

Herald 411

Chapter 411 Faruq's Battle Plan

Alexander rapidly dressed himself the moment he got the news, donning his armor and kit, before kissing his wife and the three girls goodbye, and then riding out with his bodyguards to the camp as soon as possible.

The cold spring air brushed past him as he completed the short journey without incident, and was quickly ushered inside.

"They have started marching my lord," Menes was there to greet Alexander around the gates, and he then heard his boss say, "Have the soldiers take their meals. We will move out in an hour."

Alexander had constructed defensive structures prior to the battle a kilometer ahead of the camp and he intended to face the enemy there.

"Yes, my lord," Menes was already doing this so, and so soon the pre-battle meals were consumed, and the grand total of 42, 143 people moved out of their camp, leaving only a small rear guard consisting of mostly slaves and servants to guard the camp's possessions.

And as the cool, relaxing, spring sun shone brightly over the sky, promising the day to be a glorious one, the two armies soon spotted one another, each quickly covering a part of the horizon like the ominous specter of death.

Just the sheer mass of the vast number of men made so much noise as they moved that it seemed to set the air abuzz and scare off the wild animals and birds.

For it appeared there was no force that could withstand either of them.

"It is the heavens favoring us that the Lord managed to know about this attack. If we were unprepared..." Melodias silently whispered as he need not finish that sentence to elicit pictures of horrible carnage in his mind.

And all those who heard his trepidations such as the nearby military commanders shared the same thoughts.

"The gods have favored us. Let us pray they will continue to favor us in this battle too," One of his subordinates clasped his hands and prayed.

Though it had to be said that saying it was Alexander's great luck to discover the enemy beforehand might actually be not correct.

Because just as Alexander was being praised for detecting the enemy and taking steps to avoid a lengthy siege they believed they could not win, the opposing sides as also blessing the heavens for making Alexander too dumb to make use of his walls.

And in this round, it was Alexander who got played, for if he had just used his sixty thousand (60,000) men to actively defend the city, the attackers would have had to return home with nothing to show for their efforts, for most the present levies would be soon needed in the harvesting fields.

But Alexander did not know the attackers were in such a time crunch.

On the contrary, he believed that with Pasha Djose's presumably vast food stocks, the siege around the city will be able to be maintained for several months if not years.

Hence he chose to meet the attackers head-on, and inadvertently making his life a lot more difficult and dangerous in the process than it had to be

Perhaps if he had never attacked Jabel, he would have been in an actually better position.

Because it was not like Alexander would not have noticed an army marching toward him till they attacked.

He would have certainly gotten the news when the army would have landed on Hatamum, allowing him some time to prepare.

And depending on his walls and crossbows holding on for a month would have been a cinch.

But real life was rarely like that, where both sides knew all the information.

No, in the real world, you made decisions based on the incomplete information you have.

And in doing so, sometimes the actions that makes perfect sense to you, might make it seem completely foolish to the opposing side who knows the full details.

And just one example was this battle that was about to start imminently.

"Have the men rest and drink water. And send scouts to determine the enemy's formation. We attack in an hour," Faruq stopped his army about 2 km from Alexander's position and sent out the command.

The men had only marched for one and a half hours, and were nowhere tired, but Faruq still wanted them to be in the best possible condition.

Hence the rest.

While the Jahal mercenaries were sent out to circle and determine Alexander's troop deployment.

"So those are camel?" Menicus 's eyes widened a bit with curiosity as for the first time in his life the aged mercenary laid eyes upon the beast he had heard so much about.

Nimble, graceful, and most of tall, Menicus from atop his horse could not help but admire the magnificent beast and even asked himself what it would feel like to ride that steed instead of a simple horse.

While the group of Jahal mercenaries expertly circles Menicus's contingent of soldiers, trying to figure out the weak points, their fierce gazes clashing with the steely spirit of the Zanzan troops.

Menicus was not the only one surprised by this, for camels were a new thing to almost everyone here.

And some like Menicus expressed marvel, some surprise, and most produced the primal feeling called fear.

"Men, these are just diseased yellow horses. Do not be afraid! Haha," And to remedy this, from the side, one of Menicu's subordinates described the beast in as base and crude manner as possible.

The yellow was from the beast's skin color and alluded to how humans would look when sick, while the word diseased came from the hump which looked like a tumor, and how camels looked malnourished due to them being skinner than a horse.

None of this was of course actually true, as Faruq's camels were as healthy as you could get them.

But the rousing cry managed to serve its purpose, as the surrounding men broke into a burst of laughter, diluting the tension.

"Commander, should we chase them off?" Seeing the horse riders circle around them like vultures was not a pleasant feeling and an eager captain (600 men leader) asked for permission to attack.

"No, these are just scouts. Let them do their job," But Menicus denied it.

Because there was no point in doing such.

Not only were the opposing forces too few and scattered, but they were also cavalry, meaning attacking them on foot would be very hard if they chose to run.

Hence the Jahal mercenaries were allowed to fully check out Alexander's troop dispersion.

After which they quickly delivered their reconnaissance report to their war council, consisting primarily of Faruq, Ural, and Nibraz.

"The enemy has placed both of their wings ahead of the center, with each side consisting of archers numbering five thousand (5,000), for a total of 10,000." The head scouts read out the intel loudly, and even gave his reasoning for this, saying, "We are sure they are archers because we have seen large pavises being set up. Obviously, they plan to use this to shoot from cover."

The mercenary then further continued, "The two flanks have been heavily fortified. There is a wide, semicircular ditch of about two meters around them, filled with sharp wooden stakes driven into the ground to stop them from being overrun by our infantry or through a cavalry charge."

"In fact, we have seen many more wooden logs being driven into the ground even as we scouted, the peasants using their wooden clubs to push the wood down into the earth and then using a sickle to sharpen the top." The scout added a bit of extra info.

It seemed the peasants wanted as many sharp stakes as possible to separate themselves from the enemy.

And the scout lastly reported, "The center of the enemy army is placed half a kilometer behind the flanks. There are 30,000 men as we predicted and they are arranged in two rows with no fortifications around them. That is all."

The scout gave a military salute as he finished, standing in attention awaiting further inquiries.

"There is no cavalry?" Faruq chose this as his first question.

He wanted to confirm this because an army without cavalry was a really sluggish army, unable to respond to quick changes on the battlefield.

"We did not spot any my lord,... except the few scouts," Came the answer.

They really did not spot any cavalry among the deployed army formation.

"Hahaha, Lord Faruq, this is to be expected. How do you expect a poor brat with a single city to have a cavalry? Victory is ours, haha," From the sides, one of the nobles tried to give an explanation for this, while sounding extremely pleased.

And Faruq found that to be reasonable too.

For he remembered the meager resources available to Alexander and also the Thesian culture of preferring infantry over cavalry

Thus it was very much possible that Alexander did not have any cavalry.

While in reality, Alexander did have about 1,000 horses, but they were kept in the reserve to plug up any hole in the defense.

And since they were placed at the back, the Jahal scouts failed to spot them.

Hence, another example of working with imperfect knowledge.

And using this imperfect knowledge, Faruq decided to lay out his formation.

"Okay, my lords, here is what I propose," He began, proposing,

"The Jahal mercenaries will take the flanks, attacking the archers, aided by our own missile units."

"While the chariots and cavalry charge the center, with the infantry following behind and breaking through there."

Chapter 412 Visualizing The Scale

"How is that?" Faruq asked after finishing his war strategy.

And as the most senior of the group, Lord Nibraz felt it was his right to comment first.

And he commented positively, saying, "It is a good plan. Pin down the flanks using the camel archers, and then destroy the center using the chariots. Haha, good and simple, I like it. I like it very much."

He found the plan especially attractive because it gave him the chance to use his chariots in the initial charge.

And in that way not only would he get to destroy his son's murderer, but he would also get to demonstrate to these youngsters the virtues of the chariot.

Hence the enthusiasm.

The other nobles too did not have a problem with this plan, and hence soon the final commanders for the battle were chosen.

Naturally, Faruq was chosen to lead the center, consisting of 30,000 infantry.

He then chose two men from his mercenary unit to be the commander of the two flanks, with the right going to Azab, and the left given to Azab's son-in-law, Jabad.

Lord Ural was put in charge of his 2,000 cavalry placed in front of the infantry.

Lord Nibraz was in charge of the chariots placed alongside the cavalry.

Lord Liakit was in charge of the archers that were placed on the right of the cavalry, next to the flanks of the Jahal mercenaries.

And lastly, Lord Nyantim was in charge of the 4,000 slingers, all of whom were his personal guards, placed on the left flank of the army, along with the camel archers.

In this way, Faruq managed to pretty well to make the patchwork of nobles with conflicting interests and inflated egos come together and form a solid military unit, a unit capable of wielding lethal strength.

And it was to be unleashed against an opponent who had a far simpler command structure.

Alexander's left flank belonged to Menicus with his legion of 5,000 crossbowmen.

The center belonged to Menes with 30,000 men and was the main attacking force.

There was the right flank belonging to Melodias with the same composition as Menicus.

And then there was Grahtos who commanded the reserve of 1,000 cavalry and a further 1,000 infantry.

And lastly there was the lord himself, Alexander- whose task was to oversee everything and make sure all the parts of the army moved in coordination with one another.

