

Herald 111

Chapter 111 Justifying Looting

The enormous wealth that literally was beneath Alexander's feet was not the result of a single generation but the relentless toil of multiple consecutive ones.

And the enormous wealth that literally was beneath Alexander's feet was not the property of one single individual or an organization or even a family, but the entire savings of multiple generations of the people of Adhan, from the poorest peasants to the richest merchants to the highest nobles.

Alexander estimated the total to be several billion ropas, or several tens of billion tustas!

A sky-shattering amount by any stretch of the imagination

And now it was all his!

Well, at least he wished it was, as Alexander lampooned at his own powerless at being offered quite possibly the greatest known collection of wealth in the current known world but being unable to eat it.

He understood that realistically he would only be able to get a fraction of a fraction of the total amount, both because he had little political capital to hold any large chunk of this hot potato and because he lacked the muscle to protect it.

The men under him were not his but a collection of groups formed under the threat of imminent destruction.

And now that that threat was gone, how many would still obey Alexander?

He didn't know and could not risk stealing such a large amount of wealth without concrete information.

"Imposter, you are not the king!" A young feminine voice suddenly entered Alexander's ear as the vacant hall was quickly occupied by some fifty or so priests and priestesses who entered through the back door that led to the sandy beaches of the Life sea.

This angry, chirpy voice piped Alexander's attention, not because of the sound but because of the language used.

It was Thesian!

So Alexander widen his eyes and immediately spotted the ravishing beauty who had called him out.

She was a stunning young woman- a smooth, goose-egged face with dark arched eyebrows, a delicate nose thin pale lips, and ocean eyes that were simmering and bubbling with rage.

She was tall, almost six feet, with beautiful curves and obsidian skin that made one feel like she was a goddess statue given life

But her most defining features were twice- her silver platinum hair bundled up like floating clouds and that she had an exact clone of herself standing beside her.

They were like identical twin black elves.

And like her sister, the next girl too had the exact expression on her face, making Alexander doubt if he was seeing double.

"Hehe, what gave it away!" Alexander answered in his native tongue, disinclined to keep the charade going any longer as it had served its purpose well.

"Hmph, as if we would be deceived by such a childish trick," The girl next to her, her sister answered the question for her.

"*Snigger*, so where were all this time?" Alexander was surprised by the sudden appearance of these priests.

If they had run away it made no sense for them to return.

And if they were the religious zealots type, then it made no sense why they weren't here to guard the temple in the first place.

"Hmph, villain, we will never talk," The girl valiantly declared.

"Heh, bold words! I wonder if you spoiled brats ever had a cut in your life. Alexander vulgarly jeered and mocked the girls, as only spoiled brats would dare to say such things in this situation.

This made the girls' anger even sore higher as they swore, "You...you..bad person."

The two sister's naive and sheltered upbringing in the church had resulted in a severe deficiency in their slang vocabulary and caused an eruption of laughter to roll out of Alexander's men as some even vulgarly whistled at the fresh, cute girls.

Even Alexander found these angry little bundles of pepper endearing.

Alexander then barked, "You old coots, why are you hiding behind two girls? Has cowardice eaten your balls?"

This great roar caused a bit of movement in the gathered crowd, as a simple, dirty tunic wearing old man with unsteady steps stepped in front of the girls.

"Grandpa," The girls happily chirped.

This old priest looked at Alexander and spoke with a thick, accented Thesolian, "Esteemed leader, this temple is a sacred place of worship and the dwelling of the gods. You have already spilled blood on these hallowed grounds. Do not further your sins any longer. Leave or be forever cursed."

The wizened, shaky voice had a kind of gruff echoing effect as his words sounded more like a prophecy rather than a statement.

But Alexander was ready with his counter, "Our goddess Gaia and your god Ramuh has fought a divine battle, evidenced by the rain the past two days. And today, by showing the clear sky, the goddess has shown herself as the victor. And thus your god Ramuh's temple, his home belongs to us, the followers of goddess Gaia."

"Balderdash!" The old man suddenly went out of character and shouted out, utterly livid by Alexander's bullshit, his ethereal, wizened voice shattered to a crass, grinding tone.

"That's right! You are lying," The two girls too shouted and nodded in unison, shaking their tiny, clenched fists in a synchronized motion that made Alexander doubt if they had choreographed this.

'These two twins are quite cute- fresh, lovely, and innocent, like a flower that has just bloomed in the morning.' Alexander's heart fluttered as he flirted at the idea of making these girls for his own.

'After all, why let them waste away in this dump when they could be with me, warming my bed,' Alexander joked in his heart.

"Heh, you guys make for sore losers." Alexander gave a pointed smirk, "Isn't the very fact, me- a Cantagenan is standing where no other from my city-state had ever done before proof enough of my claim? What kind of a god do you worship that can't even protect his own home from intruders?... Unless ...he was injured." Alexander deliberately said the last line in a long drawn-out way, giving the people there the time to think.

And it worked as Alexander could see the religious zeal that burned zealously in many's eyes just a moment ago be replaced with fear and uncertainty.

'Could it be true?' Many started asking themselves as they struggled to find an explanation for how both the outer and inner city walls could have been breached.

Their pillars of faith were faltering!

Well almost all of them, as the two sisters still glared at Alexander unblinking and with unmatched hostility which only made Alexander find these two silver-haired sables even cuter.

This claim also made many makes guess about the man in the golden suit.

"Who are you?" The old priest asked in a voice equally mixed with curiosity and fear.

"Heh, who do you think I am? I know you know." Alexander returned the question with a mysterious smirk and then stared profoundly at the old priest, who then started changing color every few moments, from flushed red, to pale white, to a dark frown, to sunny radiant.

It was as if the old man's face had been turned into a canvas by Alexander and he could paint on it using his gaze.

Alexander had deliberately given a vague answer and let the opponent's imagination come up with their own wild and imaginative conclusions, letting them conjure things Alexander might never be able to even imagine as viable answers.

"You,,,you..are," The priest seemed to be shaking in fear, only him privy to the actual conclusion his mind had made up as Alexander only smiled and nodded.

"Grandpa, don't tell me, he's..." Seeing their father figure so distraught, the twins who also had an active imagination were stimulated to make up their own stories, while Alexander just chuckled in his heart, 'Too easy! Nothing can dream up gods and demons better than a good imagination.'

But Alexander was on a time budget and he had other places to conquer, loot and burn.

So he stated, "I'm in a bit of a time crunch, so I will be brief, 'We have taken considerable risks and losses to be here. And we have already killed in a god's temple. So realistically, there is no way we are gonna go back empty-handed."

"But this is a temple, a..." The old priest shouted at the suggested mention of the blasphemous act.

But Alexander cut off by raising his palm and saying harshly, "Shut your trap old man! I'm not done."

Then in a mercurial twist of tone, his voice turned into a friendly saccharine one, "In the interest of saving both our times, I will offer you two choices," Alexander then made a 'V' sign to show the number two.

Then he closed this sign and raised only his index finger,

"One- We take the coins, the carpets, the curtains, the golden utensils, and chandeliers. Basically, anything that's not nailed down. But we leave the golden statue intact. And in exchange, you tell us where you guys just came from." Alexander was very interested in this information.

Then he raised his middle finger and continued,

"Or two- You don't tell us where you guys just came from. And we take the coins, the carpets, the curtains, the golden utensils, the chandeliers, etc, etc, anyway. But we also take your beloved statue. And because you defied us, we make an example out of you. The women are raped and killed by my men and as for the priests, hehe, we will have our horses have fun with your assholes."

Alexander gave a horrifying picture of their fate if they were to defy him.

And so not the horror is not diluted by the language difference, he made the entire speech be also said out loud in Azhak.

And he finished the offer by saying, "You do not have the right to bargain or change any of the conditions. You can only say, 'We agree' or 'We do not agree'. You have one minute to decide. If you cannot decide within this time, I will take it as you don't agree"

"Now choose and choose wisely."

Chapter 112 The King's Whereabouts

Alexander's ultimatum immediately caused the crowd of priests and priestesses to boil over into a chorus of opinions.

Shouts like 'Let us negotiate', 'At least we can save some of your temple', and 'It is harder to lower one's head than to be off with it', were thrown in favor of option one, while these were countered by

impassioned cries of, 'Traitor', 'Blasphemy!', 'Eternal damnation', and 'Martyrdom is better than surrender.'

Because the time limit set by Alexander was so little, everyone spoke at the same time to get their opinion across, resulting in a hodgepodge cacophonous mixture of useless gurgles, utterly nonsensical to the human ears.

'*Sigh*, I should have planned this better,' Alexander watching the chaotic clamor and din produced by the crowd stored the lesson in his heart.

Although he couldn't understand what these priests were shouting about, he could make an educated guess.

The one-minute time allotment blitzed passed but the priests seemed nowhere close to becoming to an agreement.

So, Alexander decided to sweeten the deal.

After all, he didn't really want to kill or ***** them.

It was just a threat and what he really wanted was information on their whereabouts.

"Ahem," Alexander cleared his throat to draw attention and said, "I never said the choice has to be unanimous. Any single one of you who wants to take option two can come forward, and we will leave your statue alone."

This juicy condition immediately produced results as quite a few ran forward with alacrity, shouting, "Me! I know everything," "First option. I choose the first option", "Spare us!" and many similar proclamations.

"You!"

"You scoundrels!" Seeing this apparent betrayal the twins cursed these men and women, but their protests fell on deaf ears as somewhere between fifteen to twenty men and women volunteered to share their information as they gathered themselves in front of Alexander eagerly.

