

Herald 431

Chapter 431 Simultaneous Charge

Grahtos sped his 1,000 men as fast as he could toward the enemy.

And there were several reasons for doing this.

First and foremost was because he wanted to gain as much speed as he could before colliding with the enemy.

Another reason was that he did not want the horses any time to be afraid of the camel.

For the smell and size of this strange beast would make the steeds skittish and jumpy.

While the third reason was to cover the distance as fast as possible to get away from the javelin fire which would inevitably come.

And as soon as Grahtos entered the 50-meter range, Azab slowed down his speed and started launching a volley of javelin, followed by a second round, hoping to kill as many riders as possible riders and disrupt the formation.

The reason for doing so, as opposed to just simply charging head-on was because that was how the cavalry vs cavalry fight of the time would occur.

Since both sides would be light skirmishers, without the heavy armor of the cataphracts or knights, if they charged and smashed head-on with their sharp spears, the number of casualties on both sides would be tremendous.

So, as nobody wanted to die, the way cavalry vs cavalry battle occurred was that they would initially charge at each other, hoping the other side would break, then launch their javelin at around 50-meter

range, which the short spears would be able to cover due to the extra speed imparted to them from the horse.

And then, once the horses got actually close enough, they would slow down, and start poking each other with spears, much reminiscent of the battle between infantry, only this time it was on horseback.

The enemy's javelin rained down on the large formation but failed to cause much casualty.

This was due to the speed at which Grahtos moved, meaning the horsemen were long gone from the spot they were at when the javelin was launched.

So most of these deadly projectiles innocently fell on the spots Grahtos had been when they were launched.

And it was same case with Alexander, who too withstood the withering javelin fire, while thanking his lucky stars that a stray one had not hit him or his horse.

Because if it did and he or his steed tripped and fell, well then that was it.

He would be tramped to death by the 9 horses immediately behind him.

For these men had too much momentum with them to stop even if they wanted to.

But luckily, neither Alexander nor Grahtos's life was cut short by the javelin fire, and now they were in range to strike.

'Why aren't they stopping? Do they intend to commit suicide with us? Those lunatics!' Seeing the opposing side not slow down, but instead accelerate when they were so close, both Azab and Ural thought that the opposing side had gone mad.

Because in their minds, only completely madmen would choose to do what Grahtos and Alexander were doing.

It was akin to two pikes formation lowering their pikes and running full speed ahead against one another with no shield support.

The only possible result could be a complete sanguinary slaughter of both sides.

And what scared them was the most that so many soldiers were willing to follow their commanders in this insane maneuver.

Because while it was certainly possible for some crazies to exist in any army, it was very hard for an army of crazies to exist.

After all, no matter how tyrannical the leadership was, it was very hard to inspire a large number of soldiers to commit mass suicide by impaling themselves into the enemy's spears.

Most people did not want to die after all.

The only country on earth that had managed to convince its people otherwise was Imperial Japan.

The reason for this misunderstanding was that from the perspective of the two men, the lances looked no different from regular spears, as the horizontally aligned weapon meshed almost perfectly with the silhouette of its riders, making the lance only look like a dot from the front angle.

Hence the misjudgment about the length of this new weapon.

"Stop! Stop! Form line! Form line!"

Thus, assuming that they were facing a crazed suicide attack, both Azab and Ural's cousin screamed at the top of their voice to instruct his men to form some kind of solid line, or perhaps they were calling out of the still some sane men in the opposing ranks to stop this foolish charge, who knows.

But it was too little, too late.

The enemy was too close.

"Fucking psychos! If you wanna die, die yourselves!" No amount of superlatives could describe the amount of regret Ural's cousin was feeling as he felt the steps of death get closer and closer. For he was sure Alexander would take him with him to the underworld.

And in the same vein, no amount of superlatives could describe the amount of relief Ural was feeling having avoided this death trap.

'Hahaha, the gods really do favor me. That's why it's mine. All mine!' Ural cheered, as he jumped for joy at the thought of not having to share credit.

A feeling of elation that an instant later turned into pure terror as he saw what happened next.

For the moment afterward, the two forces collided.

"Ahhhhh," Alexander had never shouted so loudly in his life, and he had never been so scared in his life, for he now had a lot more to lose,

And thus he clenched his shield and pointed his lance like those were his last possessions, and then it happened.

Bam,

The lances of the first three rows pointed in an overlapping formation struck the static, practically naked formation with the force of a freight train, and the scenery unfolded as one might expect of someone hit by such a massive object.

The lance strike sent many of the riders literally flying from the impact before they were brought down to the earth after colliding with the horses and men behind them, in a crudely similar way to how the character in GTA 5 would ragdoll after being hit by a train, while in a few instances, even the heavy, half-ton horses were knocked off their feet.

Neigh, *bam*, *Arghh*

The concert of sounds coming from the collision was deafening.

There was the screeching sound of metal hitting metal caused by the lance tip piercing the bronze armor of the enemy, the soft, dull puncturing sound of flesh being pried open by steel, and the creaking sound of bones breaking as the sharp weapon destroyed the hard skeleton.

Then there was the snapping and crackling of bones as the thundering impact between the horses broke and cracked bones, the crisp shattering of the wooden shaft as the lances snapped and to top of it all off, the horrified, pained screams and groans of the attacked men and beasts, who wailed and thrust uncontrollably in their death throes.

The charge between a proper heavy cavalry, with thick armor and lances, and light, almost naked skirmishers, unfolded just like how the history books portrayed it, like complete obliteration of the latter.

Because the skirmishers had no defense against them.

The lances outranged their own weapon- the spear and their thin armor was little better than paper in front of such huge force concentrated into such a small tip of the lance.

And in the case of Alexander, he had made the speartips of the lances extra special for them to be even more potent.

He did this by treating the steel used to a process called carbonization, which involved simply taking coal and heating it with the steel up to a certain temperature for a certain period of time inside a furnace.

This then would deposit a very thin layer of carbon onto the steel surface, making it very hard, but in exchange for lowered ductility.

Which was a problem for regular weapons such as swords, because you did not want one to be brittle and snap in the middle of the combat, but was okay for a one-time use weapon like the lance.

And as a side note, even the tips of the crossbow bolts were carbonized, giving them extremely high penetrating power.

And so, armed with this deadly, superweapon, Alexander's charge did manage to wipe out the enemies he was immediately facing, for it looked as if someone had simply erased the first four rows of the unit that faced Alexander head-on.

There were dead bodies strewn all about, of both horses and men, with black crimson blood, dark, purplish guts, and even limestone whites of broken shattered bones decorating Alexander's units surrounding.

And amongst all the carnage, not one of the forty men in the 4 rows was seen standing,

Such all the power of a single heavy cavalry charge.

And as such a macabre scenario unfolded on the right side of the battlefield, an identical event was unraveling itself on the left side, one led by Grahtos.

The charge had destroyed the ranks of the Jahal mercenaries, and the remaining survivors of the elite unit could only remain stand shell-shocked in mute awe and horror as they tried to process how they had lost so many of their friends and comrades die in a matter of seconds.

"Again!"

But neither Grahtos nor Alexander was in the mood to give the enemy any chance to recover and counter, as immediately after their first charge, they turned around for a second round.

Chapter 432 Second Charge

Alexander's charge had unfortunately missed the unit Ural and his cousin was in, thus enabling both men to manage to withstand the initial blow.

But withstanding the psychological blow was far harder, as evidenced by how both the men stayed rooted to their spot momentarily not knowing what to do, only looking ahead dumbfoundedly as they took in the visceral horror around them.

All around there were their fallen comrades, strewn about, groaning and screaming in pain, while behind them was a pile-up of horses and men as they were unable to stop in time against the charge.

'Wha...what happened?' Almost every one of them asked because they were unable to understand how this had happened.

Because according to their logic, Alexander and his co should have been skewered just like the people on the ground.

And a similar but even more horrifying sight was created around the left flank where Grahtos struck, as the combined charge of 500 heavy cavalry had decimated the center of the Jahal mercenaries behind recognition.

And unfortunately for Faruq's side, their luck had finally run out, and this time they had lost one of their best warriors as one of the initial casualties.

And that was Azab, the leader of the Jahal mercenaries, who was in the very first echelons of the unit dead center in the middle.

He died in the very first strike, when a lance pierced right through his solid sternum, destroying his ribs in the process and then flinging him off his camel as he was hurled several feet into the air.

But even after suffering such grievous injuries, the man had not died yet, as he croaked and choked through the bloody foam coming out of his mouth, the intense pain making him see flashes of the imminent approach of death.

And it was granted to him momentarily later, for the place where he landed had a scared camel, who gave horrifying belated bleat as it threw off its rider and raised his feet, before caving Azab's face in.

Blood, mucus, and teeth flew out immediately afterward, and more and more of such gore and blood continued coming out as the camel continued to stamp on the dead face multiple times until the face turned into a gooey, cracked candy.

It was a gruesome sight to behold.

And though it was just one of the thousands of macabre sights that filled this hell disguised as the battlefield, but still, for the Jahal mercenaries, no matter how elite and veteran they were, they were still shocked and saddened by the sudden loss of their leader in such a horrible way.

