

Rome Must Perish

Chapter 66: Chapter 65 Maximus and the New Recruits

"That must've been tough for you!" Tierks said flatteringly.

Acronis glanced at him and teased, "You've been reassigned to the Fifth Hundred-man Team as a centurion leading new recruits. How does it feel?"

"Not bad," Tierks replied with a modest smile.

"Seems like you're doing a pretty good job." Acronis grinned and stretched out his hand. "Enough chit-chat; hand over your pottery jar."

Tierks quickly handed over the two pottery jars in his hands, and Acronis took them, passing them to someone on the wagon.

A while later, Acronis carefully retrieved the pottery jars handed out from the wagon.

"Careful, they're a bit hot," Acronis warned.

"What goodies do we have for dinner tonight?" Tierks asked curiously as he received the two hefty jars.

"Salted meat, broad-bean porridge, and lamb soup," Acronis replied.

Tierks quickly looked into the jars and visibly lit up. "It's really lamb soup, and there's plenty of meat! (Normally the kitchen mostly serves oily soup, which is just hot water with a bit of olive oil tossed in—barely offering some fat and mainly replenishing water.) And the porridge is pretty thick this week, with lots of minced meat in it! Why is dinner so good today?!"

"Don't rush. There's more." Acronis handed him a warm, large loaf of bread, the soldiers' staple food.

With his hands already full, Tierks resorted to biting into the bread.

Immediately after, Acronis handed him a chunk of egg-sized, milky gelatin. "And this too."

Tierks's eyes widened in shock. He quickly tucked the bread under his arm and asked, "Where did this cheese come from?"

Seeing the surprise in his eyes, Acronis smugly replied, "Of course, it's homemade by our kitchen using goat's milk. We experimented many times before getting it right. Only over the past few days did we start making it in larger batches. If not for Leader Maximus saying, 'The dinner tonight should be lavish to celebrate the addition of so many new recruits,' I wouldn't even bother letting you guys eat this cheese."

"So, we're benefitting from the new recruits?"

"Obviously."

Tierks couldn't contain himself. Holding the jars tightly in his right hand, sandwiching the bread under his arm, and balancing the cheese in his left hand, he carefully shuffled toward his quarters. Behind him, the new recruits overheard their conversation. For those who had been living on slop day after day, even soft, fragrant bread was a rare treat. Now, with cheese to taste, lamb soup to drink, and salted meat to chew, they were all ecstatic.

After collecting their food, the small teams of fresh recruits sat together in groups, devouring their dinner.

Suddenly, commotion erupted near the camp gate, and the new recruits couldn't help but stand up curiously to peek toward the source.

"No need to look. That's Leader Maximus finishing up and returning to camp to eat with everyone," Tierks said.

"Does this Leader Maximus not eat alone?" Tini Bazus asked incredulously. In his experience, Pontus leaders always dined solo on lavish meals, never mingling with ordinary soldiers.

Tierks shot him a sidelong glance and proudly said, "Leader Maximus has said before: In our humble team, there are no lofty nobles—only brothers united by shared struggles and hardship. There's no hierarchy among us. We must share suffering and blessings alike. Only with this belief can we unite and defeat the Romans!"

Tini Bazus seemed deep in thought.

The commotion on the south side of the camp didn't settle; instead, it grew louder. Maximus's shifting figure around the camp puzzled Tierks. Typically, the youthful leader would choose any one squad from the three centurion groups to eat and chat with the soldiers, but today was clearly unusual.

"Tierks!" a familiar voice called out, prompting Tierks to stand instinctively and salute. "Present!"

"It's dinner time, not training. What's gotten into you, you fool!" Maximus strode over with a grin, playfully slapping down the salute-encased fist he'd raised to his chest.

Tierks chuckled, a bit flustered, and eagerly asked, "Leader, are you eating with us tonight?"

"Tonight, with so many brothers joining the Supply Camp, I'm going around to check in with everyone one by one," Maximus said, sweeping his gaze warmly over the nearby recruits. "How are you all feeling about joining the Supply Camp?"

Because Tierks had spoken highly of Maximus multiple times in front of the recruits earlier, his influence left them a bit stiff and hesitant now that their leader had appeared before them. For a moment, no one responded.

"The Supply Camp is great! We get to eat well, and the food is delicious!" someone suddenly blurted out like a rumble of thunder.

