

Rome Must Perish

Chapter 6: Chapter 6 Flora Temple

"I recognize you, Spartan Warrior of Thrace, a legend of the arena! And you, the lion from Gaul! Could you spare my life, seeing as I'm a fan of yours, always cheering for you in the arena? My family depends on me for survival!..." the driver pleaded again.

Cross seemed somewhat moved by his words, but Spartacus calmly said, "Tie him up and take him with us."

Cross was a bit surprised: "Spartacus, why make things so complicated? Didn't we always just take the stuff and let the people go before?"

There was a spark in Spartacus's eyes as he whispered, "If the Capua People don't know we've hijacked a wagon carrying gladiator weapons, and think most of us are unarmed, when their garrison troops come to pursue us unsuspectingly..."

Cross's eyes lit up, his crimson tongue licking his lips: "Seems like we don't need to rush to escape, let's hit them hard first!—"

At that moment, Maximus poked his head out of the cart: "Spartacus, there are a total of 60 short swords, 15 longwords, 15 long spears, 40 square shields, 40 round shields, 90 helmets, 90 pairs of shin guards, and 5 fishing nets in the cart."

"That's a lot of stuff!" Cross listened excitedly, even forgetting to scowl at Maximus.

Spartacus was somewhat surprised: he knew Maximus could read and write, but he didn't know this young man had such good arithmetic skills, being able to tally the cart's supplies so quickly. It should be known that almost all of their number, whether from Thrace or Gaul, were illiterate gladiators who needed to count on their fingers for arithmetic under ten, Hamilcar being the only reliable one, but even he couldn't match Maximus's speed.

Spartacus gave Maximus a deep look and asked, "How far is the temple you mentioned earlier?"

Maximus immediately stood up in the cart, surveyed his surroundings, compared them with the original owner's memory, and said uncertainly, "It shouldn't be far, not more than five miles."

"Take us there; we'll rest there tonight."

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Maximus now deeply regretted bringing the gladiators to Flora Temple; some of them actually violated several priestesses in the temple, one of whom was an elder, using this to vent their desires and hatred toward the Romans. Among the crowd, the priestesses' shrill screams lashed at Maximus's guilty conscience like a whip. He wanted to escape from the temple's main hall that tormented him greatly, but was blocked by a gladiator.

"Maximus, Cross said you can't leave as you please; go back and get some sleep," the man said coldly, arms crossed.

From the original owner's memory, Maximus found the man's name, Torquato, a Gaul, a veteran among the gladiators, and a supporter of Cross.

With you doing these things, you still expect me to sleep!... Maximus suppressed the urge to curse, and his tone became firm: "I need to see Spartacus, I have something important to tell him, something that concerns our brothers' lives! If you don't let me see him, fine, it'll be your responsibility when something goes wrong tomorrow!"

Torquato was taken aback, "You want to see Spartacus?"

"Yes!"

"What's the matter?"

Maximus ignored him and turned to walk back.

"Wait!" Torquato stepped aside from the door, warning, "You can only go see Spartacus, don't wander off!"

Maximus ignored him and walked straight out of the hall door.

Torquato followed closely, accompanying him to the rear hall like a prisoner escort.

The ajar door of the hall let out light; Maximus pushed the door open and the eyes of Spartacus and others, discussing matters inside, immediately focused on him.

Maximus swallowed a gulp and pretended to be shocked, "Spartacus, please stop those brothers who are violating the priestesses; they are desecrating the gods and will incur curses and punishment!"

"Those are Roman gods, they can't punish us Gauls. Our brothers have suffered enough from the Romans, it's just right to vent their anger on Roman women." Cross, unconcerned, mocked Maximus: "You stand up for those Roman women, no wonder you're a traitor raised by Romans!"

Maximus ignored Cross. Looking at Spartacus, he said solemnly, "They are not ordinary Roman women; they are respected priestesses. Our actions will only provoke Roman

anger, not only from the Roman Nobles but the Roman citizens will also show hostility toward us! By then, everywhere in Italy, Romans will oppose us, and we'll be blocked at every turn!"

"We're meant to oppose the Romans. Anyone who dares to intervene, we will kill them; it's either us or them, nothing too significant." Enomai said gruffly, with a disregard for life and death, only seeking a good fight.