Each of the commanders were instructed to concentrate on commanding their respective soldiers on their respective fronts of the army without needing to worry about what was going on around the rest of the army, for that was Alexander's job.

He would keep an eye on the entire battlefield, and make sure no abrupt, harmful changes occurred around the army.

For example, if Alexander noticed a part of the army weakening, or there was a flanking attack that either Menicus or Melodias was too weak to deal with, Alexander would tell Menes to transfer one or two legions from him to help them.

And in a vice versa case, if Menes was getting pushed back too much, Alexander would tell the Mencius or Melodais to concentrate fire to the sides to harass and thin the enemy infantry ranks.

There were a myriad of other types of situations where Alexander would be required to make decisions based on the overall situation and not consider just one sector, and all this which would fall squarely onto him.

And such types of decisions could not be made by a commander who was in the thick of the battle.

Because he would be far too busy commanding the troops and encouraging them to fight and would have no way time to command the army, which would require him to receive reports from the various fronts, think and analyze them with a clear head, and then give the proper instructions to the officers.

Not to mention he would also not have knowledge of the entire battlefield, meaning he would not be able to spot the weak spots appearing in his army in time and reinforce them, or notice the weakening of an enemy's lines to take advantage of.

For the only way he would be able to do both was if he had an overhead drone giving him a bird's eye view of the huge battlefield.

And since technology had yet to be invented, there arose the need for someone like Alexander.

Someone who could stay back and at least get a 2D eagle's eye view over the vast fields.

And it was a vast battlefield no doubt about it.

A size that had to be seen to be believed.

For example, just on Alexander's side, the thirty thousand (30,000) men in the center were divided into 6 legions and stood in 2 massive rows, with each row having three legions for a total of 15,000 men.

And in just one of these legions, there were 10 battalions (there were 480 soldiers in each, but Alexander had boosted it to 500 because not all the servants were needed as they were fighting at the doorsteps of their homes, meaning a less logistical burden).

And in each such battalion, there were 6 companies, (each company had a bit over 80 men to make up the total 500), in each of which stood 10 rows of around 8 men.

This 8-man structure was the basic squad, and each man was placed on the battle formation such that he would fight and die with his squad, by the side of his brothers in arms.

And from this very basic unit, the sheer size of the battleground would be calculated.

Each soldier in the company stood a meter apart from either side of his comrade, meaning a total separation of 2 meters between the two, which was meant to give each legionary the space he needed to move freely, to thrust his sword and attack, and to step around and dodge the incoming spears.

This was in much contrast to the phalanx where the men would be smooshed together to maximize the spear's thrust.

And the differences did not end there, as contrary to the phalanx, these legionaries also stood 2 meters front to back in their rows, giving just a single company (80, now 85 men) a length of around 14 meters and a width of 18 meters, for a total area of 252 square meters.

Alexander had arranged 3 such companies side by, with a distance of 3 meters between each of them, and the other 3 companies in the back rows, with a distance of 8 meters front to back, giving just a single battalion (500 men formation) which was arranged in two rows and three columns, a length of 48 meters, and a width of 44 meters for a total area of 2,112 square meters per battalion.

And this amount of space was for a very basic unit of just 500 men, arranged in a 25 men wide, and 20 men deep formation.

And given that 10 such battalions arranged in a row made up one legion, just these 5,000 men stood half a kilometer long and half a kilometer deep, covering a quarter of a square kilometer, or 50 football fields.

Yes, fifty, not five.

To further contextualize this, a soldier would need to walk five minutes to cover this distance.

A horse on a full gallop would take half a minute to go from one side to side.

A crossbowman, who had an average range of about 250 meters, would only be able to make his arrow reach the halfway mark of a legion in formation.

And lastly, a soldier looking to the very opposite end of the legion would find it very difficult to discern the man standing at the very edges.

And this was just one legion.

For Alexander had his infantry standing in three legions side by side and in two rows.

Meaning the center of the army, the one under Menes was one and a half kilometers long (1.5km) long, created by the 7,500 men, and one kilometer (1km) wide created by 4 rows of them, covering an area of 1.5 sq km.

And this was just the center.

When the two other legions of crossbowmen in the wings were also considered, who were deployed very similarly, the frontline easily stretched to 2 km and represented an area of 2 sq km.

This was quite comparable to the areas of many ancient cities, which was also why a moving army was often described as a moving town in nice descriptions and as a locust swarm that devoured everything in its path in many others.

And like Alexander, Faruq's formation too covered a similar area, even a bit bigger actually due to his larger number, and the presence of the great number of cavalry.

Hence, when these great armies would meet, it would not be wrong to describe the clash as the smashing of cities, with each giving the impression they were indestructible.

After all, how do you defeat a city where all its inhabitants are armed to the teeth?

But one would be defeated.

Armies far greater than this had been defeated, broken, and obliterated.

They were regularly defeated and today would be no different.

In fact, Alexander himself had defeated a force about twice as large as this just three months ago, and as he gazed at the battlefield, he was confident he would be able to do the same today.

He had to.

Chapter 413 Alexander's Battle Plan

Alexander could not help but release a sigh of amazement as his eyes swept across the two opposing armies.

The fact that such huge numbers of people could be gathered and then made to move in concert with one another like a proper army and not just a mob of armed men showed the ingenuity of the ancients.

For this required great administrative skills to gather and command the people, and in addition, the ability to solve all the logistical implications regarding both transporting the army and during mid-battle was a challenge only a highly intelligent species could accomplish..

This went to show that these people might be technologically backward, but no less smart.

'They should not be underestimated,' Alexander ultimately reminded himself as he turned to face his commanders and decide the battle plans.

"The enemy will likely use their archers, and camel to attack our flanks. And then charge our centre with chariots or cavalry." Alexander said to commanders, perfectly predicting Faruq's plan.

Though it had to be said this was less credit to Alexander's prescience and more so because this type of maneuver was classic.

And just because Alexander could predict it, did not mean Faruq's play was any less lethal.

Classics were called classics for a reason.

Because they were very versatile.

"Our job will be to absorb that initial cavalry blow, and then strike back. Commanders, don't let your legions break at the first strike!" Alexander swung his fist in encouragement and his gaze particularly fell on the temporary legion commanders.

These commanders had been chosen from the original mercenaries and each was tasked with commanding 5,000 soldiers in the center.

To explain it fully, Alexander had 6 legions in the center, arranged in two rows of three.

And these legions were named, with the first row being named 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, respectively from left to right.

And similarly, the next row being named 4th, 5th, and 6th respectively from left to right.

These individual legions were all commanded by officers chosen by Alexander, Menes, Melodias, and Menicus, with the two leftmost center legions being directed by Menicus's men, right next to their former leader, the center two legions being directed by Heliptos and one of Menes's officers, and the rightmost two legions commanded by Melodias's former mercenaries.

With Menes being the overall commander of the 30,000 men and relegated to ensuring the overall smooth coordination of all 6 legions.

And the reason for Alexander's gaze falling on some of the legion commanders was not because he doubted any of their ability, but because of their troop quality, as Alexander would go on further to explain in this battle plan.

"Our battle plan is to defend our wings from flanking attacks, while our center works on destroying the enemy's center. The Adhanian do not have a strong infantry culture, and we will make use of that." Alexander claimed.

And then continued directing how the battlefield should unfold in order to gain victory.

"Once the battle starts, and the center has absorbed the initial blow, the skirmish between the infantry will begin. There they have the same number of troops as us, 30,000. But we are much better trained. And we will use our better-trained troops to exhaust the peasant levies until the frontline weakens." Alexander proposed.

"Once that is done, once the ferocity of their attacks weakens signaling their exhaustion, we will make our move. We will move the fifth and sixth legion from the center and right column to reinforce the left column, telling them to attack the exposed flanks of the phalanxes attacking there."

"Meaning 4 of our legions will attack their 2 equivalent legions, both from the front and the right side (the phalanx's right side, because the opposing armies have opposite sides), ultimately crushing them."

"This is also why I have placed the center a bit behind our flanks, to give the 2 legions enough space to move and attack the enemy phalanx's flanks."

"And once that part of the enemy routs, the entire center will fold and with it the army," Alexander confidently repeated the battle plan that had been already discussed.

This tactic was not unknown to the others.

But it was rare and seldom used as it was quite dangerous.

It worked by hollowing out other sections of the front to produce an overwhelming local advantage along a narrow front and using the huge numerical advantage to basically drill a hole in the enemy formation which would cause a collapse along that part of the army, and that would then cascade into the complete breakage of all formation, routing the entire army.

Kind of like how a crack initiates at just one small point along the glass but soon rapidly spreads throughout the entire structure, destroying the entire thing.

Or how a modern blitzkrieg worked by using tanks as spearheads to penetrate a small section of the defense line and then exploiting that weakness to expand the bridgehead.

With the most glaring flaw of the tactic being the need to have some extremely well-disciplined troops who would be able to still hold the line along the sections where the hollowing out had occurred, and not simply break before the other soldiers could overwhelm the enemy.

And this was something Alexander was well aware of, and the reason behind his poignant gaze to some of the legion commanders.

Because 20,000 of Alexander's men were peasants, of similar quality to Faruq.