For all his shortcomings, at least to them, Azab was an honorable man, a good leader, and even somewhat of a father figure.

And as they watched the man die by the enemy's strange tactic and weapon, leaderless and shocked, they were momentarily unsure of what to do.

Ural too was in a similar position, as he estimated that the entire unit that Alexander smashed against might not be able to fight effectively for months, for they likely suffered fractures and sprains and internal bleeding from both the charge and the crushing of men and horse when Alexander violently pushed them back.

And the man was trying to figure out what happened and how to deal with it.

But just because the opposing two sides were unsure of their next action did not mean Alexander and Grahtos were the same.

Very much to the contrary, these two men perfectly knew what to do, and so they shouted "Again!", as they took advantage of the enemy's momentary lapse in judgment to turn around their horses without opposition and readied themselves for a second charge.

And as they did this, in Alexander's case, the light skirmishers engaged the blocks of cavalry to his side in the traditional sense, with rapid spears thrusts and javelin fire on the distracted troops, thus keeping

them too busy to interfere with Alexander who was in a vulnerable position while he changed his formation.

Which involved having his men split up right down the middle, one turning left, the other right, while they rode back to the starting line to restart their charge.

And naturally, this thinner, less manned formation was much weaker, hence the need for screening.

And just like the two light skirmisher units protected Alexander's flanks, his rear was also protected by the two units that trailed behind him.

As soon as the charge ended, as Alexander had discussed before, his unit did not engage in melee with the remaining survivor to take advantage of the situation and break through the remaining defenses.

But they instead retreated, throwing away their destroyed lances, and then parting themselves in two, before escaping from both the right and left, thus minimizing the time needed to escape.

After which they joined up at the back to ready themselves for a second attack.

And this quick splitting down the middle maneuver also gave the units in the immediate back the chance to come forward and occupy the space Alexander occupied, after which with a crazed roar they charged with spears against the dazed troops, cutting them down with extreme prejudice, while the skirmishers in the third row threw their javelins, the combined attack of which finally destroyed the first cavalry unit.

And now in that column, it was just one of Ural's units facing two of Alexander's.

And this was what Alexander wanted to do, to use a large mass of soldiers along a narrow, selected line to break the enemy, and once that was done, then, have the cavalry swing around to hit the enemy's rear.

Or that the risky plan if the enemy did not rout.

As was expressed by this regretful thought by Alexander, 'Dammit! They did not break! Tenacious bastards.'

Though the actual reason for the cavalry still holding on was that Alexander's numbers were too few.

Only 100 of them had charged with their lance against the 1,300, hence unable to deal overwhelming damage to Ural.

Instead, if all six hundred had charged and dealt damage similar to Grahtos, it was likely these already once-routed men would have broke rank and run.

But since that did not happen, Alexander had no option but to gallop back at full speed back to the starting point 200 meters back, and then, equipping his second and last lance from the steed's back, lined up for a follow-up attack.

Alexander was very nervous about this second charge, because if this did not break the enemy, he would be placed in a really tight pinch, as he would then be all out of lances, and thus unable to again charge.

And if he wanted to do so again, then he would have to retrieve more lances from his camp which was all the way back some kilometer away.

This was certainly not possible in the middle of the combat.

And then to make matters even worse, he noticed already that his outnumbered light skirmishers were being overwhelmed, even within this short time, as the wings of Ural's closed in on them, and started attacking them from multiple sides, reaping significant casualties in the process and causing the men's morale to plummet like a lead balloon.

The reason for such a rapid change towards the worse was multifold.

One because these light skirmishers were originally infantry, and many of them had never properly ridden a horse and thus were unable to properly coordinate with their beasts and companions to put up an effective resistance.

Two was the fact that they faced elite soldiers who had practiced their whole lives for such kind of battle, and those who had gotten over their initial fear and were now raging over their dead companion, showing little regard for their lives as they hacked and slashed at the green riders.

And three was that they were vastly outnumbered, so it was only a matter of time before the 500 cavalry broke and ran.

In fact, with Alexander not around, even within this short amount of time, it could be seen they were wavering.

This was not a good sign.

Now, not everything was doom and gloom for Alexander.

He had at least noticed the contingent of infantry support he had asked for slowly making toward him.

If they got here, things would certainly get better.

But they were still about 10 minutes away, and even if they did get here, it was not like things were going to magically solve themselves.

They were still infantry, meaning the enemy would still have the mobility advantage, and might even outflank them.

But still, with them, and the 600 light and heavy cavalry, Alexander was confident about forming a solid line.

Which might then give Grahtos enough time to come and save him if things went well for the man there.

But all these were all desperate options, all of which would put Alexander right in the crosshairs. And so the best option was for Alexander to try and rout the enemy.

And if that did not happen, then for his contingencies to be implemented, Alexander would need to hold on till that point.

And so regardless of which reason was used, the second charge was needed.

Either to destroy the enemy or relieve the pressure on the 500 men.

"We will hit the right wing," Alexander thus loudly shouted while raising his lance high up into the sky, drawing attention to himself, before lowering his weapon to restart the attack.

This attack could very much make or break the result of the battle, and even make or break the destinies of Alexander and all those who follow him.

Chapter 433 Grahtos Vs Jahal

As Alexander prepared for his second charge, Grahtos's one was already taking place.

The difference in speed was due to the fact that Grahtos had two rows of men who could charge, as opposed to Alexander's one.

And thus, after Grahtos disengaged himself from any melee after the initial charge just like Alexander, he retreated to the rear using a similar strategy to his boss.

While the row immediately behind him got their lances ready to have a go themselves.

"*Arghhh*, Charge!"

The deafening howl of the charge rang again across the battlefield as a second row of heavy cavalry shot themselves towards the mangled lines made up of lightly armored cavalry, who had already been badly chewed, intending to get the job done.

While the Jahal mercenaries mostly just watched with numbed horror, unable to process the fact that the enemy was able to ready itself to deal another such blow so quickly.

Hence, the speed and ferocity of Grahtos's attack made them unable to respond appropriately.

"Charge! Charge! Charge!"

But finally, as the second row, led by Laykash drew near, at last some order for the Jahal mercenaries to act came.

And it came from a man who was among the most experienced troop in the mercenary, with almost three decades of fighting prowess under his belt.

This grizzled veteran of the force led his camel straight into the mouth of the charging bulldozer, his spear pointed forward just like a lance, his eyes glowing with ferocity and steely determination.

This act was either fueled by up-to-the-ball courage or maddening desperation as he repeatedly roared out the word 'charge' while urging his camels to meet the horses head-on as fast as possible.

The expert eyes of the man had figured out the secret weapon of the enemy, their very long spears, which allowed the horsemen to hit the mercenaries before their spears could touch them, thus allowing them to kill the camel riders with almost impunity.

And for the moment, other than avoiding them, the veteran could think of no other way to counter his new weapon.

But the problem was they were in the middle of their formation, surrounded by their allied units on both sides, which in normal times would protect their flanks, but now only acted as obstacles, hemming themselves in.

Avoiding them was not an option.

Not even the enemy was literally just a 100 meters away from them.

Hence, as flight was not an option, then it could only be fight.

Or so was the thinking process of the grizzled veteran, who went along the route of trying to take as many of the enemy down with him as possible.

He reasoned that even if not all of the mercenaries could avoid the long spears, some of them certainly could, and then they could close in the distance to kill the enemy.

And there was also the small possibility that even if the enemy killed them, the horsemen would still impale themselves onto the camel riders' spears, as the sheer speed of their gallop would make it difficult to avoid such a collision, and their momentum would act against them, pushing the sharp tip into themselves.

And with that thought process in mind, he charged with his trusty companion he had raised from a calf into certain death.

But his heroic sacrifice would not be in vain.

Because seeing the lone man ride toward his certain doom invigorated the rest of the soldiers, who screamed,

"Follow Zihhnash! Follow Zihhnash! Charge!"

This veteran named Zihhnash was a very well-respected member of the mercenary, and seeing him take the lead, the others felt their blood boil with the urge to follow.

And thus the rest of the remaining mercenaries in the front rows that had been attacked now rallied and counter-charged Laykash and his men, trampling over their own dead and wounded as they did so, feeling the best way to honor them would be to kill the ones responsible and avenge them, while also wanting to deal as much damage as possible before they died.

In this way, at least in their mind, they could have some answers for those who went before them.

And as the two sides maddeningly galloped towards like confrontation and one side's complete demise, it had to be noted that Zihhnash's theory about this new form of cavalry, which would be later called heavy cavalry, though quite good, was not good enough.

For if all that there was to it as Zihhnash hypothesized, then his plan might as well have succeeded.

But that was not all there was to it.

Because Zihhnash's theory was incomplete.

For it particularly forgot to take into account the 'heavy' part of the name 'heavy cavalry', which referred to the heavy armor both the rider and the horse wore to mitigate exactly such attacks.