Enomai was a Germanic, with blonde hair, blue eyes, fair skin, and an exceptionally tall and burly figure, like a tower of iron. He was the strongest among the gladiators, though his sword fighting skills were weaker than Spartacus and Cross, but was already infamous in the arena of Capua.

"Roman citizens are different from Roman Nobles, especially those Roman poor who live hand to mouth on free bread, having lost their land, burdened by a mountain of debt. Their living situation is not much different from ours, and they despise Roman Nobles more than we do. They might join us and fight against the Roman Army, because only through this can they regain what they want..." Maximus explained seriously.

In his past life, he wasn't a history scholar, but a freelancer who liked to work from home, doing writing and graphic design, being a homebody. Playing games was his greatest hobby, followed by watching movies and TV shows online. He lived leisurely but was diligent when it came to work, especially when watching history documentaries or playing war strategy games. He always liked to understand the historical background, weapons, and equipment first, which gave him a better sense of immersion. There were quite a few films related to Spartacus. Though the real historical records were scarce, Maximus had once done detailed research on the historical background of that time.

"Nonsense!" Cross rebuked loudly, thinking Maximus was fabricating reasons to help the priestesses.

But Spartacus was greatly moved, took a few large steps toward Maximus, and urgently asked, "Is what you're saying true? Roman citizens will help us fight the Romans?!"

Spartacus's extremely excited expression left Maximus momentarily stunned: You wouldn't know this? Historically, that's exactly what you did, which is why your rebel army grew like a snowball, eventually becoming a major threat to Rome!

But Maximus soon realized that this ancient hero standing before him, who grew up in an isolated Thracian tribe and later joined the Roman Army to fight in Little Asia, was caught as a deserter, and eventually transported to Italy to become a gladiator, confined in the Gladiator School, couldn't possibly have a deep understanding of Roman society, nor could he have the foresight. Everything he did was merely in line with the tide of history...

Thinking of this, Maximus immediately realized another issue: compared to these gladiators, he wasn't exceptionally brave, didn't know how to lead troops in battle, didn't know how to farm or herd, nor did he know how to trade goods. The only thing he surpassed everyone in was his extensive knowledge, enabling him to understand the present and foresee the future. This knowledge should allow him to secure a foothold in this group, with enough authority to speak!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7 Destination

This immediately gave Maximus immense confidence, and he said loudly, "As long as we defeat the Roman army a few times and demonstrate our capabilities, the poor people of Rome, who hate the Roman Senate, will surely join us. With their help, we can leave Italy and return home!"

"Wishful thinking—" Cross snorted, but Spartacus immediately said to him, "Cross, go and tell the brothers to release those priestesses and not to harm them anymore!"

"Spartacus, this kid is a traitor, and you believe him?!" Cross pointed at Maximus and questioned.

"No matter if it's true or not, if there's even a glimmer of hope to strengthen our forces and resist the Romans, we must try!" Spartacus said powerfully, "Besides, I don't want everyone here to see us as vicious enemies, just like how we viewed the Romans who burned, killed, and looted in our homeland back then."

Cross was slightly moved, but he still refused, "I'm not going. The brothers are having fun, and I can't stop them."

Spartacus did not insist. He turned and said to others, "Antonix, Enomai, you two go and tell the brothers that we will raid those Roman estates to the south tomorrow, there will be plenty of beautiful women for them to enjoy, there's no need to trouble a few poor priestesses..."

"Okay, Spartacus." The two of them pushed the door open and left.

Maximus also wanted to follow, but Spartacus called out to him, "I remember you told me before that there's a mountain called Vesuvius south of Capua, and around it are many large estates, each with many slaves. A few years ago, there was unrest there, is that right?"

Hearing this, Maximus's heart stirred. The original owner indeed had memories of this. He responded decisively, "That's right. Is that where you plan to take us, Spartacus?"

Spartacus nodded and asked, "Do you know how far Vesuvius is from us?"

The original owner had never been to the Vesuvius Volcano Region nor had a chance to look at maps. This information was overheard from conversations between the original owner's master and guests. However, in his previous life, Maximus had researched this while watching the Spartacus TV series, and again while watching the movie Pompeii, he carefully reviewed the map of Vesuvius, leaving a deep impression. He recalled and said, "Vesuvius is in the southern Campagna Region, not far from Capua. If we march quickly... we should be able to reach there within a day. Um, is there water?"