And hence he reminded his commanders, addressing particularly Heliptos in charge of the 2nd legion, and an officer from Melodias's group named Justianus in charge of the 3rd legion.

"As you all know, this tactic will be quite straining on the 2nd and 3rd legions. They must face twice their numbers and still hold their nerves until the other four legions have initiated a breakthrough."

"Heliptos, Justianus, you must not break under pressure. You must not crack under their attack. Instead, you must inspire confidence, perseverance and endurance in your men. The entire battle plan rests squarely upon you two." Alexander reminded the two men of their heavy responsibility, even calling them out by name.

Heliptos remained quiet hearing this speech, only nodding heavily.

He did not need to be reminded of his significance.

And though he was a greedy man who loved life very much, he knew that escape from this battle was impossible.

His lord and even his own colleagues would reject him if they chickened out, and the enemy would likely not let him go after all the things his lord did, whose fault also carried over to him.

Hence fighting was the only way forward.

While Justianus was far more boisterous, stepping up towards Alexander and thumping his chest before igniting his warrior spirit and saying, "Worry not, my lord, You have given us, the 2nd and 3rd legions the best soldiers in the world. While the other 4 legions are just peasant ramble. Weak and untrained."

"Our pride as mercenaries would not let us sleep at night if we could not fight at least twice as well as them. We could even fight three times our number, hahaha."

This guy seemed very confident in his fighting prowess, radiating confidence and dominance.

While his loud mouth managed to wound the other legion commanders, as he basically called them weak, but also produced pride because these men were all from the various mercenary groups, whom Justianus praised.

"Mmmn, I hope everyone can have commander Justianus's confidence, and lead their troops as such," Alexander gave a light nod to the loud claim, showing moderate approval of the thought.

He did not know if Justianus really meant what he said, or was just trying to show off to him as a way to gain favor.

That would have to wait after the battle was concluded.

Alexander finished responding to this new commander, then turned to Heliptos and addressed him in a grave voice,

"Heliptos, as Justianus said, the 2nd and 3rd legions are the most trained unit we have. The 3rd legion is made of the freed Cantagenan slaves and servants, along with the Adhanian who fought against Amenheraft."

"While the 2nd legion is the most elite at our disposable, and possibly one of the greatest fighting forces in the world. Because it consists of purely the original mercenaries. All 5,000 of them. All of our men, our brothers, our comrades, our friends are at your disposal." Alexander said each of the words with a deepness, and heaviness rarely heard of.

Because the 2nd legion really did mean that much to him.

Both personally and politically.

Personally because a lot of the men there were his friends and acquaintances.

And politically because these trained men were the seeds he would use to build his army.

Heliptos too understood the heavy burden placed on his shoulders.

The 2nd legion had huge numbers of friends and comrades of all the military council members.

He could not play with their lives.

Hence he put his fist across his chest, and promised, "My lords, I'm aware of the heavy task I face. And I assure you, the 2nd legion will not retreat. Not while I'm alive. Not while a single man in the legion is alive."

Rarely had Heliptos such a solemn face.

And so Alexander spoke first to show his approval, saying, "Mmmn, we are counting on you. For the task of the 2nd legion ahead is truly hard. It will be the most vulnerable of all the legions, right in the center, alone and with no way to call for help from the flank. So it must hold."

He repeated, highlighting the importance.

Chapter 414 Avenging Vespay

Alexander's plan would leave the 2nd all alone for a while as the 5th legion would be moved away, putting the former in a highly dangerous situation.

For, at least, the 3rd legion would be able to request help from the crossbowmen on its right flank.

But the 2nd legion would have none of that.

And that was also why Alexander put his best of the best, the creme de the creme in there, and even put a council member in there to inspire the soldiers.

And he finished the battle plan with the words, "This battle will not be easy. But then again, battles are always won through hardship. Strive hard my commanders."

"Yes my lord!" Came the chorus which also signaled the end of the meeting and each of the commanders soon assumed their positions.

While Alexander rode to the front of the troops under the clear, sunny, morning sun, ready to give his rousing final battle speech.

But as he stood in front of the huge crowd, just about to energize the soldiers, suddenly he heard a loud, deep horn ring out from the enemy camp and soon spotted three horses galloping towards the line, the leading rider carrying a large pike with something attached to it.

And soon that circular shape revealed itself to be a head.

"Vespay!" Alexander's heart shook as he immediately recognized the familiar face.

He was a part of his original mercenary group, and no matter how bloodied and brushed, or dusty and pale his face might become, Alexander would never mistake that countenance.

He was a good soldier.

'Bastards killed Vespay!' Next to Alexander, Hemicus in a rare show of anger gritted his teeth and flashed his eyes in anger, making his horse neigh in solidarity with his master.

"Let us first hear what they have to say. Then, since they have killed our messenger, we will also kill all three of them."

While Alexander urged Hemicus to be patient for the chance.

The reason for the three rides coming to meet them was a battle tradition of Kuleef and much of Zanzan.

In this custom, both sides would send three men forward to talk to the enemy and give him one last chance to surrender and avoid a fight, while also urging the opposing soldiers to give up and go home because they had no chance, as a kind of demoralizing technique.

The three riders stopped about 50 meters away from Alexander after which the one holding the pike with the severed head stepped ahead and introduced himself as the leader, "I'm Lord Nafi, where is your leader?"

The man was in his early twenties, with the effect of puberty still lingering in his voice and face, as evidenced by his higher-pitched tone and any lack of facial hair.

"I am Alexander," Alexander respond to this inquiry quickly, stepping his horse out of the screen of man that his bodyguards had formed to face the young man.

Though Alexander was actually the young man here, which this Lord Nafi was quite surprised by.

Alexander still had some of his baby fat on his face, and his facial countenance was simply not manly, looking more like a young, pampered, nobleman's son.

"Hahaha, I heard you were young, Alexander. But young is not the right word is it?" Lord Nafi broke into a mocking sneer at the first instance of meeting his opponent, and insulting him by saying, "Child! You should be called a child!"

This naturally drew many angry glares from the men behind Alexander, but Lord Nafi did not care, as he then turned to address the common soldiery, disparaging them with a burst of haughty laughter, "And you peasants, hahaha.... to think you buffoons would follow a child. No wonder you are peasants. Lowlifes and scum of the earth. Your lord is such a wimp that milk will come out of his nose if you press it, hahaha."

Arrogant, conceited, vain, proud, and all the other synonyms together in the English dictionary might not be enough to describe this creature name Nafi.

For he was the very personification of the worst vices a noble could have.

And he finished his denigration of the people of Zanzan by haughtily ordering them, "How dare you worms raise your hand against your betters? Against the gods! Surrender at once, and you will be spared!"

Nafi's address to the crowd was certainly not great.

But surprisingly it was not also the worst given in history.

There were records of far worse things said to cower and demoralize the enemy army.

"Lord Nafi, I'm the Pasha of Zanzan. What is your peerage?"

At the forefront of the mockery, Alexander appeared unaffected and unmoved, his face flat and nonchalant for in his mind this man was already a dead man as he made the question.

And this inquiry was basically saying that since Alexander's peerage was a Pasha, anyone of not similar rank would be too low to address him.

And Nafi understood, which was why he burst another fuse and lambasted, "Bah! What Pasha! What Pasha has only one city? Mongrel, we do not recognize you. Do not think you are one of us!"

He appeared to refuse to answer, but then the proud man could not help but reveal his status to show off, saying, "I'm the heir to a Jamider (Earl)." And mysteriously adding, "You might not know me, but you certainly know my brother. Jamider (Earl) Nibbar. After all, you killed him."

"Never met him," Alexander came a cool, icy reply.

And for once he was telling the truth, because he had killed the man the moment he laid eyes upon him, without giving him even the chance to open his mouth.

Of course, Nafi did not buy it, and only mockingly sneered.

While Alexander took the opportunity to ask about the decoration on the pike.

"I believe messengers in Adhania are considered sacred and not to be harmed. So, why have you killed my man? And then mutilated him like that. Are you not afraid of the gods?" Alexander's speech was far far more icy than before, almost sounding like the chilling sickle swipes of the grim reaper.

He was truly mad.

But it seemed not to register with Nafi, who seemed far angrier that Alexander bought the gods into this than the actual accusation.

He venomously spat out, "Bullshit! When do you Thesian scums have gods? Barbarian heathens like you all deserve only death."

Then he produced a menacing grin, almost evil, and demented as he said, "We killed him because we liked it! I personally tortured him because I enjoyed it. And we would flay him alive all over again a thousand times over, hahaha!"

As he said this, Lord Nafi drove the two sides special pike into the ground, cementing the severed head into the earth, and making Vespay's wide bulging eyes stare at the gathered troops like a dead fish, with blood dripping from its head, mouth, and throat,

And as he laughed with abandon next to this, his deranged appearance swept across the frontline.

There were several reasons for him doing this.

One, which was also the biggest, was simply because he truly meant it.

Second, to spread fear among the soldiers.

After all, who would want to fight a psychopath?

And third, to rattle Alexander and make him attack him.

Because according to the customs, attacking the riders during this part of the 'battle phase' was considered blasphemous and it was said whoever did this the curse of the gods would befall upon him, his family, his people, and his land.

