

Herald 471

Chapter 471 Farzah's Zanzan Visit (Part-2)

Lady Inayah and her family could be said to be the real people looking after the royal family's coffers.

A task they had done for generations.

They also controlled the main port of Adhan, which was located in their largest city, Aprifah which was north of Agnirat and it was mainly from there Adhan shipped all its goods in and out of the province.

Furthermore, the current head of the house, Iyazid was Ptolomy's economic minister, or Treasury Master as the title went, and it was him that had instructed his daughter who controlled the port city of Agnirat to come to Zanzan and determine all the new goods it supposedly was creating after he got the information from Ptolomy.

It seemed that Alexander had barely got his industry going and already hungry bees were gathering to it.

Whether good or bad was yet to be seen.

"My dear Alexander, my fleets seemed to be only coming to you the past few months, hehe," The black, mature beauty greeted Alexander with a large smile, as she disembarked, alluding to the fact that her fleet had first dropped off Alexander in Zanzan in November, then returned with the Thesians in March, and was again back here in May.

This movement had actually disrupted some of the lady's trade.

"My apologies. It has been really a hectic few months for Lord Karvish. We are very grateful for you lending us the ships, Lady Inayah," Alexander gently smiled the reply and even bowed a bit, showing his sincerity.

But Lady Inayah appeared to possess truly a lot of ships, as among the 150 ships here, Alexander estimated around 80 to be Lady Inayah's personal fleets, as he even recognized some of the more familiar ships from their previous trips.

It seemed even the fabled Pasha Farzah did not have enough ships to accommodate all the goods he was caring by himself.

So Alexander then added, "And I should apologize that there were even a few ships lost due to tasks assigned by me. I hope the lady doesn't mind."

Though this was only polite talk, as Alexander had made sure to reimburse her to the fullest, and even some more,

And so the beautiful lady only put her hands over her lips and coyly said, "Oh, Alexander you polite boy, think nothing of it."

Finally, done with all pleasantries, Alexander then gestured the guests to board the carriages arranged for them, while the dock workers led by Heliptos worked to unload the gigantic amount of cargo placed near their shores.

And thus, with a large number of armed escorts, Alexander at last took his guests back to the mansion, where a grand meal awaited them.

Meats were the highlight of the feast, including roasted boar, venison, lamb, and poultry, cooked and seasoned with an array of herbs and spices, which offered a symphony of flavors.

Accompanying the meats were an assortment of side dishes, such as vegetables, grains, and legumes, made in exotic dishes which showcased the culinary skills of the kitchen staff.

And finally, various elaborate pies and pastries filled with a mixture of meats, fruits, and spices were served as desserts, while wine and ale flowed freely.

But the most eye-catching part of the feast was not the food itself, but what it was served on- clear glass.

In fact, everything on the table was made of glass.

The bowls the dishes were served on were made of heavy crystalline glass, the plates were intricately designed with clear glass patterns, and the crystalline goblets were made of bristol glass, which seemed to especially mesmerize the group as the light bent through it in beautiful patterns.

"So, Mikaya was telling the truth. Zanzan can make clear glass," Pasha Farzah did not hold back his candid praise as he drowned his drink from the glass, before sending Alexander a knowing glance, as if asking the man whether he understood the implication of this material he had invented that was seen as valuable as gold.

And this was how the first day of Pasha Farzah's visit to Zanzan ended, with drinks, food, and wine, as the old man retired early to his quarters, being tired from the long journey, but not before taking three courtesans that Alexander had arranged for him to bed.

Seeing this, Alexander had even commented in his heart, 'Old man, you aren't that young, Aren't you afraid of embarrassing yourself?'

But it was apparently not the case, as the pasha seemed to be old but not impotent, for the courtesans would later confide to Ophenia about being sore down there, who would then jokingly let Alexander know afterward in between talks.

As such, with Farzah's merriments late into the night making him wake up late, and Alexander hosting his council meeting in the morning, the real meeting between the two men only began the following midday, after another round of heavy meals.

"I brought a bit more than you requested. Hope you can check that." Pasha Farzah began as he leaned back on the comfortable couch in Alexander's study, taking a sip of sweet wine.

"Yes. Though I would have appreciated it more if you had bought the amount I wanted sooner. That would have really helped." From the opposite end of the table, Alexander languidly replied, similarly having a wine goblet in his hand.

The young man did not forget to air his grievance to the older man even when everything Alexander had ordered was increased by around a quarter as reported by Heliptos.

To which Pasha Farzah only shrugged his shoulders and replied almost nonchalantly, "What do you want me to say? I simply did not think you would survive."

Pasha Farzah might have bought more goods as an apology, but there was no hint of regret in his speech.

The man seemed to think he had made the correct choice based on the information he had on hand.

And then, as if to smooth over Alexander's bitterness at being abandoned, he raised his glass and frankly admitted "And I'm glad I was wrong," as he then toasted, "So congratulations on your win, brat! Good job!"

It seemed that Pasha Farzah had given Alexander the endearment of 'brat', something he had heard only the pasha call the twins by.

Either this was a frank reveal of Farzah's fondness towards him, or a cunning strategy to smooth over the recent rough patch.

But whichever it was, Alexander had no choice but to accept the outcome, as he let go of his grievance by saying,

"Hmmp, well I'm glad that at least you are here. If you were just a week late, I would have likely starved."

Alexander here exaggerated his food situation.

And Pasha Farzah only chuckled the reply, "Well then it's a good thing I bought you four who...women to eat,"

He changed that word at the last second while he made the dirty joke to liven the mood.

While Alexander had no problem recognizing which four Pasha Farzah was talking about.

'So what is up with Nanazin here? Wasn't she supposed to only come in August?' Alexander asked curiously, as the deal was that Seelima and Hellma would return to Adhan during the Jtaama held in September, and they would be replaced by Nanazin and her kids.

But she was three months early.

"*Sigh*, if she had waited till August, she might have come in a coffin," The aged pasha here could only let out a helpless sigh as he subconsciously shook his head, which made Alexander raise an eyebrow.

The first thought that ran through his mind was Nanazin was being tried for treason, but quickly discarded the thought because he would have certainly known about something like that.

"Is Ptolomy being that abusive?" So Alexander felt this was the most probable answer, for Nanazin had told him how the man liked to humiliate her in various ways, and this was confirmed by Farzah's nod.

Though the old man did not go into further detail as he felt that would be in poor taste.

So instead he said,

"By the way, I will have to take Seelima and Hellma when I return. That was the only way I could get him to agree to let Nanazin and the kids go. You don't mind do you?"

"Sure." Alexander readily agreed as he felt that even if let the hostages go, Ptolomy was unlikely to stab him in the back.

This confidence mainly came from Pasha Farzah, who was unlikely to let Ptolomy do anything stupid, something Alexander did not have when he first made the deal as he had yet to meet the man back then.

While Alexander was also of the opinion that the Queen Mother might willingly come back soon afterward to keep an eye on all the new inventions Alexander was making.

At least, Seelima had shown herself to be highly interested in observing and understanding the works of Alexander in the meantime, something which Alexander had cleverly avoided until now.

"So, what should I do with her and her kids now?" Alexander then posed this to Pasha Farzah regarding Nanazin, as the old man simply shrugged his shoulders and replied,

"Whatever you want. Use, discard, or even kill them if you want. Ptolomy doesn't care. You won't even have to return them if you don't want to."

He seemed to represent Ptolomy's will.

Alexander accepted this answer with a nod, while he thought of a way how to use make her useful

And soon a thought came to him, -Put her in charge of the banks.

Chapter 472 Zanzan City Tour (Part-1)

After taking his throne, Ptolomy had begun to see Nanazin and the three girls as more and more of an eyesore.

Or more accurately he began to take action against these people whom he had already seen as eye sores, as he could not even send them to the military as they were not boys.

And so when Pasha Farzah offered to take them off his hand, and even promised to get the two women he loved in exchange, Ptolomy felt Christmas had come early.

While Alexander who was at the receiving of the deal also considered it to be a fruitful exchange, as he felt the problem he was having about who to put the bank in charge of was also likely solved.

Alexander had wanted to look for a reliable, trustworthy, and educated person to oversee the bank, a search that he thought would have been very hard as checking all three criteria was quite tough.

But seemingly that was very easily solved.

Nanazin was certainly educated and given that the woman had no one but Alexander to rely on, it meant the lady was very unlikely to betray him.

And so given that she agrees, Alexander was of the mind to put her in charge of the banks.

But that decision was for a later time, as currently Alexander was still with Pasha Farzah, and decided to move on to other topics.

Pasha Farzah first asked about Mikaya and the twins, and whether they had been well, to which Alexander replied with a light smile, "They seem much happier now than they had been in the past," which carried a double meaning Farzah was unable to understand.

And only returned with a smile, "Good, good. I'm particularly glad that you managed to get Azira and Azura reinstated into the temple."

He then proceeded to ask about a whole host of things, starting from the challenges Alexander faced when he first came here, to knowing about how he solved the plague, to the various challenges he faced in administrating the city, up to the new things produced in Zanzan, and lastly about the battle itself.