This last question was a bit abrupt, but Hamilcar immediately handed over a water jug.

"Thank you!" Maximus said very politely.

Hamilcar smiled at him kindly.

Hamilcar, a Thracian, was somewhat older, reportedly from the same tribe as Spartacus and closely related to him. In the original owner's impression, he was friendly and sociable, and most gladiators held a good impression of him. He had assisted Spartacus in persuading the gladiators to join the uprising.

Maximus crouched down, dipped his finger in the water, and drew the coastline of the Campagna Region on the stone slab. Then he sketched the approximate locations of Capua and Vesuvius. After thinking for a moment, he added three small circles on the coast near Vesuvius: "This is Napolet, a large town in the Campagna Region... this is Pompeii and Herculaneum, both small towns—"

Maximus almost blurted out that in the eruption of Vesuvius decades later, both places were buried by surging volcanic lava.

Everyone gathered around, focused on the simple map that Maximus had drawn.

Even Cross, who was very dissatisfied with him, had to admit in his heart at this moment: this damn guy is still somewhat useful.

After a while, Spartacus looked up and asked everyone, "Does anyone have any dissenting opinions about going to Vesuvius?"

No one expressed opposition.

"Then it's settled." Spartacus made a decision: "Tomorrow morning, if Capua's army does not appear, we will set off south at noon. Hamilcar, have you made arrangements for the brothers on night watch tonight?"

"Everything is arranged."

"You must remind them to stay vigilant and not fall asleep. If they notice anything unusual, they must notify everyone immediately! We are now opposing the Romans, so we must not be careless!" Spartacus solemnly reminded.

Late at night, Maximus, exhausted in mind and body, fell asleep amidst the sound of snoring, only to have a nightmare.

In the dream, his rebel army fought a fierce battle with the Roman Army. The fighting was intense, but ultimately the rebel army was defeated. He was captured by the Romans and crucified along the road to Rome, dying in agony and suffering...

Maximus woke up from the nightmare, drenched in sweat. He touched the palm of his hand, which had been pierced by iron nails in the dream. The heart-wrenching pain felt almost real...

This is no mere dream; this is a historical reality! Maximus clearly remembered that although Spartacus's rebellion was mighty, it lasted less than three years before it ended in defeat. Over 6,000 captured rebel warriors were nailed to crosses...

Breathing heavily, Maximus instinctively turned his head to look. In the hall, the flame of the eternal oil lamp was flickering. The originally kind and benevolent statue of Flora, in the dim light, appeared somewhat eerie and terrifying. It looked down coldly at the group of sleeping people below, with Spartacus likely at the very center.

Maximus gazed at that familiar silhouette, recalling the brief records from history: In fact, the rebel army had a complete chance of escaping the pursuit and blockade of the Roman Army to attain true freedom. At that time, Spartacus led his army north with repeated victories, reaching the Po River Region, where they could see the majestic Alpine Mountains. The rebel army only needed to cross the Alpine region into Western Europe, where Gauls and Germanic tribes lived, and the Romans would not be able to do anything to them. Yet Spartacus led the rebel army south again, ultimately leading to their doom... Why did Spartacus suddenly change the marching route and abandon the escape from Northern Italy? This remains one of history's great mysteries, debated for millennia...

Can he persuade Spartacus and the others in time to change their tragic fate? Maximus clenched his fists. The memories of the dream filled him with lingering fear, and he made a firm resolve: he would do everything possible not to become a dried corpse on a cross!...

While he was lost in thought, Spartacus in the hall was also not asleep. It had taken him a long time to plan this revolt, ultimately gaining success, but he knew well that this was only temporary freedom. Italy was the area where Roman power was strongest, and they were like drops in the ocean of Romans, where even the slightest slip could lead to defeat and death...

The lives of over two hundred people resting on Spartacus's shoulders weighed heavily on him...

