

Herald 481

Chapter 481 The Clinic's RnD (Part-1)

Alexander and Pasha Farzah finished observing this section of the clinic and were led through an attaching wing to the opposite side, which did not have small rooms but was composed of large halls equipped with benches and beds where patients could rest or lie down.

"This is where we treated the injured. Burns, fractures, and broken bones are the most common types of injuries we get here," Jupitus said as she led the two men down the hallway flanked by beds on both sides and filled with patients, many moaning in pain as there were no painkillers to suppress their throbbing and sometimes agonizing ache.

While the present doctors and helpers tried to smooth some of the suffering, using comforting talks and also thorough a variety of medical supplies and instruments, including bandages, splints, tools such as specula, forceps, scalpels, and herbal remedies

As Alexander and Pasha Farzah walked through these halls, one particular sensory organ that was particularly affected was their nose, as it was hit hard by the intense smell of quicklime and soap.

So much so that Pasha Farzah looked at Alexander questioningly with knitted brows.

And Alexander was happy to inform the man, "The smell is from the disinfectants. We always keep the clinic clean."

"That includes utilities like the beds, sheets, towels, and clothes, the cooking utensils such as the pots, pans, and even plates, and obviously the floor."

"We also boil all drinking water, and regularly wash the clothes the patients wear."

After saying this Alexander then turned to point to the series of basins and bowls attached to each adjacent bed, along with a solid bar of soap, and said, "And over there the doctors and their assistants frequently wash their hands and equipment, all to keep them dirt free."

Alexander tried to make it as obvious as possible that cleanliness was one of the core tenants of staying healthy.

The two men then observed some of the patients suffering from various injuries, where Alexander found them to be mostly workers from any of his many industries who had suffered various accidents, as he then asked some of them about their wellbeing.

Following this tour, Jupetus afterward led the men to the last unexplored room of the clinic, which was situated at the very edge of the building, which she introduced as, "This is the operation theater (OT). Here is where we do the major operations."

She might have said operations as in plural, but this room was really used for one thing, singular- and that was amputation.

This was because it was not like complex surgeries where the body was cut open, mended, and then stitched back together was possible, while small stitches and sutures could be done on the patient's bed.

That left only the cutting away the damaged bit of the body treatment.

So the colloquial name the doctors gave the room was the very apt name- 'The abattoir.'

Alexander entered the room half expecting it to resemble a slaughterhouse but actually found it to be in pristine condition, which was particularly impressive given this was a completely surprise visit.

And then gazed around to see shelves placed against the walls full of medicinal herbs and bandages, various tools such as saws, hammers, and chisels immaculately cleaned and hanging on a tool rack, and the most impressive bit of the kit, the large bed, which had many leather straps hanging off it, that were used to bind a person so that he could not move while he was being sawed alive.

It took a strong man to survive the procedure, and a doctor with a strong stomach to actually treat the person.

For it was a horrible thought to imagine doing such a thing to someone, a gruesome act to commit on others, and an excruciating act to experience oneself.

And Alexander shuddered to think maybe one day he would end up here, bound, gagged with a rag doused in strong spirit, and then have an injured limb slowly sawed, hacked, and hammered off.

He did not want to experience that, but knowing the battles to come, he was sure the chances of that happening were not insignificant.

After all, even the recent spear to his thigh might have easily turned gangrene even with all the comprehensive precautions he had taken.

With the visit to the OT, the tour of the relatively small clinic came to an end...or so Pasha Farzah thought.

Because after finishing all the regular sites, Alexander turned to the lady in charge and mysteriously said, "Jupetus, there is one of more we have not visited have we? Please lead us there."

And this made the lady look at Alexander with a questioning look as if to say, 'are you sure?' before quickly complying, "Of course. Then right this way."

The silent interaction did not escape Farzah which made him grow curious, as he silently followed the two to a remote corner at the back of the clinic.

And at last came to face a large, concrete shed with no roof, and smoke coming off it.

Which made Pasha Farzah even more confused.

"In here, my lord," But with Jupetus's gesture to enter the premises, everything would soon become clear to the aged lord.

So, with Alexander taking the lead, the trio entered the large spacious room and the moment he entered inside, the very first things that Pasha Farzah saw shook him to his core.

For there were several mutilated corpses laid out on the tables, turning the table and the surrounding floor matt red, as bloodied tools such as knives, scalpels, saws, and tongs adorned the surrounding.

And certainly appeared mutilated to Pasha Farzah, whose ever-shrinking eyes spotted that all these cadavers had been opened up, with their skin peeled off, the muscles and tendons parted, and the whole host of organs laid out to bear witness.

He saw that the bodies had been stripped down to reveal much of the bones, and most had several organs, ranging from the small things like eyes, noses, and tongues, to the significant ones like hearts, livers, kidneys, and guts removed.

And the reason why Pasha Farzah was able to so easily spot which organs were missing was because many of them were laid out right next to the bodies, as if it was some kind of cruel joke being played on the dead person who was helpless to resist having his organs being taken away.

This act was considered especially egregious by some because according to Ramuh's faith, people needed these organs to move on to the afterlife.

So according to them, what Alexander was doing was denying these people paradise.

And if that was not enough, as Pasha Farzah turned his head to face the walls, he found the shelves stocked with organs stored inside transparent glass jars filled with oil, hearts that he imagined were still beating, eyes that seemed to turn to glance at him, and the brain that appeared to be bobbling up and down in the green liquid.

All while on the walls themselves were strange drawings on large scrolls of paper, that looked like satanic symbols to him.

All these appeared to be like they were straight out of Farzah's nightmare.

And, seeing all these, Pasha Farzah who considered himself as a mentally strong man, felt weak on his knees and even started to hallucinate a bit as his world began to slightly spin.

He had never been a strong believer in the gods.

He could even be called half an atheist.

But deep inside his heart he still held a modicum of respect for the gods.

So seeing these 'sacrilegious rituals', his heart began to beat like never before, and his mind started to pray like he never had.