Alexander answered some, avoided some, and flat-out lied about others.

Particularly when asked about the inventions, Alexander gave the convenient excuse that he found everything in the books from Muazz's library.

This was very convenient because if anyone wanted to ask to see the book, he could simply say that it was Zanzan's secret and deny it.

Hence nobody could ever prove or disprove its existence.

"So....about all the new things, how much are you selling?" Pasha Farzah at last got to the main point he had been circling around, as he pointedly posed the question.

While Alexander only laughed and asked, "Which ones?"

"Everything." Came the quick reply, as the Pasha Farzah looked at Alexander with greed.

He had read about all the new things Alexander had made and even seen with his own eyes a lot of the things mentioned in Mikaya's letters, and he could not wait to get his hands on them.

"Haha, then I will give you a list of all the prices. You can go over them in your leisure," Alexander lightly smiled the reply, and with a few more light pleasantries, decided to end their talk for the day, as it was already approaching dinner time.

Pasha Farzah would get his list soon after the meals were finished, as Alexander had prepared the list beforehand, which read the following:

Iron ingot (per kg) - 30 ropals

Steel ingot (weapon) per kg- 60 ropals

Paper (5 sq m)- 15 ropals

Glass- Weight in Silver or gold depending on the type.

Soap (per piece)- 100 ropals

Salt (per ton)- 1,000 ropals

Sugar (per ton)- 100,000 ropals

Fabric- Negotiable

The listing that Alexander gave was truly meant to skin Pasha Farzah off, it's just that the man did not know it.

Because for reference, these were the costs of each of the products:

Iron ingot (per kg) - 1.5 ropals

Steel ingot (weapon) per kg- 2.5 ropals

Paper (5 sq m)- 4 ropals

Glass- Few ropals per piece.

Soap (per piece)- 10-20 ropals depending on the type of soap

Salt (per ton)- 30 ropals.

Sugar (per ton)- 3,000 ropals.

From here it could be seen that Alexander had decided to price the goods on average 15 to 20 times the original cost, with the smallest being with paper at about 4 times, and with sugar being the biggest at 33 times.

So in percentage terms this was an average 1,500% to 2,000% markup.

Alexander clearly was not the type to live and forget.

Rather he could be described as a petty, vindictive man by many, intent on making the other party pay for whatever injustice was done to him when the situation provided itself.

And though Pasha Farzah likely knew about Alexander's pettiness, he was still unaware of the extent of it, for if Pasha Farzah knew about the ridiculous markup Alexander was suggesting, the old man might have had a heart attack.

So it was quite fortunate that he didn't, and so Farzah would seriously muse over the listed pricing over the night, and then again meet with Alexander the next morning to discuss it further.

But this time this meet-up would not be in Alexander's study.

"Today I was thinking of taking your lordship out into the city. Let you give a tour of the city and see all the new things being made." Alexander suggested, adding, "And perhaps you can even give me some suggestions on how to make it better."

Alexander said this, but what he really wanted to do was show off Zanzan's progress.

"Oh? Does that include that restricted area at the back of the house? Because I'm really interested in all the new things being made there." While Pasha Farzah was very direct with revealing where his true intentions lay, which was something that made Alexander's lips twitch.

That was a place only two people could go in and out without restriction, him and Cambyses.

Alexander would not even let Ptolomy enter.

"I can see Lady Mikaya is a filial daughter," Alexander dryly replied, while Pasha Farzah let out a huge roar.

"Hahaha, it seems that place really is your soul forge."

In Adhania, the soul forge was the concept of where the soul was housed inside the body, and it basically meant a weak point.

"....." Alexander only gave a placid smile, at the request he understood to be now a joke, as he then gestured the burly man to follow him to the outside.

And once the duo was outside, right past the door was waiting for them an open-top carriage similar to the one used in Alexander's wedding, pulled by four, graceful white beasts.

"Your Graces, are you heading to town?"

But just as they were about to approach the carriage, the graceful voice of whom Alexander recognized as Lady Inayah called out to them from behind.

And when Alexander turned, he noticed that she was being accompanied by the Queen Mother and Nanazin.

"Good morning, Your Grace, Your Highnesses," Alexander referred the former to Lady Inayah, and the latter to both Seelima and Nanazin, before addressing Lady Inayah,

"I'm sorry I've been too busy to keep you company. Work is no excuse to fail to entertain guests."

"Haha, no worries, no worries. I have been entertaining myself with that card game you made," Lady Inayah only replied with a candid laugh, before asking,

"If Your Graces are leaving for town, may we accompany you? I've had not had a chance to see the city and been dying to."

"Of course, of course," Alexander felt he could not really decline the request, and so enthusiastically replied, as he then turned to Pasha Farzah to ask, "That is if that's all right with you, my lord,"

Pasha Farzah naturally did not have a reason to object, and so soon the five people sat comfortably in the spacious open carriage, being pulled by the best horses of Zanzan, and guarded by Zanzan's finest.

And within a short time, the group was racing through the western residential district, which was the mouth of the exit from Alexander's mansion.

And as the four-wheeled transpired moved across the smooth road, Pasha Farzah was the first to comment on the surface they were traveling over.

"Alxx, what is this road made of? I noticed the same white stuff was in the harbor" He curiously asked.

Alxx's road was made of primarily stone but had a thin upper layer of cement as a kind of varnish to give a nice finish, and as the road was brand new, having been laid just a month ago, the cement layer was still visible.

"That's right. I noticed it too. At first I thought it was marble, but it's not," From the opposite side Lady Inayah too wanted to hear the answer.

And it made Alxx ponder on how he should answer.

Because discerning readers might have noticed that Alexander had not listed cement for sale.

This was both because he needed every ouch of the stuff for himself, and also because he saw cement was the greatest invention out of everything out there.

Alexander knew that using Portland cement, building fortresses even impregnable by all gunpowder cannons was possible, and so he was of the mind to never allow that recipe to fall into anyone's hand, not even his allies.

Alexander would sooner give up the recipe of crystalline sugar and even glass before he gave up that recipe.

Chapter 473 The Apartment Blocks (Part-1)

Alexander thought for a while about how to answer.

And ultimately decided to answer frankly.

This thing would be ultimately very hard to conceal, so he saw little point in hiding.

While also there was the fact that Alexander had plans to bring up a collaboration between Pasha Farzah, Lady Inayah, and him using this material.

So they would get to know about it sooner or later.

"This is called cement. It is a new type of mortar we found in Zanzan," He breezily answered, and then explained, "The engineers found that the stuff easily binds with stone. And so we decided to use it to make roads."

Alexander said the whole thing so lightly that he was seemingly not putting too much importance on the invention.

And the other members' curiosity also died down quite a bit hearing that, as they also had mortars of their own.

Though comparing their mortar to Alexander's would be like comparing a horse carriage to a supercar.

Yes, they were both four-wheeled vehicles capable of transporting men and material.

But there was a huge difference in how they did it.

For instance, these ancient mortars were made of crushed gypsum with water or even just clay, and their binding power with other materials was so weak that they could have never been used to make roads as quickly as Alexander did.

To put it into some context how fast Alexander could make the roads, the Roman could build their 5m wide roads at 1,5m per worker per day, whereas Alexander could make his 8m wide roads at close to 3m per worker per day.

This was possible because, unlike the Romans, Alexander did not need to repeat many of the processes multiple times to ensure a smooth finish.

He would simply use the cement to bind everything and then use a heavy roller to flatten the structure.

In fact, if he had been able to use just concrete to make the road, he would have easily boosted that 3m per worker stat up to 10 or 15m.

But this fact was unknown to the other four, and would remain so for a while more, as would the world as a whole.

For now though, the open-top carriage slowly made its way through the largely shabby part of the town, the western district, which was ironic given it had been once designated by Alexander as the residential district, meant to house the public in a huge sprawling housing complex.

It was to be Alexander's magnum opus, showing to the world how Zanzan had transformed the squalid, slum, ridden city into a clean, thriving metropolitan.

The original plan had been to create a series of 4 story apartment blocks reminiscent of the old Soviet-style housing arrangement, with the ultimate goal of housing all the city's residents there.

But due to various factors, such as war, lack of materials, and other priorities, the project had been delayed again and again.

And it was only now that the project was picking up a bit of steam, as Alexander had designated men but more importantly a significant part of his cement production to the effort.

Some of the results of which he was already beginning to see as Alexander could spot a scant few sprinkling of the first concrete buildings rising up into the horizon.

But they were very very few in total numbers, being one of the very firsts of their kind, as for now, most of this part of the city still had mostly tents plopped all around, with some wooden houses also beginning to sprout up.

These belonged to a variety of classes of people, from the homeless, to slaves who were quartered here, to even housing the workers working on the housing project.

And Alexander for his part had allowed them to squat here, mostly because space in the city was limited, and decided to turn a blind eye to this until he could build up the buildings to relocate them there.

But even then, it would be wrong for Alexander to beat himself too much.

The time he had to develop was tiny- only six months, and even then, a 16 metre building made of brick, cement, and stone was very impressive to look at.