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Dulus Vibia, a former Roman citizen, from his name one can infer his family was not noble, but his grandfather had commercial skills, seizing the opportunity as Rome expanded continuously in the Mediterranean, accumulating considerable wealth, thereby allowing the family to ascend to the knight class in Rome. His father had served as a financial officer, handling the most unpromising tasks of managing the treasury and archives for over a decade, unable to advance further, but he managed to make connections with many Roman dignitaries.

By his generation, he encountered the dictatorship of Sulla, who issued a new decree: all towns within Italy must be managed by administrative officers appointed by Rome.

Chapter 8: Chapter 8 First Battle

Vibias's father thought this was a good opportunity to accumulate political prestige, so he spent a lot of money to campaign for his son. Last year, he finally convinced Lucius Licinius Lucullus, the governor known as "Sulla's Army Inheritor." Lucullus signed an administrative order, making Vibias, who had just turned 30 and had only served for a few years as a legal officer's assistant, the chief administrator of the large city of Capua.

Unlike his father, who was content with being a regular official his entire life, Vibias always kept his eyes on the Roman Senate, even harboring ambitions of becoming a governor to honor his family. Thus, less than a year into his tenure, he seized the opportunity of Capua's city founding day to organize a massive gladiator contest to entertain the Capua citizens and build his own reputation. But who would have thought that just before the celebration, a major mishap occurred—a group of gladiators actually started a rebellion!

In Rome, the Senate would appoint an elder to oversee all gladiator schools, as these activities involved training large numbers of individuals in lethal weaponry, which must be controlled. However, as the system of appointing Roman officials as local town administrators had been implemented for less than ten years, the management system was not yet fully streamlined, leading to unclear responsibilities in this area and resulting in inadequate control over the gladiators in Capua...

In any case, the responsibility would ultimately fall on Vibias. An angry Vibias severely whipped Batiatus, who came to report the news, and decided to swiftly deploy troops to wipe out these audacious lowly slaves to minimize the impact, allowing the city founding day's celebration to proceed smoothly.

However, now the problem was that although Capua had a garrison force, apart from a few dozen city guards, there was no ready army. He could only conduct an emergency

military mobilization. By the time the personnel were assembled and the team was organized, it was already late at night. No matter how Vibias urged, the Capua soldiers refused to leave the city at night, forcing Vibias to postpone the deployment until the next day.

The next day, Vibias hurriedly led the troops out of the city, soon receiving an intelligence report that the gladiators were still inside the Flora Temple.

He finally felt somewhat at ease and ordered the troops to slow down their march.

In truth, he was not satisfied with this army composed of Capua people, as they were all panting and their formations were chaotic after only marching for a short distance.

He once served in the military and had some combat experience. Back then, it was when Sulla led his army to land in Italy, and the Civilian Faction hastily assembled an army. Not yet twenty years old, he was forcibly conscripted, and he followed the army for the decisive battle with Sulla outside Rome, resulting in a swift defeat. Vibias fled back home in panic. Due to his family's insignificance in the Roman political arena, he escaped Sulla's purging.

Ah, the memories are unbearable to recall... Vibias sighed in his heart, refocusing his attention on the army he led: although the quality of the soldiers wasn't impressive, at least they were well-equipped and numerous. According to that damned Batiatius, most of those gladiators were unarmed, and should not withstand his full assault... What needed consideration now was how to report this matter to the Roman Senate upon victory, to avoid their reprimand...

The army began deviating from Ania Avenue, entering the oak forest beside the road.

Seeing this, Vibias summoned a staff member and asked, "How far is it to the Flora Temple?"

"After crossing this oak forest, it's about one mile," the staff member replied.

Vibias cautiously said, "Send all the cavalry out to scout. We must confirm that the gladiators are still in the temple and also observe if there's an ambush!" Although his combat experience was limited, he had this bit of common sense.

The few cavalymen available quickly rode off.

When they galloped back with satisfactory reports for Vibias, the army had exited the oak forest. In the distance, a quaint temple sat amidst an apple orchard. It was early April, and the apple trees were adorned with white or pink blossoms, reflecting the warm sunlight, extraordinarily beautiful.

Evidently, Vibias had no mind for the scenery; his focus was on the temple's entrance: seven or eight strong men in shirts were sitting on the steps, sunbathing and chatting. Upon noticing the army's arrival, they hurriedly stood and entered the temple.