While the very first thought that came to Farzah seeing this was that Alexander was a devil's apostate or the devil himself, which somehow did not seem too far-fetched to him now given all the new inventions that he had managed to produce within a short time.

And then his second thought was they had brought him here to kill him or turn him into their own.

So he only stuttered in a terrified voice, "Al...Alex...ander...this...this...what is ..is this?"

Alexander was also surprised seeing this, but this was referring to Pasha Farzah's reaction, who had gone pale as a ghost right now.

Alexander thought he was having a heart attack,

He truly did not think the loud, boisterous man with such a shrewd mind would be so affected by this.

And so, though Alexander could not read minds, he thought it would be prudent to quickly explain what this was before the old man collapsed on the floor.

"This is the place where we learn the medicine- by cutting up diseased, dead bodies and studying them to learn what killed them. And then we apply that knowledge to heal the living." Alexander tried to keep the answer as short and concise as possible, and then quickly added, It's not a cult," to reassure the old man as quickie as possible.

And it appeared to have worked, as blood gushed to turn the pasha's face a relieved, rosy red, while Jupetus quickly fetched a chair to have the old man sit down.

"Ex..explain!" And as he sat down, he almost barked this while rubbing the sweat from his forehead.

And it made Alexander draw a rueful smile as he thought perhaps he had been too eager to reveal this secret.

But it was already done, so Alexander could only try and convince the old man.

Chapter 482 The Clinic's RnD (Part-2)

As Pasha Farzah sat down and then calmed down hearing Alexander's explanation, he was suddenly embarrassed, and then angry at himself for being so easily shaken.

To think a man of his age and experience would let his minds conjure up such baseless thoughts really made him want to bury his head in the sand in shame.

While Alexander had a regretful but also funny look on his face as tried to stifle his laughter.

Though he could somewhat understand the reaction given how superstitious the general environment everyone grew up in was.

But feeling the longer he stayed quiet, the greater his chance of bursting into laughter and embarrassing the aged Pasha, he quickly spoke up,

"The people are told that our medical skills are gifts from the gods. But really, it is through the acquisition of knowledge we are able to cure them. And it is in this room we acquire that knowledge, through studying these human bodies." Alexander grandly gestured.

And then continued by pointing to the corpses,

"The dead bodies you see are chosen from the deceased who do not have anyone to collect them. So the beggars, the homeless, and the abandoned."

"We collect these poor people whose life has come to an end, and bring them here."

"Where officially, we cremate them."

"And we indeed do." Alexander heavily nodded his head to emphasize that point.

Before producing a slightly sly smile, "But not before we try to learn how they died. Which we do by cutting them open and seeing what makes...made them tick."

Alexander had very diplomatically explained to Pasha Farzah the procedure of how they acquired the bodies. Which was also similar to how modern medical colleges get their cadavers- through donations and unclaimed bodies.

Alexander's explanation did seem to pacify the old man a bit, but seemingly not quite enough to let his guard down.

There were still those strange symbols and drawings on the walls.

And so he still looked Alexander with a trace of wariness.

Thus Alexander addressed those next, pointing to them, and saying, "And from them, we learned a lot of new things. And those knowledge are all displayed here."

As he then moved to a particular drawing and said,

"For instance, this here shows the diagram of a heart. And it shows that the heart is actually connected by 4 large veins that pump blood and that it is divided into 4 parts inside."

Yes, the strange pictures that Pasha Farzah thought as demonic writings were actually just anatomical findings of the group.

After Alexander showcased their findings on the heart, he continued to introduce several other drawings, among which was perhaps the most commonly found diagram in any middle school biology book.

When Alexander came to that drawing, he said, "And this is what we call the drawing of the digestive system. It basically shows what happens to the food after we chew and swallow it."

"And as you can see here, any food we eat first goes through our gullet, then drops to our stomach, afterward move to a part of the guts we call the small intestine, and lastly passes onto another large of the gut we call the large intestine, before finally exiting the body through the anus."

βᾶνδᾱς ἦθνε | Pasha Farzah was not a medical expert to appreciate the significance of this drawing, but as Alexander spoke, his smooth and natural way of talking helped to placate the man.

He was finally convinced he was not going to be sacrificed to the devil.

"Brat, you sure have balls!" And so his usual loud, sharp tone to his voice, as he called out Alexander for both having the audacity to do these things right here in his city, in broad daylight and also to so casually show them to him.

And Alexander only revealed a large smile before saying,

"I believe this will strengthen our relationship."

"Hmmpf!" While Pasha Farzah let out a loud snort at this.

He could easily guess what Alexander was doing.

He presumed that this was probably Alexander's way of finding an insurer if things did go totally wrong and his secret was revealed to the world.

And it set the old man's heart a bit at rest learning Alexander was not oblivious to the risks.

Now, even if Alexander was discovered, it was unlikely he would be too much of a hot water.

Ptolomy and Farzah would still be unlikely to abandon him.

While the other nobles generally hated him anyway.

Not to mention he always had the option to sacrifice Jupitus and say it was all here doing and he had no idea of it.

But still, Alexander felt having Pasha Farzah as a backer in the worst of the worst case was prudent.

And he also hoped Farzah might contribute to the research in the future.

Because once Alexander started making strides in medical technology, rumors about being a dark magician were bound to start circulating.

Because in this time period, even apothecaries of this time were seen as druids and witches.

And those were mostly quacks.

So Alexander felt instead of his province making all the advancements, if the discoveries could be spread out, it would help mitigate that problem.

But Alexander did not raise that option with Pasha Farzah yet.

He felt that it might be too early.

Hence he played off the revelation as a kind of display of trust between allies.

As Pasha Farzah took the time to compose himself he could finally think clearly, as he then posed,

"This..blasphem...this job...who does these cutting? And how did you get them to agree?"

Pasha Farzah knew that most people of this world were like Hiperteom, and so was interested to know what kind of men would be willing to commit these 'sinful' acts.