And hence Alexander would need to convince his soldiers, especially the Zanzan peasants to tacitly approve him killing the trio.

For people of this time period were too superstitious and if Alexander arbitrarily killed them, his army might collapse even before the fight started.

"Swnnghh," So to convince them Alexdner first took out his sword from his sheath and raised it to the sky as he then shouted, "Men of Zanzan, you have heard it all. These nobles see you as nothing but worms. And if they win today, they will take you back to your plague-ridden days. Do you want that?"

Alexander's shout was followed by an overwhelming louder, "No!"

"And you have seen with your very own eyes how these people have murdered our messenger. How they tortured him! Even a child knows not to do this."

"But these people had no regard for that. These people have no regard for the customs of Adhania. Because they are the ones godless. Tempted by the devil they have gone astray!"

In this time period, it was vital to always have god on your side in any kind of argument.

And it worked as a second jubilant chorus followed.

And then Alexander brought down his sword and pointed it at Lord Nafi as he cried, "The proof they have fallen is right in front of you, my brothers. Look in front of you! Look at the pike! Only a devil could have done that! And only a devil could then laugh about it! Just like in the confessions!"

Alexander reminded them of the temple sermons where he made sure to propagate all the nobles' nasty little deeds."

And then finished by saying,

"And so I have decided these people have lost the gods' sacred protection. Hemicus, crossbow shoot!"

Twange ... *Shoo*, *Twange* ... *Shoo*, *Twange* ... *Shoo*

Alexander seamlessly weaved in the command for the attack so flawlessly that Nafi never understood what hit him till ten crossbow bolts had pierced him and he slumped over his horse.

Dying much like his brother.

The irony.

Chapter 415 The Initial Charge

Adhania was a nation that seemed to be quite in favor of trying to resolve their conflicts with talks and negotiations rather than the sword.

This was proved by the presence of various customs and traditions that encouraged dialogue by offering strict protection to the messengers.

And these protocols were indeed strict, as just the simple act of attacking a messenger caused the curse of god to descend, much less forget about killing them, which seemed beyond the realm of possibility.

But it was a possibility that both sides made come true.

Of course, as the side who struck first, Lord Nafi and his entourage did not solely rely on Alexander's goodwill.

They had taken precautions, such as keeping almost 50 meters away from him.

And given that a javelin had a range of only 20-30 metres, and the men around Alexander were not seen carrying any bows, this distance seemed pretty safe.

But they were wrong.

For they had no idea of the crossbow and hence all ten of the shots found their mark, piercing the armored torso of the man.

And though arrows were not like bullets, meaning a single shot was not as lethal, still, ten shots usually got the job done.

And the action was done so quickly that the remaining two riders, who were Nafi's bodyguards had no idea what happened, only registering a flurry of hand movements from the opposing sides, the sharp, followed by the piercing noise of stings being let go, and then their lord simply slumping over.

Neigh, It was Lord Nafi's horse that reacted first, giving a cry of horror as it felt the warm blood of its master dye its back, and then the trained beast immediately swerved to start a full-speed gallop to its master's camp.

The beast was intelligent enough to know that its master was hurt and even knew where to get help from him.

And following the beast's departure, the other two men too woke up from their stupor, and they too quickly turned tail and ran, a shower of javelins and crossbow bolts following closely behind.

"Don't let them escape," Hemicus clenched between his teeth as he and ten others gave chase, and they even managed to kill a second rider with three accurate javelin missiles to the back, until they saw the last remaining rider enter the safety perimeter of his camp.

"Hmmp," Hemicus let out a low grunt as he stopped his horse from getting too close to the opposing cavalry, a bit peeved at having missed his target, but overall still satisfied at having gotten the main target.

And hence the small squad turned back, not letting themselves fall into a trap.

While the last remaining survivor greeted Faruq who was standing right at the front of the army, witnessing the entire interaction with wrinkled eyebrows.

Lord Nafi dying was not the ideal development he was looking for.

"My lord...Lord Nafi, they...they killed hm. Those animals! They broke the taboo!" He hysterically screeched, letting his voice carry all over the formation.

While Lord Nibraz got down from his chariot to run to his son's horse, screaming, "My son! Ohhh those bastards! My son!"

The stubborn old man now appeared unconsolable as he grasped the slumped-over body, bawling his heart out, and then saying, "I should have never done that. I should have never trusted those animals uhuhuu," as he broke into a whimpering cry.

The reason behind his saying this was because it was him that selected his remaining unmarried son to be the pike bearer, to go taunt and insult his oldest son's killer.

In fact, Nibraz himself had wanted to do it but was talked down by Faruq.

And this guilt filled with remorse as though Nafi was never as favored as Nibbar, the reason being obvious to anyone who spent a minute with the two, with Nibbar more being talented, cunning, and honey-tongued, and Nafi being brash, haughty, and impulsive, still his death hurt Lord Nibraz like he did not think he would ever feel after his favorite son died.

It appeared that though as a lord he favored Nibbar more, as a father, he loved both his sons equally.

As this drama unfolded between an old man, a horse and a dead body, Faruq tried very hard not to purse his lips in frustration.

A weak old man not in his right mind was not the image a military commander wanted to give right at the start of a battle.

"Lord Nibraz, now is not the time to break down. Now is the time to take to revenge." Faruq hence stepped in, not offering words of consolation, but words of action, as he pointed to Alexander's men and

almost snarled, "Look the enemy is right in front of us. Gather yourself. Lord Nibbar demands blood. Lord Nafi demands blood."

Faruq hardened his voice as he addressed the older man, further urging him not to lose the dignity of a noble in front of the common citizenry.

And being a military veteran, soon the retired noble pulled himself together.

'Yes, you are right. Now is not the time for crying," The old man rubbed his reddened eyes, as then his crooked, broken, sobbing voice suddenly turned steely and determined, "For now is the time for killing!"

And soon he got back in his chariot.

But that was not the end of it.

Because he then moved his chariot which was in the back on the very frontlines, barking to one of the charioteers, "You, get back!" to make space for him.

It appeared he wanted to lead the charge.

Which Faruq vehemently disagreed with this, shouting, "My lord, you are the commander. Please reconsider!"

The reason for this was obvious.

But Lord Nibraz was like a stubborn bull, shouting, "The charge was to be led to by Nafi. I will not let my son down!"

The old man was seeing red.

And seeing this red-eyed half-mad old man, Faruq wisely backed down, instead taking his horse to Ural and simply whispering to him, "Look after the old man, would you?"

Faruq said this particularly to Ural because he and Nibraz were scheduled to attack in consort, with Ural's 2,000 horses attacking the center-right column of the enemy (the 3rd and 6th legion), and Nibraz's 3,000 chariots attacking the other two columns.

With the reason for Nibraz attacking twice the enemy as Ural being due to the need for the chariot to be spread out over a much greater distance, hence making contacting with a greater number of the opposing force.

"Sure," Ural gave a short nod.

He had no problem with that as they were on the same side.

And thus, soon the 5,000 heavy cavalry were ready.

They were arranged in a 10 by 10 formation, with 10 such formations in one line, meaning there were 2 rows of 1,000 horses for Ural, and 3 rows of 1,000 chariots for Nibraz.

It was a formidable charge.

And as Alexander noticed the horses line up, he shouted one last time, "Men! Now is the time for battle. Ready yourselves!"

"Succeed and you will all be heroes. And if you die, you will all be martyrs. So what are you afraid of?"

"Nothing!" Rose a huge cry of jubilant roars, as the men readied themselves, while Alexander quickly rode to the back to conduct the battle.

And soon the battle reports started coming in.

"My lord, their chariot charge is targeting the left and middle columns, and while the cavalry charge is speeding towards our right column," A scout reported the movement which to be fair Alexander could easily see from atop his big horse.

Alexander had chosen this horse especially due to its size, letting him get a better view of the battlefield, though he would have probably noticed this even without that.

5,000 cavalry was not something you easily missed.

So Alexander's hawkishly peered into the distance, watching the cloud of dust being kicked off by all the horses, as they slowly sprinted towards them.

And it was a slow sprint, as horses trotted the kilometer or so distance, one to not tire themselves, but mainly to keep unit cohesion.

And thus all cavalry charges would start like that, covering most of the distance in a slow walk, and only breaking off into a full gallop at the last hundred or so meters making the close to one-ton man and beast accelerate rapidly to great speeds before smashing into the infantry with the maximum momentum.

And it was a great tactic, with the only exception being that it gave the enemy a bit of time to ready themselves.

And that was what the scout was for.

Not there to reassure Alexander that his eyesight was okay, but implicitly asking him, "What should we do?"

"My lord, should we use the new weapon?" Grahtos from the side eagerly suggested.

This was the ingenious thing Alexander had invented to stop the cavalry charge from simply blasting through his infantry.

"Yes," Alexander naturally nodded.

But that was not the end of the order.

He turned to the scout to officially order, "Tell the 3rd legion to employ the new weapon we invented to halt the cavalry charge just as they have practiced."

"But tell the 1st and 4th legion to move to the left, and the 2nd and 5th legion to move to the right and let the chariots simply pass them."

"The reserves will then engage the chariots in the front, while the 5th legion turns around to attack their rear and destroy them. The time of the chariots is over."