And it was the last lesson the old, grizzled veteran would learn before he died, who had mistaken the skirts around the horses as simply liveries, and gaudy decorations, utterly pointless embellishments in his eyes.

But these were anything but useless, as it would be proven during the clash.

For when the two sides collided, yes, the charging mercenaries managed to inflict more damage on the charging cavalry than they would have been able to do if they had simply stood still, but the damage they took in return for this relatively small gain was tremendous.

The lances which even grazed the mercenaries had enough momentum behind them to knock them out of their steeds or pierce them so deep that it left gaping holes in them, while in turn any lucky spear

managing to close the distance and get a good thrust in was usually stopped by the superior armor worn by Alexander's men.

As elite cavalymen, they had been certainly provided with the best of the best armor Alexander could afford, consisting of three tiers of protection, a chainmail, a linen thorax, and a bronze cuirass, all acting in unison to provide the best stabbing protection the technology of this time period could achieve.

Thus while wearing this armor, though one could still get injured with broken bones, and suffer shock and internal bleeding from the raw momentum of the spear and sword strike, it was in fact very hard for him to get stabbed.

This meant that the soldiers would not have a wound and would not bleed, which was a major boon in favor of his chances of survival on the battlefield, for it eliminated nasty possibilities such as infections and gangrenes.

This triple-layered armor which far outclassed the light linen or leather armor of the mercenaries, who wore such to aid in mobility, was not the only thing Alexander's men had going for them in this fight.

Aside from the obvious better weapon and armor, they had one last secret weapon- the stirrups.

And this small, innocent piece of metal proved why it was called era-defining in this exchange, for when the spears hit the cavalymen, or the horse-locked bodies against the much bigger, and heavier camels, it was this fantastic little piece that saved the riders' life, letting them use their feet to absorb the impact, and stay on the horses.

A convenience that the Jahal mercenaries did not have, making them fall off of their animals from the impact, and most times die from the succeeding trampling.

Due to a combination of all these factors, the mercenaries' countercharge failed miserably, as the heavy armor of the horses and men absorbed their blows pretty well, while also managing to deal the maximum dose of their own strike in return.

Thus it was a massacre, producing a scenery far scarier than the first round because the mercenaries were not charging then, thus they did not pile up one another at the back like they were now.

So, there was probably not a single rider in the whole 5 units who had charged Grahtos's units without a broken bone or worse.

And within a few minutes, the elite 10,000 mercenary unit had lost 500 of their very best, as the cavalymen simply mowed through them, crushing anything, men or beast in the way, which also included their leader.

While this amount of loss suffered so quickly stunned the Jahal mercenaries.

To give some context just how large this loss was for them, in the last 6 hours of fighting against 10,000 crossbowmen, they had lost less than 100 men.

And even that was a lot for them, which was caused by the fact that the crossbowmen could shoot further and more accurately than regular bowmen.

Usually, they kept their deads in the mid-tens, which was possible due to their mounted archer role.

Hence, the blow to their psyche over losing 6% of their total force could be imagined.

But the damage was not over, as Grahtos had already readied himself for his second go, now targeting the second row of the formation, and then started his gallop.

"Run!"

"Get away!"

"Flee!"

Finally the elite formation snapped.

After seeing even their suicide attack fail, and the enemy coming to attack them again using the same tactic, a move they had no counter to at the moment, at last even the nerves of steel of these hardened men failed them.

Because no one wanted to just stand still and die, and so when Grahtos initiated the third charge, the mercenaries' cavalry center broke and ran, which created an opening towards the flanks of the adjacent cavalry units, who too then had no choice but to withdraw.

At last the battle between the cavalry in the left flank was won by Alexander's forces.

Chapter 434 Alexander Vs Ural (Part-1)

The Jahal mercenaries for their credit did not break rank and run after facing Grahtos.

Instead, when they saw they had no way to counter the new weapon and their center was vulnerable, they deemed it unwise to continue to fight here and needlessly rack up casualties.

So they simply chose to disengage and retreat.

And the difference between a retreat and a rout was in full display then.

For while a rout was a disorganized and chaotic escape from the battlefield, a retreat was an orderly withdrawal, as evidenced by how the various units calmly turned left or right in full formation, so as to not give Grahtos any chance to hunt them down, before getting out of Grahtos's strike range.

And seeing them scatter, Grahtos let it happen without interference, for he had no intention to chase such a huge enemy anyway.

He was just relieved to chase them off and secure his left flank.

And so from afar Grahtos with a placid face saw the remaining mercenary forces slowly regroup themselves in an open space some distance away, where they tended to their wounded and reorganized their tattered command.

The Jahal mercenaries had lost a lot of their officers and even their leader in the preceding attack and so they would need some time to restructure their forces before they were ready to launch an attack again.

And they fully intended to attack again, for they were not out of the fight yet.

Not by a long shot.

After all, in their mind they had to avenge their leader and all the dead 500 before they could even think about resting.

And thus, they prepared themselves for the next wave, and Grahtos, who was watching them regroup was sure they would join the battle again.

But it was not as if the mercenaries were the only ones who were regrouping.

Many of Grahtos's men were also licking their wounds and resting themselves for another attack.

They did this because many had suffered internal injuries such as fractures and broken bones from the previous charge, and even many of their horses were seen limping along the ground in pain and discomfort.

These horses had suffered as much as the men, and maybe even more, as the last collision with the much bigger and heavier camels had taken a lot from these beasts.

Most probably those in the front had broken their ribs sounding by the groans and pants coming out of them.

Thus both sides were trying to utilize this time to rest and recover.

But the cavalry commander did not have the luxury to watch half the Jahal mercenaries rest and recuperate as he did the same, for a herald suddenly came running to him, panting and saying in an alarmed voice, "Commander! The enemy is attacking our lord to the right! Please send help! Quick!"

This messenger had been displaced by the 5th legion commander, Remus, who was chosen by Menes to lead this unit.

"What!" Grahtos's heart almost leaped out as he screamed this, before turning his head back to see the situation for himself

And from his vantage point atop his horse, he could clearly see Alexander's men engaging the enemy on the opposite side of the battlefield, while presumably the lord himself, in his eye-catching steed stood with his bodyguards a bit further back, lowering his lance and as if readying himself for a charge.

Grahtos further noticed the two battalion contingent slowly make their way towards, which, though the men were marching as fast as he could, to Grahtos seemed like they were walking at a snail's pace.

'Dammit!' He cursed venomously before blowing on a short trumpet, signaling the 1,500 men to rally towards him.

He had to go to Alexander's rescue as soon as possible.

Because without Alexander, they had no one to hold them together, for it was the young man that acted as the glue for all of them.

When the men resting and recuperating themselves heard the trumpet call, 'What! Is it another attack?' they all dreaded the thought as their instinctive reaction.

None of them were ready for another fight right now.

Not them, nor their horses, as evidenced by how many of the beasts were seen panting with their tongues out.

And Grahtos knew this, because he himself was suffering from the exact disabilities, and he even had a stinging pain in his chest caused by a glancing spear thrust that had missed.

But he knew he had no other choice.

Alexander could not die or be captured under any circumstances.

"Men! Look to the right! Lord Alexander is being attacked! And he needs reinforcements!" Grahtos thus shouted to inspire the men to his cause.

And it worked as hearing this, the men felt almost a kind of supernatural power course through them, as they moved with great haste and purpose, seeming as if their bodies were set on fire with zeal and purpose.

For in the distance they could clearly see their vastly outnumbered comrades fighting gallantly, but nevertheless being overwhelmed.

And if they did not receive help soon, it was likely they would break, or worse, their lord might get killed or captured.

This could not be allowed to happen, hence, even when their horses were exhausted to the point they would barely gallop, the men still decided to push them past their limits.

Thus soon, the 1,000 men had formed a solid charging line and were ready to charge.

But why 1,000, and not 1,500?

It was because of this exchange between Grahtos and Laykash.

The former instructed the latter, "Laykash, you stay behind with the 500 light cavalry. Have them protect the flanks of the 5th legion in case the Jahal mercenaries try anything again. I will be back soon."

As he said this, instead of galloping off, the commander gripped the young man's hand to again emphasize his point, "You must hold on till I come back!"

He had bloodshot eyes as he said this.

This was because Grahtos was well aware of the challenge Laykash would have if he faced the experienced cavalry unit using these green infantry on horseback.

And could only hope that the enemy did not recover so quickly and that the 5th legion had enough nerve to hold on against their charges if it did occur.

Within the time Grahtos had finished giving out these orders, the soldiers were ready to go and all were waiting for Grahtos to give them the order to gallop.

"Charge! Charge as fast as you can!" And without further ado came the order, as the 1,000 men tried to cover the one-and-a-half kilometer (1.5km) as fast as possible, while also navigating through the prisoner who lay prone in the middle of the inner battlefield.

And while these tired men with their limping horses, and only one lance strove to reinforce their lord, Alexander was about to start his second charge.

The 500 green troops would not be able to hold on till Grahtos got here.

"*Arghhh*,"

So came the familiar murderous roar from the hundred men, before there was produced the thundering stamps of the horses, whose heavy strikes turned the solid, dry ground into mud, and the men riding these beasts who moved like the gale of a hurricane charged at the right flank of the enemy, one who was engaging one of Alexander's units from the side.