After all, not everyone was 'not quite right in the head' like Alexander and most were still afraid of going to hell for desecrating bodies as stated in many of the religious scriptures.

And Alexander did face that problem as evidenced by his initial problem of trying to convince Hiperteom.

But his wife Jupetus proved to be far more malleable, as the lady was among the rare believers who believed in saving lives was more important than honoring some unknown gods, a belief that might have been nurtured when studying under Alexander, and her own experience of suffering multiple miscarriages in her lifetime which left her ultimately barren.

And so when Alexander tentatively proposed to her the plan, the lady jumped at it with joy.

Because nothing brought her more joy than healing a wounded person to health.

And as for her helpers, who were tasked with doing the actual cutting, extracting, drawing, and analysis.

"I got some of the gravediggers to help with that." Alexander very casually replied, while making Pasha Farzah go a bit wide-eyed, as he then gave his reason, "I do not know if my lord is aware, but these people are quite shunned by society."

"They are usually ostracised to live near the edge of cemeteries, they can mostly only marry among themselves, and other people rarely involve them in their joy and festivities."

The reason for this was because the people of Zanzan saw these people as omens, as their appearance could herald the death of someone's loved one.

Which was why people tended to avoid them.

Though if one thought about it, seeing gravediggers at a funeral was probably the most natural thing there was.

But hey, no one said logic was a strong suit for the people of this time.

As Alexander then finished by saying,

"So when I approached them with the promise of status as doctors during the day time and 500 ropals a month as wages, most jumped at the opportunity. Because for many, they were already living in hell."

"Wait! So all those doctors we saw back there were gravediggers? Do they even know anything about medicine?" Hearing this Pasha Farzah shouted out aloud with incredulity, which also made it very hard for Alexander to not shout out,

'As if you guys know about medicine anyway!'

But Alexander kept his cool and gently replied, "Surprisingly a lot more than you would think, lord Pasha."

"Because being a gravedigger, they handled a lot of bodies, many of which are diseased ones." "Which means that in the course of their work, they can gain the ability to spot many symptoms of deadly diseases which even many accomplished doctors can not."

Now it would be wrong for Alexander to hype them up too much.

Because the understanding of medicine and healthcare in this time period was significantly different from the modern times, as it was often limited and based on observations rather than scientific understanding, with the focus being primarily on symptom management and alleviating suffering rather than a comprehensive understanding and treatment of the diseases.

But that was the best Alexander could do for now.

"I see." Pasha Farzah at last forcibly nodded, as he then raised his head up subconsciously, and suddenly seeing the blue afternoon sky above him, suddenly remembered,

"Brat! Why does this shed have no roof? So that the gods can smite you without trouble?" He snarled.

"Hahaha, perhaps it is because we are not afraid to defy the gods right in front of them?" Alexander gave the joke answer with a chuckle, before giving the real answer.

"No, it is to give the observers the best lighting possible. God's natural light. So that they can see all the small details "

"And if it rains, they have shades they can pull over."

Chapter 483 Weapons Demonstration

Alexander had designed the autopsy room with features meant to best maximize the ease of discovery in there.

This primarily meant having adequate light supply, which was achieved by having no roof, while also having other ease of life options such as a slanted floor to help drain the blood into the sewers below, a huge built-in pyre to burn the bodies, that coincidentally also benefited with having no roof as it allowed the fumes to escape easily, and lastly, the know-how from Alexander about how to actually document the findings.

Now, back to the first point, having no permanent roof did mean having to contend with rain and snow.

And to combat them there were thick heavy rolls of leather attached to the upper ends of the room which could be quickly unfolded to act as a makeshift shade during emergencies, where the rolls would be supported by poles that could be attached to the ground as supports.

This way a perfect balance between utility and shelter from the elements could be achieved.

Alexander showed all these to Pasha Farzah, and afterward, feeling everything had been seen decided that it was time to return, but not before turning to Jupetus to ask one more thing.

"Oh, are the men not here today?"

Here he was referring to the personnel responsible for processing the cadavers.

"Ah! They must have gone home for lunch." Jupetus instantly replied with a slight exclamation in her voice, before asking, "Should I call them my lord?"

Going to one's home to have lunch and then returning to work was quite common in this time period.

Because cooking something in the morning and keeping it hot and delicious was very hard without the use of modern technology like microwaves, and modern materials like plastic tupperware.

"Ah, then no need. Tell Golam that I said hello." Alexander lightly brushed aside Jupetus's suggestion, and then turned to Pasha Farzah with a smile and gestured,

"Well, then lord Pasha. Should we return? We have taken a lot of time here, and I'm sure the Queen mother is getting angry haha!"

Farzah naturally nodded to this suggestion, and with Jueptus escorting them up to the front gate, and bidding them goodbye, the tour of the clinic came to an end.

And it was a visit to be remembered, especially for Pasha Farzah, who had a complex feeling regarding Alexander's experiments.

On one hand, he felt glad that the boy trusted him enough to show this.

But on the other hand, he was somewhat fearful that something bad might happen to Alexander due to his bad karma.

But ultimately he decided to keep these feelings inside him for now.

Because whatever happened, the blame would lay squarely on Alexander, while all the benefits this 'human cutting' as he liked to call it would bring would be shared with all.

So if someone was willing to anger the gods and perform taboo research and then willingly share those results, why would he be a fool and try to stop it?

After all, there was also the consideration that he was no spring chicken, and if Alexander could discover some great medicine that would enable him to live longer, Pasha Farzah would be even willing to donate slaves as live test subjects with no qualms.

And it was because Alexander suspected the pasha might be sympathetic to his cause like this that he had decided to show the project in the first place, pretty sure his secret would be safe with the man.

While the man in question was currently jokingly saying in his mind,

'Maybe the brat will discover the secrets to immortality, haha.'

pandasnovel.com As Alexander was having a completely different train of thought.