Chapter 416 Alexander's Secret Weapon

The horses in a slow trot, almost menacingly made their way closer and closer, the sound of more than 8,000 beasts (2,000 from Ural, and 6,000 from Nibraz because each chariot was pulled by at least 2 horses, and sometimes even more) stamping their hooves against the ground making the very earth shake with trepidation.

Somehow the slow methodical approach was actually worse than a full gallop.

But why did horses not gallop this short distance?

Because if they had wanted to, they could have easily run this relatively short 1 kilometer.

Because there was a problem with that.

Simply, it was because it was far easier to maintain a solid line by controlling a horse's walking speed, rather than a running speed, similar to how humans can keep a solid line while walking, but it becomes very hard to do when they start running.

Because everyone walks around the same speed and its easier to synchronize with that, rather than a running speed, which is quite different for people.

In addition to the high chance of the formation becoming scattered if they galloped, there is also the increased risk of horses tripping, stumbling, and colliding with one another in the fast-paced movement.

To visualize it easier, imagine a crowd of people walking, they would appear orderly and there would be little chance of accident.

Now, imagine them running.

There would inevitably be trips, stumbles, cuts and bruises, and large accidents.

The same thing applied to horses, and thus the tactic of galloping only the last one to two hundred meters.

And as these horses approached this critical line, a joyous sight greeted Lord Nibraz..

"Hahaha, look, look, they are running, haha, coward peasants," Lord Nibraz felt his grief temporarily subside as he seemingly saw the left and middle part of Alexander's army collapse, possibly running away from the incoming charge.

While in reality, they were not scattering in terror but just moving to the sides.

But Lord Nibraz could not be really faulted for his assumption.

Because soldiers running away from a cavalry charge was the norm.

After all, a man running on a horse with a spear intending to impale you was scary.

And thus, it was actually rare to see soldiers standing their ground and fighting.

"Hmmm, so the experienced troops are on the left, " While Ural noticed that though a part of Alexander's army had disintegrated, his part still held.

(Ural says 'left' because he is directly facing Alexander, and so Alexander's right is his left).

Seeing this he at first felt a tinge of jealousy at Lord Nibraz for getting such an easy rout of his enemy, but soon consoled himself that the old man deserved it after what he went through.

Instead, he focused on the part of the army he was supposed to attack and found that those men were still holding their ground.

This was impressive considering when such a huge collapse happened, usually, everyone would just drop everything and run.

Because all who stood and fought in such a circumstance would be encircled and enslaved, while if you ran, you still had a small chance of escaping.\

And the smart ones knew what to choose.

Seeing those men still hold their ground, and knowing that Alexander was a mercenary leader, Ural easily made the connection that those troops must be the former mercenary soldiers, the hardened troops, and decided to hit them with everything he got.

Which was quite wrong.

Not totally wrong as some of them were veterans of the two battles against Amenheraft, but still very wrong.

But this mistake was not too egregious, as Ural intended to fight them anyway.

Hence, he lined up the men at the two-hundred-meter point, made sure everyone was properly ready, and shouted to his trained men, "Men, take no prisoners! Charge!"

And Lord Nibraz similarly commanded his men to do the same, as the cavalry charge begun.

Gulp, while the men at the receiving end of this charge swallowed a dried gulp.

Because facing a cavalry charge was terrifying for any man.

And nothing could be used to better illustrate that than giving a real-life recount of something that occurred when shooting a Soviet movie named War and Peace (1967).

In that movie, a major feature was a charge of French cavalry against the Russian lines.

Since this was before modern computer-assisted special effects, the Soviets used a few Red Army battalions to play the part of French soldiers in the movie.

According to the script, the cavalry was supposed to charge at an infantry square, which would hold fast and the cavalry would break away.

However, when the fully trained soldiers saw the horsemen bear down on them, these professionally trained men all suddenly broke and ran, dissolving the square.

Yes, even in a movie set, where they all knew perfectly well that it was all fake and they just needed to stand still and nothing would happen, actual professional soldiers, some of them even ww2 veterans, still got scared and ran.

And it did not happen just once also.

But a full three times.

And this was the terror of just a fake cavalry charge.

But even that was so much that in the end, the director realized that no matter how much he tried he would be unable to get the soldier actors to stand in the charge of cavalry they knew wasn't real, was fully aware that it a movie stunt, and that these soldiers used the Ak-47 every day which made cavalry charges against infantry obsolete.

And so the script was changed to accommodate this.

For Alexander, this event perfectly went to illustrate the horror of a cavalry charge.

Because if this was the reaction to a fake cavalry, imagine what it would feel like facing a real one on the battlefield, where one had the real possibility of being cut and skewered like a kebab if he just stood still.

Diapers should come as complementary with the armor kit.

And this was the main reason why so many armies dissolved at the sight of a cavalry charge, and why Europeans loved and feared cavalry so much.

Because facing something like the French heavy cavalry or the Polish Hussars was simply very, very scary.

It was a feeling that had to be experienced to be truly appreciated.

But it would be not fair to give all the credit to the cavalry.

The infantry deserved some credit too.

Because the fact that soldiers and many times even ordinary peasants sometimes did not break at a far worse sight that even ww2 veterans were afraid of went on to provide some kernel of truth to the saying that ancient men were real men and that most modern men were women dressed as men.

A saying that Alexander used to vehemently disagree with before, but subtly changed his mind after coming to this world.

Because it took real men to withstand the gore and horror of an ancient battlefield, where one had to perform vicious acts against his fellow human beings to win, withstand the violet screams and shouts of men dying around, and feel the visceral smell all around, all of which took its toll on the human psyche.

A toll that soon all 96,000 men participating in this bloodbath would have to pay.

And right now, it was the 3rd and 6th legions time to pay, for they saw the black mass of death, neighing and screaming like the scythe swing of the grim reaper approach them, their eyes bloody and crazed, moving towards them in a storm of dust that drowned all the light around them as they bared their intent to not only kill them but destroy their bodies of the face of the earth.

Just feeling the earth tremble at their approach was bowel-inducing.

But fortunately for Alexander, for all the terror that a cavalry charge, ultimately the lines held.

And not only they held, some daredevils even ran forward at the order of their sergeants (100 men leader) who himself ran forward, shouting, "Now! Come now! The enemy is close enough!"

It seemed these people had a death wish.

At least that was what Ural felt when he saw a scant few men charge toward him, like headless chickens.

And he simply smirked.

He had seen people do all sorts of things when they were scared

Some would cry, some would run, some would freeze and others would run forward with a crazed look, maybe to try and confront the fearful object or maybe to just get it done with.

After all, to many a swift death was preferable to an eternity of living in fear.

'Heh, well let me deliver it to you,' Ural, placed in the third row said to himself as he sped forward, now only a 100 meters away.

But his confidence abruptly turned to grim horror as he saw what was happening and an instant later heard his horse give a scream of terror he had never heard of before.

For Alexander's chosen ones, specifically trained to carry the secret weapon had been deployed.

But what was this wonder weapon you ask?

Well each of them carried a long, thick rope, intertwined with metal chains and metal bells and gushed in oil and tar.

Which most importantly were all on fire, whirling above the two hundred or so men, creating a horrifying sight for the horse, as it appeared that there were flaming disks in the middle of the battlefield, the bells and metal chains clanking and juggling like the devil's laughter.

This was Alexander's strategy, to scare the horses off the battlefield.

Chapter 417 Ural's Cavalry (Part-1)

The tactic Alexander employed was copied from the Black Army of the Hungarian king Matthias, who used it against other enemy cavalries.

And the results were usually very good, as it took a very, very, very well-trained horse to not just jump and buck, throwing off its rider before breaking rank and running when faced with a terrifying whirling circle of blazing fire and the swishing sound.

And usually, 50% of the enemy cavalry would break rank and collide with one another in this tactic, proving just how lethal the technique could be.

Alexander copied this specific technique instead of the more usual and popular techniques such as using pikes or the Greek sarissa, which was a really, really long spear for one very important reason.

Because the opposing side had mounted archers.

What did he mean by that?

Well, pikes and sarissas were really good at stopping light and heavy melee cavalry.

Because these combat units generally needed to get close to attack and having sharp, pointy sticks being pointed at them made that very hard to do.

This was because horses were rational creatures who would not just impale themselves on the sharp steel and commit suicide just because you told them to.

Instead when pikes or other sharp objects would be pointed at one, it would try to swerve or turn around or stop, thus taking action arbitrarily to stop itself from dying.

In this way, pikes and long spears were very effective at stopping a cavalry charge.

Sure one could launch javelins from atop a horse to try and disperse the pike holders, but cavalry was not primarily used for that.

It was used to utilize the combined momentum of man and horse to smash infantry.

And so, if you were going to throw javelins, why do you need horses?

Infantry would do the job fine.

They might even do it better as a soldier sitting on the ground would be able to arch his entire body to put more strength to his throw, hence hitting the enemy from further away.

And besides, just how many javelins did one carry?

Two to three.

Maybe a horseman could carry five.

And once that was all used up, one would need to go all the way back to their camp to refill the stock.

While the entire time the enemy infantry too could lob similar projectiles.

In which case, archers would be a better choice.