Something that even the Queen mother had her eyes drawn to when they were passing across one of them., as she pointed her finger and asked, "Lord Alexander, what are these buildings? I saw quite a few of them along."

She had been meaning to ask about the buildings for a while and finally could not withhold her curiosity.

Alexander turned to look at the building the exotic lady was pointing to, which had clearly been only very recently finished as evidenced by the absence of any paint on the walls, and even any window panels for that matter.

For now, it appeared only the bare skeleton of the building had been constructed.

"Oh that! I'm building these buildings to rent to the workers. I think they will be much better than the shambling shacks they used to live in before." Alexander frankly revealed.

And it appeared that it was something Pasha Farzah seemed to very much agree with.

"Oh! Alexander, you really have an eye for these things. Nice! Very Nice!" He praised with heavy nods as he then like a true moneybag, simply asked,

"Matrak could certainly use something like that. So how much does this cement cost? I saw you did not list it in the price list."

It appeared the pasha was of the mind to replicate these structures in Matrak, where temperatures in winter would reach as low as -20 degrees Celcius, and wanted Alexander to simply quote a price for this new mortal.

Which made Alexander inwardly groan, 'I really should invent Roman concrete.'

Alexander had known long ago that hiding the existence of cement was not possible given the extent of infrastructure development going on in Zanzan.

And so Alexander was of the mind to at least offer a substitute of cement to stave off the vultures who would be coming for this white powder.

To that effect, he had been trying to find the ingredients.

But up until now, he was having no luck.

Particularly, finding the volcanic ash that the concrete required was proving hard.

And so Alexander chuckled, "Let us discuss that later," and then quickly attempted to divert the topic as he then proposed, "Would my lord like to take a look inside?"

Pasha Farzah was of course interested to see the inside of a building he was thinking of replicating and figure out the ins and outs, and the build quality of the structure, and so readily agreed, "Yes, yes, let's."

So soon the carriage was halted, and the group got out of the vehicle to take a look around the building.

Which was surprisingly deserted.

Alexander had expected to see some workers here, doing something, but the huge plot was entirely empty, which he certainly found strange.

And it would be only later that he would learn this was the norm.

For it seemed that Diaogosis had divided the building project into two groups.

The larger group, consisting of about 80% of the workforce was responsible for the actual building.

While the second group was kind of like the internal decorators.

They were the ones in charge of furnishing the building with the appropriate doors and windows, with most of them being carpenters, along with some being tasked with putting the plaster on the walls, painting them, and sometimes even decorating them.

So what had happened here was that the first group had finished making the building, but the second group was yet to catch up, hence the vacant premises.

But for now, Alexander decided to put the, in his eyes- abnormality to the back of his head, and with his large contingent of bodyguards, entered the building premises.

Alexander felt his world get significantly darker as he entered inside, as he was inundated with the color gray, and hit by the distinct, musky smell of wet cement mixture yet to dry, as he then focused on surveying the layout of the building.

Which was very simple.

There were two entrances to the buildings, one at the front and the other at the back, along the length of which ran a 2m wide corridor, on either side of which was housed 4 flats, for a total of 8 residences per floor.

And between the middle of each of the 4 flats sat a common lavatory, whose pipe connected to the pre-existing sewage system underground.

Alexander introduced all these things as the nobles toured the premises, as then Pasha Farzah curiously asked,

"Oh? It's quite big. What's the square feet?" after he entered one of the doorless apartments and looked around, finding it to have 2 bedrooms, a common room, and even a small kitchen with a chimney attached to it.

"The whole building is 32m x 16m. So about 650 sq feet." Alexander readily answered to the agreeing nod of the pasha, who found the space adequate for a peasant or city worker.

"So many such buildings will you build? And how fast can you build them" Then from the side, Lady Inayah posed this, to which Alexander blatantly lied,

"For now only a few. I want to see how the people like it."

"And as for how quickly,....well, about one every month. That's why there are only a few of them."

Whereas the reality was Alexander planned to build a thousand of them, and he could build one around every 3 days."

Chapter 474

Alexander's ability to build a 4 story building every 3 days was certainly very impressive, as evidenced by the fact the logistics of furnishing the building were unable to keep up with the speed.

And it might even sound like a complete farcical claim to some as such a building would take, even by modern standards six months to complete, though it could be argued that modern buildings needed a lot of internal finishing such as electrical wiring, plumbing, and HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning), all of which could be skipped with Alexander's apartment.

But even then, one needed to simply give the concrete roof on each floor at least a month to dry and cure, where first the water on the surface would evaporate, leaving the dry cement.

Following this, the material would undergo a process called hydration and several chemical reactions would occur inside it to reach its optimal strength.

And this process always needed around 28 days to complete, and even if the cement felt dry in the meantime, it would still not be suitable to be built over, both because the cement might not be strong enough, and also because during the curing process the cement required a good flow of air and water to cool it.

The reason for the latter was during hydration, the cement underwent several complex exothermic reactions, all of which required water and all of which produced a lot of heat, meaning without water, the reactions would not occur, and also the cement would crack from the inside due to the excessive heat.

That was also the reason why engineers would tell people to keep any new cement structure wet or cool, or why workers would be seen spraying water on a recently build concrete structure.

So from all these reasons, it could easily be seen that Alexander would not even build a one-story building within 3 days, much less a 5 story building.

In fact, if one stopped to calculate, he would find that each building took Alexander around 5 months to complete.

A 50 times difference from that 3-day claim.

So what did Alexander really mean by saying he could build the building in 4 days?

Well, it was simple.

Instead of making the workers work just one or two days, and then have them sit idle for a month while the roof dries, Alexander simply moved on to start on a second building.

And once the first-story roof of that building was completed, he would move them to a third, then to a fourth, and so on.

You get the idea.

Since the cement took a month to dry, and he could simultaneously have 30 buildings in the construction queue, so by the time the 30th building's first floor was built, the 1st building would be ready to have its second floor started.

Upon the completion of which the entire process would repeat itself.

Now, originally these buildings were meant to be 16m x 16m housing eight apartments per floor, giving each flat about 300 sq feet in area.

So with the intention to house around 200 people there, it would admittedly be a little snug.

But Alexander had wanted to skimp on the materials and he was also of the mind that the people would not mind too much as they spent most of their time outdoors anyway.

But he would be proved wrong in this thought as his ears one day would pick up the following words during a regular visit to one of these buildings.

That day he was listening to Diaogosis say something, when he heard a worker murmur to his colleague, "I wonder who is going to stay here?"

To which the other man had replied in an almost disdainful tone, "Slaves probably. I would not live in them."

The man said it like living in this building would be beneath him.

So hearing this, Alexander then decided to find out a bit more about what the grassroots thought about the building, and found out that the people of this time were used to living in more open spaces than people like him, who had grown accustomed to the congested, urban life.

Thus, it appeared that there was a genuine possibility that the people might not get inside Alexander's apartment blocks, even if he made the things.

Hence, Alexander decided to double the size of the houses, hoping this would attract the masses.

So, the houses would now be 32 meters x 16 meters, with an 8-meter road surrounding them, giving each apartment block the dimensions of 40 meters x 24 meters. (Because each opposite and adjacent building would contribute half the road).

Which also meant the 1,000 buildings he wanted to build to house 200,000 residents would take about 1 sq km of area or about one-quarter of the city.

And realistically it would have to be double that as there would have to be other amenities in there as well, such as aqueducts to deliver fresh water to them, open fields for the kids to play, and even public schools that Alexander planned to open in the future.

Which meant Alexander would likely have to extend the western district past the city wall, or build a new wall surrounding it.

All to accommodate the bigger buildings.

But it was what it was.

Knowing it would have to be done Alexander had gritted his teeth and decided to do so, and face the challenges that came with it.

The very first of which was the increased material requirements.

Something that Diaogosis had reported to him some time ago.

According to the man, to accomplish Alexander's demand to build one floor every 2 days, compared to the previous 300 men and 15 tons of cement per floor, he said he would need 800 people and 50 tons of cement per floor.

And he even gave the breakdown.

2 days for laying the foundation.

And 2 days to build each of the four floors. - 1 day to build the walls, and 1 day to cast the concrete roof.

Which came to 10 days and 250 tons of cement per building without taking into account the curing.

Now using Diaogosis's method, Alexander found he would be producing 15 buildings every 5 months.

This seemed too slow.

And so to speed up the process, Alexander did two things.

First, he divided the 800-man into 2 teams, with one working on the walls of one building, and the other casting the roof of another.

This way, one group would not have to sit idle waiting for the other group to get the walls up before starting on the roof.

And secondly, he decided to give Diaogosis 2,000 men as opposed to 800, and a daily quota of 100 tons of cement as opposed to 50 tons.

This would double his production output, getting 60 buildings in 5 months, or 1 every two and a half days, which was approximately about 3 days when taking into account the workers' weekends.

This was very impressive, as this with this speed, Alexander would be basically able to house 200,000 within a decade, even after taking into account any unforeseen delay.

In fact, if he could solve his bottleneck of cement supply, he would be able to finish it even sooner.