And when these men felt the earth shake and saw the charge of the 100 men coming to reap their lives,

'Run!'

That was the only word uttered.

No one knew who that 'brave' man was to speak this frank word.

But it did not matter.

Because this one syllable word was enough to turn a solid 100 men cavalry unit into vapor mist that vanished into thin air momentarily later.

Meaning they ran.

And when this unit ran, it exposed the unit behind it to Alexander's wrathful lance.

Who then too ran.

And honestly who could blame them?

What were they doing to do anyway?

Stand still and die?

Sure, if they were crazed fanatics who viewed their death as a way to disarm Alexander by destroying his last lance, and then deliver ultimate victory, then sure, they might as well have stood and died.

And if that happened, there was indeed a good chance of Alexander dying or being captured before Grahtos or the infantry would come to their rescue.

After all, the enemy was a lot here.

But fortunately for Alexander, and unfortunately for Faruq, Ural's cavalry were not such fanatics.

All the men were from privileged positions, and they all valued their lives very much.

The cavalry unit consisted of either nobles, or heirs of noble houses who came here to accumulate military credit, brothers and cousins and distant relatives of such people, sons of nobles who had no realistic chance at the family head position and wanted to try their luck in the battle, nobles who had fallen in hard times and wanted to gain wealth and fame in battle, and many such similar ambitious, opportunistic people.

They were very well trained, but not the most disciplined bunch, especially in the face of large casualties.

And since they had already lost 100 of them on the first charge, these men did not fancy trying their luck against Alexander's lances.

Thus, they ran, and like how rats are able to sense a ship sinking and jump overboard, once Ural's right flank became exposed, the remaining men saw no point in resisting.

A rout was initiated.

Chapter 435 Alexander Vs Ural (Part-2)

The reason for the collapse of the flanking attack on the right side, led by Ural was not as singular as one might make it out to be.

Certainly Alexander's charge was the single most decisive factor.

But other ingredients played their part in this recipe of tucking one's tail and running as well.

The very first incident that had struck especially hard at the morale of the troops was the routing of the Jahal mercenaries.

The two forces were situated directly opposite of each other and each could monitor the other without any visual impairment.

So when the 1,300, or now only 1,200 men witnessed the event, it had an effect on them that was difficult to quantify.

Because many of these men had grown up learning and knowing the reputation of these cut-throat mercenaries and some even idolized them.

And if one went through their stellar battlefield record, many would conclude they deserved such worship.

For whenever these men were deployed, it was almost an assured victory, as they would shoot and charge the enemy to oblivion, many times when facing an enemy much bigger than their own.

And the number of times they had been defeated and lost the battle could be counted on one hand, and all of them were either against overwhelming numbers or when they were forced to fight in unfavorable terrains where their mobility was restricted.

But no one had ever managed to defeat them in flat, open ground like this one, never even mind someone who was outnumbered.

It was because of this that Faruq had laughed in glee when he saw Alexander come out to meet him in battle on such an open battlefield, even being outnumbered no less, as if Faruq needed any more advantages.

And this confidence was justified because without any heavy armor able to withstand the arrow strikes, and some kind of strong but easy to use bow to strike back, the only way to counter-mounted units would be to have one's own.

And those were in very short supply given how hard and time-consuming they were to train.

Pasha DJose had sent his 10,000 contingent to avenge his son knowing this, which was the entirety of such men under him, confident that not even the god's interventions could save Alexander.

But it was his, his son's, and the Jahal mercenary's bad luck that they faced Alexander this time, someone who had managed to find the perfect marriage of these two technologies, which he had given the name of crossbowmen and heavy cavalry.

Thus Alexander was able to effectively stop this menace on the battlefield.

And when this event ultimately occurred, Ural and his men witnessed with almost abject horror the yellow tide being beaten to a pulp by the tiny square of blue, before they were forced to retreat from their positions.

From an outside observer, the retreat of the Jahal mercenaries seemed like the sea of yellow being beaten back by a small dazzling glow of blue.

It was a crippling blow to many in the field, especially for those who knew the mercenaries' reputation and had always felt reassured by their presence.

And now all that boisterousness had disappeared, the once high morale rapidly dropped in troops throughout all sectors of the army.

Even Faruq had felt his heart drop when he saw the left thrust not only be stopped but also be countered, causing a full retreat.

He of course had not expected the mercenaries to outright win as it took mounted units some time to accumulate damage to finally break the enemy.

But he had also never thought in his wildest dream they would fail and be routed.

Faruq's only concern about the strategy up until that point had been the archers and slingers breaking, thus enabling the enemy's archers (crossbowmen) to target his left flank (right from Alexander's perspective) and so forcing him to call back the Jahal mercenaries to reinforce that front.

And the man had not even received the news of Azab's death.

Thus, though Grahtos did not know it yet, him winning against such a huge force with almost casualties was a major turning point in the war, as his win had a cascading effect on all of Faruq's forces.

And this effect was particularly prominent on Ural's men who saw their heroes, facing the exact same problem, run.

And thus, since the other side had decided running away was a viable solution, certainly these men took note of that strategy.

Then, having been dealt such a shock, right after one of their own units was cut down to the last man, many of them had already gone weak in the knee, after which they witnessed the second worsening development- the 1,000 infantry coming after them.

Ural's men knew that though these foot soldiers were slow if Ural could not punch through the 600 men holding them back, they would eventually reinforce Alexander, and make them get bogged down in a battle of attrition.

Ural had already lost a lot of men in this battle and so wanted to avoid that at all costs.

But, the real nail in the coffin in their desire to resist and attack Alexander's position was Grahtos's charge, whom Alexander had missed because he had his back turned to him, but Ural's men certainly did not.

They knew that if those 1,000 men had the same weapons as Alexander did, which was most likely the case given how quickly they had solved the Jahal mercenaries, then there was little they could do to stop them once they got.

Thus when some ran, all ran, completely breaking rank and fleeing in all three directions, very much like headless chickens.

In this way, if the Jahal mercenaries' withdrawal was a textbook example of how to do an organized retreat, then Ural's men running away was a textbook example of what was meant by a complete rout.

These demoralized men ran in every direction open to them, some even running in the opposite direction to their camp in an effort to get away from Alexander's spear in the short term, who had wisely chosen not to follow them.

He was still outnumbered after all.

But a few of the 500 novice cavalry were not so wise and chose to follow the fleeing cavalry.

And though they managed to rack up quite a few kills with backstabs and thrusts, many were also caught off guard when the much more experienced enemy cavalry chose to suddenly turn back and counterattack, transforming themselves from the hunted to the hunter.

And after a few such incidents, and Alexander's urging, these men learned their lessons and regrouped back to their lord. Being vigilant in case it was a fake retreat.

But it seemed the rout was genuine, as Ural and his men soon galloped back to their back, leaving their dead and wounded behind.

And by the time Grahtos managed to reach Alexander, all that greeted him was a few hundred dead and wounded bodies of men and horses as enemies.

"My lord! Apologies for the delay! Thank goodness you are safe!" Grahtos breathed a gigantic sigh of relief as he slowly caught up to Alexander, relief and reassurance washing over him as he then called out from the side to the gaudily dressed man on the extravagant horse.

This was of course Hemicus, who Grahtos had mistaken as Alexander from afar.

"I'm here," And this mistake was rectified a moment later as Alexander's voice rang out from around the vicinity of his guard captain, as he then took off his helmet for easier identification.

"Ahhh!" Grahtos let out an involuntary gasp, before quickly repeating the greeting.

He did not ask why Hemicus was dressed as Alexander.

Because this was not the time or place, and besides, he could reasonably guess the answer.

Instead, he turned to Alexander to give the battle report of the left side.

"My lord, we have managed to make the contingent of Jahal mercenaries retreat! We did it! We beat them!" The cavalry commander was elated by the result, as evidenced by his giant grin, and even he found it hard to believe the speed at which they won and the kind of destruction they had wrought upon the enemy.

This lance seemed to be the weapon of the gods.

And his elation reached even higher levels as with twinkling eyes and a fervent gaze he sang the praises of the heavy cavalry.

"It was all because of you, my lord! Oh, when you promised me we would have a new cavalry, I always knew it would be magnificent, but I could have never imagined it would be such a revolutionary creation. Not even in my wildest dreams!" Grahtos's fists shook as he said this, before continuing his speech unabated,

"Without the barding, he would have died from the counter-spear attacks. Without the lance, we would not have been able to hit the enemy. And without the stirrups, we could not have stayed on the horse."

"It was only through the perfect meshing of these three separate inventions that were we able to achieve the result we did."

"And all this credit belongs to you! Glory to the lord of Zanzan! Glory to Goddess Gaia," Grahtos seemed to have become a bit too emotional as he even got down from his horse to prostrate towards Alexander, right in the middle of a battlefield.

And seeing their cavalry captain as such, many others also followed suit to kneel and bow at Alexander, chanting and glorifying him.