Thus, as long as the enemy did not break during the initial charge and stood its ground as held fast onto their pikes, the cavalry would become a mere decoration on the battlefield, unable to do much.

But this only applied to melee cavalry.

Because things were very different for ranged cavalry, more commonly known as mounted archers.

These units could do both, melee and ranged attacks.

They could charge using spears and shields, destroying the army if they were cowards.

Or if they faced a particularly resistant enemy, they could switch to ranged attacks, using their bows to launch volley after volley of lethal missile fire.

And the enemy infantry would have nothing to counter that.

And not only that, the infantry would be quite vulnerable during this.

Pikes and sarissas were heavy weapons that required both hands to wield efficiently, meaning no shield or perhaps a small light shield like the buckler at best.

This type of shield would never be adequate against the arrow rain the mounted archers would launch, meaning the passive infantry would be slowly worn down.

This was the tactic used by Mongols, who would first launch arrows to demoralize the enemy before charging to see if they would break.

If they did not break during the first charge, they would follow it up with another brutal arrow shower, hoping that perhaps the enemy would change their minds during the next charge.

And if that was not enough, another wave of death would follow, followed by a third, then a fourth, and so on, until eventually, overwhelmed by the death and carnage around them, and suffering from the repeated inherent terror of a cavalry charge, the surviving troops would at last choose to flee.

That was how the Mongols destroyed their enemies.

And if something as simple as a pike could have stopped them, something that Alexander The Great had 1,500 years ago, the Mongols could not have created the biggest continuous land empire in the world.

But they did.

Because pikes were too passive.

It prevented the enemy from attacking you in melee but it did not harm them, leaving them to do their thing.

And that was why this technique was originally invented, to not just deny the cavalry their charge, but to actively harm them.

Because at the time this tactic was introduced, firearms were already a thing, so cavalry could still shoot the infantry, destroy the pike formation and then charge.

And this new move prevented that situation.

A situation that coincidentally was very similar to the one Alexander found himself in at this time, facing a group of cutthroat mounted archers dressed as mercenaries.

And hence the choice.

Alexander of course did not just copy and paste the weapon he read as an interesting trivial in a history book.

He also added modifications to it, such as adding the metal bells, which not only amplified the sound produced but also added to the orchestra, making the weapon give off a terrifying piercing sound as the metal chains clanged against one another while the metal bells jingled like announcing the arrival of the apocalypse,

"Ahhhh," Alexander's brave men shouted at the top of their lungs as they used both their hands to swing the rope above their heads whose upper half was on fire to scare off the horses, with their own shout both intimidating the enemy, but moreover, releasing all their fear and tension.

Because it was bloody scary facing 2,000 charging horses coming to kill you.

Neiiiiigh, *Neiiiiighhh*, *Neeeeeiigggh*,

And while these soldiers shouted, the opposing horses also shouted, as the sight of the huge flaming wheels of fire and the horrible whistling sound dealt enormous psychological damage to the poor beasts.

Hence many of these once-loyal companions betrayed and disobeyed their riders' instructions and recklessly tried to swerve and turn around, in the midst of a full charge, and almost all ended up them clashing with one another in a mess of grotesque melee.

The ordered charge had been completely ruined as horses and men clashed with one another, creating screams of panic and agony, which drove both men and beast to further extremes of confusion, while the officers tried very hard to gain control of their ranks.

There was shoving and pushing, which caused many men to fall over, and then get stampeded by the sharp horse hooves.

There were many horses who stumbled and fell over after colliding with the other fleeing horses before promptly getting crushed by the other retreating mad horses.

And there were many soldiers impaling themselves on their own spears, breaking their bones from the sudden impact, and experiencing a general sense of chaos, panic, and disorder perforate their ranks.

And this huge attack affected the entire cavalry charge, as the officers themselves struggled hard to control their mounts, many dying in the ensuing chaos.

"*Shoosh*, *shoosh*, there, there. Calm down, calm down. Good girl, good girl," Ural was one of the lucky ones as his horse was one of the highly trained ones and did not immediately lose its mind after seeing the sight.

And thus its master managed to get it to calm down after some time.

Ural was quite lucky that he managed to survive this encounter relatively unscathed, having successfully avoided the other fleeing horses, while also managing to stay atop his horse even when the full galloping charge suddenly came to a screeching halt.

'The gods must favor me, arghh' Ural said a prayer to himself with a grunt, as he felt a sharp pang of pain in his chest.

A spear's butt had smashed against his ribs during the initial disaster, and it was a miracle that he was not knocked over from his horse.

'Argh, my ribs might be broken,' Ural gritted his teeth in pain as the adrenaline wore off, but the strong man managed to push the thought out.

For he had bigger concerns.

Concerns which were evident to anyone who had eyes and could look around Ural.

Dead bodies of horses and men lay strewn about, huge gaps in the formation gaped with a dead fish's mouth, and everybody was in a complete panic over what to do.

"Fuck!*" Ural let out an unrestrained shout of frustration at his devastated units, anger, and grief taking hold of him.

Even by his most conservative estimate, he had lost at least 200 men and horses.

Even for a Matbar (Marquis) it was no trivial loss.

Especially when those losses were dealt to his elite horsemen, the creme of the crop.

Matar Uzek had sent these men to aid Pasha Djose in good faith, for they were in-laws, with Ural being married to the man's youngest daughter.

And so to lose so many men just like that, without having accomplished anything was very heart-rendering for Ural, and his heart shook at the thought of how he will explain this loss to his father.

But little did he know, a far greater problem was rearing his ugly head as he spoke, for Alexander had already sent his 3rd legion to intercept the disorganized cavalry, trying to catch it in its most vulnerable position and deal a decapitating blow.

Chapter 418 Ural's Cavalry (Part-2)

In the ensuing chaos following the destruction of the formation, Ural and his men were too busy trying to get a hold of their bearing and restore order to the lines to notice the mass of soldiers approaching them at breakneck speed.

"Quick! March quickly!" The commander of the 3rd legion shouted from behind, urging his men to walk as fast as they could without breaking formation, wanting to catch the cavalry less than 100 meters ahead of them in as vulnerable position as he could.

It would take legion about only one minute to make contact, but the commander wanted to hit them as soon as possible to kill as much cavalymen as possible before they could run away.

'They are charging us! An infantry unit, fucking peasants, are charging us!' Ural was among the first to notice this, and the sight of it filled him with fear and rage.

Fear of the ensuing violent bloodbath that was about to befall his men, and rage at the thought of this being done by mere infantry.

Adhanians tended to look down on foot soldiers as lowly for they were mostly composed of peasants, and viewed cavalry, which was used by nobles as the main attacking force and the important determining factor that won battles.

But Ural had little time to gnash his teeth and vent.

Instead, he decisively turned his horse around and made his way to the second row of the calvary, which was far less affected, and started to scream at the top of his voice, "To me! Gather to me! Line up! The enemy is upon us! Line up!"

He was urging his men to rally around him and trying to restore some sort of solid battle line to withstand the initial infantry charge and minimize the casualties.

This single maneuver, where he chose to basically sacrifice half of his father's elite cavalry to save the other half was a testament to his competency as a military leader, and to his credit, the move began to work.

Many of the dazed and confused riders, who previously had no idea where their immediate superior was amongst the sea of men, beasts, and carcasses heard the familiar voice of their leader and began to gravitate towards him.

But before the act could truly show its efficacy, Alexander's men were already upon them.

It was too little too late.

"Javelins!" One of the cavalymen was heard shouting as the first volley of the projectile was launched from a distance of about 20 meters, the deadly short spears traveling in an arc before impaling themselves on their target.

There were 250 men on the first row of the legion, and as the first three rows let loose their missiles, the 750 javelins shot wrought even more destruction and devastation on the already scattered formation.

Some of the javelins naturally missed, but much more found their target, piercing deep into the naked beasts' bodies and their riders, with a few javelins even sharing their target, littering them with multiple deep wounds.

This shower of spear rain and the imminent clash with 5,000 men was the last straw for the disorganized men in the first row, and thus the initial forward formation of 1,000 horsemen simply routed, causing even more casualties they pushed, shoved, and stampeded their own to save their hide, their backs following a second volley of javelins.

"Dammit, useless wastes," Ural ground his teeth as he saw this.

He had hoped the first row would have been able to offer some kind of token resistance to the enemy, buying him enough time to reorganize his rear lines and put up an effective defense, or at least perform an orderly retreat.

But it seemed that was a fool's hope.

This was also partly because Ural had not given any such order to the first row, neither did he nominate an officer in charge to organize such a procedure.

Thus, the occurrence of the disintegration of the front line.

"Buuuuppp" So seeing no other way, Ural decisively took a bronze horn attached to his saddle and blew on it, the loud blare piercing the ears of all those around him.

And everyone in Ural's unit understood what it signal meant.

It meant it was time to retreat.

Ural understood there was no hope for his cavalry to survive the infantry charge, and so, without doing something stupid like going after individual battlefield glory or trying to save face as a noble, he unhesitantly issued the call of retreat.

And hearing that, the still relatively tight light cavalry formation simply dissolved, scattering like sand into the wind and routing themselves, and denying the 3rd legion of their kills.