"Good, you have made a noble choice," Alexander nodded in a pleased tone. "Though many of your more hard-headed colleagues may call you traitors and blasphemers, they are wrong.

They are fools- deaf, dumb, and blind to the horror they just escaped and you should pay no heed to them. All of you are heroes, unsung heroes who might never be appreciated for your sacrifices but are heroes nonetheless. Hold your head up high and be proud."

He gave an awe-inspiring speech to these 'apostates', mostly to loosen their tongues.

But Alexander didn't expect the next reaction, as many broke into tears after the translation of Alexander's speech finished.

It was no easy decision for many of the priests and priestesses to make, but they did it anyway, even while knowing the infamy they would suffer the rest of their lives because they believed this was the only way to protect their beloved god.

So, when their conqueror and presumably oppressor praised them for an action even their close friends did not seem to understand, many were moved to tears.

"He, what's he saying, sister?" The eloquence with which Alexander said those words even made the two girls start whispering to each other.

After Alexander finished his speech, he pointed to a random man in front of him, "You! Come closer."

And the man skipped towards him with unconcealed glee.

"Men, grab his two arms." Alexander then gave an ominous order which made the priest scream,

"No, why? I will tell you everything,"

"Scoundrel! See, we told you he was a scoundrel!" The twins bared their cute canines in anger.

"Relax, I won't hurt you." Alexander lightly said, and explained, "This is to ensure you don't get any funny ideas when are so close to me."

He then chuckled, "Killed with a sneak attack by a priest. I don't want to die in such a stupid way."

This level of prudence moved both Alexander's men and the priests.

'That's our commander' and 'What a fearsome foe' were the thoughts of the respective groups.

But Alexander wasn't done with his precautions yet as he then told his men, "Bring him to the center of our group. And keep a strong hold on arms. If he breaks free, it's your ass!"

"Yes, commander!" The two cavalrymen, who had grown to worship Alexander squeezed the thin arms of the man even more tightly as he was dragged inside the sea of soldiers.

Alexander expounded his actions, "The reason for me doing this is so that he can't lie. We will hear what he says and then again pick one of you to hear your piece. And if your stories don't match....hehe." Alexander chuckled in a dark, menacing way.

'This guy is too careful.' Many sighed spookily as this eliminated much of any chance of lying.

"Mmm, so get your story straight." Alexander was pleased to see the dark shades appear on some faces as their plan to spew nonsense was foiled even before it could begin.

"Make sure they do not talk among themselves." With this last command issued to the front soldiers, Alexander turned and went to meet this detractor.

"I presume, you have heard everything. So, speak." Alexander asked the priest whose each hand was securely bound by a soldier.

Understanding there was no point in lying the priest sang like a canary, "Yes! We were out escorting the king!"

The very first line that priest spoke was a bombshell and when Alexander's translator finished translating it for him, it sent Alexander's head spiraling.

'The king! He's escaped through the Life sea.' He immediately understood what the priest was talking about.

'That's how they knew I was an imposter!' Alexander then connected another dot and began to at once berate himself for not just slaughtering the priests the moment he saw them and then issuing a chase.

If he had done that sooner, instead of taking part in idle chit-chat with them, maybe he could have still killed the king.

But it was too late now.

"Did you do all this on purpose? Did you talk so much just to buy time," Alexander cursed as he looked venomously at the priest.

"Hehe," Was the sound produced by the very smug-looking priest, relishing in looking at Alexander's very visibly distressed face.

This made Alexander grind his teeth in frustration but he soon calmed down, coming to terms that there was no use crying over spilled milk.

"Speak," He then ordered in a cold voice.

"The king came to us about two hours ago, alone, riding a solitary horse. He rode straight into the temple with his horse, panic written all over his face as he convened a meeting with Archpriest Manuk. He told him that the outer ring of the city had been breached and enemies were pouring in. Worse, many seemed to think he was dead."

"The archpriest hearing this immediately told the king to gather his kin and commanded us to ready the boats and supplies. These were always kept near the Life sea as an escape route for the royal family in times of crisis."

"The king argued to barricade the inner ring and wait for reinforcements, but the archpriest reasoned that they lacked the forces to guard the walls and if it was somehow breached, they would be finished."

"He suggested that a far more prudent action would be to escape via the Life sea and then link up with the incoming army and then besiege and retake the city."

"And so His Majesty gathered his family and a few guards and along with archpriest Manuk, sailed south."

"And while most of us were busy seeing him off you came. But fortunately, they managed to escape in time. Hehe, the heavens truly bless my king." The priest made a wide-beaming grin as he looked at Alexander with absolute triumph written on his face.

This gloating made many of the soldiers around the priest angry and they could hardly keep their itching hands from beating him up.

But how was Alexander supposed to know that while his men were busy killing useless priests and priestesses, his most prized prey was just a few hundred meters within his grasp and all he would have to stretch his arms a bit to grab it?

Alexander had assumed Amenheraft had returned to the palace which is why he split some of his forces to raid the palace.

Thus given how Amenheraft was able to escape death time and time again, both when facing Agapios and Alexander, the latter began to wonder, 'Is this guy loved by the gods or just plain lucky?'

But then he smirked, 'Well maybe not that lucky. He did lose his most precious city to an unknown nobody.'

So he sniggered back, "Hmph, good for you. Your king has managed to tuck his tail between his legs and run away, leaving all of you to die. What a good god-king!"

This taunt incensed the priest who shouted, "Our king will be back, And then will be your reckoning. Reckoning I tell you!"

"Hmph, then keep praying," Alexander understood he had squeezed everything he could out of this man got and was disinclined to waste any more time with him.

Instead, he called his soldiers to get a female this time to know her version of the story.

And when the priestess was brought before him, the same way the previous priest was, hands locked by sturdy men, she verified everything Alexander already knew.

Understanding the information was truly authentic made Alexander release a big sigh of regret as he felt that he was so close, but yet so far.

He subconsciously turned his head to the side and towards the Life sea, where he seemed to have spotted a few dots on the swaying water and though it might have been his imagination, he could have sworn his eyes crossed gazes with the same penetrating, profound eyes he had seen during his horse chase.

'Amenheraft, although I missed you this time. if you are really going to meet up with your army, our paths will cross again. Let's see how many lives the lucky cat has!' Alexander was keen for their next battle to begin.

Chapter 113 Legitimizing The Steal

Alexander gazed at the body of water called the Life sea and marveled at the unnatural wonder.

It was a salt lake, and like the dead sea of his previous life, its salt content was so high that people could not sink in it.

But unlike how the people of his world called the Dead sea dead because people could float on it like a dead person, here they called it the Life sea because the people swimming on it would not die by drowning, which symbolized birth and life.

For the Adhanians, in their holy scripture Takqa, it was even said that the birthplace of all life on earth was in this sea and it was because the life energy there was so strong here that people could not drown.

But this was not the most magnificent spectacle of the sea.

It was the fact that it was entirely pink!

Yes, the entire one hundred kilometers long, twenty kilometers wide at its widest point sea was not blue but pure pink, making it appear like a giant shining jewel when viewed from above.

This phenomenon was caused by a rare plankton that was native to this place, but the people of Adhnaia did not understand this.

Inside they claimed it to be the blood of Ramuh, which fell on earth when he fought against the other gods, and many Adhanian rituals and ceremonies, and festivals were based around this sea.

To them, this was the equivalent of the Muslim's Kaaba or the Catholic's Vatican city and because of the Life sea, this city meant so much to everybody.

Whoever held Adhan, held Adhania.

This was the spiritual heart of the country and tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over the country would come each year to perform their pilgrimages here.

In this way, Adhan almost defined Adhania.

And hence, although Alexander had not managed to kill Amenheraft, by taking away his seat of power, he had crippled him for eternity.

Even if the king could somehow take back the city, he would still be forever known as a failure who let the city of pilgrims fall to a foreign force.

At least that's what Alexander told himself to soothe his aching heart, such words acting as a balm to relieve some of the pain.

Snapping himself out of such thoughts, he then strode forward to the priests and priestess and smiled, "Thank you for choosing wisely. Now both of us don't have to witness any unpleasant sights."

Then he barked vulgarly, "Soldiers, touch any of them, and I will tear out a new asshole, you assholes."

This was the way most soldiers spoke to each other and if the commanders used too formal or soft words, it was seen by most as either a weakness or as being rich and pompous.

'Too high and mighty for us,' Many soldiers would think.

And so this was the way Alexander normalized his exchange with the soldiers as

"Hehe, commander, you got it!" Came the reply.

Then Alexander gave a sly smile, "Now, why don't you guys help us carry some of the loot!"

He wanted them to be accomplices to his crimes!

"What! You...scoundrel..." One of the twins shouted at Alexander like he had just stepped on her tail.

"Esteemed leader, we have already fulfilled our promise. Why are you making things hard for us? The treasures are here, take it." The old priests pointed to the coins and gestured to Alexander to have it all.

"Haha, so we are going strictly by the condition I stipulated, huh?" Alexander let out a cackle.

"Then remember that I never said anything about letting you guys leave unscathed. I only said that the statue would be left untouched. And remember these men have fought very hard the past few hours and are in dire need of some entertainment." Alexander made a subtle but very direct threat.

"*Whistle*"

"Commander's the best."

"I want those silver-haired witches,"

Cheers, jeers, and lewd looks were immediately thrown at the women and even the men just as Alexander finished, making them shiver involuntarily at the thought of what would happen to them.

They were once again reminded that they were still at the mercy of these cruel, barbaric men.

"You...scoundrel, you promised," Another of the twins felt driven up the wall by Alexander's antics as she copied her sister, though because of their lack of slang vocabulary it was starting to get repetitive.