Chapter 436 Faruq's Last Try

Alexander was certainly pleased by the loyalty displayed by his soldiers.

"Thank you for your kind words. I'm glad all of you are well too," He replied.

And he was genuinely pleased.

He had half expected many of them to die facing such an overwhelming, and he certainly thought they would be pinned down by them for a long time.

This was because he had no real idea of the kind of damage heavy cavalry could do to light cavalry when the latter foolishly chose to face the attack head-on.

The way for light cavalry to win against heavy cavalry was to outrun and out-maneuver the much slower due to their heavy armor heavy cavalry and perform flanking attacks.

But since the enemy did not do such, the result was the total oblivion of their forces.

But even then, Alexander was surprised by the carnage he was able to wrought with even such a small number of men.

He did expect something a bit like it from reading history, but it was one thing reading something, and it was another completely different thing to witness it first-hand.

So, when even he was surprised by the result, it was understandable that the regular soldiers would be overwhelmed.

But even still, this was not the time and place to be displaying such emotions,

Then noticing the contingent becoming distracted when they were still in the middle of the battlefield, Alexander urged them otherwise.

"Let us shelf such talks for later, The battle still rages on, so let's get back to our comrades for now."

The fight was still going on the frontline after all.

"Yes my lord," Being reminded of this, the soldiers hence soon got back up on their horses and were soon ready to deploy.

And Alexander then gave his next order, "We will join the frontlines now. The battle is nearing its end and we are needed there."

This was the official reason, though the real reason might be that he did not want to give the enemy another chance to attack him in the back where he was all alone.

Once was enough.

And so soon the 1,600 cavalry moved themselves within 200 meters of the frontlines, ready to assist in the battle after they caught their breath in a minute.

"Hemicus tell the 1,000 detachment to equip themselves with the fire chains and act as the rear guard," Once in position Alexander then gave out this order, intending to use these men to foil any similar future attacks.

And so, currently, the situation on the battlefield was such:

The left flank still had the 5,000 Jahal mercenaries attacking the crossbowmen, as they relentlessly launched waves of arrows to try and break Alexander's men.

Just below the crossbowmen, there was the 5th legion facing the left side, placed there to stop any cavalry charge from the Jahal mercenaries, while their flanks were protected by 500 light cavalry.

Perpendicular to this unit was Alexander's 1,500 mobile detachment, there to respond to any emergencies.

Behind Alexander were the 1,000 men acting as the rear guard with the special fire ropes to deny any cavalry attack.

And in front of Alexander was the 2nd legion fighting all alone against 2 similarly sized phalanx units.

Then in the right flank was another half of the crossbowmen detachment fighting against the slingers and archers.

And at last there was the defeated part of the Jahal mercenaries who were recouping and regrouping some distance away from the battlefield.

"My lord, father has fallen fighting gallantly in battle," Sunash, the eldest of Azab was the one to inform Faruq of the loss as half of his forces reorganized themselves.

And for a while, Faruq had no comeback.

In his professional life, Azab was an excellent military commander and a reliable partner to go into battle with, while in his personal life, he was the one who taught Faruq everything about war.

Thus the loss hit Faruq particularly hard on both fronts.

And his mind was too much in chaos to think about what to do next, for the aftermath of having to deal with Azab's loss was something Faruq would have to pay dearly for.

But those were later concerns, as now his pincher attack had been foiled and Ural had run away from the battle, while the enemy strengthened itself against any such future attack.

The same trick would not work twice.

Victory seemed to be slipping away from him like the raging rides of a waterfall, if it had not already slipped away anyway.

And just like the saying 'misery loves company', a herald soon came bearing further distressing news, "My lord, Lord Liakit and Lord Nyantim have announced they are withdrawing. Apparently, their men have taken a lot of damage."

The last statement was a complete lie as the second round of the battle had barely gone for an hour and the casualty between the two sides was roughly the same.

But seeing that Faruq's plan fail, the mighty, undefeatable Jahal mercenaries retreat, Ural's men tuck tails and run right in front of them and now that their own flanks were threatened by Alexander's counter cavalry attack, the two men saw no point in continuing this fight other than to gift Alexander free kills.

Hence after the two men sent messengers to each other, the two lords wisely decided to retreat when they still had the chance.

Though in this case they were overthinking about the danger of their flanks from the enemy cavalry as Alexander had no intention to go out to meet them in battle.

For reasons of their horses being exhausted, them being down to their last lance, and the danger of the still 5,000 Jahal mercenaries active on the battlefield.

But still, just the potential threat of an attack was enough to convince these men to retreat.

Besides, the other prominent reason was that the lords did not think they could win the war.

".....okay," Faruq gave an almost anemic reply to the message, fully understanding the reasoning behind the men's decision.

And then the young man began to see dark.

Because with this move, he had basically lost his chance to win the war unless a miracle happened.

And it was a sentiment shared by Lord Liakit and Lord Nyamtim as well, who relayed it using the same scout in the same message, "My lord, the two lords advise you to retreat. Save as many men as you can."

"....." Another long silence followed as Faruq imagined what a loss here would mean for him.

So instead of answering the scout or coming up with a decision, Faruq now glanced at Sunash for advice.

He hoped like his father, the man would be able to provide him with an alternate option.

And lucky for him, the man could.

"My lord, we can pick up the slack on the left flank (Alexander's right flank). Though we took some casualties, we are still strong enough to suppress those archers," Sunash sounded very confident, reasoning, "After all, those men have been continuously attacked with arrows and stones from the morning. They must be nearing their breaking point."

This was true as the men were really tired as logs, their arms feeling like tree stumps at the moment.

And they could barely feel them as they reloaded their crossbow by manually pulling the string up using both hands.

But being tired did not mean they were not eager for a fight.

While it was true at one point they might have suffered from low morale, and showed signs of breaking, things had changed now.

Morale was actually quite high right now, for they were energized seeing their allies rout both contingents of the cavalry units, and they themselves had confidence in them as they were able to make the archers and slingers rout twice.

So if Sunash was hoping for a breakthrough in that sector, he would be disappointed.

But credit to the experienced man, he was not done there.

As he further planned, "And even if the enemy does not break, that will be alright. For if that happens, we can take a few thousand of our men to attack the enemy's center column. That is now weak!"

Sunash seemed to have a similar eye as sharp as his father to notice that vulnerability, which he explained to Faruq,

"I have noticed the enemy commander sent about 5,000 men from there to the right (Alexander's left) to protect against another flanking attack, leaving their center column weak."

"So we will concentrate our infantry and cavalry there to overwhelm and snap that vulnerable part, thus opening the flanks of the other two columns." Sunash determined.

And then by himself addressed some of the concerns Faruq might have.

"And as for the enemy's new weapon, I have seen it in action. And it has a major weakness," Sunash confidently added, before revealing it to be, "Its weakness is that each of the soldiers using it needs quite a bit of space to deploy it effectively as the spinning of the rope needs a lot of free ground."

"So given how closely the soldiers are positioned in the formation, and them having to deal with the phalanx, the enemy will not be able to use their new fire weapon in this congested space." Sunash positively assured.

And then finished by saying, "Of course, we can't charge them, as that would require our infantry to get out of the way which would give their infantry the space to use their weapons. But we can fight from camelback."

Chapter 437 Alexander's Attack

The ability to fight infantry from horseback or any animal for that matter was a great advantage for the riding men, as the higher elevation gave the rider more angles of attack, while also making it harder for soldiers down there more difficult to defend from the strange, downward thrusts.

This was coupled with the fact that the riders were able to put more force into their attack from the higher ground, thus able to tire the defending soldier more quickly and then break through his defense to deal greater damage.

And this was not even mentioning the role of the horse or camel, who was many times able to aid its rider by attacking the enemy with its kicks, and sometimes even biting down on them, tearing chunks of flesh in the process.

Thus, when an equally numbered cavalry fought infantry, it was usually the former who came out at the top, for they were able to deal much more damage.

Hence when Sunash proposed concentrating his forces along a narrow line with the aid of cavalry to cause a rout, it certainly sounded plausible to Faruq.

"Okay, then I will leave that attack to you," The commander of the army had thus clutched onto that one last hope.

The man was really desperate.

Now it was unknown whether Sunash really believed the tactic would work, or if he just said what his boss wanted to hear.

The reason for the latter being that if a subordinate was not too greatly trusted, sometimes it was a great taboo to say no or answer negatively.

Because many times it conveyed incompetence.

Hence it was certainly possible Sunash had made this up to please his boss.

Because remember, Alexander had moved his reserves to the front to precisely counter such a breakthrough.

But it was what it was, and whether Sunash truly believed it or not, nevertheless Faruq and him quickly set about implementing their plan.

So, the formerly beaten-back Jahal mercenaries were soon bought back to join the fray and their presence managed to stabilize their left flank by drawing the fire of the crossbowmen from targeting their infantry to making the archers defend against them.

And thus once again the battle seemed to have entered a state of stalemate, as the exchange of archer fire resumed, while the bloody, brutal melee continued in the middle.