But Alexander also knew it was unlikely because increasing that would be hard.

Even if he could mine more limestone and build more kilns, creating the watermills to crush the clinkers would be a challenge as Zanzan was already running out of fast-moving water sources.

And those few that remained were likely going to be used by the aqueducts to deliver fresh water to the city.

While moving the cement production to an additional city was a no-go for Alexander at the moment.

And so with all those considerations, Alexander chose to delay green-lighting this immense project, instead letting Diaogosis, and now Farnaz do some more preliminary work first.

One of which making sure the cement he had invented was safe.

This worry arose because Alexander had no access to any of the modern quality assurance equipment one would need to inspect the magnitude of variables that determined a cement's quality.

Heck, Alexander even did not have a thermometer to check the kiln temperature.

The best he could do was look into the kiln blazing with fire and roughly guess the temperature based on the color of the flame which had been honed through his vast experience of working with various types of furnace

Hence, without knowing the quality of the cement, Alexander was of course worried about making a 16m story structure where people would live in using it.

This was not like building roads, where an inferior cement would only mean frequent potholes and an expensive maintenance.

So Alexander first decided to build a few prototype buildings to see how it all went.

In this way, the workers had the opportunity to gain experience working with this brand-new material and learn how to use it.

While Alexander also made sure that the cement he made would not just turn to clay and bring the entire thing down within a few months of its construction.

Because, just from his experience as a metallurgical engineer, Alexander could tell the cement he had made would be treated as fairly low quality in his times.

But as Alexander stood inside the finished structure and felt its sturdiness of it, he felt that his worries had been exaggerated.

The cement seemed to be good enough.

So he felt confident in going ahead with the project.

Chapter 475 Market Visit (Part-1)

Once the group finished inspecting the apartment complex, they soon returned to the carriage and made their way to the center of the city.

And while on the way, Pasha Farzah asked a few more tidbits about the houses, particularly, "So what's the cost of these buildings?"

And Alexander would admit these houses were not cheap.

Each apartment needed 250 tons of cement which cost Alexander 75 ropals a ton.

Around 1500 tons of bricks were needed which was 60 ropals a ton.

Each of the workers working there demanded 300 ropals a month, double that of a peasant's as they were much more skilled.

And then there were aggregates such as sand, gravel, and water, and furnishing such as doors and windows.

Taking all this into consideration, it came to around 200 to 250 thousand ropals per housing.

This was certainly not cheap.

And worse still it was an amount Alexander was never likely going to be able to recoup.

Because even assuming he could charge each of the 32 families living there a monthly rent of 30 ropals, it would still take him around 18 to 22 years to make his money back.

And this was not even considering the maintenance costs, such as sweepers to clean the buildings, repainting it once in a while, and conducting other repairs.

Alexander would likely have to set up a small council of around 100 to 150 men just to oversee these buildings.

All this combined meant that Alexander would likely be able to maybe recoup half of the 200 to 250 million ropals he planned to spend on the 1,000 buildings over the next decade.

"A lot! Close to a million." Alexander quadrupled his costs when he answered Pasha Farzah with a helpless smile on his face, saying, "That's why I will only build a few for now."

Hearing the costs, and being well aware of the cost of building structures in general, F surprisingly found the cost to be reasonable as he nodded gently.

The reason was because he compared the concrete buildings to comparable stone ones, and since stones were much more expensive than bricks, and the mortar had to be prepared using much more expensive process, he estimated the buildings to be around 800,000 to 1 million ropals using his own experience.

Which led to his next question.

"So why are building such expensive homes for the peasants, my lord? I don't think they will be ever able to pay them back." But this was not asked by Pasha Farzah.

Instead, in a rare case of occurrence, it was done by Nanazin, who chose to open her mouth for the first time since the journey started.

And Alexander turned to look at the beautiful woman who was wearing a full-sleeved, high-collared black dress that covered her entire body except the face and hands even on this hot summer day.

This was in much contrast with the other two women, who wore much looser, even somewhat revealing clothes, their half-sleeved gowns starting much below the collarbones, and even showing a bit of cleavage.

And it was not like Nanzan had worn it because she preferred it, as she was clearly uncomfortable in it given how Alexander would see small beads of sweat trickling down her cheeks, and how she would regularly swing her hands around a bit, in a sort of an attempt to fan herself.

But she had still chosen to wear it due to reasons Alexander would easily guess.

"Yes, Your Highness is right. But it was never about the money. I built them because I wanted to help the peasants," Pushing those thoughts away for now, Alexander gave this reply, as he then chuckled in a self-deprecating manner, "Hahaha, what can I say? Being once a peasant myself, I just could not leave them."

This reminder made the four remember once again that Alexander was in fact not one of them.

At least not by birth.

A fact they would easily forget once they started talking to him.

Because Alexander's mannerisms were really not likely a peasant, which was crude and crass.

But instead, he was very clean, refined, and charming in his conversations.

And this was not something a peasant was capable of, no matter how expensive clothes he put on, or how much perfume he drowned himself in.

And it was a phenomenon one could see in the modern age as well.

Such as if a relative visits from the village or rural areas, they just have that bumkin aura to them.

But Alexander did not have that.

And that was what the people had thought Alexander of until now, as a refined, smart man.

But that impression changed with Alexander frankly revealing that he was wasting so much money on a deadbeat project.

Even the competent Pasha Farzah saw no point in providing free housing to the poor peasants when they could easily be living in small huts and doing the same thing.

After all, peasants were called peasants because they were cheap, abundant, and disposable.

So there was little need to look after them outside of the basic necessities.

Hence the old man was of the thought that after Alexander had looted the Grand Temple, he had more money than sense, and so was wasting them in such frivolous endeavors.

And this made him internally shake his head.

But he did not speak out against it, or offer some advice.

Because it was Alexander's decision and felt it would not be right for him to comment.

Besides, he also felt mistakes were a good way to learn.

And this was this last thought that made the Pasha not form a bad impression of Alexander.

After all, the old man had seen enough of life to know that all people had something they were bad at.

And all people made bad choices or wasted money on poor investments at some point in their lives.

He himself had made the mistake of underestimating Alexander and had to pay the price.

And so the aged man let Alexander carry on.

While it was Lady Inayah who broke the almost uncomfortable silence that had descended after Alexander's altruistic answer,

"Haha, Lord Alexander is truly magnanimous. Zanzan is lucky to have a lord like you," She lightly smiled the answer.

And though it appeared a very polite answer, it was actually diplomatic code for calling something or someone 'not so smart'.

Because a lord being praised as competent or skilled or a military veteran was praise.

But a lord being called magnanimous meant he was actually a sucker who was loose with money.

Alexander was of course aware of the thoughts of the people around him, if not fully, but at least partially.

And surprisingly, he would agree with them...if the price he quoted was correct.

A million ropals for a building was too much for him no matter how good his financial situation was.

If it had been so much, Alexander would have simply discarded the project.

But the 250,000 price tag barely made that possible.

"Yes. Magnanimous." Pasha Farzah spookily repeated, before regretfully shaking his head and saying,

"If only they were cheaper. I could have built them in my cities, and they would be immune to razing."

The aged lord had the smarts to figure out that these cement buildings would be pretty impervious to fire, which would give a defending force a great advantage, for they would be able to fight inside the city without any trouble and even use the buildings as obstacles to break up the attacking force, enabling the defenders to pick them off one at a time.

And the reason why it was not possible currently was because an attacking army could simply set fire to the wooden and thatched houses, turning the city into a smoking ruin and cooking the enemy inside.

That's why in ancient times, the battle tended to end once the city walls were breached, unlike in modern times.

Alexander silently praised the old man for his insight, while the carriage at last entered the central district, which frankly had nothing much to see.

"This place is currently empty. But I intend to build all the administrative buildings here," Alexander lightly said as the carriage went past a bunch of workers busy in construction.

Currently, they were being ordered to build the senate building, as Alexander wanted to move his meeting there as soon as possible.

Following this the carriage turned north to the market district, and it was here Alexander intended to show some of his new inventions.

And as the carriage entered this section of the city, the roads started getting narrower, and the buildings shabbier.

"We have not had the time to develop this part of the town," Alexander gave the reason for its current state, and when they reached the mouth of the open market, he lightly smiled and said,

"After the war and the spring harvest, the markets are just starting. So it's not much,"

Though looking at the bustling crowd ahead of him, it was anything but not much.

In fact the market seemed to be almost spilling over.

Seeing this state, and because of the dingy, congested roads, Alexander then proposed they view the market on foot, saying, "If Your Highnesses cannot get up and close, you will not simply be able to determine the quality of the goods."

And the Queen mother appeared eager to do that, as she quickly said, "Hmm, yes, let's. You cannot see anything from a carriage anyway."

And so with a large, multilayered escort, Alexander and the group slowly made it into the crowded market.

Chapter 476 Market Visit (Part-2)

Alexander had some of his bodyguards go in front of him to clear the way, and the group then proceeded to walk into the square center and observe the bustling market.