As he passed the rows and rows of rooms with doctors in them, he could not help but reminisce about how the people were at first afraid to come to the clinic because they heard it was run by gravediggers, even though only a small percentage of them were doctors.

But there was that inherent social fear of the term gravedigger, which was further expounded recently because these men had been responsible for spreading the plague, though through no fault of their own.

It had only happened because some of the gravediggers, who were responsible for digging the mass graves, had inevitably caught the plagues, and acted as vectors, which worked to further spread their fear.

But these fears were slowly being quashed. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

Both by policies such as sermons in the temples dispelling these fear which were undertaken by Alexander, and also by the fact that the sick people of Zanzan really had nowhere else to go.

And once the people started coming here and started seeing results, the once ostracised group of society was finally beginning to be accepted, a result that managed to produce a sense of happiness and achievement in Alexander.

And with these thoughts, the duo finally approached the carriage that they found had been moved to under a shaded tree some distance away, with the ladies seemingly fanning themselves with their palms likely due to the high heat of the summer noon.

"Ah, my lords! You are back. And here we were just starting to bet on which sickness you had fallen to back there!" The Queen mother did not even attempt to hide her anger as she greeted the two men with dripping sarcasm.

This was because they had promised a short stopover of just ten to twenty minutes, whereas in reality, she estimated the men had been gone for over two hours.

She had even thought of ordering the carriage to turn around and take them home, leaving the two behind.

Because she could not remember the last time she was this hungry, hot, sweating, and tired.

And the scowl that she sent toward both of them made her thoughts terrifyingly clear.

While Lady Inayah and even Nanazin gave them disapproving looks.

And Alexander and Pasha Farzah could only apologize profusely for the delay, as then without further ado quickly urged the carriage to start.

While on their way to the eastern district, Pasha Farzah regaled the scenes he had seen inside, as somewhat of a way to entertain the currently sour mature women, where he praised Zanzan's medical achievement, and recounted the cleanliness practiced there, much to the eager ears of a crowd of three.

And finally, after a short journey, the carriage arrived at the eastern barracks, which was let through without any trouble, and the vehicle was then parked right next to a large, lavish building.

"My lords, my ladies, what took you so long? We were getting worried!" To greet them there was Menes right in at reception, dressed in perfect military gear, while the question managed to again produce another slight on the Queen Mother's face for she was reminded of how she was forced to waste two hours of her time under the hot summer sun with an empty stomach.

If it had not been Alexander and Farzah, but anyone else, even Ptolomy, she would have absolutely given them an earful.

But her sour mood quickly improved once they were ushered inside, where the temperature was much cooler due to the shade and many potted plants, as well as due to the servants coming to fan them using fans made of large dried palm leaves.

"Sorry, we got caught up in visiting another place," It was Alexander who answered Menes's inquiry, and a while later was led to a large feast that had been prepared in anticipation of the group's arrival.

The items included all the usual delicacies, and though lunch was late by a couple of hours, it was nevertheless delicious.

"Brat! Show us the new weapons! I've been waiting to see that for ages." But ultimately they were not here for the food.

So the moment the old man had finished praising the sweet pudding, he shouted out the real reason they were here.

"Sure," Alexander gave a slight nod, and so a while later the group was introduced to the crossbow, and instant bow.

The tests that were performed here were almost identical to the ones Alexander had shown Lady Miranda, with even the sales pitch being the same, and the only exception here was that the instant bow was also used by the cavalry to show their viability as horse archers.

For this demonstration, Alexander had men carrying the weapon ride and shoot at straw targets at a distance, and though many missed, many hit too.

"As you can see, the ability to fire five times in a row makes it possible for much less trained men to compete with highly trained horsemen. Because even if they miss, they can adjust their aim instantly before the enemy has the time to move too far." Alexander pointed out and was met with agreeing nods from the other four.

Now, the platitudes of praises about the two weapons need not be said, as Lady Miranda and Lord Janus had done that already, with the only exceptional quote being from Pasha Farzah, who dubbed the crossbow as 'The weapon that will win us the war'.

He said this because using crossbows, it was possible to use cheap, disposable units like peasants to easily defend forts and strongholds.

Meaning even a poorly trained, outnumbered force could defend a position using this weapon.

Pasha Farzah certainly had the military foresight to recognize the game-changing advantage of that.

The group then stayed for a while watching these demonstrations, until finally, dusk began to fall on Zanzan, and the group at last decided to finally wrap up this exciting day, at long last ending the long tour.

Chapter 484 Talks With Nanazin (Part-1)

Along the way back to the mansion, Pasha Farzah talked with Alexander about the various limitations of the crossbows and the doctrines of their use.

While Alexander described in great detail how he had employed them to defeat the Jahal mercenaries.

Pasha Farzah had not been clear on the details of the battle tactics before, so listened to the recount of events from the man himself with rapt attention, nodding, agreeing, asking, and commenting on the various battle tactics Alexander had used.

"Haha, well brat, it's good that Ural had not committed more of his forces on that last attack" Pasha Farzah half breathed a sigh of relief, and then pointed out, "I hope you have now learned to keep a bigger reserve of units in the back, especially when facing an outnumbered cavalry."

But overall, the aged man was quite satisfied with Alexander's tactics, feeling that if he was in his shoes, without the power of hindsight, he might not have done much better.

While from the side Lady Inayah added with a pleased nod,

"It seems all of us greatly underestimated you, my lord. To think you would have such a crafty invention to counter Djose. I'm undoubtedly impressed."

Which got an enthusiastic nod from Nanazin, and made the Queen mother join in with the comment,

"Yes, Adhania is lucky to call you one of its own. And We are honored to have you as our subject."

Here the 'We' referred to the royal family, and along with her praise, the Queen mother also did not forget to remind Alexander where his loyalties should lie.

Though how much it worked was questionable, as the oath that Alexander had taken with Ptolomy was seen as merely a convenient tool for him.

Now, in Alexander's recount, he had muddied the truth a bit, particularly about the second pincher cavalry charge, changing the recount so that both the attacks had far fewer numbers than it was originally.