Maximus saw the speaker—a dark-skinned, burly man with a simple and kind face—and his smile deepened. "Eating well and enjoying it? That's the spirit! We're risking our lives to fight the Romans just so we can fill our bellies and live like real humans. Am I right?"

"Right!"

"Leader's absolutely right!"

The soldiers responded enthusiastically.

"Next, there's something even tastier!" Pleased by their reactions, Maximus turned and shouted, "Akegu."

A boy trailing behind him immediately handed over a bulging waterskin.

"I originally planned to host a small celebration to welcome you all into the Supply Camp. However, our main troops are out attacking the Romans while we're stuck behind guarding the camp, so we must remain cautious against enemy ambush." Maximus explained, holding up the bovine-hide waterskin. "But to show how much we value you new recruits, I still convinced others to let each team have a portion of wine. This is Falernia wine—the finest in Italy! Tierks, you're in charge of ensuring every brother gets a sip, but no one is to drink too much."

Tierks took the waterskin as the recruits' fervent gazes shifted to him. He glanced around at them and said, "Tini Bazus, you go first."

Tierks chose Tini Bazus because, despite his chatterbox nature, he was experienced and clever enough to set a responsible example for the others.

Tierks's judgment was sound. Facing Maximus, Tini Bazus resisted the urge to gulp greedily, taking a measured sip before returning the waterskin to Tierks.

Tierks passed the waterskin to another selected recruit.

All nine recruits drank in turn without shouting or struggling, observing restraint. The waterskin still held plenty of wine by the time Tierks had his turn, taking only a small sip.

Maximus watched this unfold, impressed: Tierks was doing remarkably well leading troops after just one day. His leadership showed potential.

"Was the wine good?" he asked, smiling at everyone.

"Delicious!" they replied in unison.

"You've only had a taste this time. After our Supply Camp goes out to battle and defeats the enemy, then we'll celebrate victory with plenty of wine, alright?"

"Alright!!"

Following this, Maximus had Tierks introduce each recruit to him, taking care to greet them warmly and exchange a few friendly words with each. The atmosphere was harmonious.

As Maximus prepared to head toward the next squad, Tini Bazus finally mustered the courage to speak up. "Ma... Maximus, Leader, I've heard that in the Supply Camp, you can learn reading and arithmetic. Can I join?"

Maximus was pleasantly surprised. He hadn't expected a recruit to bring this up on his own. Smiling, he replied, "Of course you can! Just ask your centurion to apply to Clerk Vorenius. We'll arrange it for you." As he said this, he looked around and added firmly, "I hope everyone follows Tini Bazus's example and actively seeks to enroll in learning! But if you're just curious to look around, don't sign up—the training requires commitment, and learning does too. Why do the Romans dominate the Mediterranean? Not only because of their military strength but also their vast knowledge and advanced technology. If we want to defeat them and build a good home afterward, we need military training and training here—"

Chapter 67: Chapter 66 The Lukaiya People

Maximus tapped his head with his finger: "Do you agree?!"

"Yes..." This time, the recruits didn't respond in unison, as some of them were lost in thought.

After Maximus left, Tierks nudged the dazed Tini Bazus: "Kid, you've made an impression on the leader now!"

Tini Bazus, his thoughts revealed by Tierks, changed the subject without a change in expression: "Captain, I've been a street performer, a soldier, a slave, and Leader Maximus is quite different from all the other important figures I've encountered before."

"Of course, he's different!" Tierks said sincerely: "Leader Maximus knows a lot, like those lofty scholars, but he's very willing to teach us!"

Then he put on a stern face: "Since you said you want to learn, I'll be watching over you carefully, to make sure you don't get sent back halfway and embarrass our squad."

"Captain, what do you mean?" Tini Bazus caught the implication in his words.

"You think you're the only smart one? I've been following Volenus and learning for a while now!" Tierks said with a self-satisfied look.

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The rebel army first crushed the Roman legion's vanguard north of Calatia, then annihilated its main force by the Volturno River. Roman Legion Commander Valerius, bringing a hundred cavalry and the supply team to Cales, was shocked to hear this news from the scattered soldiers. Fearing that the rebel army would continue north and encircle them, he hurriedly withdrew the remaining troops to the north.