"Ahh, today is a Thursday. That's why it's so crowded,"

And looking at the heavy crowd present, Alexander reminded himself that it was the weekend, which meant most workers had the day off or reduced work as they offered prayers or sacrifices at the temples in the morning.

In fact, this was happening around the time Alexander was visiting the central district, which was why the group had avoided that congested part of the town for now, even though Pasha Farzah had wanted to see the temple his granddaughters were working in.

Instead, Alexander had promised to let him meet them on their return trip.

And for now, urged the pasha to enjoy this foreign market.

The northern market square was a bustling hub of activity, encased around an area surrounded by timber-framed buildings which served as the abodes of the merchants there.

These buildings were adorned with colorful banners and flags which advertised many brand names and even read out various catchy messages.

For example, Alexander spotted one commercial banner for wine that read: 'This drink will be the life of your party.'

It seemed even in the iron age people knew how to make their product stand out.

Alexander and the group slowly made their way through the narrow roads, taking their time as they turned their heads from side to side to see the local produce.

This was a rare opportunity for all three of the women, with Lady Inayah being usually too busy, and the Queen mother and Nanazin being able to leave the palace without special permission.

And hence they wanted to savor the opportunity.

Especially when that opportunity was in a foreign land.

So they took their time to observe the stalls and makeshift booths lining either side of the street, their awnings casting shade over the array of products displayed.

These stalls were almost all owned by local farmers, who proudly presented their abundant collection of fruits, vegetables, and spices from the recent spring harvest, the colorful, vivid natural produce lighting up the surrounding.

Among the vegetables, there were every kind of beans: pitch black black beans, verdant lima peas, vibrant kidney beans, golden fava beans, and many more, in addition to beautiful plump gourds, green cabbages, bright carrots, and juicy leeks.

And these were just a few of the delicacies Alexander could see.

While among the fruits were ripe watermelons which every shop seemed to have a stock of, juicy plums, bright jackfruits, and stone fruits to name a few.

All being laid out in full display to tempt customers to have a bite, while their owners energetically call out their wares, hauling customers to them and then haggling over the price.

And at last were the spices and aromatic herbs, which hang from wooden beams, enticing passersby with their earthy fragrances.

And as Alexander passed by these, his nose even stung a bit from the smell a bit, as huge quantities of garlic, black pepper, bell peppers, mustard, and onions were laid out in the open.

But compared to the fruits and vegetables, their amount and variety were pathetically poor, for it appeared that Adhania and even Thesos were lacking in some of the more exotic spices such as ginger, turmeric, and cloves.

Perhaps they would be discovered when Alexander initiated his age of sail.

Alexander certainly had the mind to do this as he walked past these eager and energetic shopkeepers, while also being unable to help himself from comparing the current markets with his previous life's supermarkets.

And the biggest difference he would say between them was that whereas in modern times a market usually referred to as a stationary place with concrete buildings and fixed shops here a market simply referred to a place people got together to buy and sell stuff.

What he meant by this was that here markets were not permanent structures, but that most people would simply bring a portable stall or even just a basket filled with the fruits, vegetables, grain, etc from their fields, and set up by the roadside peddling it, while people moving about would spot them and then based on their needs purchase them.

This also meant that markets were not 24/7 available amenities like in the modern times.

But rather that this organic meeting would gather around itself around 2 to 3 times a week, while the rest of the week the place would be fairly deserted, with only the professional merchants with their fixed shops selling their wares.

So the city folk would actually have to pace their pantry such as that they could would be able to last three days without a major restock, as they could grain anytime, but not the seasonal produce, as well as meat and fish.

Speaking of meat and fish, the fishmongers and butcher stalls were next.

And they were in a wider clearing around the center square of the market.

Now unlike in modern times, meat was not available to buy every day.

But could only be bought on certain days of the week.

The reason for this was there was little way to store meat other than salting it, and so any unsold, and unprocessed meat would spoil very quickly.

And as there was not enough demand for freshly slaughtered meat every day of the week, butchers would usually slaughter one animal per week, which was Thursday for Zanzan.

And this produced an interesting phenomenon where people would show up at the market in the crack to get the best cut of meat.

While in the case of fish, the timing was the opposite.

Because usually the freshest fishes would be found around the evening when the fishermen would return from the sea, or perhaps in the afternoon if some fishermen decided to return by midday.

Alexander and the group stood still for a while and watched as the butchers wearing their trademark bloodied aprons now dyed red expertly use a cleaver to process cuts of meat for their customers over a wooden board, while the fishmongers poked at the fishes' eyes to show the buyers the freshness of their produce, or even cut open the fish to show the vibrant, red guts.

And a bit further way was the poultry for sale, as chickens, ducks, and even various birds were offered up for sale in small, bamboo cages.

After a while of watching this, the smell of raw meat and fish seemed to get on the nerves of the ladies, and so deciding to leave this crowded part of the market, Alexander surged forward.

And found the next destination a lot more free from the previous hustle and bustle.

It seemed that things had slowed down here quite a bit, as then wafted into Alexander's nose was the scent of freshly baked bread as well as the mingling aroma of roasting meats, fried fish, and fragrant spices.

Alexander appeared to have entered the food court of the market.

And looking around, he saw many food stalls selling various meat, fish, and vegetarian dishes of various exotic colors and tastes, many of which he did not even know the name of.

Numerous people were seen patroning these makeshift stalls, buying and eating the snacks either standing or sitting on the stall stools provided right in front of the shop, which was surprisingly reminiscent of those food carts of modern times.

And as these people ate and drank, they also enjoyed the songs and tales of the minstrels and street performers playing on the center square and would whistle, cheer, and even throw money to encourage their performance.

This part of the market might not be the busiest, because not everybody had the time or money to sit and snack in the middle of the day while watching the street performance, but it was certainly the most interesting part of the market.

"Would the ladies like to have something to eat? Perhaps even a cool drink?" Alexander politely offered seeing the group stop to appreciate the performance, though he knew this was unlikely.

Not to mention the security risks of eating food from an unknown source, but more importantly, he knew these noble people would not be caught dead dining in such an open space surrounded by commoners.

After all, if they were caught mingling with the low borns, their whole dignity would be dragged through the mud,

Particularly for the ladies.

"Thank you, lord Alexander. But we are not hungry," Predictably Seelima answered this back with a sweet smile.

Though this was a fib, as it was approaching midday, and breakfast was a few hours ago.

Not to mention, they had been walking for not an insignificant time now.

So Alexander replied, "Then perhaps we can get something to eat on the go. The eastern district is a while away," before quickly turning to Hemicus without giving the Queen mother to intervene, and said, "Go find what is nice. Hot, spicy, cool. Bring a bunch of things."

Alxx seemed to want to sample the lot.

So the guard captain received the order with a stoic nod, and then taking a few of his men, set out to purchase various food items.

While the group waited and entertained themselves with the street performance going on in front of them, and after the performers noticed they were being observed by some nobles, decided to put on the best show they had.

A show that Alexander would come to enjoy.

Chapter 477 Alexander's Shops

Hemicus had fortunately made a full recovery from his injury and soon managed to get an assortment of various unique food items for the group to enjoy.

There was something similar to fish and chips, made of various small cuts of fish, fried and crispy, and drizzled with a spicy fish sauce.

There was a kind of shashlik item with meat and vegetable on a stick.

There were several pie dishes with meat, fish, cheese, and vegetables.

There were simple dishes of various pulled meat such as pork, beef, mutton, and venison cooked in butter with seasonal vegetables, and lastly, there were various cut fruits sold together in a mixed fruit basket.

All to be had with fine wine.

And coincidentally enough, the wine that Hemicus bought from Camius's shop, which was also situated here, along with several others selling similar merchandise.

Alexander had not actually never seen Camius's shop up close, due to security reasons but now was given the perfect opportunity to observe it from the corner of his eyes.

Alexander could not spot Camius but found that his shop had been set up at the front porch of a rather lackluster building nobody was giving a second glance at, which was good given it was the main headquarter building of his intelligence agency.

As for the shop itself, it was very ordinary, consisting of stacks and stacks of barrels arranged vertically, all presumably filled with wine.

While the shop attendant could be seen handing out samples to prospective buyers to have a taste before buying, and afterwards haggling over the process.

Camisu seemed to have done a very good job with the shop, as even Alexander, who knew about the specialness of the shop failed to find any from just looking at it.

It was at that point Hemicus returned, and Alexander called out cheerfully, "Ahh, good you are here," while he was also surprised to see one of his men carry an entire barrel of wine with him, which also made him unable to hold back a smile.

Plastic bottles were truly the modern age's lifesaver.

Alexander and Pasha Farzah tasted one of every item, while the ladies contented themselves with only the fruits.

And after finishing some of it, Alexander gifted the performers some gold and decided to move on to the next part of the market.

At past the halfway mark of the market, around the center of the market were a few of Alexander's own shops, which he had asked Takfiz to set up, and placed trusted attendant to oversee.

They were not large by any means, but only sold small quantities of his unique produce, mainly paper, soap, and iron ingots, but also had a series of stalls selling some sugar, a few pieces of beautiful glassware, and lastly weapons, particularly beautiful swords, all guarded by a conspicuously great number of guards, who kept a watchful eye out for thieves and troublemakers.