And the reason for this was if Alexander said the truth, he would have to then describe how he countered them.

And since saying that he beat a much larger, well-trained force head-on using the same type of light skirmishers would not cut it, it meant that he would have to reveal the existence of his heavy cavalry.

Alexander did not want to do that yet.

Because he believed that there should be some things one should keep a secret from even his allies, just in case they decided to stab you in the back for whatever reason.

This was also the reason why he had not shown the armored knights to Pasha Farzah, nor the chainmail, considering delaying those revelations for perhaps a few more years.

So Alexander entertained the group with other stories, both along the way and also at the dinner table where they feasted on all the various kinds of food Pasha Farzah had brought for them.

There were traditional Adhanian cuisines like curries, fancy pies, and many meat dishes with different types of meat cooked in a variety of ways, as well as Alexander's specialty dishes such as brioche, kebabs, pasta, ravioli, and carbonara.

The number of various dishes at the table meant that those at the table had a spectrum of choices to eat whatever their moods desired, no matter how incongruous it might be from their preceding dish.

But the star of the show was undoubtedly the desserts, the centerpiece of which was an ice cream cake freshly baked and decorated with seasonal fruits, along with the usual accompaniments of puddings, faludas, custards, etc.

If the guests were asked to name the number one thing they enjoyed at Alexander's place, the answer would undoubtedly be the food.

Following the feast Alexander then invited the group to try some of the games he had invented, which had expanded from just poker to blackjack, bridge, and Texas hold'em to name only a few.

And Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah seemed very eager to try their hand with lady luck, while Nanazin excused herself right after dinner saying she was tired.

So it was up to the others to spice up the night, and as the games progressed, the group seemed to gravitate towards poker, with Pasha Farzah and the Queen mother seeming to have developed quite the rivalry, which was not strange given both were extremely ambitious and hyper-competitive people.

While, Alexander, like Nanazin, too was feeling tired, and given that he had a whole host of things to take care of in the following days, the main one being the preparation to host the 12 nobles he had invited for talks, he decided to hit the bed early.

Hence he excused himself after playing only a few initial rounds by feigning drunkenness.

And after taking a shower, Alexander was back in his room.

Here, as he was getting ready for his night, suddenly his eyes landed on a particular pot, which reminded him of something he had been wanting to do since morning.

This pot contained some salve of the legumnum, which was a great antiseptic, and one that Alexander kept on hand at all times just in case of an accident in his room, sort of like an emergency first aid kit.

And seeing it reminded him of Nanazin, or particularly the reason why the woman had been wearing such heavy, fully covered clothes. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

'I guess I should go give it to her.' Alexander said to himself, wondering, 'I hope she is still awake,' as he then took the small pot into his hand, and felt he should deliver the medicine himself.

This was because he figured that if he sent it through a maid Nanazin might reject it given the preciousness of the medicine, or out of embarrassment due to what sending that medicine implied.

After all, having a wife beater as a husband was never a glorious moment for any woman.

pandasnovel.com And so with that altruistic thought Alexander took the medicine pot and made it to Nanazin's room, whereupon he announced himself after a knock on the door, "Your Highness, it is me Alexander. May we talk?"

Now a man visiting a lady at this time of night usually meant only one thing.

And with especially how Alexander phrased it, it really conveyed that message, though he had no intention of such.

'Ahh!' Immediately after Alexander's knock, he first heard a small, shocked squeak from the room, followed by a series of rustling, and some banging, as Nanazin's slightly panicked voice rang out,

"My lord, please wait a moment. I will open the door shortly."

Alexander could very well guess why such rustling sounds were being made, and after finally a few while, the door squeaked open and Nanazin welcomed Alexander in, "Lord Pasha, please enter. Apologies for the mess."

Nanazin looked a bit haggard as she gestured for Alexander to enter, while Alexander only peeked through the door to look around the room and find it actually spotless, except that one corner where there were several sets of clothes haphazardly thrown about.

And as Alexander then turned to take a good look at Nanazin, he found her draped in a black, heavy cloak that covered all parts of her body, which must have been torturous in this heat.

"This is a bit of medicine. Have it." Alexander did not dilly-dally much, as right from the foot of the door he very casually stretched his arms to gift the small pot to Nanazin with a neutral tone.

An act which instantly made Nanazin panicking face fall into a sort of wounded forlorn countenance.

'Haha, so you have noticed Alex. Though who wouldn't?' She then let out a rueful, haggard smirk as she addressed Alexander with that endearing call.

"...." While Alexander found it hard to find any following words and could only stand still with the pot in his hand.

"Ah! Where are my manners? Thank you," Nanazin quickly noticed this and then gratefully accepted the medicine, before again inviting him in, "Please enter."

But Alexander declined, saying, "No, no, Your Highness, please rest."

The meaning that Alexander wanted to convey here was to give Nanazin the privacy to apply the salve on her wounds, while he was also reluctant to enter a married woman's quarters at night.

"No! Please enter!" But Nanazin repeated her message, though the meaning this time was very different.

If previously it had been a polite invitation, now it appeared to be desperate begging.

And so Alexander had little choice, as he gently nodded and entered with a "Then excuse me."

The moment Alexander entered Nanazin rapidly bolted the door shut, before turning around and then letting out a sorrowful chuckle,

"Haha, when I first heard you knock, I thought you had come to sleep with me. So as I was desperately searching for the cloak, I was thinking of how to reject you without being kicked out of the house, hehe."

Nanazin explained her initial panicking face, while to Alexander somehow her chortle sounded more painful than if she was actually crying.

"You do not have to worry about going anywhere. Zanzan will be your home from now on," Alexander's reassuring words only sounded like consoling puffery to Nanazin.

But it still somewhat healed her wounded heart.

At least someone was willing to put that modicum of facade in front of her.

Back in Adhan, many were not willing to do even that.

Though in reality Alexander really meant what he said.