"Haha, and what did I promise? I only told my men not to harm you to show my goodwill towards you for cooperating with me so quickly" Alexander reasoned.

"But, how were my good thoughts repaid? With curses and insults," Alexander somehow turned the blame to them as he pointedly stared at the two girls.

"That...this.." This clever wordplay caught the twins tongue-tied as they struggled to give a decent reply.

All their life up until now, they said whatever they wanted and the others obeyed.

"Hey, you two, what's your name?" Alexander was by now starting to get curious about these zealous twins who were scolding him at every opportunity with no regard for their safety.

"Azira." The left one sang.

"Azura." The right one sang.

"You look like adults, but your behavior is like children." Alexander then turned to the old priest standing beside them, and asked, "Why is that?"

"They are the twin princesses. They have led sheltered lives and are not familiar with the way of the world. Esteemed leader, please forgive them. They know no better!" The priest then politely bowed.

He himself was in quite a pinch as he could neither forcefully restrict these young ancestors nor make them scarce and could hope they held their tongues and Alexander was a reasonable man.

Alexander was quite surprised seeing Amenhearaft's so close kin, his own daughters still here, and asked the next natural question, "What are they doing here? I thought Amenhearaft had escaped with all his immediate family?"

"His Majesty implored the princesses to get on the boat with him. But the Highnesses were adamant. They refused all coercion, choosing rather to die in the temple than abandon it."

"Heeh" Alexander smirked and then gave a penetrating scan of the two commenting, "I thought you two were fearless. But it seems I was wrong. You two are plain stupid."

If it was not Alexander here, but any other person, the fate of these twins would have been tragic.

"Bahh, we are not afraid of anything." One of them spat out in anger.

"That's right. The only one we fear is father and God Ramuh," The other nodded in agreement.

Alexander was impressed by this defiance and this made his male ego want to break them to his will.

So he said, "Yosh, I have decided. I want you two to hand over the first coins. Now bring it."

Alexander then held out his palm and gestured to them to fill it with coins.

But how can mere words from a man break these fanatics' will, who despite the urging of others spat out, "Hmph, you wish. Do your worst."

Alexander seriously wondered how much bravado the girls would have once their clothes started getting ripped off and the scalding pain of being invaded unlubricated went rippling into their bodies.

But he did not want to do such things.

Instead, he smiled and clapped, "*Clap*, *clap*, *clap*". As expected of someone of royal lineage and carrying divine blood." He praised, drawing somewhat pleased, somewhat confused looks from everybody else.

Then he continued, "The two highnesses' courage and fearlessness have even moved this poor soldier's heart and made him gain immense respect and reverence for you two. Please accept my bow." Alexander said as he performed a perfect bow.

This act of respect and worship somewhat cooled the anger of the sisters as they began to feel good about themselves for not bowing to a bully.

But Alexander's next line destroyed such feelings.

"But I wonder if your grandpa shares the same conviction as you two. He is quite old and it could be quite the tragedy if something were to happen to his bones." Alexander found himself playing the role of a second-rate villain in a B movie.

"Did Your Highnesses know that it can take months for someone to die from a broken bone injury?" Alexander playfully asked.

Then he began to give an exaggerated and very inaccurate portrayal of a leg injury, "First, the leg swells up. Then it becomes deformed. Then black pus starts to come out. Then the entire leg becomes 'eehh' big as pus continues to form under the skin, turning the leg black and making it look like the size of an elephant. Then the festering and the rotting starts. And at last, maggots begin to crawl out of the leg as finally, after so much agonizing pain for so long, after months of unspeakable torment, at last, it ends."

And he finished the threat by saying, "Now, you don't want that to happen to your sweet old grandpa, do you?"

This dark portrayal of the to-be fate of their beloved teacher, instantly moved the girls' hearts as they looked angrily and with tears in their eyes at Alexander.

'To think that we ever thought that this scoundrel had a bit of goodness in him,' The girls cursed themselves for their naivety.

The sheltered princesses were very soft in their hearts and had even spent the entire last three years working diligently handing food rations and comforting all the people who came to the temple in search of solace, regardless of their status.

The two princesses were called the 'Saintesses of Ramuh,' by many and were adverse to any pain and suffering.

So, Alexander's threat hit them at their weak spot, and although the old priest said, "Your Highnesses, please don't worry these old bones." the twins could not defy Alexander any longer.

So, with venomous flames billowing out of their eyes and a sad, blank look of despair and dejection plastered on their face, each picked up a hand full of ropas and then approaching Alexander almost threw them onto Alexander's two waiting palms, all while keeping their heads down and not even bothering to look him in the eyes.

But Alexander only chuckled at this, as he clenched his hand full of coins into a fist and did a triumphant banzai pose, "Let the gods witness that, I, Alexander have not stolen anything from the temple of Ramuh. But instead gifted its riches by its guardians."

This proclamation made the girls and every other Adhanian turn white-faced in horror at the realization that they had fallen for Alexander's scheme.

They had sold out their god!

But Alexander paid no heed to this as he shouted, "Now, let the looting begin."

"Ooohhh." Came the enormous cheer that echoed off the high walls of the temple.

Chapter 114 Uppercut

Alexander's little scheme was very simple.

Produce enough smoke to draw everyone's attention there to keep the eyes from the real fire.

All the threats and information gathering he claimed were true, but the real thing he was after was a kind of permission from the priests to take their riches legally.

This was for him to have a way to retort when they would inevitably claim Alexander sacked the Temple of Ramuh, the most sacred place in Adhania.

Of course, there were plenty of holes in Alexander's claims that any decent orator would be able to point out.

Like how he made them do it under duress, how they gifted him with only a handful of coins, or how they never expressly said anything.

But Alexander was not interested in building a rock-solid argument.

He was only interested in an excuse.

And for that, this 'symbolic' gesture was adequate.

But Azira and Azura didn't seem to think so.

They looked as if their soul had been sucked out of their body as they blankly stared up, looking at the fresco of Ramuh that decorated the interior of the ceiling, almost like asking him to take them up to the heavens to be judged.

Alexander feared whether these two would be alright!

Alexander turned his attention to the priest who similarly had wooden or spacy looks and decided to break them out of their stupor by ordering them to help with the looting.

With the first stone thrown, these people saw no point in resisting and decided to obediently obey.

"Get the horses to help carry the loot and dump it on the courtyard." He ordered.

Then he split up his forces more, "Two hundred of stay here and loot. The other six hundred go to the nearby houses to get food. Say it's King Ptolomy's orders," He commanded which drew an ear-splitting cheer from the men.

None of them were stupid enough not to understand what Alexander meant by either of those orders.

Alexander had a poker face as he assigned many men and women to a cruel fate, as he instructed Azura and Azira to follow him, who did it in a mechanical, puppet-like way, both of them having lost all will to oppose Alexander.

As Alexander made his way into the courtyard, he was pleasantly surprised to see that his main force had also arrived, led by Menicus with Ptolomy beside him.

"Congratulations on becoming king, Ptolomy," Alexander boisterously laughed as he strode forward to greet the thin, gaunt man on the horse.

But instead of reciprocating the gesture, Ptolomy seemed very angry with Alexander and shouted, "Alexander, what are your soldiers doing? Tell them to stop this immediately!"

Alexander was thrown a bit back at the harsh tone of the voice and after Alexander's translated it for him, Alexander pointed his right hand to Ptolomy and then turned to his translator, "Ask him what he is so angry about. I got him the city so what's with the attitude?"

"You want to know what I'm angry about? Your soldiers have ransacked both the palace and the temple! The palace and the temple, you barbaric brute!" Ptolomy spat out masses of saliva from atop his horse onto Alexander's face below.

Ptolomy's little tirade drew very displeased looks from the soldiers around him as none of them liked seeing their commander getting berated even after accomplishing virtually the impossible task.

Some blind followers like Menes and Camius could be even seen putting their hands on their sword buckles as if contemplating whether to cut this blathering fool down.

Alexander too felt his temper rise.

He had woken up at the crack of dawn, worked the whole day, pulled an all-nighter to plan for a war, directed the war, won the war, had a heart-pounding, nail-biting chase with the fleeing king, invaded a city, planned and carried out the capture of a city and at last robbed the city's greatest reserve of treasure.

So, one might forgive Alexander for wanting at least a pat on the back for a job well done.

But instead of his hard work being appreciated, this blathering fool was castigating him in front of all his troops and acting as if he was already king.

The cranky Alexander hence decided to do something about it.

"Get this fool off his horse," Alexander commanded the soldiers, and Ptolomy in spite of his protest of, "You! What are you doing? Unhand me or I will have you executed!" was swiftly made to stand in Alexander at equal ground level.

Alexander's blue eyes penetrated the black, hazy, shaking eyes of Ptolomy, fear surfacing on his fear and quivering lip and Alexander sighed in his mind, 'This guy is no good.'

Compared to Amenheraft's calm, deep gaze that looked steady and unmoving even in times of mortal danger, this fool was shaking like a leaf in a storm in front of him.

"You...yo..what.." Ptolomy stammered and moved his eyes away to break eye contact.

It was right that moment that Alexander clenched his fist, twisted his hips as he firmly placed his legs on the ground, and brought up his right, armored hand squarely on the lower jaw of the, landing an uppercut so hard that it knocked Ptolomy off the ground, making him fly in the air in a smooth arch as he then landed on the pristine marble floor with a dull thud.

His eyes went all white and a white foam, mixed with tinges of red started flowing out of his mouth as he was knocked out cold.

"Your Majesty!"

"You..what are you doing?"

"*Clang*"

Furious roars burst out of the retinue following Ptolomy, as they were appalled by the sight of their king being hit in the face like that, and some of the more hot-headed ones even drew their swords, wanting to charge up to Alexander and cut him down.