After resting for a night by the Volturno River, a few rebel leaders, following discussions, decided not to risk advancing north but instead returned to Vesuvius flaunting their spoils and captives.

The townspeople along the way also learned of the defeat of the Roman legion and quickly spread the news.

Upon returning to the camp, the entire supply team was ecstatic. Although Maximus had always appeared confident after the main force went to battle, calming the troops, there was still some apprehension in everyone's hearts. It was only when the army returned triumphantly that they could finally relax completely.

This victory greatly boosted the morale and confidence of the rebel army and its supporters, dispelling their fear of the Romans.

For the Campagnians, however, it was a disaster, as it meant that this slave rebellion would continue and lead to a dreadful consequence.

Campania, under Roman rule, was a wealthy region, but not without its poor. Precisely because its land was too fertile, it attracted much covetousness from Roman nobles.

The plundering and annexation of its lands had never ceased over the years (Sulla's manor and villa were here), resulting in many property-less poor who had lost their homes. Some went to Rome seeking opportunities, while others wandered to various towns in Campania, living off scarce bread and menial labor, longing to change their plight and restore the glory of their citizenship.

The slave rebellion sparked by the Gladiator had raged around Vesuvius for nearly half a year, and all the Campanians knew about it. The reason why the poor hadn't gone to seek refuge wasn't that they didn't want to but because they understood the might of the Roman Army better than the slaves and were not optimistic about the rebel army's prospects, believing they would soon be suppressed.

However, first Grabo's 3,000 Roman soldiers suffered a crushing defeat, and now a whole Roman legion was nearly wiped out. The continued victories of the rebel army shocked the poor, who had initially dismissed it, prompting some Campanian poor to start joining the camp...

On this day, the rebel army convened a military commander conference. Once all the leaders had arrived, Spartacus spoke: "The reason for gathering everyone today is that there is a matter that needs discussion. Dozens of poor from Lukelia want to join us, but they have a special request."

"People from Lukelia willing to join us?" Cross was a bit surprised.

Cross's surprise stemmed from the fact that the rebel army had been stationed here for a long time and had a deep understanding of the surroundings. Lukelia was located on the southern edge area of Vesuvius, near Pompey. Unlike most Campanian towns, it was a Roman colony, a town built by real Romans who had relocated there. Additionally, with a history of just ten years, Lukelia was one of eight colonies built under Dictator Sulla's urging. The residents were mostly Roman veterans who had followed Sulla in battles and were enjoying the political interests granted by Sulla. Why would they rebel against Rome, which was still controlled by Sulla's faction?

Not only Cross felt odd, but the other leaders were also puzzled.

"Here's the situation..." Hamilcar explained on the side.

It turns out that much of the land distributed to Lukelia's residents was previously land belonging to Pompey, arbitrarily divided by Sulla. Due to the ruthless suppression of the Civilian Faction throughout Italy and executing many, the fear of his bloody methods left the Pompeians not daring to object, but they held a grudge against the Lukelians. They both sought to cozy up to Sulla's subordinates and quietly caused trouble for the Lukelians.

The Lukelians, although granted fertile land, were not accustomed to wielding hoes instead of their usual sword and shield. These Roman veterans had no experience in

agriculture, and with the competition from large estates, were already finding survival tough, let alone having someone deliberately target them. Over a few years, some Lukelians fell into heavy debt due to mismanagement.

The creditors were all Pompeian nobles, who under Sulla, behaved generously, not pushing for repayment, and even willing to lend more. But once Sulla died, they immediately turned hostile, pressing for debt repayment. If the debt couldn't be paid, they would forcibly seize the land. When the Lukelians went to reason, they would be beaten by the guards arranged by their creditors... During this period, several conflicts occurred, and the Lukelians always came out worse, with Roman Elder-sent officials investigating the matter siding with the Pompeians.

Before the Italian Alliance's civil war, Lukelians, as Roman citizens, had some privileges. Nowadays, all Italians are Roman citizens having equal political status, with no advantage for the Lukelians. Moreover, debts had to be repaid as per Roman Law, and even in the past when the Gracchi brothers wanted to reduce the debts of plebeians, they faced strong opposition from the Elders, let alone now.

The landless Lukelians finally chose to seek help in Rome. After all, they were followers of Sulla, and according to Roman tradition, Sulla was their patron. Although Sulla was dead, he had successors.