'Well, it's good that I'm here. I can discuss the banking business with her," He said to himself, as he took a seat on the comfy couch.

Chapter 485 Talks With Nanazin (Part-2)

Alexander's reason for keeping Nanazin here was not only to keep her from suffering further abuse at Ptolomy's hand but also because the bank he was thinking of establishing would need a trustworthy person to head.

And to that effect, Alexander took a seat on the couch at the center of the room and first said some pleasantries, "I just remembered that this is the first time we are talking face to face after you came to Zanzan Your Highness. I apologize for my inattention."

To which Nanazin gave a silent smile as she clutched her cloak tightly around her body, placed the medical pot on the table, and then sat across Alexander while making sure to carefully tuck her legs inward so as to fold the cloak towards her in order to not reveal any parts of her lower torso except the bare feet.

"Alex, you said I can call Zanzan home? How? How do you intend to keep me here? And how do you intend to treat me?" Nanazin had a seriousness to her voice Alexander had yet to hear.

He had heard her cry, moan and beg.

But never this hard, steely tone.

And it appeared this was the reason why she had begged Alexander to enter the room.

Because she needed to know.

She needed to know what Alexander had in store for her.

"...." Suddenly hearing this serious question Alexander gave himself some time to think as to how to best answer the question.

Because directly saying 'I want you to run my banks and look after all the money I have' might sound too incredulous for the distrusting woman.

And while Alexander racked his brain, Nanazin commented, "Let me remind you, snatching me from that bastard will not be easy. Whether I like it or not, or if he acknowledges it or not, we are still husband and wife. We took that oath under the eyes of the gods."

Nanazin presumed that Alexander was thinking of marrying her because she could think of no other way he could keep her here as according to the deal she would have to be changed with the Queen mother every year.

As Nanazin said this Alexander noticed that even when she hated Ptolomy to the point she would loudly curse him, she still considered him her husband.

'*Sigh*', truly a good woman wasted on an animal,' Alexander could only sigh in regret.

And then a while later he finally finished organizing his thoughts and gave a very brief outline, "We will keep you here saying we are short-staffed and need you for administrative duties...which is kinda true."

"You will live in this mansion and be paid a yearly salary of somewhere between 7,000 to 10,000 ropals. That is also what similar others are paid."

"And that will be enough for a few years, or at least until the armistice ends six years later."

Here Alexander had cleverly disguised the bank position as an administrative job, which would also suit Nanazin perfectly because she did have quite a bit of experience in simple clerical and accounting jobs, as she was the one who had kept track of Ptolomy's finances before he became king.

Nanazin was truly wasted on Ptolomy.

After saying this, Alexander then finished by saying, "And as for what happens after that, well by that time Ptolomy will likely have put a baby in either the Queen mother or maybe even Hellma's belly. We will decide that later."

Alexander brushed off the concerns that were six years in the future for the moment.

After all, so many things could happen in the future.

Ptolomy might not even live that long, through both natural or unnatural causes.

Who can say?

Hearing Alexander's genuine and detailed answer, Nanazin let out a very audible large sigh of relief as she finally relaxed her taut body.

Being the one who handled the money for Ptolomy, she knew exactly how big even a yearly sum of 7,000 ropals was.

It was quite adequate to live a good life.

Perhaps not a glamorous one, or a cushy one, but quite a reasonably comfortable one.

Because with that amount of money, she would comfortably be within the 95th percentile of the wealth bracket, or in the top 5%.

The lack of money had always been a constant source of discomfort for Nanazin, as though she had a lot of jewelry and clothes to her name, she had no cash.

And it was also not like she could pawn off her belonging at any shop.

Nevermind most such shops would not be able to afford even her cheapest possession even if they were to sell themselves over 10 times over, but also the royal family had strict laws against this.

Special permission was needed to sell or buy goods related to the royal family, and those caught violating it would be severely punished.

And it was enforced exactly to stop women like Nanazin from doing what she was trying to do, which was attempting to acquire ropals to pay for her escape. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

The reason for her desire to acquire this particular mode of currency was obvious.

Because a noble lady escaping carrying a bunch of glittering jewels was as easy to track as if she was letting off a flare every time she exchanged one of those.

The trackers would just need to follow the trail of the unique gems to catch her.

As opposed to the common ropals which were all identical and would be mixed with everyone else's.

Hence, with Alexander promising her financial freedom as opposed to empty words, she suddenly felt her world get brighter and her shoulders lighter.

"Thank you," The simple two words contained an amount of gratitude in them that was difficult to quantify, while Nanazin regretted not having a broader vocabulary to express her gratitude towards Alexander more vocally.

"No problem." Alexander breezily replied to Nanazin's heavy gratitude, treating it like he was doing a causal favor.

And then taking a further look around the room, he suddenly noticed something and inquired, "Do your daughters not stay with you? To you know...take care of you?"

Alexander presumed her wounds must hurt.

"Ah! I have not told them." Nanazin's let out a dry smirk, adding, "I'm sure they suspect something. And might even know a bit. But certainly not the actual extent. I've been careful," she said proudly.

Nanazin was truly a great mother.

Like she had tried to prevent her daughters from being taken by Lady Inayah for their study back in Adhan, here she was also trying to hide her suffering from them to not worry them.

"I see. They are lucky to have a mother like you," Alexander gave a gentle nod, and then feeling the conversation was over, attempted to get up.

"Would my lord like to see them?" But was stopped by this inquiry from Nanazin.

The 'them' here of course referred to the bruises, and the query made Alexander a bit fluxed.

He could not realistically say, 'No, I do not have to see the scars you suffered,' but he was also perfectly aware of what would happen if he said yes.

To him it appeared that Nanazin's question seemed to be less of an actual question and more of a what was about to happen.

"Does Your Highness think that is a good idea?" But still, Alexander tried one last time.

"Yes. I want Alex to see." But the reply was immediate.

Rustle, *Rustle*,

And so with one grand swing of her arms, Nanazin opened her cloak and let it slip into the floor, finally revealing her abuse to Alexander.