But in reality it only seemed like a stalemate, for under the calm, stable facade was brewing discontent and disillusionment, like cracks in a fragile pane of glass, as Faruq's men in the middle, the infantry, were slowly starting to buckle.

And the reason for the cause was surprisingly not because of the men themselves per se, who after their rest did have enough in the tank to go on for much longer, but actually, because of the men leading them.

Or particularly to whom they belonged, their particular lords.

"My lord, Ural, Liakit, and Nyantim have all retreated. Please give us the order to retreat too. This battle cannot be won." The one who said these brave words was another Jamider (Earl), and the man currently alive with the highest peerage after Faruq, and Ural.

And he was also the one who contributed the most number of infantry, close to around 8,000, which was no small number.

This Jamider (Earl) was also not alone and had come to pressure Faruq with a small entourage of his retainers, consisting of many Shordars (Barons) and Takulders (Viscounts).

"Yes, let us stop this senseless bloodshed. We are killing our men for nothing," And the one chosen to comment after the Jamider was strategically chosen, for this particular statement was uttered by a Talukder (Viscount) who was a peculiarity among the nobility.

This was because he was one of the rare handful of nobles who truly cared for the peasants under him.

And this man had even come to fight against Alexander because he truly believed he was the devil, oppressing and killing the people under him.

So, when even this staunch man advocated for a retreat, it sent a clear message to Faruq about the morale of the army.

After all, from their perspective, the nobles saw no point in losing their men over something they had little to no chance of achieving.

Not when these men were needed badly in the fields.

While these men petitioned for a withdrawal, Faruq felt a headache.

He knew a withdrawal would be almost certain political suicide for him, and so seeing the men standing in front of him urging him to do exactly so made his head hurt.

But these men also controlled a combined total of about seventeen thousand (17,000) infantry, and though they had handed over the command of their men to him for better coordination and maneuver, Faruq perfectly knew well that they could snatch it back any time they wanted.

Those men were loyal to their lords after all, and not him.

And so, Faruq could not outright dismiss them.

Thus instead he tried to convince them of the plan and urged them to hold strong only a little longer.

"The enemy is weak. Their center is already straining. Just give me a bit of time," He pleaded, and then enticed, "Remember all the riches that are waiting for you in the city. And the secret to all those strange weapons! It's all there waiting for you, just a fingertip away."

This seemed to work temporarily, as some of the nobles were convinced by the plan, some by the pleading, and some by greed.

So they grumbled, and mumbled, before ultimately nodding and then urging Faruq to do whatever he was going to do quickly.

Because they could not wait forever.

While this argument was going on the back between Faruq and the nobles, Menes on the other hand sent a critical message to Alexander.

"My lord, General Menes is certain the enemy infantry is weakening. And he is urging you to start the plan. The time is ripe!" The scout reported.

Alexander did not need any more encouragement, as he himself was getting a bit frustrated by the stalemate.

This was because if this continued, though he was confident the lines would hold, it was likely a second battle would take place tomorrow.

And he absolutely wanted to avoid that for just a while ago he received a message saying that three-quarters of the arrow had been already used up.

This meant that in the up until 8-hour battle, one and a half million (1.5 million) crossbow bolts had been let loose out of the total stock of 2 million.

So, if the battle dragged on until tomorrow, Alexander would have almost no arrows to counter the Jahal mercenaries.

And at that point, he might as well raise his hands up and surrender.

Plus, given that there was only about one to two hours before sundown, he decided it was now or never.

The exhausted troops would have to give it all now and here if they wanted to win.

"Okay! Have the 6th legion commence the maneuver as discussed," Alexander thus gave the command, detailing, "Let them swing around to hit the enemy's left flank. And also order the 6th, 7th, and 8th battalion of the 5th legion to aid in the attack."

Thus soon about 7,000 men were on their way to attack Faruq's left side.

While this transferring of forces was going on, Alexander also remembered to send greetings to the 3rd legion commander, reassuring him that he was close by in case of support, which managed to rouse the fighting spirit of the men fighting.

In fact, Alexander's presence so close to the frontlines boosted the morale of the army in general, the caveat being he was now arguably more vulnerable to enemy attacks.

Alexander's tactic certainly did not go unnoticed by the enemy, who had first thought that the enemy was routing, which led to a massive cheer from the infantry initially.

And for some time, even the ferocity of their attacks increased as they felt victory was just another spear thrust away.

But the 3rd legion had been trained in this maneuver and was able to hold on even without Alexander's intervention.

While the enemy, seeing that the formation was not breaking, and the soldiers were holding their grounds, soon ceased their reckless attack, many also running out of steam in the process.

"The right flank! Commander, they are going to attack the right flank!"

And after a while, when it became clear where the 6th legion was going, and as the 3 battalions of the 5th legion made contact with the exposed side of the left infantry, alarmed shouts began to sound all around Faruq.

"Quick! Sunash reinforce them! Reinforce them! Go now!" Faruq maddeningly shouted when he foresaw the imminent collapse of the army and tried to divert the reserve he had built up to plug that hole.

But Sunash seemed to disagree, saying, "That place is too congested. Our camels won't be able to get through in time."

"And as for swinging around to the right and then hitting them in the back, the enemy already has two and a half thousand (2,500) men there as rear guards. We won't be able to charge because of the flaming weapons and won't be able to break through them any time soon."

"Instead of telling me what you can't do, why don't you tell me what you can?" Irritated by Sanush dismissing his idea, and moreover frustrated by how the battle going Faruq hence shouted.

So Sunash suggested, "Let us attack the center as planned, and hope they break before we do."

Chapter 438 Battle Conclusion (Part-1)

Faruq deliberated on Sunash's hopeful suggestion for a bit.

It was this or going with his own plan where he would be just stopping the incoming collapse.

But that could not win the battle.

And thus ultimately decided to follow Sunaash, gambling everything on this dice roll.

Faruq knew that the battle could now be only won if the enemy made some major mistakes, and not by his own skill.

Hence, soon, the 2nd legion started to see camels in front of them, followed by a shower of javelins and spear attacks.

"Hold! Hold! Just a bit longer hold!" Seeing this Heliptos and most of the officers under him cried, encouraging and boasting the men.

These men had been going at it from the morning and most had lost their throats, sounding hoarse and gravely from the day-long shouting and urging.

While the men under them were scraping the bottom of the barrel to stay in the fight.

The men here had been fighting for close to 9 hours by now, and given that even just standing continuously for 9 hours would be tiring for anyone, the fact that these men were still able to lift a shield and thrust a sword proved their mettle.

Alexander could ask little more of them.

And this was not even mentioning that in the last few hours, they had been fighting double their numbers.

Thus some could say Sunash might actually have a chance there as even the toughest of warriors had their breaking point.

But those people were to be disappointed, as at last Alexander decided to commit his reserves there, commanding Grahtos, "Grahtos, go help Heliptos. The 2nd legion must hold! Fight hard man!"

The men and horses in the back had managed to recover some stamina in the meantime, and thus they were able to be deployed into battle, so soon 1,500 heavy cavalry was there to counter the camels.

"Hahaha, see boys, the cavalry is here. What are you afraid of? Hahaha," Heliptos loudly cheered while breathing a sigh of relief at the alleviation of pressure on his men, and then urged them with the single word, "Fight!"

And for the experienced veterans, that single word was enough, who did not need long speeches like the green peasants.

Thus both sides engaged in brutal melee, with the Jahal mercenaries being especially reckless against Grahtos and his men in order to try and avenge their fallen comrades.

But the heavy armor of Grahtos's men proved to be a hard target, and it seemed it would take some time for the mercenaries to work through them.

Time that they did not have as Alexander's 7,000 men had already struck the left flank and were pressuring them there.

The result of that collision was as one would expect.

The phalanx was far too vulnerable on the sides and the legionaries were able to through them that side like a hot knife through butter, as the phalangites proved themselves incapable of turning their spears around to effectively counter the threat.

Hence the death count was rapidly shooting up in that sector, and that side seemed minutes away from a collapse.

After all, neither the men nor the leadership there wanted to win at all costs.

Thus, as soon as the good news of Sunash hitting the 2nd legion reached Faruq, pleas for help from the right also began to haunt him, as the nobles informed him of their desire to retreat and save their men.

And Faruq had little answer to their pleas because his reserves were already committed elsewhere, who were busy engaging Alexander's men.

So even if he could move some men to temporarily buttress the situation, Alexander could do the same, balancing the equation once again.

Hence the man could only plea, order, and urge the lords to hold on a bit longer, promising them he needed just a few more minutes to break the enemy and win.

Meanwhile, he also sent messenger after messenger to Sanush to try harder to break the enemy, but the temporary mercenary leader was already doing the best he could.

The main thing was that it just naturally took a while to grind through six and a half thousand men (6,500), even if one outnumbered the other 2 to 1.

Thus Faruq's few minutes never arrived and the promised time then turned to tens of minutes and then close to an hour.

By which point the sun was already close to setting, and dusk seemed to be apidly encroaching upon the day.

Soon the day would end, and so if the battle was not decided within the next half an hour, it might as well drag into tomorrow.