"Form up, prepare to attack!" Vibias excitedly shouted, and the bugle immediately sounded.

Five hundred Capua citizen soldiers, wearing leather helmets, leather armor, holding square shields and long spears, with short swords at their waists, began to jostle as they transformed from a marching column into a tight phalanx while advancing toward the temple, moving very slowly.

During this process, the doors of the Flora Temple swung open, and the gladiators rushed out rapidly...

Vibias's eyes widened instantly: some of these gladiators were wearing equipment similar to the Capua soldiers, while others were clad in flamboyant gladiator attire... well over a hundred people had weapons lethal enough to kill!

Damn Batiatus dared to lie to me!... Vibias was furious, but he did not panic excessively because, from his vantage point on horseback, he could see clearly: the gladiators' formations were chaotic, and behind them, scores were not wearing any armor and wielding only clubs and kitchen knives, a complete motley crew! His troops were double the enemy's numbers and well-equipped, perfectly capable of crushing them!

"Continue advancing steadily!" Vibias ordered coldly, and the bugler beside him blew the bugle rhythmically.

However, the Capua soldiers in the front rows were not as eager as before and became somewhat hesitant.

Originally, Spartacus, Cross, Enomai, and several other renowned gladiators from the Capua Arena donned their usual gladiator gear and stood firmly in the front center of the formation. Many Capua soldiers had seen their matches before and, upon seeing their imposing figures now, recalled the terrifying scenes of them slaughtering enemies in the arena, instantly feeling uneasy, their legs shaking.

This was exactly the effect Spartacus wanted. He immediately shouted, "Brothers, charge!" and strode towards the enemy on the opposite side.

Cross, Enomai, and the other gladiators all roared and charged together; though they were few and disorganized, their momentum was fierce.

"Shield formation!" Vibias's face changed slightly.

In fact, launching a round of javelin throws at this time could have disrupted the gladiators' charge, but since Marius implemented military reforms and started the recruiting system decades ago, citizens of Italian towns no longer trained in Roman tactics like their ancestors did, ready to respond to the Romans' call and fight side by side with them at any time. As a result, Capua citizen soldiers do not possess the relatively advanced military skill of javelin throwing.

However, Vibias felt slightly relieved to see the soldiers raise their shields in time.

But at this moment, the gladiators led by Spartacus, like fierce tigers, had already charged to the Capua citizen soldiers' formation. Before they could thrust their spears, the gladiators slammed their shields into the shield formation.

The Gladiator School provided abundant food after intense training to improve the gladiators' win rates, so they were all sturdy and bigger than the Capua citizen soldiers. The poorly trained Capua citizen soldiers could not match their strength, and despite their teammates' supporting from behind, they were still knocked around. Taking advantage of gaps appearing in the shield formation, the gladiators swiftly and accurately stabbed their short swords into their opponents' bodies, and amidst the screams, many Capua citizen soldiers in the front rows of the formation fell.

The gladiators' terrifying lethality shattered Vibias's pre-planned combat strategy. Positioned in the rear formation, he instinctively shouted continuously, "Hold steady! Hold steady!..."

However, he was panicking, and the Capua citizen soldiers were even more terrified. Facing these killing monsters was already making them uneasy, and now hearing their companions' screams, these well-off Capua people no longer had the courage to fight. They threw down their shields and long spears and turned to flee.

Seeing defeat was inevitable, Vibias hurriedly turned his horse and rushed to escape back to Capua.

Chapter 9: Chapter 9 Maximus's First Battle

Early in the morning, the gladiators woke up, Hamilcar took some people to use the temple's backyard kitchen equipment to cook barley porridge and bake bread.

Meanwhile, Spartacus sent Antonix to disguise as a civilian, riding a horse carrying gladiator equipment, to investigate the movements of Capua City. Therefore, when Vibias led his troops out of the city, Antonix had already reported this news to Spartacus.

After breakfast, the energetic gladiators were not frightened by the fact that the attacking enemy outnumbered them. Instead, they showed a strong desire to fight and began preparing for battle.

Due to the insufficient amount of weapons captured by the gladiators last night, not everyone could be equipped. According to Spartacus's suggestion, the weapons were first given to the teammates with strong combat abilities, resulting in Maximus not being selected. In the end, he was only given a kitchen knife.