Lucius Licinius Lucullus was Sulla's principal military successor, and during his campaigns in Little Asia, a small part of these Lukanians even served directly under his command.

However, he was a refined egoist, strict with soldiers, and rarely distributed loot to them. Not keen on politics, he showed little interest in inheriting Sulla's political legacy. So, when the Lukanians sought his help, he only gave them superficial answers.

Another key general under Sulla was Pompey. The young Pompey did indeed care for his men, had ambitious aspirations, but he was not one of Sulla's old subordinates. He didn't fight in Little Asia and joined when Sulla led troops into Italy, unfamiliar with these old soldiers. He had his followers and was busy with campaigns in Iberia, clearly stating his inability to assist the Lukelians.

As for other Elders who had close ties with Sulla, they all avoided the Lukelians. Later, the Lukelians enquired through political friends in Rome and found out: the Pompeians had sided with Little Sulla (Dictator Sulla's nephew). Thus, they dared to seize Lukelian land, having his backing.

Faced with losing their lands, the Lukelians were desperate. Some wandered from Rome, while others returned to Campania with hatred, relying on the aid of comrades to survive.

Later, the rise of the rebel army, and their two victories over the Roman military, reignited their hope, leading them to approach...

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Chapter 68: Chapter 67: The Demands of the Lukaiya People

"These Lukaiya people are willing to assist us in attacking Pompeii, asking only to kill a few nobles in Pompeii, especially Vidius, whom they claim is the main culprit for seizing their lands..." Spartacus said, "As long as we agree to do so, these Lukaiya people are willing to join our ranks and fully help us fight against the Roman Army."

"How many of these Lukaiya people want to join us?" Cross asked.

"Over fifty people."

"Over fifty people?!" Cross laughed heartily, "Every day now more than five hundred people are coming to ally with us. Do we really lack these fifty people!"

"Among these more than fifty people, most were previously team officers in the Roman Army. Leading them is a Chief Centurion of the legion, who told us that there are many comrades in Italy in a similar situation to his, and he is willing to mobilize them to join our ranks..." Hamilcar emphasized.

Another Centurion, and a Chief one at that... Maximus's expression subtly changed.

"A few days ago, we just annihilated a Roman legion. Have we killed few of their officers? We have enough people wanting to join our ranks who harbor hatred against Rome. These Roman soldiers, who have been commanded by the Roman Elder to seize foreign lands and slaughter foreign people, are not worth recruiting!" Cross said excitedly.

"Although our troops now exceed ten thousand men, due to the influx of people these days, the ranks are somewhat chaotic and lack training, unsuitable for field combat." Antonix said cautiously, "Moreover, our troops have no experience in siege warfare, and lack siege equipment. Because of our presence, surrounding towns have strengthened their defenses. Although Pompeii is not large, the city walls are four or five meters high. If we lead the army to attack, casualties will be significant, and if we cannot capture it, it will not only affect morale but also damage our prestige..."

"I'm interested in attacking a city, but I don't want to do it because the Romans want us to," Enomai said bluntly.

Attutmus immediately followed, "If it's about arraying troops for battle, I have no objections, but for siege... let's forget it."

"I actually think it's possible to send troops to attack Pompeii," Maximus spoke up, drawing everyone's attention. He said calmly, "Not for those Lukaiya people, but for ourselves! Now, more and more people are joining us, and food isn't a concern. After all, it's harvest season. Soldiers go out to cut wheat every day, which is enough to sustain us for a while. But apart from food, we are desperately short of some supplies, such as pottery, linen, tents, copper pots... The farms in the Vesuvius region have been scoured by us, and there might be some farms beyond it, but not many, while our demand is large. Only by capturing a small seaside town like Pompeii, which has bustling trade, can we not only meet our needs but also gain more, like blacksmiths!"

"Do you think attacking a town is as easy as making dinner?" Cross looked at him contemptuously, "You speak lightly, but it will cost many lives!"

Maximus said earnestly, "We rose up against the Romans, risking our lives in the first place. If we don't try, we'll never know if we have the ability to capture a town, and aren't the Lukaiya people there to help us?"

"Lukaiya people?" Cross sneered, "Who knows if they're deliberately deceiving us, trying to send us to our deaths!"

