

# HERALD OF STEEL

## Chapter 7 Unveiling

"What's taking so long? The famed Sycania cavalry can't win against some infantry?" Agapios snapped at Samaras, clearly unhappy with the rate of progress.

His cavalry could move unchallenged throughout the battlefield, yet after two hours, they hadn't still managed to destroy the wings of the enemy.

This made the aged general quite cross.

"Sir, it seems they came across the royal guards. The enemy must be truly desperate. The line will likely fall anytime, have just a little patience" Samaras provided his analysis in a soothing tone.

"And besides, sir I got good news. They killed the butcher." He then added with a huge grin.

This news made Agapois wide-eyed, and his grizzled face visibly lit up, his face flushed with happiness.

Finally the killer of his son and one of the rapists of his wife was dead. Finally, they could have some peace.

"Is it true Samaras, have you confirmed it?" The general asked visibly shaken. That brute had been one of his anathemas for years.

"The Sycarian's described the unique armor to the tee and besides, there isn't another his size in the whole of Adhania" Samaras reassured his commander.

"Good good. Those cavalry has really done a great job." Agapios loudly cheered that brute's death.

So, who was this butcher Cantagena was celebrating killing?

It was Lamiz-The sword of Ramuh!

Years ago Lamiz and Kefka were sent to Cantagena to kill Agapois.

Using a spy they managed to easily infiltrate his mansion at night with a few soldiers and swiftly took care of the suspiciously few guards. But soon they found out why it was so easy. Agapios wasn't home!

Agapios had suddenly decided to go out drinking that night, taking a large contingent of bodyguards with him as he had received intel that an assassination attempt might soon be made against him.

Unable to accomplish the mission, they did the next best thing. They killed his son and took turns raping his wife. They gang-raped her the whole night before escaping at dawn, leaving her alive to make Agapios face the ultimate humiliation.

This incident shook Cantagena to the core.

The fact that the family of their most esteemed general was attacked in their own residence sent shockwaves throughout the city-state and a witch hunt was soon initiated to root out Adhanian spies.

The senate authorized arresting anyone with the slightest suspicion and soon the streets of Cantagena were bathed in blood, mostly with those of the innocent.

The senators used this opportunity to purge their own rivals and gain more political power, ultimately severely weakening Cantagena for several years.

This was one of the main reasons why Cantagena lost the War of Flowers, losing its hegemonic status to Exolas.

"Boooooommm...crackle....." As the two men were looking forward to the imminent victory, suddenly, a bright flash and a loud bang smashed into them.

Soon the sky turned dark, visibility became almost zero, and hail and rain started to drown the battlefield.

As the two men were trying to find a way to cope with this change, a runner rapidly dashed towards them, panting and completely out of breath.

"General, the soldiers can't neither see nor hear in this weather. We have lost all communication with our front lines." He reported.

Agapios frowned at this news. But he was not really surprised.

Communication and coordination between units were done mainly by whistles, drums and trumpets, all now drowned out by the booming thunderstorm.

Even the rare signal flags were of no use.

"Dammit," Agapios cursed under his breath.

This could not have happened at a worse time. They were at the cusp of victory.

"Let's withdraw for now, sir," Samaras prudently suggested, anxiety laced in his voice.

As a superstitious man, he suddenly felt that Ramuh had descended.

"Hmmm." Just as Agapios was about to make a decision,

"Hooonk." his ears were greeted with the low sound of an ordinary trumpet.

But for the veteran of a hundred battles, his instincts were screaming that this signaled anything but ordinary.

Amenheratf had finally decided to reveal the trap.

Amenheratf blew the trumpet the moment the first raindrops fell, and then he roared in a crazed pious voice "Men, this thunderstorm is the divine gift of Ramuh. The drought is over. Now show these heathens why the flowers here bloom red. Ramuh blesses us all!"

Moments later they appeared, from the wooded side of the battlefield.

First a few hundred like little dots. Then a few thousand seemed to form a line. Finally, their numbers seemed to swell to more than ten thousand as they formed proper battle formations.

But these were not ordinary soldiers. No, they weren't even infantry.

Their unique attire instantly gave away who they were.

They were one of the most feared units of Adhania - slingers!

Wearing a simple tunic with no armor, pair of pants, and sandals they carried a small buckler in their left hand, and a simple sling in their right. A small bag slung across their shoulder carrying their ammo- stones.

"H...how....how can they be here?" Agapios asked incredulously. These elites were supposed to be still hundreds of kilometers away. Even after seeing them right in front of him, it was hard for him to believe that they were really there.

"Has the Adhanian army already come back and was just waiting to ambush us?" Samaras interjected with his own horrible premonition.

His conjecture sent shockwaves through Agapios's heart and he almost felt faint. If that was true, they were finished.

Even if Agapios could somehow escape the battlefield, the Cantagenan senate will surely hang him to appease the public.

"No, that shouldn't be the case. They wouldn't dare to send even the royal guards if they had such a force. Even if they wanted to bait us in to encircle

us, Manuk would never allow his king to be left unattended. The fact that even that brute left Amenheratf's side showed just how dire the situation was." Agapios said in a confident voice. It was unknown if he was trying to convince Samaras or himself.

As a matter of fact, Agapios was right. There were only the slingers.

How the slingers got here could be said to be an even more impressive strategic feat than the one Agapios used to position himself today.

Adhania had fifteen thousand cavalry in its army. Slingers with just their clothes and sling, with no armor, no shield, not even any ammo were put on these horses and made to ride day and night to reinforce the king's army.

To save weight, the slingers didn't even carry any food, just a small pouch of water.

This was all done to make the horse as light as possible and reduce their burden.

War horses had extreme pain tolerances and could simply run themselves to death, their heart simply giving out in the middle of a gallop.

To alleviate this, horses on long journeys had to be put under as low a load as possible.

And that's why the heavy, armored cavalry that rode these horses could not come.

Even with all these precautions, the two days and two nights straight journey had killed almost all the horses through exhaustion. When a slinger's horse died, he would hitch a ride with another, if both horses dies, they would simply march.

Using this draconian march the fifteen thousand slingers had finally managed to come to the king's rescue.

They restocked at the king's camp and then hid themselves among the trees surrounding the battlefield, waiting for the prey to step in.

And who was the architect of his utterly up to the balls move?

Manuk!

When his spies reported the king had left the capital and Ptolemy was arresting all the heads of the royal faction, his instincts started blaring.

Coup! The king's half-brother was actually starting a coup!

Manuk could no longer sit still, acting as a mere head priest of the army. He had to be beside his king. He had to help him.

But what good could he do alone? He was just one man. He needed an army.

So, using his status as the archbishop of the temple of Ramuh, he threatened the general of the army with eternal damnation and made him hand over the cavalry and slingers to him.

And then he committed one of the gutsiest moves ever recorded in history, destroying a country's most powerful and expensive military unit- the cavalry, all in a bid to save his king.

And it worked. He had made it in time to save his king or at least give him a fighting chance to pass this abyssal predicament.