This central part of the market was actually reserved by Alexander for his own goods, and he planned to develop this part into his own economic zone, but for now, it was still in this infant stage.

"Oh? Is this where you make all your money from?" Lady Inayah teased a bit as she as she looked at the shops, her and the other two women seemingly being very interested in the things displayed.

"Hahaha, hardly." But Alexander chuckled the denial, saying, "These shops really don't sell anything. But they are more meant as displays, showcasing to rich merchants who might be interested in buying these things bulk."

'Hmmp...so they are used for advertisements?" Pasha Farzah easily related to the stalls, as Alexander nodded and answered, "Yes. The merchants can first inspect the products here. And if they like it, then they ask the attendants where they can buy more."

"So this is the wholesale part." The Queen mother commented understandingly as the group then proceeded to check the beautifully displayed products.

The paper shop was beautifully decorated with color festoons, while the actual paper was sold in rolled scrolls.

The glass shop in contrast was a bland-looking stall, with only a few pieces displayed, each showcasing a different type of glass.

Just from the outside it looked pretty pathetic.

But external appearances could be deceiving, as the reason why the stall was not decorated was because there was no need for it, for the products housed in them more than made up for that.

Each of the vases, bowls, goblets, or plates were worth their weight in gold, and most merchants would both be fascinated by the creation and also intimidated by the listed prices, which started at the five digits.

The ladies had seen similar products in Alexander's houses, so were not too surprised by them, but still, they could not marvel at them, as Nanazin picked up on the goblets, and muttered in a silky dreamy voice, "My lord truly as is a genius."

Her ethereal tone sounded as if she was whispering into the ears of her lovers, and it made the ever-sharp-eared Seelima smirk a bit.

'Perhaps I can use this,' She thought.

After the glass store, the group moved on to see the iron ingots which were stacked up one above the other like a pyramid, something the ladies had little interest in, but something Farzah very much adored, loudly saying, "So it is true Zanzan can mass produce steel."

And then smirked at Alexander with a teasing look, "So, I wonder by Muazz couldn't?"

This was a reference to Alexander's excuse about how he learned everything from books in Muazz's library.

And Alexander could only smirk back.

Following the iron shop, the group observed the soap shop, where they found the fragrant bars of soap being sold in color paper wrappers, while the foamy liquid soap was sold in beautiful metal and clay containers, with a few even having glass containers, but for these, it would cost a few hundred times more to buy the container than the soap.

Seeing the ladies eye this shop particularly eagerly, especially Nananzin, Alexander decided to gift each of the ladies some as souvenirs, as they then moved to the last shop.

"Good sword!" Pasha Farzah's eyes caught onto the intricate sword decorated with gems and inlaid gold which was the centerpiece of the shop, that had been originally made to show to the prospective merchants the height of Zanzan's metallurgy.

Now openly selling swords might seem not like a smart move, as it would seem like arming your enemy.

But Alexander actually had no problem selling high-quality swords.

Because the quality of swords an army possessed did not really affect its battle prowess, at least not in the same sense as crossbows did.

After all, a better sword would not enable it to cut through a wooden shield, now would it?

So swords were more of a fashion statement, kind of like those fancy handguns gifted to modern generals or dictators.

And Alexander was more than happy to swindle nobles eager to boost their self-esteem by having them spend on one of these.

Though swindling might not be the right word as Alexander was giving them the best sword money could buy.

Something Pasha Farzah was easily able to recognize, as he grabbed the short sword tightly and swung it around, loving the sound of the steel cutting the air.

It seemed to Alexander had the pasha had become twenty years younger, with his eyes sparkling with joy at the new toy.

"I'm glad the pasha likes this. If you want, please have it as a gift from me," Seeing this Alexander politely offered.

And the pasha did not stand in ceremony, as he boisterously laughed and said, "Good then brat. I quite like this. Hahaha,"

This market visit was turning into one of the best ones he had in his life, if not the best.

While the shop attendant, seeing his boss visit, quickly fetched the scabbard for the short sword, and with this done, the group then at last visited the sugar shop.

In fact calling this a shop might be a stretch as it was just a man sitting behind a bench with colored shade above his head, his product being a small sack of sugar placed on the table in front of him.

There was a small metal spoon inserted into the sack, and several tiny wooden plates laid out on to the tables, while at the door of the store was a large placard with the simple words:

'Come taste the crystallized sweetness of the heavens. Each spoon only 5 ropals.'

It appeared Alexander's idea for attracting merchants was to have them taste a bit of sugar and then decided for themselves.

"Hahaha, if someone saw this, they could either call the owner crazy or a genius." Pasha Farzah loudly laughed, both because of the insane price tag and also because although this type of advertisement was very common, what differentiated Alexander was how indifferent he was to the outlook of the store he was selling the stuff from.

To Pasha Farzah it looked like a beggar was selling something others would not give a second look, but those that would find white, crystallized gold.

"Hehe, well, it goes to show just how much lord Alexander is confident in his product that he feels even such an ordinary display will bring everyone running. And I think he is right." From the side, Lady Inayah giggled.

While the Queen Mother nodded with agreement and said, "Mmmn, this sugar is truly to die for."

Chapter 478 Market Visit(Part-3)

The group really left no stone unturned when it came to praising the refined sugar, with even Nanazin joining in, as she nodded and said, "Mmmm, this sugar has to be my favorite invention out of all of the things lord Alexander has made," adding,

"In fact, I think even if he were to charge 10 ropals, some would still come asking for a second or even a third bite."

Nanazin was sure anyone and everyone who tasted this solid treat that directly activated the brain's dopamine receptors will want to buy it"

And then unable to resist herself, the still-now queen headed over to the counter to have a bite, and was soon joined by the other two ladies who could not resist.

And seeing this Alexander advised, "Your Highnesses, why don't you sprinkle some of the sugar onto your fruits?"

And this they quickly did, showering the cut fruits they still had in their fruit baskets with the white powder, and then relishing in its taste.

"Mmm,"

"Ohhh"

They could not help but subconsciously moan.

While Pasha Farzah commented, "Alexander, I would like to buy your entire stock of this sugar. But the price....."

100,000 ropals a ton was enough to make even someone rich as him bleed.

To which Alexander only smiled and said, "Hahaha, come on my lord. 100 ropals per kg is a bargain. Don't tell me you would not have paid a few hundred ropals a kg for this?"

This was true, Pasha Farzah would have coughed up that amount if it came to it.

But what kind of a lord would he be if he did not haggle?

And so the old man switched to his silver tongue, which after a while seemed to have produced results, as it made Alexander simply sigh and say, "Okay, okay, we can re-negotiate the prices another time."

The group stayed in this part of the market for a while, preferring it much more here because the place was virtually deserted.

Regular people had no need or the capability to afford the things here, not to mention the presence of so many armed guards drove many away in fear.

While today it also appeared that prospective merchants showing interest in Alexander's wares were low.

So the group was able to enjoy Alexander's shops to the fullest.

But finally, and albeit a bit reluctantly they decided to continue with their tour, as the group then moved to their last destination- The artisan's section.

And the moment they left the peaceful central square, the hustle, and bustle of the market again hit them like a sledgehammer, as the people used alternative routes to access the wares here.

Which were of the category produced by the most numerous branch of the artisans- the potters, who were selling every kind of pottery one's heart could desire.

Potters perhaps made up 80% of all artisans, and was the group that always produced the lion's share of the economic output for the artisan class.

The reason behind such a huge demand being there because everyone needed pottery.

Their needs ranged from a variety of earthenware and clay pottery used for utilitarian purposes such as cooking food in them and serving food in earthen bowls.

They were also used to store all kinds of kinds of food, herbs, spice, and vegetables, not to mention the most important ingredient of life- drinking water.

Then they were used for miscellaneous purposes, such as vessels to pickle fruits, and even sometimes even for storing materials such as jewelry.

After that came decorative purposes, where beautiful vases were used for decorating the house, either by themselves or growing flowers in them, clay idols for worshipping the gods, and clay toys such as dolls, and figurines for children.

Clay pottery was really the plastic of the ancient era.

As Alexander stood at the mouth of this section, he could see rows and rows of such clayware laid on the ground, a sight he had seen only a few times in his life.

And it appeared that a lot of these had their outer walls used as a canvas for skilled painters to exhibit their artwork, depicting scenes of daily life, religious iconography, and heraldic symbols.

It was both a way to express themselves while also making their products more eye-catching.

Alexander and company slowly walked past these large rows of merchandise, while some brave and eager potter hauled them to take a look at their wares, while a bit further from this huge display of skilled labor and arts were the tanners and leatherworkers.

Here the men showcased their finely crafted assortment of belts, pouches, and shoes, as well as saddles, and bridles for horses and bulls.

Next to them were blacksmiths displaying their skillfully crafted knives, cleavers, short swords, as well as various tools such as hammers, nails, chisels, etc.