"Enough, let's not talk more, let's vote and decide." Spartacus finished speaking, and Cross immediately stated firmly, "I disagree with attacking Pompeii!"

"I also disagree," Antonix followed closely.

"I cannot agree with the Lukaiya people's request," Enomai shook his head.

Hamilcar glanced at Spartacus and then at Maximus, and said softly, "I think we can agree to the Lukaiya people's request and try to attack Pompeii."

Maximus was invigorated, "I also agree to attack Pompeii."

It was now Cross's turn to be anxious because in most previous voting meetings Spartacus and Hamilcar's opinions were consistent, so this time might be no different. By then, a tie of three votes to three, would such a trivial matter even be temporarily shelved? Wouldn't it be a joke to let Maximus laugh at it!... Cross was feeling frustrated, but then Spartacus said, "I also disagree with attacking Pompeii. The Lukaiya people's request must be refused."

Cross was overjoyed upon hearing this, "It's settled then, send those Lukaiya people away!"

After speaking, he glanced at Maximus, but Maximus's expression was calm, betraying no disappointment.

Cross's eyes glinted as he said, "Spartacus, I have a proposal."

"Speak."

"Since Attutmus became the Fifth Battalion Commander, he has been deeply loved by the soldiers, accumulating considerable prestige. Additionally, in the recent battle against the Roman legion, the Fifth Battalion that he led performed exceptionally well. I think it's time to make him one of us, to become a genuinely military commander!"

Cross was not someone who naturally thought for others. The reason he proactively mentioned it this time was because he suddenly realized earlier: Spartacus has a close relationship with Hamilcar and Antonix, coupled with Maximus, who is at odds with him. In the military commander conference votes, Spartacus has too much of an advantage. The newly joined Attutmus, though having an ordinary relationship with him, is not very close to Spartacus either. Bringing him in could give Cross a better chance of getting his future suggestions approved.

Attutmus shot an appreciative look at Cross.

"I was actually planning to bring this up myself, didn't expect you to mention it first, Cross. This just shows that Attutmus's performance has won all our recognition. So now let's vote on whether he should gain a vote in the military commander conference," Spartacus said seriously.

The result of the vote was naturally unanimous approval, thus increasing the number of rebel army leaders to seven.

While everyone was congratulating Attutmus, Cross spoke again, "I have another proposal—"

Cross looked at Maximus and said solemnly, "This time when we went to attack the Roman Army, we assigned all of our newly joined 500 slaves to the Supply Camp, which was only a temporary measure. It has resulted in the Supply Camp's Guard having more than 700 soldiers. I think it's a total waste to have so many soldiers in charge of providing us with food and treating our wounded since they don't need to fight on the front lines. It's better to transfer half of them to other battalions, what do you think?"

This remark by Cross abruptly made the originally relaxed meeting atmosphere tense.

Since its establishment, the rebel army has undergone reorganizations and reformation, but its structure remains relatively loose. Each battalion and the Supply Camp's leaders are like feudal lords with significant power. No other leader, including Spartacus, could interfere with their internal affairs without consent. Cross wanting to pull people already assigned to the Supply Camp openly humiliates Maximus and undermines his prestige as the head of the Supply Camp.

This kind of matter had never happened in previous military commander meetings. Cross was likely still holding a grudge about the incident two months ago when his battalion soldiers were publicly punished for insulting the Medical Team's women, seizing this victory to take revenge.

"During your expedition, Napolet sent multiple spies to approach our camp. If not for the sight of hundreds of Supply Camp Guard soldiers conducting military training in front of the camp, the Campagnians might have looted the camp's supplies by the time you returned victorious. This is the role of having a guard team with sufficient soldiers. If Cross, you want to take away my people, then in future campaigns, let the Second Battalion always stay behind to guard the camp!"

Maximus coldly retorted and immediately went on, "I also have a proposal! The soldiers of the Second Battalion often say they don't eat much, and the food distributed to them is a bit too much. I suggest that in the future, food rations for the Second Battalion should be halved!"

Chapter 69: Chapter 68 Quintus

In the past, when faced with Cross's provocations at the military meetings, Matthias always endured, with Hamilcar and Spartacus helping him handle the situation. But now, as the Supply Camp has grown, his courage has also increased. He feels he can no longer let Cross target him like this; otherwise, he'll only be looked down upon by the new leaders joining, and how can he have any influence in the upper echelons of the rebel army!