This was not a street brawl but a war confrontation. Fighting with a kitchen knife was too dangerous, so Maximus, learning from some teammates, went into the oak forest to break a sturdier and straighter branch, sharpened one end, and used it as a spear.

Even though he was at the rear, seeing the fully armed enemy forming a line and approaching made Maximus tense. When Spartacus led the charge, he followed his teammates in a rush, but the fear in his heart unconsciously slowed his steps a bit.

Then he saw Spartacus and others display great power, breaking through the front of Capua's formation, and quickly the Capua people screamed and routed.

Victory came so swiftly that Maximus could not believe his eyes. His confidence soared, and like his other teammates, he chased forward: if not to perform now, then when?

Maximus, tall and long-legged, without wearing armor or carrying a shield, ran swiftly and soon caught up with the fleeing soldiers.

He thrust his stick forward, the sharp end failing to pierce the enemy's leather armor, but causing him to tumble to the ground.

Maximus didn't pay him any more attention, swung his stick, and struck another fleeing soldier on the head. The man screamed and fell abruptly.

The scream did not frighten Maximus; instead, he felt exhilarated. He pursued a few more steps, another stick hitting another fleeing soldier on the head...

He smashed down three or four people in a row, seeing other fleeing soldiers getting farther away, and unable to catch up, Maximus finally stopped, turned around, and saw his companions already cleaning the battlefield: some were stripping armor from the dead soldiers, some finishing off wounded soldiers on the ground, and others gathering captives who couldn't escape and surrendered...

Having been overly excited in pursuit just now, he felt more fatigued upon relaxation. Maximus didn't join his companions' actions but sat heavily on the grass, gasping for breath...

Yesterday, seeing his teammates kill their severely wounded comrades felt cruel; today, seeing them kill similarly wounded and fallen Capua people, Maximus only felt slightly uncomfortable.

Is he beginning to get used to it?... Maximus looked up, the gentle sunlight streaming through the gaps in the trees fell on him, unusually warm...

While he was in a daze, a voice sounded in his ear: "Maximus, I never thought you could run so fast, knocking down three at once."

Maximus turned his head to look; the speaker was Torquato, a strong Gaul Gladiator who, like most others, used to look down on him but now showed a bit of admiration in his expression.

It seems my desperate performance just now wasn't in vain!... Maximus extended his right hand, spread his fingers, and said with emphasis, "Torquato, I didn't just knock down three, but five enemies! But if it weren't for your attack that broke them, I wouldn't have knocked them down so easily. If you weren't wearing armor, you could definitely run faster and kill more enemies than me."

Torquato, an honest fellow, upon hearing Maximus's flattery, grinned broadly and said, "Don't worry, this victory brought us many weapons and armor, next time you'll hold a shield and spear, fighting alongside us."

Torquato's recognition dispelled Maximus's inexplicable sadness and temporarily made him forget his fatigue. As he was about to say, "Let me help you strip armor," noise came from not far away, it was Spartacus and Cross having a dispute.

As it turned out, Cross wanted to kill all the captives to intimidate the Romans.

Spartacus opposed this, believing that all these captives should be released because these cowardly Capua soldiers would spread tales of their fear, causing Capua to be more cautious in deploying troops against them, thus buying them more time. Also, the benevolent act of releasing captives would make the Capua people less hostile to them, beneficial for their future operations in the Campagna Region and for expanding their forces...

"Spartacus does have a point," murmured Torquato, who had been listening attentively.

Maximus looked at him somewhat surprised: the Gaul Gladiators in the team always regarded Cross as their leader and fully supported him. It was rare to find someone who didn't blindly follow and could think independently.

Maximus then glanced at Spartacus who was persuading Cross. He realized that his words last night might have somewhat influenced this leader of the gladiators, showing he's a commander who doesn't stubbornly stick to his views and can accept subordinates' suggestions. As a result, Maximus felt more confident about persuading Spartacus to lead the army to escape Italy in the future.

Spartacus's opinion was supported by Hamilcar, Enomai, Antonix, and others, so the captives were forced to remove their armor, wearing only waist-coats, and were released.

Cross's face darkened, and he said nothing.