And the extent of it left Alexander stunned.

There were scars marks all over her body, big and small, long and short, thick and thin, red and black, to the point that the once pristine white body he had seen appeared like it had been cruelly scribbled on by a sadistic devil with a red hot poker.

It made him become speechless.

"Let me tell you how I got them," While Nanazin, who had grown numb by this point decided to recount a bit of her experience.

"These long thin ones you see are from lashes of whips." She said pointing to her abs and chest and then turned around to show her back which was crisscrossed with the marks, making her once pristine back long horrific.

Then turning forward, she moved her hands downwards to her crotch and mons pubs which was still red with inflammation and had many red scars tangled together.

"The short thin ones are from the crop hits. " she then turned around to show that her butt had also suffered the same.

"The long thick ones are from the ropes they used to tie me with." At this point, Nanazin pointed to her wrists, neck, and thighs, which bore deep thick rope marks.

Before finally pointing to the small and large black circles all around her body and especially her flanks, and saying,

"And these things...these black little circles. Well the bastard thought it would be funny to burn me with hot poker while they tied me up andand...wuhuuu...wuhhuuu." She could not finish as she suddenly broke out crying into uncontrollable howls, vividly recalling those hellish nights, while Alexander jumped up to hug and console her.

pandasnovel.com The sight of what had been done to Nanazin made him sick, and Alexander felt a surge of anger he very rarely had toward anyone.

The last ones were perhaps Damous and Aristotle, and both those men were dead...killed.

Chapter 486 12 Nobles Vs Alexander (Part-1)

As Alexander observed the scars, he had a hard time believing that someone could bear such pain without so much flinching outwardly.

Very few would have even noticed Nanazin was hurt from interacting with her during the day.

pandasnovel.com Alexander could only imagine the herculean effort it must have taken.

"Why didn't you ask for any medicine?" Alexander asked as he then spent some time calming down the wounded woman, and afterward helped her apply some of the salves, particularly in the back where it was hard for her to reach.

Following this he left her to sleep.

The next few days for Alexander were a hectic one.

First and foremost because he busied himself with taking inventory of all of the goods that Pasha Farzah had brought.

The unloading had finally finished after taking that long, but it was worth the wait.

Because after all the cargo was collected and stored, Alexander suddenly found himself much much richer.

It appeared 300 million ropals were able to buy oneself an astronomical amount of goods.

So he found that he had gained an additional 25,000 slaves, which was 5,000 more than he had ordered, a few thousand draft animals which would prove invaluable for his industries and agriculture, and most importantly 40,000 tons of food, with 30,000 tons of it being grains, and 10,000 tons being dried fruits, salted meat, and fish, many kinds of exotic wine, and different types of nuts to name the notable ones.

This finally meant Alexander's food troubles were over for the time being.

While there were many other things in smaller quantities too, such as various types of stone and timber, metal ores such as iron, copper, gold, and silver, furs of various animals, linen clothes, and other miscellaneous products such as various machinery and farm tools.

And as Alexander read the comprehensive report Hemicus, who was in charge of this gave him, overall he found that the pasha had bought 25% more of what Alexander had ordered, which was surely a way to compensate him.

Following the unloading of the large amount of goods, they were quickly stored in the warehouses near by the harbor, or inside the locked treasuries of his mansion for the time being, from where they would be allocated for their required usage later on, or be directly sold to the open market for a profit.

Or not for profit for some goods such as the grains, which Alexander bought for 3 ropals per kg, but sold wholesale at 1.5 and retailed at 2, all to keep living costs down for the people.

Anyway, while the storage operation proceeded, Alexander concentrated on the second important thing he was concerned with- meeting the nobles he had asked to come and subjugating them.

To this effect he sought the advice of Pf, wanting to know how best to proceed with annexation, and as the two men brainstormed ideas, the middle of May arrived and the nobles in question started to announce their arrival.

'My lord, it is great to see you again,' Shordar (Baron) Prantik was the first to arrive in Zanzan, coming to greet Alexander as soon as he entered the city.

And over the coming days, he was followed by several others, both familiar and unfamiliar faces.

Until finally all four of the familiar nobles, and the twelve new nobles that had been called up had arrived, taking residence in the many various villas around Alexander's manor, many of which they themselves had once owned.

And with the guests all having arrived, a grand feast was soon held to welcome them, though the party was more formal than warm, as the 12 new nobles were rather wary of Alexander.

Which was understandable given they were basically intimidated into being here rather than out of their own volition.

So the party was rather lackluster, without any real life to it, as the group was rather focused on what would happen the next day when they were scheduled to hold the talks to determine the twelve's future.

That meeting began right after breakfast in the outer hall of the second floor, with the 16 nobles meeting with Alexander's delegation consisting of his council member, but more importantly, four additional honored guests, who were Pasha Farzah, Lady Inayah, and surprisingly Nanazin and the Queen mother, both of whom Alexander had invited to act as witnesses from the royal family.

The setting revolved around a huge ornate oak table with Alexander's side of ten sitting on one side, and the nobles sitting on the other.

Though whereas Alexander's side sat in a uniformly spaced line, the nobles had a very distinct gap between the 4 nobles sitting on the right and the 12 remaining ones.

Clearly, the group who had already sworn loyalty to Alexander was being ostracised.

"My lords, thank you for coming to Zanzan to attend this conference. We are honored," Alexander, sitting at the center, began the pleasantries with a bright smile.

As he then gestured with his hand to the left, and introduced, "I'm sure you have already met, but this is Her Highness, the Queen mother-Seelima, the mother of the His Majesty, King Ptolomy."

"Nest to her is Lady Inayah. She controls much of the trade around Adhan, and her father, is Lord Izayid, the current treasury Master."

Moving his hand then to the right, Alexander then said, "Then to my right is the current prime minister-Lord Pasha, ruler of Matrak." I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

"And lastly, next to him is the current Queen, Her Highness Nanazin."