"You—" Cross's face changed dramatically; he didn't expect the always patient Maximus to suddenly retort.

"Alright, you two are leaders now, yet you quarrel like children, what does that look like!" Spartacus immediately scolded them, using the excuse of their bickering to cover up the conflict, and the matter ended there.

After the meeting, Hamilcar took the initiative to find Maximus and criticized him, saying, "You were too impulsive earlier; you shouldn't have quarreled with Cross."

"Teacher, you saw it just now, Cross is too overbearing. If I don't fight back, he will only become more arrogant in the future. How can I have any face as the leader of the Supply Camp to attend military meetings!" Maximus said angrily.

Hamilcar spoke earnestly, "He's in the wrong, but you shouldn't threaten him with things like reducing food supplies! You are the leader of the Supply Camp, which is to provide food security for the whole army. If someone disagrees with you, and you use such methods to threaten them, how can other leaders trust you to manage the Supply Camp?!"

Maximus was taken aback and then sincerely said, "Teacher, you're right. I got too emotional earlier and didn't think it through. I really shouldn't have said that!"

Seeing him admit his mistake, Hamilcar gently patted his shoulder, "Just be careful in the future. Regarding whether or not to agree to the Lukaiya people's request and attack Pompeii, both of us are concerned about the lack of supplies. But Spartacus needs to consider the overall situation of the team, so—"

"Teacher, I understand, every leader has their considerations, which is why we have the Military Commander Conference. How could I blame Spartacus?" Maximus said indifferently.

Disputes are the norm in the Military Commander Conference, but Hamilcar specifically comforting Maximus was because, under the leadership of this young gladiator, the Supply Camp was becoming increasingly important to the rebel army:

Even though more and more soldiers are joining and the team is getting larger, the Supply Camp can consistently provide plentiful and delicious food;

The soldiers train seriously and are not too afraid in battle, because the Medical Team takes good care of the wounded; some even desire to be injured to stay in the Medical Team;

The Supply Camp established a construction team that built roads between battalion camps and even helped repair other camps when idle;

They also established a Weaving Team, planning to provide uniformly dyed linen waistcoats for the whole army, under Maximus's suggestion, to make the rebel army look more formal;

They organized children, training and working during the day, studying together at night; Maximus once explained, "This is preparing for the rebel army's future"...

The number of people in all battalions is increasing, but only the Supply Camp remains orderly and shows prosperity. This fully showcases Maximus's leadership ability, making Spartacus and Hamilcar value him more, hence Hamilcar came to explain in case he had any dissatisfaction with Spartacus.

Hearing Maximus speak, Hamilcar wondered if he was making a mountain out of a molehill and then heard Maximus say, "Teacher, where are those Lukaiya people?"

"At the First Battalion's camp."

"Can I go see them?"

"Do you want to attack Pompeii?!" Hamilcar looked at him in surprise.

"The whole army isn't moving, just our Supply Camp couldn't possibly take Pompeii!" Maximus shook his head and said, "I want to see them because they were once subordinates to the Roman Dictator Sulla and want to learn about Rome and southern Italy from them."

"Oh, that's it. But since we didn't agree to their request, I'm afraid they won't be willing to say much."

"Perhaps if I take the Lukaiya people to the Supply Camp, provide some food, they might be willing to talk."

"Okay then."

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Genius Quintus, a Roman citizen from Ladim of plebeian birth, married at 20, was conscripted a year later. After years of warfare, he rose in ranks to become chief centurion of the Roman army and even received Sulla's audience and commendation. As a result, when he was settled in the colonial city of Lukelia in Campania, he was given forty acres of state-owned land.

Having no experience in managing farmland, he listened to some suggestions to buy many slaves, farming tools, and seeds, preparing for a significant effort, only to encounter a drought, drastically reducing yields, causing a loss. Not resigned, he wanted to earn it back and thus borrowed money under someone's recommendation. The next year's harvest was good, but he couldn't sell his wheat, as market prices were very low, selling would mean not only not earning money but also losing money.

Quintus became chief centurion not only because he's shrewd but also because he's always had a resolute spirit of not admitting defeat. Since wheat wasn't profitable, he decided to switch to growing profitable grapes to clear his debts. However, grape growing required high technical skills; he lacked experience and skilled slaves (such slaves were expensive and in high demand), so he ended up losing again...