And then there were the carpenters selling their woodenware of bowls, utensils such as spoons, figurines, toys, chopping boards, and most numerous of all-furniture, which they seemed to have every kind of, from small chairs or stools, to large beautiful tables, ready-made doors, and windows, to lastly huge cupboards.

And as Alexander walked passed all of them, the clinking of coins and the jingling of keys echoed as merchants tend to their money chests, ensuring the safety of their earnings.

At the end of these shops was the last section of the market, - the textile and clothing section, which was perhaps the part of the market the least densely populated of all the sections, outside of Alexander's shops.

Both because it was at the back, and also because clothes were in general an expensive commodity.

But nevertheless, for anyone looking to buy fabric, the market seemed to offer an array of options.

Traders exhibited thick bolts of richly dyed fabrics of velvets, wool, silks, and linens, colored red, blue, green and yellow, and embellished with intricate embroidery and patterns.

While tailors displayed their finest garments, including elaborate dresses, tunics, and cloaks, some of which were adorned with jewelry and brooches to entice the more affluent buyers, most likely merchants.

"Hmmm, are any of these shops your's lord Alexander? I'm sure many ladies would quite like your products," The Queen languidly asked about the lingerie shop while out of mere curiosity, she decided to check out some of the dresses, much to the delight of the shopkeeper there.

Though Alexander knew she had no actual intention of buying any.

Nobles did not just go to a shop and buy their clothes.

No, no, no.

Clothing was perhaps the most important item for a noble as it showed off their status and affluence, and it was especially the case for noble ladies.

And so they would make sure whatever they wore was custom-made to best suit their needs and taste.

To help accomplish this, all noblewomen would have a personal tailor and stylist who would be well-versed with the current trends and styles of the times, and who could guide them along the design of the fabric.

So if a noble lady wanted a dress, she would first call them to tell them about the occasion she wanted to wear them, the material she wanted to use, and then speak about what she wanted to look in that dress.

Hearing these the stylist would then recommend various designs and materials to be used, and then even produce sketches of the design.

And if this sketch was to the liking of the lady, the dress would be given the go-ahead, while if it was not, the entire process would have to be repeated again.

Hence, the best a merchant could usually hope for when peddling to nobles was that a servant would come to them and buy a few rolls of fabric if it caught the eye of a noble lady.

"No. Not yet. Those lingeries are beyond the ability of the common folk anyway," Alexander replied to the Queen Mother's query about the shops in a light tone, while slightly shaking his head.

Alexander had not placed the lingerie shop in his reserved spot primarily because he did not think Gelene had earned it yet, and intended to give her that spot as a future reward.

And so that made Gelene intend to open a shop here, but first there came the war, where she was required to produce yarn for the arrows which delayed that.

And then afterward found Zanzan did not have the high-value customers such as rich merchants and nobles that would be required to consistently sell the product.

So then Alexander ordered her to simply stock up on them, as he planned to sell these to Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah in bulk.

And he was pretty sure they would buy these mass-produced garments anyway, even if their target would be the nobles, who generally detested anything not custom-made.

For with the blooming of the dandelions, Alexander had also managed to make elastic bands, meaning the bras and panties would have a 'springiness' to them they had never seen before.

Alexander was confident that they would be a great hit.

And so after his reply, Alexander added, "If Your Highness is curious, we are working on a new kind of clothing which I'm sure you will love. I'll ask Gelene to show it to you later."

To which the Queen mother somewhat eagerly replied, "Oh? Then I look forward to it."

She really liked the comfortable underwears.

And with that eager anticipation, came the end of the market visit, as the group then proceeded to the eastern district.

Chapter 479 Sanitary Reforms

The shops that the group visited until now were all the interesting shops here in the northern marketplace,

There were also a few shops beyond that, right next to the northern gate, but those were small permanent shops selling the usual daily necessities like grains, firewood, etc.

Not worth visiting.

And so after the tailor visit, the group turned around and decided to grab lunch at the eastern district where Alexander had also planned to showcase a series of military demonstrations to Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah, mainly the crossbow, and the instant bow.

Now, as a side note, Alexander's city market, though certainly very impressive and big, was actually missing two types of shops, one was the horse or animal market, and the other was the slave trading square.

The reason for the former was because there were no horse merchants currently residing in Zanzibar, as any and all who had come here had their entire bulk of the stock brought up by Alexander to shore up his chronic shortage of draft animals.

While the reason for the latter, the slave market was exactly the same, the existence of a large shortage of manpower which caused Alexander to buy off every slave trader nearby.

Though Alexander's haul for his efforts in this endeavor could be said to be petty.

The group traversed the distance between the northern and eastern district quite quickly, while Alexander noted there was a whole lot more activity here, without a doubt due to the recent additional presence of 25,000 Thesians who took refuge in the former hotels, inns, and gambling dens, quickly transforming them into homely quarters.

The part of the city seemed to be in a transitional period between growth and decay, as while many parts of it were full of vibrant life, right next to it lay demolished structures, for Alexander had ordered the full remodeling of this part.

Thus many busy workers, many of them soldiers who were recruited for manual labor could be seen tearing out the old congested structures and making space, while others laid roads, built aqueducts and constructed sewage systems.

It was a busy, busy part of the city.

"Lord Alexander, what are those? I have seen them several times on my way here?" And while they were passing across a series of wooden sheds, the Queen mother pointed to and asked about them.

And Alexander replied, "Oh, those are the public restrooms for the peasants to use. It's free to use and the latrines are connected to the sewage underneath which washes away the filth. Everyone uses them."

And quickly from the opposite end Lady Inayah nodded appreciatively, "Oh, so that's why the streets smell so nice. Very smart," as she then pondered if she should do the same for her city.

The reason for the comment about the smell was because whenever Lady Inayah would leave her part of the city quarters and travel to the commer parts, a perpetual slight stinging smell would keep assaulting her, which she found very unpleasant.

And if Alexander could provide a solution, she would certainly consider it.

Though it was not if Agrinat was the sole example.

In fact all cities she had visited up until now had that pungent, ammonia smell to varying degrees, and she remembered Zanzan as having a particularly bad odor that assaulted her when she had raced in her carriage from the harbor to Muazz's mansion.

And the source behind this unpleasant smell was very evident.

For people would regularly dispose of their garbage by simply tossing it out of their windows or doors onto the streets below, causing the accumulation of a significant amount of waste, including food scraps, animal excrement, and other household refuse, both from residential and commercial use.

At Lady Inayah's inquiry, the 'proud of his work' Alexander was eager to show off his city's management skills, as after his reply, he elucidated, "You see my lady, in Zanzan it is a punishable offense to throw garbage into the street. They can be fined up to 20 ropals for it."

"So instead we have trash collectors who go around the city every day at dawn with special carts to collect all the trash and dump it outside the city or into the sea."

"Or the people can drop their trash at special trash places we have in the city."

"And lastly, we have about 300 street sweepers whose job is to clean any trash which might have escaped the collectors."

"That's why the streets are so clean."

Alexander's explanation produced both impressed and intrigued looks.

Impressed at the organizational cleanliness, and intrigued by the intention.

"Why go so far for these people? Sounds like a whole lot of money for nothing," And the ever-pragmatic Farzah posed exactly that with knitted brows.

Sure enough, the man's thoughts first ran to the question of budgeting, which to be fair was not insignificant.

By Alexander's own estimates, he found it would cost him around 2 to 3 million ropals per year to maintain the sanitary department, or the tax amount of around 5,000 to 6,000 peasants.

And it was because of this great cost that most cities did not take care of their garbage problem.

But it was a cost any modern person with the minimum of knowledge of hygiene would have found worth it.

So Alexander first chuckled, "Well firstly it's easier on the nose. Have you tried walking in Adhan, haha?"

Alexander had certainly seen the filth the so-called divine city possessed.

And then gave the serious answer, "The main reason is because these unclean things cause diseases. So by spending money to clean them, we stop people dying. Which can also include me or my family. After all, death does not discriminate."

And then lastly added, "While it also means the people can keep working and pay more taxes. So actually we make money back through this by longer tax repayments."

Alexander said the last sentence because he hoped the utilitarian pasha would find this reason more convincing.

As he then gave a preceding example, "I still remember when we first arrived at Zanzan, plagued and filled to the brim with full of filth. And once we cleaned the plague, voila, no more plague."

"Coincide? I think not!" He grandly declared.

And these talks managed to put Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah in a thoughtful mood, as they weighed the pros and cons of replicating Alexander.

"Oh? Does cleanliness cure plagues? Is this one of those pearls of wisdom from your goddess?" While the Queen mother asked this to Alexander, her tone so flat and neutral that he was unable to determine if she was genuinely asking or simply taunting.

This was because currently there were several theories regarding the causes of disease, with the two prominent ones being firstly the supernatural theory. which posited them as being curses from the gods or the work of the devils.

And secondly, there was the natural one, which said diseases were caused by natural factors.

And these two theories then branched into many sub-sections of their own, with the supernatural group arguing which god caused which sickness, and how to best exorcise which devil.

While the second theory branched off into discussing which natural factors caused the diseases, and they ranged from reasonable conclusions such as healthy living practices like eating good food and exercising.