Alexander chuckled at this show of bravado, and darkly warned, "Your king is still alive. Touch a hair on my body and every man, woman, and child in this city will not be."

The reality of their and their subjects' fate squarely lying in the hands of these extrinsic mercenaries bought Ptolomy's entourage back to earth and the more leveled-headed ones quickly shouted, "Fools! Sheath your swords. You want our king to die?"

Alexander then pointed to the man lying sprawled like an eagle and addressed the fifteen in front of him, "Tell me, why do you support this fool?"

"The fool cannot realize the simple reality that I have twelve thousand men at my fingertips and he has got zilch. Yet he dares to act like a king in front of me, berating and insulting me in front of my soldiers? Is this the kind of liege you guys follow?"

Alexander's acquisition drew some shamed and flushed faces as many turned their head and avoided looking Alexander directly in the eye.

But an old man, Alexander presumed he must have some close relation with Ptolomy from his birth attempted to defend his king. "Esteemed commander, King Ptolomy was just expressing his objection at the atrocities the soldiers are committing in the city. Worse they are chanting 'By King Ptolomy's orders' claiming it was you who told them to do so."

'Haha, good. Those guys are doing mighty well!' Alexander chuckled ominously at the 'good' news in his mind.

But outside he put on a façade of indignation, "Whatever complaints he may have, is this how to greet a general that has captured the greatest city in the world? Is this how Adhania rewards success? With insults and beratement for its commands and the brave soldiers that died for them?"

This passionate cry drew even deeper scowls on the foreheads of the soldiers as they felt their efforts were being so thoroughly trampled on.

The experienced old man certainly felt the anger of the people around him, as he had an imaginary feeling of his surroundings getting hotter and quickly spoke up to shield Ptolemy, "No, no, esteemed commander, we do not mean any disrespect! For getting us back our city we owe you a debt that can never be repaid. In gratitude for getting our city back, please accept this bow from this small man."

He then performed an immaculate bow reserved only for nobles and royals.

'Hmm, so this is Ptolomy's ass wiper," Alexander identified the man who likely took care of and managed the idiot's messes.

The old man was not however content to just take Alexander's infraction laying down as he asked, "But commander, what do you say about the soldiers' claims that you told them to ****, kill and plunder while chanting 'By King Ptolomy's orders?'"

His voice was sharp and pointed.

But Alexander only chuckled in his heart, 'Hehe, they are right!"

On the outside, he explained, "I entered the city with only fifteen hundred horsemen who rapidly dispersed themselves to chase the fleeing enemy, Of course, they are gonna shout. 'By King Ptolomy's orders' as they struck them down. Didn't King Ptolomy want these enemies killed? Didn't King Ptolomy order the destruction of all enemy forces? What were the soldiers supposed to chant, 'By Commander Alexander's orders'? That would make me a usurper!"

Then he addressed the atrocities, "And if any soldier told you that I ordered them to commit such any atrocities they are lying. Simply using my name to commit vile acts of filth to fulfill their own animalistic desires and escape justice. Bring anyone who commits such crimes to me and he will be judged according to military law."

Alexander's eloquence stunned the crowd as the old man sighed spookily in his heart.

'He's a tough cookie,' The aged man commented.

Chapter 115 Snake Tongue

The old man was no greenhorn to politics or warfare and knew the things the soldiers were doing now were natural and to be expected.

But what he really wanted to do was to hold Alexander accountable for all the atrocities and then have Ptolomy sacrifice him to save the royal reputation.

But with the stirring speech Alexander gave just now, that event seemed unlikely,

'Didn't they say he was a slave just five days ago? How is he such a good rhetor?' The old man and the group's de-facto leader spookily asked in his heart.

He did not need a translator as he spoke Thesian quite well and hence the real, raw speech felt even more powerful to him.

And he started to grow even more fearful of the former slave who was said to be blessed of Gaia.

Although he didn't buy those claims, he even considered the Adhanian royal family's claim of divinity as nothing but more than a convenient tool, he did begin to recognize Alexander as a man of extraordinary means.

Sensing this potential starlet, the old man named Barzan tried a new angle of attack, "Commander is most likely right about the soldiers- those peasant scums of the earth were probably trying to besmirch your shiny name. How can a noble like you be ever compared to them, hehe?"

Barzan tried to wedge a divide between Alexander and his men.

But Alexander quickly fill this vulnerable spot as he defended his men, "Do not paint all my men the same colors using the example of few rotten eggs. There will always be some black sheep in any organization. But most of my men are exemplary soldiers."

This passionate speech moved many men as all their lives they were either seen as faceless drones who worked the fields or greedy bastards who would sell their souls to the devil for money.

Few had dared to so openly credit and praise them, especially in front of royal authority.

Running out of cards to play, Barzan decided to play his last card, "The commander maybe be right about his soldiers, especially given that he could take a city of a million with just fifteen hundred men." He seemed to praise.

Then he turned his words to attack, "But commander it is still inexcusable for you to hit a member of the royal family. King Ptolomy was just over-passionate and overly concerned about the lives of his people and their well-being. So, how could you hit a man in whom divine blood flowed?"

'Divine blood? This idiot? Heh, if I were one of the gods and I have a descendant like that, I would have smitten him at birth.' Alexander cursed in his heart.

Openly he only smiled, "Senior asks why I hit him. Well. you have given the answer yourself, didn't you? Because he had become over-passionate and over-concerned and was not thinking straight. I was afraid that one of my soldiers might not take his outburst too kindly and out of blind loyalty to me, might do something untoward towards the king ..or you." Alexander's sweet melodious voice instantly changed to a hard, cold tone as he uttered the last two words.

'This guy, this boy, has no fear of kings or gods. He must be dealt with as soon as possible.' Barzan made up his mind to oppose Alexander the moment the opportunity presented itself.

Alexander too felt like cutting down this competent man to make Ptolomy more dependent on him and since he held the absolute advantage now, lording over the lives of the fifteen men and one woman, he decided to do it now.

But first, given his eyes caught something interesting, he decided to play a bit.

"Old man, you have been acting all high and mighty all this time. So, I believe it's time I got my chance to question you." Alexander held absolutely no respect for the man as he uttered these words, drawing a slight, almost imperceptible frown from the old man.

"You all seem to be very smart men." He started by addressing the crowd. "So tell me why follow a guy like Ptolomy? I believe none of you can be stupid enough to not know who is the real power, the shadow king behind Ptolomy is."

Alexander emphasized, "I believe none of you can be blind to the fact that Ptolomy is just a puppet for the nobles to erode the royal authority and get their own way. And to do that the nobles and one particular Pasha even tricked Ptolomy to get foreign powers to intervene in their civil war and even proposed to tear his beloved country to shreds."

"And I believe none of you can be oblivious to the fact is grossly unqualified to lead you against his much more competent brother."

Alexander strategically paused to see how the expressions of the various men and one woman changed. Some were shamed, some afraid, some ambivalent, and some steadfast and dogged in their belief, with Barzan being their most staunch supporter.

Alexander then continued to paint a grimmer picture, "Tell me, when Amenheraft returns to this city in a month, can you reliably expect Ptolomy, who has never even led a phalanx formation and has no army to speak of, to fend him off."

"And even if he can miraculously accomplish that, will Amenheraft just give up, let him be captured, and then kindly hand over the throne to the one he views as a usurper."

Alexander vigorously shook his head, "No! Even if Prolomy can somehow win this time, it will not be the end, but only the beginning. The beginning of a brutal civil war."

"Ask yourself, do you think your liege will be able to win the civil war? Can he win the war so decisively that the royalist nobles will rejoin him? Can he do it without becoming a puppet for Pasha Farzah and the other nobles? And last, of all, can he go all this without letting other foreign powers like Cantagena and Tibias or even Exolas from taking advantage and ripping his country apart?"

Alexander raised his octaves each time he pronounce the phrase, 'Can he,' which to many of the Adhanians felt like him hammering a nail of doubt and confusion deeper and deeper into their hearts each time, as by the end many felt their throats parched and their hearts filled with dread.

And Alexander finished his speech by saying, "Do not answer me and lie. Answer your heart and at least have the decency to be truthful to yourself."

This was a clever psychological trick by Alexander.

By not letting anyone speak, he made sure those intractable hardliners who could never be reasoned with or made to switch over cannot make passionate pleas and dilute much of the dread and confusion Alexander had worked hard to build up.

Instead of being drawn into a crowd mentality, Alexander let each of the fifteen use their head and let each come to their unique conclusion.

And although Barzan opened his mouth to say something along the lines of, "King Ptolomy is the only real heir," Alexander simply raised his hand and cut him off by saying, "Senior, whatever you think about your liege, you are free to do so. But keep it to yourself."

Then Alexander gave a little smirk looking at Ptolomy pretending to be knocked and not doing a good job at it.

His eyes were incessantly twitching and his lips quivering as if he was having a hard time keeping his mouth shut.

"Get up! I know you heard everything." Alexander ordered and the thin, lanky man obediently did so.

He looked at Alexander with a complicated expression, unsure of how to feel about the man in front of him.

Was he to be angry for Alexander hitting him and for the atrocities he told his soldiers to commit?

Or was he to be happy that Alexander got his capital back for him and for telling him the truth?

He had never thought of the situation like that.

He only thought the nobles were trying to help him and that it was Amenheraft that was always harming him and his country

But now, with this new information, he was equivocating.

Alexander on the other hand knew exactly what to do.

And he had an unequivocal feeling towards one man who he had decided to kill here and now.