Years later, he was deep in debt; luckily, creditors never pressed him until he learned of Sulla's death and rushed to Rome for the funeral. During this time, the creditors from Pompeii brought a large group to demand payment. When Quintus's son couldn't pay, they wanted to forcibly take the land deed to settle the debt, leading to a conflict. Quintus's only son was severely injured and died six months later; his daughter-in-law died from grief, leaving the destitute Quintus struggling with his only grandson...

Years of grievances had no redress; enduring hatred had prematurely turned Quintus's hair and beard white, making him gaunt and wrinkled, only his eyes remained sharp and penetrating, like burning flames.

Following Quintus were two other Lukelia people with similar experiences.

The three entered Maximus's tent and, after sitting down, Maximus got straight to the point, "Gentlemen, we've discussed your request and concluded that attacking Pompeii at this time is unfeasible—"

One Lukelia man immediately expressed dissatisfaction, "You have tens of thousands of troops, yet you don't dare attack even a small Pompeii. What bullshit about resisting Rome and gaining freedom! You might as well bind yourselves, surrender to Rome, and maybe you can avoid the crucifixion and die faster!"

Another middle-aged man followed with a plea, "Please don't make a decision so quickly, let's discuss this further! We know Pompeii's situation very well and are willing to fully assist you! Although small, Pompeii flourishes in maritime trade and has abundant supplies. If you can conquer it, you will gain a large amount of supplies to greatly improve your current equipment... Please reconsider!"

Maximus slowly said, "Pompeii may be small, but its walls are high, solid, and prepared. We may have many men, but they are newly formed, without siege experience or siege weapons. Attacking such a city would cause heavy casualties and not necessarily succeed. Pompeii may have many supplies, but which town in Italy isn't like this? Why should we crash into a wall specifically at Pompeii!"

Chapter 70: Chapter 69: Quintus's Siege Plan

The middle-aged man named Calpurnius Scapula said eagerly: "I served for many years as an engineer in the Roman Army. I can help you make siege engines. Quintus—"

He pointed to the elderly man beside him: "He served for many years as the Chief Centurion, with rich experience in sieging. He can teach you how to attack Pompeii—"

He then pointed to the rugged man who spoke first: "Oluus was once a famous warrior in the Roman Army, awarded the Warrior Crown. He can gather over 40 experienced warriors, though slightly older, to fight alongside you!"

"You make me tempted, but it's a shame..." Maximus sighed twice.

After entering the military tent, Quintus, who had been silently observing, spoke: "Since you have made your decision, why not directly let the leader who originally received us tell us at that camp? Leader Maximus, just speak your mind."

Feeling exposed, Maximus, a bit embarrassed, let out a dry laugh, looked at Quintus, and said in a deep voice: "Although the other leaders oppose, I still want to try. However, my soldiers are only 800 in number, and a frontal assault on Pompeii is definitely impossible. If you have no other way, let's pretend I never mentioned this, and you can leave."

"800 men, and you want to capture Pompeii?! It's simply—" As Oluus began to speak, Quintus bluntly interrupted: "Oluus, shut up!"

He immediately fell silent.

Quintus looked at Maximus: "Do you have paper and pen?"

"Yes." Maximus quickly brought them to him.

Unceremoniously, Quintus walked straight to the wooden table and leaned over to draw.

Maximus came closer to watch, noticing the elderly man quickly sketching an oval with lines and dots on the papyrus.

He looked up at Maximus: "This is the Pompeii City Map."

Maximus nodded to indicate understanding.

"The Pompeii City Wall is about two miles long, with the land-facing wall about 700 meters in length, the height of land-facing walls is five to six meters, and the sea-facing walls are two to three meters. There are 6 gates—" Quintus used his finger to point at the map he had just drawn: "Herculaneum Gate, Vesuvius Gate, Capua Gate, Nola Gate, Sano Gate, and Sea Gate. Pompeii has a population of over 6000 people, with a City Guard of 300. In case of emergency, at least 800 people can participate in combat. The forces defending the entire City Wall are actually insufficient for your entire troop but more than enough to deal with just your 800 soldiers."

Maximus stated calmly: "I must remind you, half of my 800 soldiers have armor and weapons, while the others have only farm tools and sticks."