Most of the riders turned to their right as they escaped, which was currently empty grounds as Lord Nibraz had already finished his charge, and the wide open fields actually allowed the horsemen to spread themselves out and run as full gallop without colliding with one another, enabling most of the horsemen to run away safely.

After all, the infantry could never catch them on foot and so the retreat itself was quite successful, with only a few unlucky ones dying from stray javelin shots, and which was far less than what would have if they had chosen to stand and fight.

Seeing the cavalry run without a second thought, and knowing there was nothing they could, the experienced legion commander decided not to bother, instead urging to his soldiers, "Halt! Halt! Turn back! Turn back! The enemy infantry will soon come. Enemy infantry will come! Turn back! Turn back!"

In addition to the worry of the impending enemy infantry charge, the legion commander and his officers were also afraid that some of the more hot-blooded troops would give chase to the fleeing horses to try and get a kill, and others would soon follow, causing them to become out of formation and thus vulnerable to an enemy counterattack.

This was not an uncommon technique where cavalries would do a fake retreat to lure the enemy in and then suddenly turn around to flip the tables on the attackers.

Knowing this they thus repeatedly said this command, trying to get the root soldiers to maintain unit cohesion.

And it worked, as the troops stopped their chase, though it was mostly because the enemy cavalry had buggered off even before the infantry would get a good hit on them.

And so the 3rd legion concentrated instead on killing the leftover riders who lay on the ground injured, and moaning in pain in front of them.

Such types of men would usually be taken as prisoners to be exchanged for ransom.

But they neither had the time to do this as the enemy infantry could start marching any moment now nor did Alexander want to take prisoners.

So the unusual event of simply killing them happened, both for the men and beasts which were too injured to be retried, while a few unharmed horses that had not yet run away were retrieved as trophies, their total number amounting to less than 10.

It appeared in terms of horse acquisition, this tactic was a dismal failure.

But in terms of killing horses and destroying a cavalry charge, it was an unquestionable success, because the number of horses Ural lost was truly horrific.

It was nowhere near his conservative number of 200, but in fact double that, at more than 400 horses and riders lost.

Meaning just as the battle started, Ural had lost 20% of his men, which was not just a devastating loss, but a catastrophic one.

For even well-trained armies tended to usually rout at 15% to 20%.

While poorly trained ones did that at 5% to 10%.

Thus it was unknown if Ural's cavalry would be able to make any kind of contribution in today's battle.

'Hmmp, so what if I lost? Lord Nibraz had already destroyed the enemy center. Victory is ours,' As Ural rode like the wind back to his camp to try and reorganize his men, in a kind of sour grape moment he tried to console himself with such a saying.

He saw his loss as nothing more than one of Alexander's little stunts, as one last 'pathetic' win by the soon-to-be-dead Thesian, and took comfort in that.

Though the fact that the army would win so easily, with the only notable casualties being his, and suffering huge personal losses at that, did sting Ural pretty bad.

And so turned his head back to look that how that battle was going for Lord Nibraz.

It was unknown if he wanted to see the old man triumph, or struggle a bit and acquire some losses so that at the end of it he did not appear too bad.

But whatever he was expecting, he was not expecting to see the sight in front of him.

Because his eyes registered no presence of Lord Nibraz's cavalry, but only found that Alexander's lines had fully restored themselves, as if by magic.

'What! Am I seeing things? Is it the dust? Or am I too tired?' Ural thought he was witnessing witchcraft as he found Alexander's 'destroyed' lines restored, and he had a sudden sinking feeling in his gut.

"What sorcery is this?" He asked him in a shaky voice, his instinct as a military commander telling him something was wrong.

So he slowed down his horse to get a better view and squinted his eyes through all the dust that had been kicked up by the 8,000 beasts galloping towards their target to try and figure out what was going on.

Chapter 419 Lord Nibraz's Chariots (Part-1)

Through the cloud of dust, Ural could only make out the silhouettes of some of the soldiers standing in a perfectly straight line

This was strange because if Lord had managed to break through, then there should have been a gaping hole along the front line, or at least a spattering of movement as the charioteers hunted down the fleeing soldiers.

And even if the charge was stopped, the chariots should still be there, fighting the troops.

But there was no sign of them.

'Where are they?' To Ural it appeared that Alexander had swallowed them up and banished them from existence.

"Is he really a sorcerer?" The young man's heart shook as he further recalled how his cavalry was destroyed by something he would describe as a magic fiery wheel.

The sight and particularly the sound of it especially affected the man.

Ural was a particularly superstitious and religious man, and the two evidences presented before him made it hard to ignore the possibility.

'No, don't jump to conclusions. Let me ask Faruq,' But the man was at least calm enough to not immediately go down that rabbit hole and instead decided to find the overall commander and get him to fill him in about all the things going around the army.

Besides, he needed to report his status anyway.

And as Ural was making his way to find the commander situated at the back with the supply wagons, he was completely oblivious to the fact that Lord Nibraz had already departed from this world.

In fact, he was one of the first to go amongst the forces he led.

And to understand it all, one had to travel back to the time of the initial charge.

"Hahaha, look, look the cowards as all running away," Lord Nibraz shouted to the bodyguards riding with him on his chariot as he saw the soldiers move away from their charge.

To him, it seemed that they had already won.

"Yes. This will put a stop to everyone saying the time of the chariots is over, master...*shoo*," And the loyal bodyguard buttered his lord with a nod while shooting high arching javelins at the enemy.

The chariot that Lord Nibraz rode on was specifically made for him, ornate and lavish to say the least, it was drawn by four horses and pulled a 4 people cart, which consisted of one driver, Lord Nibraz himself, and two bodyguards who were highly skilled warriors, as well as being very good javelin throwers.

And as if like almost following the lead chariot's move, many other charioteers also threw their projectiles, be it arrows or javelins at the 'running' infantry, attempting to kill as many as they could.

Though in reality most of these shots fell innocently to the ground or embedded into the bronze-plated wooden shields, with only a very few managing to find their target, and even more scant ones actually managing to take a life.

But in reality, for the charioteers, this dismal level of accuracy was actually okay.

Because the missiles were not a chariot's main weapon.

It was only a secondary weapon meant to soften up the enemy before they charged, which would break the infantry formation, and allow the chariot to run through them, where the chariot's main weapon would be employed- The scythe attached to the chariot's wheels.

For the fleeing soldiers, there were few things scarier than the distinct sound of the thumping of horse hooves and the squeaking noise of the wooden wheel, knowing that he was about to get his legs chopped off any moment.

The anticipated pain and the subsequent horror of laying on the ground, fully conscious and bleeding out, must have been an unimaginable experience.

And as they lay there, many must have surely contemplated whether they would prefer to survive this encounter and live as a cripple or simply die to save their family the burden.

It was a horrifying feeling, which was also the primary reason why chariots were such a frighteningly effective weapon.

"We will swing right to destroy the fleeing scums, and then hit their left flank." Lord Nibraz instructed his driver, intending to hit the undefended rear of the crossbowmen placed on the left flank.

He said this especially to his driver because usually in the middle of any kind of mobile charge since there would be little time to pass the order down the chain of commander, riders would follow those in front of him.

And as Lord Nibraz was leading the charge, this was him deciding where they would strike.

And it was a good plan.

A classic.

But with one small caveat.

A caveat that was going to soon rapidly charge towards him.

For under Alexander's order, Grahtos had positioned his 1,000 cavalry in a similar way to Lord Nibraz, in the classic 10 by 10 formation along a single file, and as soon as the chariots made their way into Alexander's inner battlespace, the veteran Sycarian simply let out a fierce war cry, "Charge!"

The trained men did not need to hear anything more, as they only tucked their lances underneath their armpits, gripped the huge, long, wooden spear as hard as they could, solidly pressed their feet against the stirrups to keep balance, and then just started the gallop like they had practiced hundreds of times.

This was the main thing they had been drilled to do for almost the entire last two months and now it was their time to perform.

As the ground shook heralding the world's first heavy cavalry charge with a lance, the clash between the cavalry and the chariots, the new vs the old, Lord Nibraz's eyes seemed to bulge out of his eyes surprise and horror.

"What! They have cavalry? How!... *Grrrh*!" He cried out, before literally having a mild heart and collapsing on his chariot, his eyes gaped open in terror at what he saw.

The old man was already getting on with the years, and then there was the long journey to Zanzan, coupled with the grief of losing both his sons, one literally minutes ago.

And so when he noticed the presence of the cavalry right around Grahtos's shout, making it appear that the Sycarian's voice was loud enough to cross the two-hundred-meter distance, though it was more

likely the presence of the huge number of horses that really alerted Lord Nibraz, the sight seemed to be too much for the old man to bear.

And so he simply collapsed.

"Master! Master!" The bodyguards cried in horror, the words containing both concern for the old man, and fear for their own lives.

Because though Lord Nibraz could not see it, they, along with all the men on the front lines paid testament to the fact that around a thousand horsemen, with both men and beasts wearing what to them seemed like decorated livery, which actually was horse armor, seemed to be bulldozing towards them with really, really long spears.

Shoo, *Shoo*, *Shoo*,

The charioteers were moving too quickly to try anything like swerving and trying to get out of the way.