Spartacus, looking at the pile of amassed weapons and equipment, said to Hamilcar, "Go bring Maximus to inventory our gains."

Maximus gladly accepted the task, and shortly he completed the count.

Hamilcar came to report, "Spartacus, in this battle we killed 58 people, captured 137, acquiring a total of 195 leather armors, 320 leather helmets, 261 short swords, 452 long spears, and 500 long shields."

"This is a tremendous gain, now all our brothers have weapons!" Spartacus was somewhat excited, then asked, "How many casualties do we have?"

"Only three were slightly injured."

Spartacus glanced at those around him and, smiling, said, "This battle was won too easily, Capua people are so nice, knowing we lack weapons, specially sent us a batch."

There was a burst of laughter around.

Cross coldly said, "Capua people are soft, everyone knows that, defeating them is easy, but the Romans are not so easy to deal with."

"You're right," Spartacus ceased smiling and said seriously, "So we must rush south to Vesuvius, to quickly expand our forces, relying on the mountainous terrain there to confront the Roman Army that might come to suppress us at any time. These armors and weapons didn't come easily, let the brothers all wear them. The surplus will be temporarily managed by you, Hamilcar, figure out how to transport all of them, let Maximus assist you."

"Alright." Hamilcar readily nodded.

Hearing Maximus's name, this time Cross only snorted softly, without voicing opposition. After all, the scene of Maximus leading the chase of the fleeing soldiers, knocking down several in a row was witnessed by him, plus his performance last night somewhat changed his previously poor impression of him.

After receiving the notification from Hamilcar, the first thought that came to Maximus was: this is letting me handle logistics, doesn't that mean I don't have to fight anymore?

So he nodded in agreement without hesitation, then asked, "What should I do now?"

Chapter 10: Chapter 10 Along the March

"Go prepare the carriage." Hamilcar said, turning to walk towards the temple. Maximus followed closely behind, and the two of them arrived at the courtyard behind the temple. Two horses and a donkey were tethered there, happily munching on the barley that the gladiators had brought from the school.

The two of them led the horses to the carriage, harnessed them, and connected them to the shafts...

Although the original host had grown up studying with the young master, he had also done this kind of work as a slave, so Maximus quickly got the hang of it. He then harnessed the donkey to the carriage.

Hamilcar, meanwhile, was throwing bags of flour out of the donkey cart.

"What good flour, why throw it all out?" After having a meal of barley porridge, Maximus could not adapt to the food the gladiators used to eat, so he was puzzled to see Hamilcar discarding the good flour.

"We have to make as much space as possible to carry those weapons. We can always loot flour from the farms, but it's not so easy to come by these weapons," Hamilcar answered.

Maximus thought it made sense but felt it was a pity. After thinking for a moment, he said, "Why not give this flour to the temple's priest as our compensation?"

Hamilcar didn't speak, tacitly agreeing.

But when Maximus faced the temple priestess's swollen, resentment-filled eyes, he hastily finished his sentence, turned, and ran.

By the time the two of them drove the horse and donkey carts to the front of the temple, the pile of leather armor on the ground had already been divided up. This indicated that Spartacus wasn't very good at arithmetic; the weapons and armor obtained were not enough to equip all the gladiators, which made Maximus feel relieved.

The gladiators despised the ornate, heavy helmets with poor visibility they normally wore, and all switched to leather helmets. At a glance, they looked just like the City Guard of Capua.

However, they disliked the heavy shields and were unwilling to carry them, leaving over five hundred of them piled on the ground like a small mountain, which made Hamilcar frown, as the two carts couldn't hold so many items. He immediately mentioned it to Spartacus.

Spartacus had to instruct everyone to at least carry two shields and one long spear per person. To soothe their complaints, he promised to soon capture more carts to carry their weapons, allowing them to march south more easily.

Just as everything was arranged and they were ready to set off, a piece of bad news affected everyone's cheerful mood: among the wounded resting in the temple, one person's chest wound had become infected, causing a fever that wouldn't subside, and he had fallen into a coma.

Spartacus had no choice but to issue the order to let him "die peacefully."

This time, Maximus witnessed the process of the wounded being stabbed through the chest and buried in a pit. He felt relatively calm and was even relieved that the deceased was not Fesaros.