So he addressed Ptolomy starting with a perfect bow, "Your Highness, please accept my apologies for letting my temper get the better of me. These things happen in the heat of battle, hehe." Alexander himself excused him of any wrongdoings as he brushed the incident as a minor foible.

Ptolomy too had learned his lessons and just kept quiet.

Alexander was pleased by this obedient display and soothed, "Your Highness, I'm sure you have heard everything I said. And the fact that your most trusted retinue did not stop or contradict me proves its veracity."

Then Alexander changed his tone to an understanding one, "Don't worry, Your Majesty. I understand none of this is your fault. You were tricked! It's all your retinue's fault. It's all their fault!" Alexander directly pointed his index finger to the fifteen people while feeding poisonous, honeyed words into Ptolomy's ears.

"What! Lies, your Majesty, lies. This Barzan has always spoken with the utmost integrity to you," The old man immediately jumped up after hearing Alexander's scandalous rhetoric, his face red with anger as he looked at Ptolomy with impassioned eyes to believe him.

But only got a look of utter mistrust in return.

Chapter 116 A Thorn Removed

Ptolomy was chosen as the head of the rebels just for being born in the right womb and not because he was the best choice.

Hence he was not the sharpest tool in the shed, not by a long shot.

So, it was easy for Alexander to twist Ptolomy's mind, especially when his narrative fits the latter.

"Brother, you can't be seriously thinking that uncle Barzan was tricking you right?" From atop a horse chirped feminine voice, trying to defend the old man.

It was Hellma and having recovered from her fever, she had rode into the city on horseback.

"Women should stay out of men's business," But Ptolomy just flashed his palm to shut the girl down.

Alexander was also not about to let anyone sway Ptolomy's mind.

So he taunted Barzan, "Old man, you claim to be always truthful to Highness Ptolomy. Then why didn't you warn your master that he was being manipulated? Tell us, we are interested to know."

Alexander asked with a smug look on his face.

'Because the idiot wouldn't have listened anyway. He had already fired or killed any detractors that tried to counsel him. The only thing I could do was stay with him and try to minimize the damage as much as possible.' Barzan cursed in his heart, knowing that he would never be able to say this out loud.

So he lied, "The nobles manipulating my liege is a complete lie. They serve their liege with utmost loyalty..."

Alexander here quickly cut him off, "Utmost loyalty? Heh, then why did they not send their armies to defend their king? Why did His Highness need to call us, the Cantagenans? The very fact that I am here is solid proof that your 'outmost loyalty' quote is complete horse crap."

Barzan realized too late that he had a slight mistake by lying and Alexander had him by the throat by now.

And Alexander knew this as he attacked, "Hehe, Barzan, for someone who claims to be so loyal to Highness Ptolomy, you sure are apologetic towards the nobles. Why is that?"

"That..." Barzan attempted to speak but got cut off again.

Alexander swipe his hand across and scolded, "Shut up! Don't insult our intelligence. Everyone clearly knows why you are defending them. It's clear as day to even a three-year-old child. You took bribes!"

"What! You...you!" The old man became so angry that he was having a hard time forming coherent words.

"Is it true? Barzan, did you take bribes?" Ptolomy asked in a wounded voice, finding it hard to believe the man who cared for him from his birth would choose to betray him.

While Alexander laughed darkly in his heart, 'Haha, ohh, you so sweet naïve child!'

"Your highness...." Barzan's defense was again cut short.

But this time not by Alexander but by Hellma!

"Come on, brother! This is uncle Barzan we are talking about. Are you going to trust a man you just met over him?"

This reminded managed to restore some of Ptolomy's confidence in Barzan while he looked at Alexander in askance.

'Smart girl,' Alexander commented.

Then he said, "Okay let's say you didn't take any bribes. This is unlikely, but let's just say it is."

Alexander made a point to drive home the fact that Barzan likely had his loyalty compromised.

After that, he continued, "Then you have to concede that you somehow did not notice how the nobles were just using His Highness Ptolomy. Somehow you managed to miss how the nobles tricked him into allowing foreign powers into the lands, Somehow you managed to miss how the nobles made King Ptolomy sign away his country's land to its rivals. Something an illiterate who was a slave just five days ago can see."

Alexander then quickly made a point not to blame Ptolomy, "Of course, His Highness is to not to be blamed for any of this. He is still young and no one could have performed the way he did in times of such crisis. To be able to bear such great responsibility takes great courage. And any peccadillos he might have is only due to his retinues not being competent enough."

At last, Alexander finished his attack, "So, you have two choices Barzan- One- you say you took bribes to help the nobles, Cantagena and Tibias carve up Adhania. That will be treason and you will be made an example of."

"Or second - you can claim incompetence and that you truly had no idea about anything. In that case, you are guilty of negligence of duty, and that punishment lies with the king."

"So choose." Alexander then folded his arms as he anticipated a response.

But no such response came.

Only an uncomfortable silence.

"Well, what's your response Barzan? Are those things Alexander said true?" Ptolomy the impatient could not hold his temper any longer.

But Barzan only gave a rueful smile and said, "I will leave Your Highness to determine my guilt."

To be suspected of such grave crimes at such an age, when he had done so much and sacrificed so many things for his boy, broke the poor man's heart.

He did not feel like defending himself, partially because there was nothing to defend against, everything said against him was wishy-washy and made up, and also because he felt whatever he said would not ultimately matter.

He knew the boy from the day he was born and understood he had already proclaimed him guilty.

But just because Barzan didn't want to defend himself, didn't mean others didn't want to defend him.

Particularly it was Hellma, along with the urging of other retainers who raised their voices to Ptolomy, reminding him it was all just baseless conjecture and he shouldn't be hasty.

And credit to Ptolomy where credit is due, he did seem inclined to follow their suggestion.

For a brief moment.

Because Alexander instantly launched a deadly counterattack, "Your Highness, let me paint for you two pictures."

"In one picture, I stay behind with the army, train the populace and help you successfully defend against Amenheratf's assault, thus securing you the greatest city in the world."

"In the second picture, I leave with loot from the Temple of Ramuh and march up to Agnirat. It's only a hundred and fifty kilometers from here and even in bad conditions, we can make it in at most two weeks, far earlier than Amenheratf can ever hope to catch up."

"We then dump the billions of ropals we took from the temple in front of the city and ask for ships and safe passage to Cantagena in exchange for giving city lord Inayah the ropals, which we are confident she will agree to."

This was a naked, unmasked threat by Alexander saying he could leave Ptolomy to hang out in the open to dry.

Then Alexander gave a light smile to Ptolomy and said, "I would very much like the first picture to come true. But I cannot do the things I said I would do if I am constantly judged and interrupted at every step."

"Did you know Barzan tried to frame and beseech my name by saying I had commanded the soldiers to ****, murder, and plunder! What a liar!"

Then not giving anyone the chance to intervene Alexander presented his sheathed sword to Ptolomy, "It is time to choose your fate, Your Majesty."

"Choose him and you will become a puppet of the nobles and be slowly replaced by Pasha Farzah as the true king of Adhania."

"Choose me, someone, who has no roots in Adhania, someone who has no political support, someone who can only rely on you and you will gain a powerful ally who will not betray or replace you."

Alexander then shook his sword in front of Ptolomy to tempt him to take it and kill Barzan,

"What! No brother. Don't trust Alexander. Trust Uncle Barzan," Hellma literally cried tears as she pleaded with her brother to have mercy.

"Shut up!" Ptolomy snapped, at his sister's incessant meddling in men's affairs.

Then he fiercely grabbed the sheath and *clang*brought out the naked blade in a single motion, the clean steel reflecting his maddened, red-eyed countenance.

Ptolomy had made up his mind.

"Hehe, young master is doing the right thing," Barzan seemed to be surprisingly taking it well as he even started addressing Ptolomy by the title he used to endearingly call him before, 'young master'

Then he turned his head full of thick white hair to Hellma, "Princess, please do not blame your brother. He is only doing this because commander Alexander has demanded my head in exchange for this support to the young master."

"For this poor old bones to be able to die for young master's cause is my life's greatest honor. So please do not cry." He then lovingly placed his hand on the young girl's head, making the fourteen-year-old break into sobs and tears.

"Oh, my only wish is that I would not be able to see young master's great accomplishments in the future. I guess I will have to settle for seeing it from Aaru." With one last sigh of regret, Barzan got off his horse and then turned to Ptolomy and said, "Then, please do it, young master."

Ptolomy on the other hand was unmoved by these theatrics.

He had already made up his mind and clutching the steel sword tightly to the point his hands had gone white, he approached Barzan with bloodshot eyes and got ready to behead him.

'Hehe, naive fool,' Alexander gleefully danced in his heart at Ptolomy's stupid decision.

Chapter 117 Sacking The Inner City

Ptolomy was actually a bit reluctant to 'deport' this trusted or more accurately until very recently trusted retainer.

But Alexander's words, coupled with threats had managed to convince him otherwise.

As Ptolomy gazed imperiously down at the old man, his ice-cold voice rang out, "Nobles fight among themselves all the time. And we from the royal family turn half a blind eye to it as long as it is not too serious. But you colluded with foreign powers to undermine and destroy our great country. This is unacceptable."

Ptolomy had decided to indict Barzan with the first accusation and this caused the old man to only let out a light smirk.

Ptolomy didn't seem to notice this as his monologue continued, "Normally you would be killed by quartering (using four horses to dismember the four limbs). But given your immense contribution to rearing and raising us, we have decided to show leniency. We will give you a quick death. Now, lower your head so we can behead you!"

"Hehe," Barzan obediently followed with a chuckle, though not before sending a little quip towards Alexander, "Well, I will be going ahead. Today was me, tomorrow maybe you."