Which would be a nightmare for both sides.

Alexander due to his arrow shortage, and Faruq due to his loss of morale in today's battle, which would make it hard, if not impossible for him to convince the various nobles to mount another attack tomorrow.

But just as things were starting to look like it would go that way,

Blare!, *Blare!*, *Blare!*

Alas for Faruq, his center-right column was ultimately unable to hold, as trumpets blared out to signal the retreat.

This was done arbitrarily by the officers and nobles in the front without consulting Faruq, not that it would have mattered anyway because the men in those formations had already begun to ignore their officers' orders to stay and fight, and had begun to rout.

"No! Stay! Don't run!"

"Strenght! Show strength!"

"Just a bit more. Endure a bit more!"

"The sun! Look at the sun! We can win!"

"Bastards. I will hang all of you fucking traitors,"

"Traitors! All of you are fucking traitors,"

The various officers and nobles began to try all kinds of different techniques to convince the peasants to stay, from pleading, to urging, to ordering to threatening.

But all such coercion proved to be too ineffective against the might of the sword and shield of the legionary.

The average peasant did not really care who won or lost.

They only came here or were forced to come here under the orders of their lords

And thus, when the fear for their lives ultimately reached a critical point, they had no concern about the overall situation on the battlefield, i.e- whether the sun was setting, rising or even being eaten by a giant serpent.

They only cared about surviving right now, at this moment.

And thus the peasants ran, starting from around the infantry unit whose flank was under attack from the 6th legion, the panic then spreading to the back units, and then to the sides, until ultimately the entire center was no more.

And the routing of around thirty thousand (30,000) men was a scene to behold.

Viewed from above it would have looked like a fall of dominos, where at first only a tiny phalanx square disintegrated into a trickle of tiny, black dots, and that trickle then spread to other phalanx units, and then other, and then other, until the trickle turned to a pond, then a river, and then turning to a full fledged sea of people all running for their lives in all directions in panic.

This was because the sight of one panicked man urged the others who saw him to do the same, which in turn made more people follow that group, and then even more, until everyone broke formation and dropped everything to run away in fear.

This was called a rout and it was happening right in front of Alexander, as each man fought for himself, pushing, shoving, and even tackling others in an effort to be the first one to escape into the safety of their camp.

In fact, there was so much confusion and chaos on the battlefield that some nobles and officers were even killed by their own forces, either by being pushed down and then trampled to death or even by being mistaken as the opposing forces and being struck down.

There was even one noble whose own standard bearer somehow mistook him for the enemy through all the dust and charged him with the pointed part of the pole.

But Fortunately for the noble, one of his bodyguards managed to get between the two and managed to promptly cut off the attacker's hand, thus saving his master's life.

Similar scenarios played out all along the one-and-a-half kilometer (1.5km) front, as the retreating soldiers caused more death and damage to their own forces in the few minutes it took to reach their own camp than Alexander's men had been able to inflict in the close to 10-hour struggle.

But this was the norm as it was really hard to cause much death when the soldiers fought in formation, which was why they fought in formations.

And the real casualties were death only when the enemy was running away, where one could catch them off guard and vulnerable.

As the peasants ran, Alexander's forces for their part also showed no mercy to these feeling cowards, running ahead to try and catch as many as possible

But all of them were tired as dogs to give any meaningful chase, and besides, the entire solid ground had been long ago turned to mud by the trampling of so many feet.

So, many were able to escape by the grace of it, while many others slipped and fell down into the mud, before being stamped to death by the panicking men.

Or they broke his legs or simply got stuck in the knee-high mud, which many might mistake as quicksand.

Thus the mud giveth and the mud taketh away.

Chapter 439 Battle Conclusion (Part-2)

Faruq could do nothing but stand like a wooden block as he witnessed with muted shock his army dissolve right in front of him.

"Greed! The gods are punishing me for my greed!" He lamented in a low, silenced breath.

He said this because he realized that if he had committed his reserves to strengthening the sector where he was being attacked, instead of trying to win, then though he might not have won, he would not have lost either.

For by the time Alexander would have finished chewing through the large contingent of men there, dusk would have already descended and the battle would have had to stop.

In fact, if Faruq had been able to hold on just for another hour, Alexander's men would have been simply too tired to fight even if a huge opportunity presented to themselves.

But there were no 'buts and if' in life.

Faruq was certainly enticed by Sunash, but ultimately it was him that made his own choice.

So, he had no option but to accept the result, no matter how mortifying it might be.

While one side drowned itself in sadness and regret, the other side was dousing itself with happiness, elation, relief, and all other kinds of emotion that produced dopamine.

"Over! Finally it's over, ahhhhh," Grahtos simply slumped over his horse in exhaustion after releasing a cry of exhaustion, feeling like he would not be able to feel a thing even if someone hacked at his body.

His muscles ached like never before and his eyes felt like they were being pulled downwards by elephants.

It simply took the man all his energy just to stay awake.

And such similar events replayed across the battle.

All the infantry sat on their butts before taking off their helmets to try and cool down, as they huffed and puffed with lethargy.

Many even laid straight down on the mud and closed their eyes, wanting to take a nap then there.

The infantry would scarcely believe that they had survived the battle from almost dawn to dusk.

It was a brutal fight no matter how one saw it.

And the 2nd legion was especially tired, as evidenced by how most of the men already drifting to sleep.

The situation on the flanks was also no different.

The ten thousand (10,000) crossbowmen had finally managed to survive the onslaught that lasted for 10 hours, a feat that even they themselves were having a hard time believing they had somehow managed to accomplish.

And as they rested their brushed plam, some even bleeding from them as they had overworked their hands when reloading the crossbow, they reminisced how there were many points along the battle that looked really dicey for them.

But the solid pavises and the range and accuracy of the huge crossbows proved to be the decisive factor, able to outrange and outperform their enemies while soaking all the damage thrown at them.

And the enemy did throw everything they had at them, as evidenced by how the two flanks were littered with broken bits of arrow shafts, iron heads, and lead and stone stones, while the pavises in the front line had to be challenged about every hour because they would become like tattered paper by then.

The crossbowmen deserved all rest they wanted because as green peasants, it was very impressive for them to withstand the withering arrow fire.

And it would not be controversial to say that though it was the infantry who ultimately routed the enemy, it was the crossbowmen who were the real MVP of the battle, as it was them who kept the Jahal mercenaries at bay, and enabled the infantry to do their job.

And lastly, there were the officers and higher-ups, all of whom had not fought in the frontlines with shields and swords per se, but almost all of whom had very broken and sore throats by this point.

Shouting commands, singing encouraging songs, and bolstering the men to fight on was no child's play.

Among them, the highest one, Alexander even had stinging pain in his thighs, as a spear thrust had accidentally managed to go through all three layers of his armor to produce a wound.

It was a mild wound, nothing serious, but that did not mean it did not hurt, especially when he rode his horse as it caused his thighs to move about.

But for now that little bit of pain was drowned out the relief he was feeling.

The battle was closer than he would have liked, but nevertheless, he did it.

At last he did it.

He won.

And thus he managed to save all those he loved and cared about.

And to reinforce this fact Alexander stared almost blankly at the field in front of him, where the enemy soldiers were running away like headless chickens, while the biggest threat on the battlefield, the Jahal mercenaries stood in the middle of the field, begrudgingly staring at the army with hate-filled malice.

To think one day they would be defeated by an outnumbered foe in a straight-up open battle.

And they even lost their leader in the process.

It was a humiliating fiasco for them.

"Master, the enemy is weak and has his guard down. Give us the order to attack!" Sunash suddenly urged Faruq in a boisterous voice, the zeal and desire to battle in his tone palpable.

To an outsider, it might seem the Jahal mercenaries were fresh as daisies, ready to fight for another 10 hours if need be.

Whereas the reality was the exact opposite.

They were just as exhausted as all the other men, with most being barely able to hold onto their camel's harness.

They had no energy to shoot arrows.

Not that they had much left anyway, as only they had shot around 3 million of the wooden thing with a metal pointy thing at the enemy.

While Lord Liakit's archers had shot another 1 million, totaling the gross arrow count to around 4 million, which was double Alexander's estimated used crossbow bolts numbering 2 million, or almost double the entirety of the latter's stock.

And then there was the consideration of the camels, who desperately needed food and water, and most importantly rest.

They might be called the ships of the deserts, but they were not literally so and thus were not able to move day and night like a ship.

Sunash certainly knew this as he himself was in a similar state, so why did he make the promise?

Because under that facade of confidence and zeal, there was a bubbling mass of fear and uncertainty.

He knew Faruq likely blamed him for the loss, if not fully then at least partially for diverting the reserves elsewhere.

And though it was totally Faruq who fully sanctioned this, well Faruq was the lord and he was just a mercenary.

So whose words held more weight?

"Heh, what are you doing acting so high and mighty? If you had listened to Master Faruq, we would not have lost!" And this sentiment was precisely expressed by Jabad, as he shot down Sunash.

And the reason for so was obvious, to pull down Sunash and elevate his position in the mercenary group.