And so the only thing they could do was throw their javelins to hurt the incoming mass of man and beast, perhaps hoping their shower of projectiles will kill enough of them to cause them to break off the charge.

But that hope never had the possibility of becoming real, as the javelins had only around 30 meters of range, and all of them fell harmlessly to the ground.

And once the charging cavalry was finally in range, the short 30 meters would take the horses in full gallop literally seconds to cross, even a fit man would run that distance in a few seconds.

So by the time the javelin traveled along its arching path and descended onto its target, Alexander's cavalry was already smashing into the lightly armored, defenseless charioteers.

Aghhh, *Smash*, *Snap*, *Neigghh*,

The initial contact naturally produced a cacophony of orchestral noise, blending in the piercing scream of the man and horse being pierced by the lance, the thumping smashing sound of horses colliding with one another, the crisp sound of the wooden lance snapping, or the chariot itself breaking apart due to the abrupt stoppage, and lastly the scared and tragic death throes of the poor beasts.

Cavalries took less space than chariots and so Alexander's men were able to focus their attack on a much narrower front, dealing a far greater devastating blow, as each chariot was targeted by two cavalymen, one targetting the beast pulling the cart, and the other the driver.

And though some inevitably missed, all in all, the entirety to the charge was effectively stopped dead in its tracks as the lances dug as much as half a meter into some of the horses, killing them then and there.

This way many of the chariots in the front row were destroyed, with their riders being violently thrown off the vehicle, and a lot of them dying upon hitting the ground or at least being grievously injured.

And it could be argued that the dead few were the lucky ones, as those that fell to the ground and survived, were soon stamped to death under the cruel hooves of the scared, panicking, beasts who tried to escape this death trap.

While others, both men and beasts found themselves impaled by the very scythes they used to cut people's legs off, these bulky, bronze, and iron weapons having broken themselves off from the wheel during the violent clash and now whirling uncontrollably towards everywhere, bringing death to anyone who stood in its way.

Chapter 420 Lord Nibraz's Chariots (Part-2)

It was never clear how Lord Nibraz died.

Some said he died from a heart attack, some said he died in the initial charge, and others posited he died later due to his injuries, being stabbed and stamped to death.

While the truth might be a combination of the three.

And in an almost poetic way, the poor man never really understood how he died.

Because he never understood where all those horses had come from, and so in this way, his death was quite similar to his sons'.

Which was an impressive feat for Alexander who managed to consecutively stealth kill three people.

But at least in some way the old man's quick death was a blessing, because he did not have to witness the complete destruction of his family's fortunes or be forced to accept the death of the chariots as a viable military strategy.

Because that was what was happening right now.

With the chariot charge stopped, and the forces still reeling from the pile-up of horses on horses, carts smashing into one another, and general death and chaos all around, they were in no position to defend against the following melee from Alexander's cavalry, who switched to their swords and spears and started thrusting against the defenseless charioteers.

And they were defenseless charioteers no doubt about that, for they carried no shield, the most important equipment in an ancient battlefield, letting Alexander's elite cavalry attack them with almost impunity.

For in such close quarters, they could not even use their javelins to strike back and only passively accept the thrusts.

Not to mention their most important weapon, their chariot's mobility had been stripped away from them, making them basically sitting ducks.

And their situation was about to get a lot worse, as the 5th legion was rapidly trying to maneuver to attack their rear.

'Quick! Turn left quick! We can't let the horseboys have all the fun," The 5th legion commander shouted, as while the other 3 legions moved to restore the solid battleline, they had been ordered to swing around and hit the enemy in the back.

"Javelins!" And very soon a very similar shout to the shout a cavalryman gave before rang out from the rear of the chariots as the 5th legion launched their javelins, before charging at the defenseless back of the charioteers, hacking and slashing at them.

And that was the end for the charioteers.

They were surrounded on both sides with no way get out of this encirclement, their own broken chariots acting as a wall of obstacle preventing that, so the more than 6,000 charioteers simply abandoned their chariots and started towards either side of the battlefield like madmen.

"Run! Run away!"

'Save yourselves!"

"Fucker! Don't push."

"Get out! Get out the way!"

"Argh, help me! Don't leave."

"My leg! Help! My leg is crushed!"

"Fight! Let us stay and fight"

"Surrender! We surrender."

"Don't kill! Don't kill. We give up. We give up."

There were all kinds of voices ringing out in the air, all fearful and confused, with each man trying to arbitrarily decide what was the best way to survive, running, begging, surrendering, and even fighting.

Grahtos and his cavalry spent a while trying to kill as many fleeing soldiers as possible while offering life pardons to those who surrendered.

"Hand on your head! Heads on your head and you live!"

"Lay on the ground! Lay on the ground and you live!"

These cavalymen shouted as they rode around the small interior space, almost like they were policing sheep in an enclosure.

And those who chose to be obedient sheep were spared, while the disobedient ones were speared and slashed in the back, neck, or leg, with a few lucky ones managing to escape.

As this rounding up occurred, a question soon arose-

What to do with the men lying on the field?

After all, the number of captured men was huge, and allowing them to just roam around Alexander's rear lines did not sound safe.

Even if they were unarmed, their sheer numbers were a problem.

And besides, this was an active battlefield, with weapons such as javelins and spears laid strewn all about.

They could easily pick them up to perform a kamikaze attack on Alexander himself, or try their luck escaping if the opportunity presented itself.

Or just simply cause chaos in the rear and make life miserable for Alexander.

Whichever it was, it would cause a major headache for Alexander if it did happen.

"Come on! Let's go. Let's tie these men up!"

So this was where Alexander's 1,000-man infantry reserve came in,

These men carried with them carts full of ropes, which was common to do in many ancient battlefields because it was expected the winning side would take prisoners, who would then be tied using those ropes and sold into slavery.

And hence Alexander's 2 reserve battalions found themselves as the cleanup crew, tying the arms and legs of around 4,000 prisoners who lay prone on the ground.

And this was where they were scheduled to stay until the battle ended, which would be when either side routed, or when the day ended.

And once that was done, the thousand men focused their attention on the now masterless horses, most of who were still attached to the carts, and actually simply feeding on the grass around them.

Seeing this, Alexander found the type of nonchalance on display funny, and even a bit endearing, as these beasts gave no fuck to all the chaos and killing going around them and were just having a snack to pass the time.

These were the real chads.

But their snack time was later interrupted when Alexander's men unfastened the beasts from their carts and started gathering them towards the rear, behind Alexander to secure them.

"Haha, it looks like our horse shortage will be finally over, haha," Seeing the huge number of beasts recovered unharmed, Grahtos could not help but laugh out loud in delight.

The new industries required a lot of horses to move all the stuff around, and in recent months, there had been a severe shortage of mounts which had hampered production.

But now, it appeared such constraints would be finally relaxed.

As a side note, Grahtos had said this not from the frontlines, but from the rear, as after their initial charge, the cavalry had retreated to the rear to rest and recover.

These men had inevitably suffered some losses, particularly from the chariots' scythes, which some of them had inadvertently run into, or the scythes had broken off and run into them, and so the rides were busy treating their wounded comrades, or changing their wounded steeds for fresh ones.

While Grahtos had joined back to Alexander to report the success of the charge and observe the battlefield with him.

"Yes, you right," Alexander too shared the joy of booty with his retainer, and even ordered, "Have some of your men escort the horses to the camp. The frontlines are stable at the moment,"

Given that the battlefield was in a stalemate, Alexander wanted to use the time to secure his prize.

"Yes, my lord," Grahtos readily nodded.

There were around 5,000 horses retrieved unscathed by the men, and given that it was pretty easy to make a group of horses follow a lead horse whom they would see as their leader, which would be ridden by a rider, this task could be done by only a few hundred men.

From the initial charge to finishing the clean up took no short amount of time, even when a thousand men were working hand and foot the entire duration, with Alexander estimating the entire operation taking around 4 hours or until midday.

And while this was going on the rear, a very active and real fight was taking place on the frontlines, between the two infantry in the center, and between the camel archers and their missile units against the crossbowmen.

And this was a fight that had started right after the initial charge had failed.

"Ural! What happened?" Faruq was just about to lead the infantry charge when he saw the injured man clutching his chest make it to his camp, and this was the very first question he asked him.

And the inquiry referred to both his health and to his cavalry.

For though Faruq had seen the cavalry charge disintegrate, he was still unsure of the details.

"Ughh...the bastards used flaming ropes to scare my horses. Then the stupid beasts went crazy and crashed with one another. And I got hurt during the chaos ..ohhhh," Ural tried to keep the report as succinct as possible.

His chest hurt like crazy every time he breathed, let alone talked.

".....I see," Faruq could see Ural was visibly ill and thus did not press the man for more information, as he could get the information he wanted from any of the other surviving cavalymen and thus

instead only urged, "Then get some rest and don't worry about anything. We will take it from here."

"Wait!" But Ural did not seem to be finished, as he quickly posed the question he had come here for,

"Where is Lord Nibraz? What happened to his troops?"

The alarm and concern in his voice was palpable, as whether he liked the old man or not, they were still on the same side.

And 3,000 chariots disappearing was no joke.

While Faruq's face grimaced for the first time since Ural had met the man hearing this.

Because Faruq knew Lord Nibraz and his men were getting slaughtered as they spoke.