"You're—" Oluus began to speak again but was quickly silenced by Spukala beside him.

Quintus remained composed and slowly said: "A few hundred men trying to capture Pompeii, a frontal assault won't work, only a surprise attack will. But since you have been at Vesuvius for half a year, if in April or May Pompeii was still careless, keeping the city gates wide open until dusk, allowing free access for travelers, but as your threats to nearby towns grew, all land gates of Pompeii began to remain closed, rarely opened—"

"You're saying all land gates?" Maximus keenly picked up on a hint in Quintus's words.

"Yes, land gates, because the Sea Gate is open." Quintus said as he picked up the pen, drawing a wavy line on the bottom of the Pompeii City Map, then pointed at it: "This is the shoreline, and this is the Sea Gate. Fearing you, the Pompeians closed all land gates, relying solely on sea transport for contact with the outside world. Pompeii's

supplies are brought into the port by merchant ships, through the Sea Gate, and into the city, so the Sea Gate remains open."

"You mean—if we want a surprise attack, the only way is by sea, using a ship to land troops in the port and break into the city through the Sea Gate?" Maximus pondered aloud.

Quintus tapped the coastline on the simple map, shook his head, and said: "The Pompeians built the city here because there is at least a five-meter height difference between the coast and the city, with only a sloped path from the Sea Gate leading to the port. Since all the land gates are closed, even if the Sea Gate is open, inspections must be stricter than usual. Trying to sneak in may be very difficult, and if you want to storm the Sea Gate, it may also be challenging."

Quintus pointed to a place on the coastline: "The port area on the bay side is at least a hundred meters from the Sea Gate. By the time your soldiers land at the port, the sentries on the city wall can easily spot you. Once the Sea Gate is closed, the Pompeians, shooting from above, you won't even have a place to escape to."

"It seems with just my men, we cannot possibly take Pompeii." Maximus sighed deeply and waved them off: "If that's the case, I won't keep you—"

"Leader Maximus, don't be hasty!" Quintus, seeing that he was about to be dismissed, spoke urgently without further ado: "Seizing the Sea Gate isn't possible, but a surprise attack from the port into the city can be done!"

"Oh, why?" Maximus responded indifferently, showing little interest.

"Look here." Quintus's finger slightly moved upward and then pointed hard.

Maximus then noticed an unconnected part on the left side of the Sea Gate, above the port on the hand-drawn map of Pompeii: "What is this?"

"Here, about 200 meters, there's no city wall," Quintus said in a deep voice.

"Reportedly, it wasn't built during the city's construction, possibly because the height difference between the city and the bay below was more than eight meters and the slope was steep, making it impossible for enemies to climb up, so it seemed very safe. However, after hundreds of years, the bay below the city has turned into a flourishing port area. The lower part of this un-walled city area is now full of buildings, and there are even people openly defying the Pompeii City Government's ban, building three-story high buildings here to rent more houses to the poor of the port area—"

Quintus paused, his indifferent face suddenly twisted with some derision, he sneered: "The only family that dares to do this and leaves the city government helpless is Pompeii's first family, known as the 'Pompeii Protector'—the Vidiu family—"

Hearing this, Maximus's heart was stirred: Isn't the Vidius family the target this elder seeks revenge against!

Quintus ignored Maximus's expression and continued speaking: "The Vidius family built several three-story Roman-style 'Hui' buildings in the port area below the un-walled city area, their rooftops almost level with the city. We only need to get to the rooftops, place wooden ladders or planks four to five meters long, and we can easily enter the city from the port area.

The Pompeians, like other Campagnians, are timid and have never experienced war. With city walls as their reliance, they barely have the courage to fight you. But once you break into the city, even if you have only one or two hundred soldiers, if they don't gather more than two or three times your numbers, they won't dare confront you."

Quintus scoffed disdainfully and swiped his finger across the map: "Once your soldiers enter the city from here, you can run no more than 200 meters west along this road to reach the Herculaneum Gate, kill the guards, open the gate, and your ambushed soldiers outside can rush in. With 800 men and us combined, we can completely conquer Pompeii!"

As Quintus spoke to the end, his emotions grew somewhat excited, but Maximus merely blinked: "According to you, entering the city from the side bay seems easy, but how do we get a transport ship into the port? Given Pompeii's land defenses, they must be equally vigilant at the port!"