And then Ptolomy swung the large sword in a mighty arc and with a sharp-pitched scream by Hellma accompanying the dull thud, the head was separated from the body, staining the red marble strawberry red.

Alexander watched this execution with a placid face, his mind thinking back to what Barzan had said as he whispered to himself, 'I am well aware I might be creating the next Joffrey. But you, old man seem to be under the mistaken impression that I want to serve Ptolomy. Heh, if I didn't lack the political capital now, all sixteen of you would have been cut to ribbons. And mark my words when I say that this is only a temporary fix. Ptolomy must die. The question is not when but how soon.'

Alexander was slowly revealing his monstrous ambition to the world, and he was never gonna back down.

Death or apogee, he would reach one or the other.

"*Clap*, *clap*, *clap*, you have done the right thing, Your Majesty. Your throne is now secure." Alexander said while giving an enthusiastic but fake applause.

Then he said "Now, there is just one last command for you to give,"

Alexander afterward handed Ptolomy back the royal seal and asked, "We are very low on food. So, please give the orders for the soldiers to collect food from the houses in the inner city. I'm sure the nobles have huge stockpiles of them."

This insane order Ptolomy instantly shout out with utter incredulity, "What? There's no way I will allow that! Have you gone mad?"

This reaction was because even the slow Ptolomy clearly understood what it would mean for him if he were to take food from the nobles by force.

His entire rebellion might very well fail the very next day if he were to antagonize so many nobles at the same time.

And this was not even considering that collecting food was actually a euphemism for, '****', loot, and murder.'

If so many nobles were humiliated like this, he would be finished.

'Yes, that's what I want. For you to be utterly dependent on me and me alone!' Alexander whispered the plan in his heart.

But he presented a reasonable explanation to Ptolomy, "The reason you lost the rebellion the first time was because of those nobles. Those traitors catapulted the second they smelled a weakness from you. They are nothing but traitors and deserters and deserve no mercy from you. Showing them any resiliency would only display cowardice and weak resolve."

"That..." Ptolemy's lips quivered in anger as he recalled just how quickly those that used to kneel before suddenly rose up to backstab him.

Alexander then asked with a taunt, "Do you believe that those nobles would ever be grateful to you for saving them, No! They would only think it's natural for them nobles to be above the law, to be above justice, to be above even the royal family."

Alexander's speech was starting to make more and more sense to Ptolomy as he felt his anger grow.

Alexander continued, "They will think that they can defy the crown and go scot-free anyway. And they will continue to defy you regardless, ignorant of your generosity. The only way to show one's generosity is by first displaying his cruelty."

Alexander's last sentence moved Ptolomy very much and he started seriously considering punishing the nobles to make an example out of them.

But here, Hellma, who had finally gotten herself together after experiencing that traumatic sight, screamed, "No, brother! What about the nobles who support us?"

This question bought Ptolomy back to square one as he asked the same question to Alexander.

And Alexander was ready with the reply, "Please remember that any staunch rebel nobles mostly like have been either executed or imprisoned in the dungeons awaiting trial." Alexander made an educated guess.

"The only nobles who used to follow you that would be released would be turncoats. Do we want turncoats? Didn't they swear allegiance to you and then break it? They are oath breakers and deserve no mercy."

This made Ptolomy's blood boil again.

Alexander then soothed the frayed nerves of the distraught young king, "Do not worry Your Majesty. All your true kin and supporters must be in the dungeons captured by Amenheraft. The only ones out and free are traitors and opposers. They are your enemies anyway. So why bother with the consequences?"

This made sense to Ptolomy as he weakly nodded in agreement.

And at last, Alexander told him the reality, "If we want the million people in the city to not start rioting, we need the food. You burnt all three of the granaries after all remember?"

This reveal of secret information made Ptolomy go wide-eyed as he never wanted others to know of this shameful act of his and looked at Alexander with dread and panic.

'What, how does he know? How much does he know? What to do?' Such thoughts raced across his mind as Alexander so openly revealing this secret caused a large amount of disturbance among the soldiers.

Many, especially from the back whose faces were hidden hurled derogatory remarks like 'scum', 'wastrel', and 'low-life' toward him.

"Brother, is this true?" Even Hellma asked in a shaky, voice of disbelief.

"That was just a strategic move to slow down Amenheraft. It was me or them," Ptolomy came up with a decent kind of excuse after some trying amongst all the taunts and jeers.

And instead of trying to discredit him, Alexander praised him, "Yes, it was a very good move indeed. As expected of His Majesty."

And this got some color back into Ptolomy's face.

Alexander noticed this and finished by saying, "Because we have a shortage of food and the surrounding has nothing left to forage, we must obtain from somewhere or riots will start sparking up."

"And we will need to stock up on grain both in case of emergencies too, like if Amenheraft decided to besiege the city and try to starve us out. We will also need enough grain leftover to plant so we can feed our population the next year."

"And the only people who have so much grain with them are the nobles in the ring city. These nobles are hoarders who care not one iota for the populace."

Alexander tried to play Ptolomy and the nobles off of each other.

He finally added, "And if things turn bad during the battle with Amenheraft, which it very well might, then the nobles could stage a rebellion to try and save their skin. We will then be facing a two-pronged attack, both from outside the city and inside the city and that would be a disaster. We would be finished." Alexander stressed.

And the last line that managed to tip Ptolomy to side with Alexander was, "And I have not even started on the securities account. How many nobles do you think spy for the fleeing king?"

The fear of spies telling everything about him to Amenheraft terrified Ptolomy and so quickly he raised his arms and ordered, "Soldiers, I hereby order you to gather all the food in the noble's residences as soon as possible. In the name of the King, Divine Son of Ramuh- Ptolomy, I also order you not to harm any of the residents of the house, especially the women and children." He proclaimed.

"Noooo, stop brother. That snake has poisoned your mind," Along with Ptolomy's other retainers, the one that made the loudest imploration was Hellma.

'Hmm, I got rid of Barzan, now it seems I will have to get rid of her,' Alexander placed another name in his imaginary kill list.

Although Ptolomy had given the order with quite some pomp, shouting regally and holding his seal high into the air, strangely, not a single soldier moved from his position.

Because Ptolomy was not their commander and they had not been hired to fight for him.

Instead, the men waited for Alexander's explicit instructions which soon came with a hearty laugh, "Haha, you have heard His Majesty. Go and collect the food. You have three days!"

This large time limit instantly drew an astonished "What" from Ptolomy who understood that Alexander had basically given the men three days time to sack the inner city.

But as Ptolomy looked at Alexander's smug, confident smile beaming back at him, unconcerned and unafraid, Ptolomy began to get a vague feeling that maybe jumping ship with this man was even more dangerous than the ship with the nobles.

But what could be done now?

The dye had already been cast and Ptolomy could only let out a heavy sigh as he braced for what was to come in the future,

Chapter 118 Shedding Weight

Alexander's generous time limit caused a booming cheer to erupt from the soldiers as they rapidly dispersed like ants on a hot pan, eager to wreak unimaginable havoc on the ancient beautiful city and its inhabitants.

As the file of soldiers in front of the temple rapidly thinned out, there was a small contingent requested to stay behind by Alexander.

And if one were to look closely the soldiers there were from Alexander's original group, plus Melodias's.

Alexander shouted, "Men, I am sure you want to know why I stopped you from having fun, instead forcing you to guard the inner gate and the temple gifts."

"Ahem," Alexander cleared the phlegm in his throat and resumed, "That is because this a different kind of mercenary from Nestoras's or Aristotle's. A kind of mercenary where there will be no looting or killing of innocents and certainly no ****."

This was like telling someone who loved starting the day by cracking open a cold one that he had to give up drinking and become sober immediately.

Unless that person had a spiritual rebirth or his liver was dying he was unlikely to even consider it.

"*Clatter*, *Hub-hub*" Alexander's speech instantly and predictably caused a ruckus among the group and many looked confused and even a bit angry.

Alexander keenly noticed this was from mainly the men from Melodias's group, those who had just joined and hence did not have much loyalty toward Alexander, to begin with.

He was very pleased by the fact that his own men were mostly surprised but remained patient, knowing Alexander never spoke without reason.

Only a few like Pallidus joined Melodias's men, and Alexander even heard Pallidus personally shouting, "Heh, the brat's gone mad after one success," thinking Alexander would not hear it, but he did.

Alexander didn't let the soldiers hang for long, "All of you have two options to decide from. Option one- you can join the others and take part in the collection of loot and booty, taste the fine things Adhan has to offer, and make general merriment. That is an option." Alexander repeated.

'But,' Everyone used to Alexander's way of speaking knew the dreaded three-letter word was coming,

"But, you will not be a part of my mercenary group." Alexander dropped a threat that made many go wide-eyed.

Alexander then quickly moved to reassure the men, "Don't worry. Don't worry. This is not a punishment. None of you will be kicked off the army. Only out of my mercenary group. You can still fight and plunder as while we are in Adhan"

"And when you decide to leave the army, all of you will be given the promised ten thousand (10,000) or fifteen thousand (15,000) tustas. Not a single coin will be deducted from your pay as indemnification. And for all of your hard work and loyalty for all these years you will be even given a severance pay of twenty-five thousand (25,000) tustas in addition to your previous reward."

"Uhhhooohh," This immediately caused a loud cheer and some of the more impatient and unruly men even detached themselves from the crowd and started running toward the city, not even bothering to listen to Alexander's second option.

These men had done the math in their heads, and they liked the results.

Each of them would get anywhere from thirty-five thousand (35,000) to forty thousand (40,000) tustas and since a family of four needed around a thousand five hundred tustas a month to live, this meant that these mercenaries would not need to work for two whole years!