To the weird such as not cutting nails and hair because they are all part of the natural.

To the well-intentioned but misguided ones such as not letting a person suffering from cholera drink water because they thought it was excess water that caused the body to discharge it in the first place.

To lastly the insane such as blood-letting, which was the practice of cutting a wound and letting the blood flow out, with the thought that the disease would flow out with it.

Though such a practice usually caused the victim to die even quicker.

βᾶνδᾶς ἦθνε | But perhaps the most famous natural germ theory was the theory that diseases were spread by bad smells, as evidenced by how most bad things smelled bad.

This was true.

But the people here, unfortunately, misread the clues.

Diseases were not spread by bad smells.

But smells that the body recognized as bad were usually emitted by harmful sources spreading diseases like refuse and wastes.

So in this case, the people read the warnings completely backward.

Now, Alexander did not know which of the many branches of medicine Seelima believed in.

He knew she certainly hated the previous king, so perhaps the natural branch.

But she also saw herself as above the others, having sort of a god complex.

So it could be either.

Thus Alexander decided not to engage with his powerful woman over the belief of diseases and sickness,

And so only smiled, and gave a blank stare, as coincidentally, his eyes spotted a rather inconspicuous building that was part of the red light district and a particular favorite of a certain noble lady.

And this made Alexander almost guffaw.

But he managed to quickly swallow it as he was abruptly interrupted by Pasha Farzah, who posited, "So that's why you are building so many aqueducts," and then as suddenly something caught his eyes, pointed a large two-story wooden building to his right side and asked, "What is that? Why are so many people there?"

And this made Alexander turn his head to see a long queue snaking out of the pointed building, as he then answered, "Oh that! That is the public clinic."

While this announcement made Farzah want to visit it.

Chapter 480 Civil Clinic

Pasha Farzah knew about Alexander's advanced medical procedures from back in Adhan, when Alexander had helped Laykash recover from his broken thigh.

And so was the man was curious to see how Alexander treated his patients in his clinic.

"I want to go take a look. Could we?" The burly man hence inquired.

And it made Alexander raise an eyebrow in concern.

"Are you sure? There are lots of sick people there" He pointed out.

To which Pasha Farzah simply waved his hand like it was nothing and said, "Bah! This old body is limping on its last legs anyway. Come on... let's go."

While the Queen mother represented the three ladies to bid the duo goodbye, "Then my lords please be safe. We will wait for you in the carriage."

After all, a dirty, diseased-ridden hospital was no place for a noble lady in her opinion.

And so taking a small contingent of guards, the two men went to see the ins and out of this, for the time, modern establishment.

The reason for it being modern is because in most cases when people fell sick in time period, they had the following options, none of which were going to a hospital.

First and foremost, were the home remedies and self-care, where peasants resorted to traditional methods passed down through generations to manage common ailments and injuries, which could include herbal remedies, poultices, hot or cold compresses, and basic wound care techniques.

As there was no formal healthcare, this method was the most preferred by peasants and would resort to the later options only if this failed.

So the second option was going to the local healers and herbalists within their communities.

These individuals possessed knowledge of traditional remedies and herbal medicines and would use herbs, plants, and natural substances to create remedies for various common illnesses and injuries.

Thirdly, they could visit the nearby temples, in which they would both pray to the gods to heal them and also receive tangible treatment from the establishment.

Temples usually had infirmaries with stocked herb gardens and many priests and priestesses would possess some degree of medicinal knowledge that allowed them to offer a slightly more advanced level of care.

This basic providence of medical treatment to the sick and injured was seen as a civic duty of the temples as well as being a major source of their income, all while also helping them cement their status as favored by the gods into the hearts of the masses.

This was one of the reasons attacking temples was so hard.

Because it tangibly affected the surrounding populace and would make them prone to revolt.

This was also why Alexander's clinic had many of Gaia temple's personnel working here, to provide the same, if not better services than the previous Ramuh temple.

All so that the people would forget the latter's existence.

Now back to the fourth option for the poor was to seek care from charitable institutions such as almshouses or hospices which would offer basic medical treatment to peasants who were unable to afford private healthcare, with them themselves relying on donations, endowments, or religious organizations for funding and support.

And the last option the people had, which was probably the worst one- Visiting the local barber or butcher.

This might seem a bit weird given that profession had no relation with human anatomy, but aren't humans just animals?

And butchers handled cows, which are similar to humans right?

This thought process let barbers act as surgeons, who would perform procedures such as bloodletting, wound dressings, tooth extractions, and bone setting.

Their medical knowledge was limited, and their practices were based on traditions and guild regulations rather than comprehensive medical training.

Meaning they were quakes, even among quacks.

But because of their cheap visiting cost and frequent interaction with the community, unfortunately, they were often the primary healthcare providers for peasants if they were unable to solve it themselves.

Alexander had wanted to ban these practices but knew if he did not provide an alternative, it was bound to fail.

Which was one of the reasons behind this clinic's establishment.

All these thoughts flashed inside his mind as he entered the building, which had been converted from a pleasure house, with its structure still reflecting some of its former vestiges.

Which was actually a boon for the clinic due to how it helped sort out the patients.

And as Alexander led Pasha Farzah through, he helped the man introduce how the clinic operated.

"This is the reception area," He said, pointing to the front area of the building whose layout was exactly like a modern hospital's, with rows and rows of chairs to sit on, then saying, "What people first do is register and provide information about their condition over there on the information desk."

"Once they have done that, the receptionist will then recommend them to a room over there where a doctor will look at them." Alexander afterward pointed to the door which led into a courtyard which branched out into many more buildings.

This was what Alexander meant by the structure of the clinic being a boon, as having a central courtyard not only allowed him to easily sort the waiting patients from the patients receiving treatment, but it also allowed natural light and ventilation to reach the various rooms surrounding the courtyard.

And without the presence of strong, artificial light, this was a massive advantage.

So while previously this courtyard was previously used for tired men to gaze into while they enjoyed their women, now it was helping save lives.

There was little else to see in the reception outside the waiting patients and male nurses running about talking, listening, and attending to them.

And so Alexander decided to move on to the inner courtyard where the real action happened.

And just as Alexander crossed into the central courtyard, a hurried and high-pitched voice came to him, "My lord! You are here!"

The voice was feminine, and familiar to Alexander, as he turned to look at a woman in her early forties, wearing a spot white apron, with her hair tied up in a bundle.

"It's nice to see you too, Jupetus" Alexander greeted with a frank smile, who was also Hiperteom's wife and among the best healers Alexander had in his mercenary group.

And then he proceeded to introduce her to Pasha Farzah, "This is Miss Jupetus. She is one of my best pupils and is in charge of this clinic."

And then introduced Pasha Farzah to the women. "This is Lord Farzah, He is the pasha of Matrak."

Which instantly initiated another great bow from the women.

"Greetings my lord." She said.

And got a heavy nod from Farzah.

As she then raised her head to offer, "So how may I help you, my lords?"

Before turning to Alexander and asking in concern, "Is your leg still hurting?"

This generated a curious look from Pasha Farzah, who was unaware of any injury Alexander had suffered.

And so Alexander filled in him on it.

"Hahaha, I got a spear attack on my thigh in the last battle, But don't worry it's all fine now" He chuckled breezily and got a simple nod from Pasha Farzah who saw injuries as part and parcels of battle and saw it as no big deal as he could see Alexander had recovered fully, which he did about a week ago.

Alexander was of a similar mindset, as he turned to Jupetus to reassure her everything was fine, saying, "No, we are for here for my leg." and then asking, "In fact, we came here because Pasha Farzah wanted to see the clinic. Could you give us the tour?"

"Of course, of course, right this way," Jupetus was more than ecstatic to show the two lords around, as so began the clinic tour.

First, she led them to a room attached to the reception area that was only accessible to the staff.

And inside, there were shelves upon shelves filled to the brim with scrolls, which she pointed to and said, "This is where all the patient's medical records are stored. To make sure the doctors can look at it whenever necessary."

Jupetus then led lead them upstairs through a staircase right next to the room, as she explained the purpose of the upper rooms on the way, "The clinics have special rooms for consultations and examinations. All these are located upstairs."

"The patients can meet with the attending physicians there and describe their symptoms. The doctors will then assess the patient's condition using observation, questioning, and physical examination techniques before offering a diagnosis."

As Jupetus said this, Alexander could see several of the rooms being used for precisely that, where a lot of men men, women, and children were being seen by a couple of doctors.

Following these rooms, at the back was a large hall, that now acted as the clinic's pharmacy, stocked with various jars and containers full of herbs and scales and pestle and mortars for measuring and compounding medicines.

Lot of men were seen here, with the patients buying the medicine recommended to them, and the doctors preparing the herbal concoctions to present to their patients, while the men manning the counters ran to and fro to fulfill the customer's requests.

It was a very busy part of the clinic, but the size and orderliness of it all impressed Pasha Farzah very much.

And it had to be remembered that they had seen just half the clinic, as Jupetus said, "This part of the clinic is for illnesses. While the other wing is for injuries."