As the previous battle had taken place early and ended quickly, by the time the gladiators passed through the apple orchard and returned to Ania Avenue, it was not yet noon.

Ania Avenue was a major thoroughfare leading from Rome to the southernmost tip of Italy at Regium, bustling daily with travelers and vehicles. Although news of the Capua army's terrible defeat had spread, causing nearby travelers to avoid the area, soon new, uninformed travelers and vehicles made it lively again. By the time the gladiators walked down the central main road, they were still mistaken for a local army and quickly captured four carriages.

The gladiators discarded the items in the carts, loaded the shields and long spears onto them, and with space left over, also seated the wounded who had difficulty moving.

The gladiators were not worried about the lack of drivers, as Gauls were the best drivers.

Maximus also switched from the donkey cart to a carriage, using the original host's memories to reacquaint himself with the skill of driving a carriage. In his carriage sat an injured Gaul Gladiator providing technical guidance as needed.

After this plundering, the other travelers and merchants finally realized that these "soldiers" had bad intentions and scattered in fear. The empty main road made it easier for the gladiators to march.

However, calling it a march was more like a stroll. Although wearing the City Guard's armor, they had no concept of marching in formation. Over two hundred people followed behind Spartacus, Cross, and Enomai, chatting, laughing, and playing like ordinary travelers, heading south leisurely.

This chaotic scene caused Maximus, sitting in the carriage, some discomfort. Although he understood that these gladiators, originating from Gaul, Thrace, and Illyria or other places, did not lack battlefield experience prior to becoming gladiators and had grown fearsome personal fighting capabilities through years in the arena, as proven by the previous battle, could they hold against the disciplined and well-coordinated Roman Army with their free and loose fighting style?

Even though he had never served in the army in his previous life, Maximus could firmly give a negative answer. To avoid an unpleasant mood, he turned his gaze to the sides of the avenue.

Campania truly deserved its reputation as a renowned plain in Italy. The wheat fields stretched endlessly, and only a month after the spring equinox, the green seedlings were already above ankle height. Swaying in the breeze, they resembled a vast, boundless sea of green. People could occasionally be seen weeding and tending the fields in this sea.

According to the original host's memories, farmers wearing short tunics in the noonday heat, engaging in intense labor, were likely the owners of the fields, while those with bare torsos and dark skin were probably slaves. But the owners rarely acted arrogantly and often worked in the fields themselves, coordinating smoothly with the slaves, even joking and conversing with them, creating a harmonious atmosphere...

This prompted Maximus to question the knowledge he had from his past life about Rome: in a slave society, weren't the slaves and slave owners supposed to be mutually hostile?

The earnest Maximus decided to keep observing closely.

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South of Capua, along Ania Avenue, were Calatia, Suysula, and Nola. These towns were once small cities occupied by the Samnites, who used them as bases to attack Greek colonial towns along the coast, which led to intervention by the Romans. The Samnites were eventually defeated and became part of the Roman Alliance. However, they didn't completely submit and occasionally stirred up trouble.

When Hannibal invaded Italy, many Samnite tribes sided with him; during the Roman Alliance War, they were among the main rebels. More than a decade ago, many Samnites eagerly responded to the recruitment by the Civilian Faction when Sulla attacked Rome, battling Sulla's Army under the city and were captured when defeated...

Sulla was extremely annoyed with the Samnites, believing that Rome could never be at peace as long as the Samnites existed as a distinct people. Thus, he not only massacred nearly ten thousand Samnite captives, he also hunted down any prominent Samnite individuals associated with the Roman Civilian Faction and enacted a series of

stringent measures against the Samnite towns during his tenure as a Dictator. For instance, Samnite towns were prohibited from building or repairing city walls; Roman officials would govern them; no City Guards could be established...

Ten years later, these Samnite cities on the Campagna Plain gradually turned into villages. Some cities even vanished. The fierce spirit of the Samnites of the plains had almost been worn out. They clearly saw the gladiator band marching openly on the avenue as a band of thieves but only gathered in groups, watched from a distance, and made no move to attack the rear contingent.

After the group passed Nola, based on the original host's memory, Maximus went to inform Spartacus that they could no longer head south but had to leave the avenue and turn westward.