And that was enough for them to not even hear what Alexander what to offer in his second option.

These were mainly from Melodias's group and although Melodias shouted and implored them to just stay a while longer and at least listen to the man who had won this city for them, the men's heads were only filled with one single thought, 'If we don't hurry, all the fair one's will get used. Hehe, I wonder how much different a noble's one is different from the regular whores'.'

These beasts could hardly keep it in their pants.

Alexander watched this desertion with a mixture of pleasure and insight.

Pleased that he had identified these disobedient bad eggs and will never have to deal with them and felt insightful because he had learned just how hard it was to control men.

Melodias was very well respected by his men as he had sacrificed so much for them, but even his words fell on deaf ears when such soft and sweet booty lay in front of them.

'*Sigh*', it is so hard to stop men from committing atrocities." Alexander inwardly let out a heavy breath.

He then remembered reading a report in his previous life that even after the United States of America had spent tens of billions of dollars on morality and ethics classes to teach its soldiers how to treat the residents of US-occupied territories, there were still many cases of rogue soldiers raping and killing innocent civilians.

And that was in an era of mass surveillance and high degrees of awareness among the people and so these cases were able to be caught.

So how was Alexander going to stop his soldiers from doing such things in an era so backward that they hadn't still mastered making steel?

Alexander could even see some of his own men, men he had gotten well along with before, men he had thought were loyal, dithering on what to do next.

'Should we stay with the commander and his new ways or take the money and go? We can easily find another job with any other mercenaries,' Alexander could almost hear these thoughts forming inside the minds of his men as many started contemplating switching mercenary groups.

And given that most of the mercenaries were in dire need of new recruits right now, these experienced veterans would be taken in with open arms.

So, seeing this, Alexander felt that the original conditions of option two that he had thought up in his mind might be a little too harsh and decided to modify them.

"Now, option two." Alexander slowly said.

"Option two is you stay here and guard the loot and gates. It's not glorious and it's not fun. But in exchange, you will all be given a fixed salary of two thousand tustas regardless of employment or not. But that's not your biggest perk."

Alexander then shook his head animatedly, "No, your perk is the fact that you will get to be commanded by me and share in my success. So if you have confidence in me. If you feel like I can lead you to victory, If you feel like that I lead you to greater wealth than thirty-five- forty thousand tustas. And if you think you have the willpower and discipline to control yourselves, then and only then stay."

"Haha, of course, we will stay with the commander."

"Leader for life."

"We are yours to command."

Thinking Alexander had finished, many mercenaries cheered and started boisterously making big claims.

But Alexander was not finished as he then issued a penalty for breaking the conditions of option two, "And remember, if you stay and still commit such crimes. Then not only you will be discharged with no pay, but you may also then be handed over to the nearest city lord or even the king to be judged and put to death and sold to slavery!"

This threat of death or slavery scared many as many soldiers started having second thoughts again.

Alexander sighed heavily in his heart when he saw some of them, many great fighters, leave to start plundering the city.

But, he did not regret it.

He wanted a clean corp of soldiers absolutely, blindly loyal to him which he planned to use as a kind of seed to grow his new army.

And to make sure this new army grows strong and healthy it was vital that he cut off the bad, rotten parts from the very start, from its inception, so it does not spoil the whole structure and cause it to rot from the inside.

Interestingly, Alexander also noticed Pallidus leave for his group and make towards the city, which made Alexander remember the shout the former gave.

He knew that this scum was never gonna stop scheming against him and Alexander swore in his heart, 'Heh, you think you can leave this group, Pallidus? Haha, how can you be allowed to get off so easily after everything you put me through?' while his eyes flashed a chilly blue light few noticed.

'Who's he planning to have me kill now?' Camius was one of the few who did. and lampooned in his heart.

"Commander, every other mercenary and army does it. So, why are you not letting us?" One of the mercenaries who quite looked up to Alexander said with a tone of just indignation, feeling as if his hero had just betrayed him.

Alexander gave a kind smile at the young boy about the same age as him, "Umm, very good question."

"It's because what I want are soldiers that follow orders, kill enemies, and take over places with as little destruction as possible so that that place can be used to generate wealth."

"What I do not want are soldiers like the ones we faced today. I do not want soldiers who break discipline at the first sight of gold and make them vulnerable to ambushes. I do not want soldiers that burn and raze cities, making it totally useless to both sides."

"In essence, what I want is a professional army with strict discipline. And those who stay behind will be the pillars of that army."

Chapter 119 Somber Reflections

Alexander's speech moved some but confused most.

They knew the word professional- which meant someone expert and army which meant, well an army.

But what did a professional army mean?

Although in their defense, their confusion was justified as the concept of a professional army did not really exist at the time with only Exolas being the exception.

Even Amenheraft's so-called elites were originally just farmers that regularly received just two weeks of training per year during the winter when the peasants had nothing better to do.

Of course, the war over the last two years had transformed many into seasoned veterans.

Seeing the quagmire of confusion his soldiers were in, Alexander expounded, "Our employers hire us to either to protect their land or capture new territory. And the biggest complaint both of them have is mercenaries are destructive, mercenaries spoil the land that they conquer."

Alexander then clenched his fist and pronounced, "I want us to be different. I want us to be elite soldiers that fight and kill, but do not steal, loot or ****. This means the cities we capture will be intact for our employers and so be more valuable."

Alexander then gave a light smile, "Of course, such services will come with extra costs. Our regular rates will be what the Cantagenans offered and there may be other perks along the line."

Alexander added mysteriously.

Alexander then finished in an understanding way, "Don't worry, none of you will have to make the decision right now. You have three days. Think it over."

"But remember, though the payment will be higher, the training and discipline will also be harder. Dismissed." Alexander warned and then dismissed them, ordering one hundred to guard the inner gates, two hundred to follow him, and the rest to go back and escort the rest of the camp back to the city.

After all these orders, Alexander sighed in his heart, 'My original condition had no additional pay. Just the chance of being with me. If I had done, probably less than twenty would have stayed.'

Alexander felt that his thoughts might have been a little naive when he figured that because he had just won them the city, they would be more susceptible to coercion.

But he was wrong!

Mercenaries were inherently unruly and Alexander understood that when he campaigns in the future, tragedies will surely occur under his name.

The social and political structure was such that it would be impossible for him, a single man to go against this tide of inevitability, at least in the near future and all he could do was try and minimize the damage.

With the soldiers set to sack the city, Alexander then suddenly remembered about a person.

And asked some of his soldiers, "There's a Sycarian by the name of Laykash who was injured and is probably near the gates. Go get him into the palace and then inform me immediately. Go, do it quickly."

Then Alexander asked everyone else that was present to join him in the palace and soon this small group made their way through the streets in silence, though for very different reasons.

Ptolomy was a bit sad about Barzan and seeing his city be molested while his entourage was going through a crisis of loyalty.

Alexander's group was silent for completely different reasons.

They were tired from staying up all night and then fighting in a melee and then marching here.

And now they were immersed in a kind of dreamlike state as they still couldn't believe that they had managed to capture his magnificent city as they soaked themselves within the grand, imposing, architecture that adorned both sides of the city.

The roads were cobbled with stones and each side was decorated with beautiful homes and expensive spires and minarets - made of the finest timber and stone, giving the whole place a feeling of majesty and mobility.

The only caveat was that some of these beautiful structures seemed to be smoking and their ears would be at times blasted by the screams of men dying and women being humiliated, sometimes literally in front of them as they made their way to the palace through the wide road.

Many houses they crossed seemed to be entertaining guests, though likely not willingly as it was clear as day what the soldiers were doing to the men, women, and children.

Alexander turned a complete blind eye to the burning and plundering taking in front of him, because even if he could stop the things happening right here, what about the fact that the same thing was repeating all over the inner ring?

Was he supposed to ride throughout the city and stop everyone at the same time?

And even if he was capable of this superhuman feat, even many of Alexander's own men, men he considered very loyal to him had refused to listen to him when given the 'controversial' command.

So how could he expect others, who respected him but ultimately only followed him because of necessity, to heed his command?

And that was beside the point that this destruction had strategic value for Alexander.

The killing was restricted to mostly the inner ring, because all the best loot and women were here and because his force of ten thousand was grossly inadequate to rampage throughout the entire twenty square kilometer city.

This meant it was the nobles, rich merchants, and their servants, totaling around thirty to forty thousand who were ultimately bearing the brunt of the assault.

And given how hedonistic these privileged groups were by Ptolomy's description, which Alexander believed, the latter felt not a shred of compassion for them.

These people had let the common mass suffer brutal hunger and destitution for three whole years while they lived in the lap of luxury, refusing to make an inch of concession to their lifestyle, and although many individuals might have been innocent, as a whole the group deserved to be punished.

'The lesser the number of nobles, the better the world will become,' Alexander said to himself, trying to justify the atrocities he was in part allowing to happen as he saw a woman literally be thrown out of her house and into the road, get her clothes ripped off and then be humiliated right in front of him, while the soldier doing this seemed so out of it that he had even noticed the large contingent of people approaching him, only shouting, "For my brother. You bitches sacrificed my brother."

The group soon made their way to the palace 'enjoying such delightful scenery,' some producing sadness in their hearts seeing these events, some feeling anger, some like Ptolomy having ambivalent feelings like angry at the plundering taking place but also happy seeing the nobles punished and some feeling nothing - like Menicus who had been long inured to such scenes, having seen, participated and even replicated such horrors in his long mercenary career.

And the palace was no rosy side of the picture as well. Even well before entering even the outer gates, the same, horrific sounds could be heard emanating from the palace and Alexander knew the five hundred men were enjoying the best time of their life right now.