Thus it appeared that even before his father's body had gotten cold, power struggles within the group had already taken birth, and Sunash would have to from now contend with these vultures determined to strike him down.

And what was worse was that their lord, Faruq, and by extension, Djose was likely against him, as evidenced by Faruq saying, "Jabad, I will leave the rescue of the wounded and the retrieval of the important bodies to you, Pay special care when handling your father."

It sounded as if Faruq regarded Jabad as Azab's real son, rather than a son-in-law.

"Yes, my lord, rest assured," This detail was certainly missed by no one, especially not Sinash and Jabad, who produced completely different reactions, Jabad a huge grin, and Sunash a stoic, hurt face.

The latter had not gotten to even start mourning his father and his position in the mercenary was already looking precarious.

'The bastard likely wishes to sacrifice me to save his own hide,' Sunash guessed what Faruq was thinking.

And he hit the bullseye on this one as Faruq certainly wanted to sell the story of being misled by Sunahs to his father to come out of this situation alive.

And sure even that would get him a good licking, but it was better than being held fully responsible for today's fiasco.

Thus, correctly guessing this, Sunash was now in flight mode, as he thought about how to escape this trap before the mouth fully closed.

Alexander did not know all these inside stories, instead, he only saw the bulk of the Jahal mercenaries finally retreat to their camp, leaving only a few to collect the important dead bodies.

And Alexander let them do that as they wished, both because it was the custom, and because he had no way to stop them.

Instead, seeing this he breathed a sigh of relief, as he was previously afraid maybe the mercenaries might try one last time.

And though that would not have likely worked, as his 40,000 soldiers would take some time to chew through even if they just stood still, and the dusk would make their visibility and thus aim almost zero, still it was a possible threat.

A possible threat that was now gone, finally indicating the end of the battle.

"Get the men up, collect the dead and wounded, and escort the prisoners," Hence Alexander commanded.

Chapter 440 Battle Conclusions (Part-3)

As dusk settled, troops from both sides returned to their respective camps, eager to rest their sore bodies.

In Faruq's camp, there was a general gloom and disheartenment for having lost the battle, as the soldiers treated to their injuries.

While the higher-ups were getting themselves ready to meet with Faruq and discuss their future offensive.

Or more specifically, what was the fastest time they could board the ships?

Because most nobles saw no point in continuing his battle.

While in Alexander's camp, the strongest emotion was not ecstasy, but exhaustion and relief.

It was a brutal slugfest and the men right now wanted nothing more than to just have their supper and then get back to their tents and rest their heads on the pillow.

In fact, even food might not be as enticing as the sweet release of sleep.

So, contrary to the popular belief that Alexander's side would be filled with loud boisterous cheers and the jubilant glow of drinking and other various celebrations, it was rather quiet, as the men simply rested their tired bodies and silently eat their hot porridge.

As a matter of fact, it was with the enticement of the flavourful food being cooked by the camp's slaves and servants that Alexander's tired men found the strength to exit the battlefield in the first place, but before also taking the captured prisoners with them.

These POWs amounted to about fourteen thousand (14,000), consisting of mainly charioteers, and infantry.

The charioteers had been already captured earlier, but the infantry was caught in a couple of ways.

They were captured either when they surrendered, when they were too injured to escape, when they were simply too tired to run, when they fell into the mud and could not free themselves, and lastly when they were simply captured by Alexander's men.

And these men's fate would mostly be to be turned into hard-manual labor slaves, made to work physically intensive sectors such as the fields, mines, and quarries.

Though some might be exchanged for ransoms.

As the huge group of men made their way to their camp and the servants and slaves there got to work taking care of these tired men, the problem of where to stage all the prisoners came up.

Fourteen thousand (14,000) was not a small number.

And so seeing the camp getting cramped trying to accommodate them, Alexander decided to send the prisoners into the city itself as it was just a short walk away.

Also to make sure that none ran, he had a contingent of around 5,000 men escort them.

"Also tell Cambyses to send 5,000 men from the city garrison," Alexander instructed this to Grahtos, who was leading the escort of prisoners.

Alexander wanted to use these men to reinforce his camp and guard against any night attacks.

And the reason for not using the army present was because Alexander feared his men might be too tired for sentry duty.

Though it had to be said that the chance of a night attack was very unlikely, as the enemy was just as tired as them, and any attack had very little likelihood of succeeding and would rather only drain their energy even more.

But still, Alexander wanted to be on the side of caution.

If he somehow lost the battle after coming so far, he would not have any place to hold his regret.

"Yes, my lord," Grahtos accepted the order still seemingly full of energy, and he was off.

While Alexander finally got his wounds dressed.

The hole poked around his thigh was relatively small as was usual for a spear thrust, amounting to around an inch in diameter.

Since the wound was so small, Alexander felt it did not need to be cauterized, and so after taking off his bronze plate, linen padding, and chainmail, Alexander simply cleaned the wound with hot water, then dressed it with a strong spirit, which stung a whole lot but Alexander could do nothing but bear with it, and then finally bandaged the fresh wound himself.

The whole thing took about 10 minutes and few people even got to even know that Alexander was hurt in the first place.

"You are hurt!" But one of the people who did get to know was Cambyses, who had decided to come and visit him in the camp as soon as Grahtos met with her.

She, like much of the people in the city, was very worried about the results of the battles which would likely decide their fates.

And so she had even stood atop the walls of Zanzan the whole time watching the battle play out, even though she could not see much.

As from that far away, the human eye could only vaguely pick out two opposing lines of blue and a mix of different colors, indicating the liveries of Alexander's monolithic forces, and the various mixtures of different noble houses.

But even then, before coming here Cambyses at least knew they had not lost.

This was because she had noticed the blue lines retreated later than the mixture color lines, which usually was very good news.

Though she was prudent enough not to say it out aloud in the city without knowing the details.

And the chance to know those details came soon, around the time she was having supper in her office, as Batholomew came to inform her that Grahtos had entered the city with around 14,000 prisoners.

"We won!" That was the first thing she had cheered, as the losing side did not usually take prisoners.

And so leaving her half-eaten food still on the table Cambyses ran out to meet the man.

".....And that is it, my lady," Grahtos first gave a short summarised version of the battle, and then ultimately made the request Alexander instructed him to make.

"Bartholomew, you arrange it. I will go see Alex," But instead of dealing with it for herself, Cambyses simply dumped the load into her deputy's lap, and soon took a horse escorted by a few city guards right to the camp.

She wanted to see the situation for herself, and hear about the victory from the man himself.

Cambyses had no problem with security there as at least one of the guards along the various checkpoints at least knew her or of her, and so she was even able to directly enter Alexander's camp without his permission, a power granted to no other.

And as she entered, there she was her husband with his right thigh bandaged, which naturally alarmed her.

"Yeah, I led a cavalry charge and got hit. Not too big a wound though," Alexander very nonchalantly told her about how he got the wound.

There was little point in trying to hide it from his wife, one whom he would sleep it, after all.

"Tsk, why did you have to lead? Why could you not let Hemicus do it?" Cambyses furrowed her eyebrows in worry and displeasure.

She naturally did not like to see Alexander put himself in danger.

"Who says I didn't?" And Alexander gently shot back, saying, "I had Hemicus switch places with me. And for that, the man got three piercings, one on the shoulder, one on the sides, and one on the legs. Well, three that I could see."

"..." Cambyses could then only stay quiet, understanding such was the norm, and would be the norm for the foreseeable future.

She had naively assumed that after Alexander became a noble, he would not maybe have to fight on the frontlines, but the circumstances proved her otherwise.

Thus she decided to switch to a much happier topic, and she bought out the dinner she had hastily packed for Alexander before coming here.

And as Alexander ate, he asked about the general situation in the city, about Mean and Ophenia, and if there had been any attacks in the southern sector.

"No, there was nothing." Cambyses succinctly replied, before asking with much trepidation, "Alex, is the battle over? Have we won?"

The hope and anticipation in her voice was thick and palpable.

".... maybe. Unless the enemy gets reinforcement." Alexander sided on the side of caution before arbitrarily declaring he had won.

The Jahal mercenaries were still a threat given Alexander was almost out of arrows.

But in general, he was optimistic about his chances, as even if the opposing side decided to give him a fight, he could make them bleed.

And if worst came to worst, he could retreat back to the city, build up his stock, and then sally out to again face them in battle.

If he could win once, he could do it again.

But such options were kept close to his heart, as for now Alexander only said to his soldiers to rest and get ready for any potential enemy attacks.

While he himself decided to call a late-night meeting with his commanders.

"So, what about the casualty counts?" This was the thing Alexander was most interested in.

And Menes gave a quick answer,

"From the infantry, we have 274 dead and 659 wounded, the latter of whom are being treated in the medical clinic."

"From the crossbowmen, we have 103 dead and 1,673 wounded, with the latter number being so large is because it includes even minor injuries such as a swollen arm or a sprained hand." Menes explained, detailing, "The truly wounded number is much smaller, at around 500, and mostly includes arrows around the torso and heart."

"At lastly from the cavalry part, the dead number is 17, while the wounded is 34."