"Protect the princesses. These men have gone half mad with pleasure." Alexander warned as he moved the three of them- Hellma, Azura, and Azira into the center of the group and made thirty bodyguards be the vanguard.

As they slowly approaches the palace, they spotted only a few palace guards' corpses sprawled across the walkways and gardens, as most had run away at the first sight of five hundred men charging on horses straight at them.

Now, instead of soldiers patrolling the grounds of the magnificent castle, bloodshot, lust-addled brutes roamed the premises, hungry for their next victims.

Some of these in their craze even attempted to attack Alexander's group but after getting booted squarely on the chest by Alexander's bodyguards and knocked back to their senses, they managed to recognize Alexander and after bowing and thanking him, promptly turned around to carry on their mischief elsewhere.

The group finally made their way to the palace entrance and the scene here was even more horrific.

The number of corpses was much more numerous here, likely because the inner guards were chosen more carefully and had more loyalty, so they didn't break and run, instead choosing to stand their ground and defend the palace to the last men, only to be slaughtered by the Sycarians.

But the tragedy was not over with the deaths of these men as many women too lay with them, either dead or on the verge of it, many with their lower parts destroyed, many having their breasts chewed out, and many suffering lacerations of various degrees.

Some were being raped even when Alexander appeared, being dragged out of the palace by their hair, their screams drowned out by the cackling of beasts in human skin as the men threw the women into the pristine stone walkway and violated them, many times multiple men preying on a single woman.

In this way, Alexander was greeted into the palace, with the walkways dyed red and decorated with the bodies of its defenders, with the mournful tragic music of women being humiliated in the background.

'If this is just the front gates, what's happening inside.' Alexander felt an uncharacteristic chill in his heart seeing the scale of the atrocities.

'*Sigh*, If god exists, will I be judged for these crimes? Or will it all be written off as an inevitable product of the time?' Alexander could not help but ask himself, knowing if he were to try and make his ambitions come true, such events will be repeated many times over.

Chapter 120 Into The Dungeon

Alexander's vanguard kicked the men off the pathway to clear which caused them to scamper off, but not before dragging the women they were on top of by the hair to continue their act elsewhere.

"Alexander, this is insane! At least, spare the palace!" Ptolomy pleaded with the commander of the army, fearing for the lives of his own family.

"I have asked my men not to touch anyone who is related to you," Alexander assured though he doubted the men were in any position to listen or remember anything given what he was seeing unfolding in front of him.

Because as he had gotten closer, he could now see better what was happening inside the palace, on the very outer grand hall.

The thick oak doors were opened ajar and on the thick, luscious carpets were many women and maids, all being violated by hundreds of men.

Many screamed and pleaded, many grunted and whimpered, while some seemed to have lost their voices as they obediently took the punishment, fearing more resistance would only mean more pain.

A very few had no men on them, likely because they had either died, lost consciousness, or become too loose.

But whenever these women stirred and tried to run away, some lucky ones even managing to crawl up to the gates, they would be immediately pounced on by the hungry beasts all around looking for fresh meat, whereupon the next round would begin, most of the time at that very same place.

"Menes, find Grahtos and tell him to gain control of his men. We will be staying here." Alexander said in a flat tone, and received a loud "Yes" in return,

"Let's go to the dungeon and see the prisoners," Alexander told Ptolomy to lead the way as he figured a lot of Ptolomy's supporters should be there.

And soon, the large number of people made their through the outer hall, and into the inner courtyard, and then turned left, traveling along the winding pathway to reach a small, unassuming iron gate.

There seemed to be no one around, the guards likely having run away and the Sycarians also seemed to have not found the place yet as this place still held its tranquility, forming a jarring contrast to the rest of the screaming environment.

The vanguard found the iron gate not locked, its lock neither picked nor broken but likely opened with a key and from the narrow tunnel, echoes of muffled shouts, cries and groans could be heard.

This sound made Ptolomy have a very bad feeling, while Alexander took an educated guess of what was happening and ordered, "Men, lead the way. And remember to keep shouting 'Those who surrender peacefully will be shown mercy.' in Azhak."

"Commander, you...you..," Princess Hellma stammered as blood ran out of her face because she vaguely understood why Alexander had given the order.

Alexander helped finish the sentence for her, "Many palace guards must have hidden themselves in the dungeon to escape when the palace was taken. And now I'm afraid they have taken a liking to the inhabitants of the cells."

Alexander then defended the Sycarians, " It is likely not my men because otherwise, we would have met some of them on the way and because the lock would have been broken, not opened with a key. My men don't have so much patience."

"That, that...I..gotta...commander please hurry!" Captain Slow Ptolomy finally understood the implications behind Alexander's orders and with a pale face and shaky voice urged him to hurry.

Alexander thus sent his vanguard forward, who proceeded down the spiraling staircase chanting the phrase Alexander taught them, and when they reached ground level, the scenery down there was even direr.

The doors of the cell doors laid wide open and just like Alexander had predicted, the Adhanian royal guards were now 'feasting' on the people they had been assigned to guard and protect.

Countless bodies, mostly noble men judging by their attire, were thrown out of their cells and onto the cold, damp, pot-riddled prison floor while the noble ladies in their cells, were being forced to know the taste of the common rabble.

People they disdained to even look at most of the time, were now on top of these high-class ladies, most being made to serve multiple men at once.

"Kill them! Kill them all!" Ptolomy screamed in a furious voice Alexander had yet to hear, his voice hoarse and his entire body shaking with rage and unfiltered fury.

The fact that the palace guards, the people entrusted with the protection of the palace were doing this enraged him, but what really set him off was the fact that these nobles were part of his factions and vital to his effort to gain control of the country.

And with them now dead or humiliated, Ptolomy's job had gotten a hundred times harder.

Although Ptolomy had given the order, it was Alexander's say that actually meant anything to the soldiers and they soon received clear instructions from him, "Get all the prisoners out and escort them to the palace rooms above. Cover the women with clothes and treat any injuries that they may have if possible."

Alexander then told them what to do with the palace guards, "Those guards that surrender are to be locked up in the cells. Those who resist are to be killed immediately."

"What, locked up? Kill them. I want them all dead!" Ptolomy was incensed that Alexander was proposing to let go of these rapists and demanded swift and brutal executions.

"Calm down! I have a plan," Alexander only placidly replied as his men started rounding up the guards in this huge, sprawling underground structure.

"Plan? What plan? What can these ingrates help us with? Tell me! Tell me now!" Ptolomy launched himself into a harangue, anger taking over his rational mind, as balls of spit started to pepper Alexander's face.

Ptolomy had become livid as he witnessed the scenes in the dungeon, and vowed in his heart to feed every one of the guards to the dogs.

But now that Alexander seemed to be showing softness to these criminals, his fuse had blown off and he had lost his cool.

Alexander on the other hand kept his cool and slowly turned to his translation while pointing his index toward Ptolomy, "Tell him, if he doesn't want to get hit, to shut the fuck up."

The translator did not need to translate as Ptolomy had already understood what Alexander was eluding to by the gesture while the pain of that strike surfaced back up, reminding his jaw of the pain.

So, Ptolomy instead decided to look for his immediate family members- his wife and three daughters and his queen mother.

And soon his eyes caught the sight of a dimly lit cell in the furthest corner of the dungeon, whose door seemed like hadn't been opened.

He sped towards that corner and shortly after let an eruption of joyous cry, "Oh thank Ramuh, you are all still alive! Oh, thank Ramuh!"

Clearly, his closest kin was still alive and it appeared unharmed.

"Ptolomy? Ptolomy, is that you?"

"Father!"

"Daddy!"

Cries of joy also erupted from in the cell.

And his jubilation soon infected the others in his entourage who also quickly went to congratulate their king.

"Mother!" Alexander could hear Hellma's happy cry and this jovial atmosphere amidst the otherwise tragedy formed a stark contrast.

Alexander was surprised that these women seemed to have escaped the fate that fell on all women around and was about to go ask them when he got his answer as Ptolomy asked them, "Are you guys alright? None of the soldiers harmed you?"

And got this reply, "We are divine beings on earth. Would those mongrels ever dare to touch us?"

The reply was cold and its haughtiness seemed to have been generated from the very bones of its speaker.

The fact that even these rabid palace guards hadn't dared to touch, let alone humiliate the royal family was a testament to the kind of control the royal family exerted on its citizens.

'*Sigh*', taking over this city will be hard,' Alexander felt a slight headache when he thought of his plans to one day take over the city.

How was he to wipe away the brainwashing of the royal family from the populace?

Slaughter them to the last one?

But branch families will always exist.

And so, for the time being, Alexander could see no good answer.

These thoughts swam inside Alexander's mind as he quietly watched as his men round up the guards, who had been literally caught with their pants down and under the threat of points steep tips could only surrender.

They had thrown their swordbelt along with their pants to perform these acts and now found themselves defenseless, though some desperadoes tried to grapple and tackle their captors, only to be swiftly cut down with practiced efficiency,

Alexander wondered if these were stupid for trying to fight armed mercenaries bare-handed or smart because they knew what Alexander planned to do once he caught them.

"Ptolomy, how are you here? And what's all the ruckus about?" Alexander could hear a concerned voice ask.

But Ptolomy only reassured them without going into detail, "Don't worry, everything is all right. I will explain everything in time, But now, let's get y'll out of here."

He then opened the cell door which was surprisingly not locked and urged, "You guys are all cold! Come out quickly and let's get you warmed up. Everything is alright now!"

And so each of the ladies slowly came out, drawing Alexander's attention towards them.