"We are all very honored that you could take the time to come here."

Alexander had a very cordial smile as he introduced, or more accurately re-introduced these people as all of the nobles had already met and greeted all of the guests at the party the night before, something Alexander of course perfectly knew very well.

But he did so anyway, as a way to exert pressure on them using the four's names and titles, and his warm smile did not detract the nobles from realizing that.

It was a stacked lineup these low-level nobles would have likely never even dreamed of meeting, much less interacting with.

But since such big shots were there, that fact made Alexander's counterpart who was in a much grouchy mood at least put on a curtain of civility they would have certainly not otherwise.

Because while Alexander was not a real noble in their eyes, these people were.

And this was also why Alexander had requested their presence in the first place.

After Alexander's introduction, the opposite side softened their hard facial features a bit and did the same in a cold, but flawlessly formal manner, beginning from the left and ending at the right.

With the two main introductions being of the two Jamiders (Earls) there.

"The honor is all mine, my lords. I'm Jamider (Earl) Yuusiq, and we are all pleased to meet lordships of such high caliber as you." A large man with scars multiple scars on his hands and a full beard greeted them, though the greeting seemed to exclude Alexander.

Alexander for his part knew this man from before even before he came to Zanzan.

At least just by the name.

This was because he had checked the records listing all the nobles in Adhan's royal study before and found there that this man ruled the city of Harki, about 70km northwest of Zanzan.

Furthermore, Camius had also mentioned the man before in his report.

As he did the name of the next name who was also similarly introducing himself.

"My name is Jamider (Earl) Tikba. And it is a great honor to meet Your Highnesses." The thin, almost cadaverous man with gaunt eyes and sunken cheeks then sent a slight bow toward Alexander's left, where the Queen Mother and Nanazin were sitting.

He ruled the city of Kquem, which was slightly northeast of Zanzan, about 80km from Alexander's capital.

And as the two Jamiders (Earls) sat at the center of the table, side by side, Alexander, who was sitting directly opposite to them, noticed a weird dichotomy, where the huge burly figure of Jamider (Earl) Yuusiq seemed to completely overshadow the thin, flaky figure of Jamider (Earl) Tikba, almost like how a mountain would shade those on its side.

It was a funny sight for Alexander.

After the introductions, it was Lord Tikba, who started the negotiations, first addressing the four 'real nobles', "Esteemed lords, we are all very grateful to have had the chance to meet with all of you."

And then got to the real issue.

"But you also must be aware of why we are here. And thus it should be clear to you this is a blatant violation of the armistice drawn up by the two parties Lord Ptolomy and His Majesty Amenheraft."

The noble even turned to Pasha Farzah and pleaded to him directly,

"Lord Prime Minister, you were there when they signed it. You even wrote the treaty yourself! Can you sit by and simply watch as it is violated so openly?"

It appeared that the nobles knowing they did not have nearly the muscle to resist Alexander had instead chosen to appeal to the opposing sides' ethical side.

And Alexander could certainly respect that.

But that did not mean he would acquiesce to their demands.

While Pasha Farzah, who was being addressed to only brushed his hand and snarked,

"Bah! If you think the treaty has been broken, then why haven't you asked that brat to come and save you? Heh! If he can that is!"

Chapter 487 12 Nobles Vs Alexander (Part-2)

The biting reply that Pasha Farzah gave in his absolutely confident tone was in part enabled by the knowledge of the secret deal struck between Ptolomy and Amenheraft, where the former asked the latter to look away as Alexander annexed these houses in exchange for the continuation of the financial aid.

So from Pasha Farzah's and Alexander's perspective, there would be no compromise on the actual annexation, only the manner in which it would be done.

As Pasha ended his reply, the Queen Mother decided to pick it up, similarly sneering and saying, "Haha, Amenheraft is living on alms given by 'Us'. Where will he get the army to come and save you? You are all delusional."

While Lady Inayah added, "And even if he did, Zanzan will only then need to add a few more flower beds to its outskirts. Just like it did with Djoser's men, hehe."

And lastly, it was Nanazin's turn, who smirked and said, "Your so-called king has lost to Pasha Alexander every single time he has fought him. A total of three times," She emphasized by showing three of her fingers.

And then recounted them,

"First he lost his city to the lord,"

"Then he lost his army to the lord,"

"And just two months ago, he lost his most ferocious attack dog's army to the lord."

"What makes you think he can help you now? He can't even help himself. Hah! Joke!"

The curly-haired beauty was particularly biting in her reply as she very animatedly brushed her arms, exalting Alexander perhaps a bit too much than the others.

But the theme of the message given by the group was clear.

There would be no compromise on the annexation.

And to bolster that stance they had shed any pretense of civility the moment they sat down for the discussion, and simply taunted the nobles to ask for Amenheraft's help when they brought up the matter of armistice.

Of course, the group had rehearsed much of the talking points earlier, coming up with prior answers to points that the group guessed the nobles might raise.

It was originally suggested by Alexander and the other four were finding it very effective, for they were able to buttress one another with ease.

This was very much different from the negotiations the other four, or more accurately three had participated in before, where they would have to basically ad-lib to the situation as they did not go into it with such a comprehensive plan.

And this planned approach immediately had a marked impact, as the nobles instantly understood that the opposing side would not heed the excuses regarding the treaty.

Which also made the nobles understand there was little way to stop getting eaten here.

"Haha, well regarding the treaty, I was there too when it was signed. And I also wrote a large portion of it." From the side, Alexander firstly lightly chuckled this, reminding the nobles he also deserved the credit for that besides Pasha Farzah, and then asked,

"May I ask why you choose to side with Amenheraft rather than the true king Ptolomy?"

And the answers were as generic as one would expect, only having three major versions.

The first one being:

"Because he is the one true king. Chosen as the Crown prince by the previous late king, His Majesty Alozmer, he is the rightful successor of the throne of Adhania."

"And it is a fact no amount of whitewashing by you people will be able to change" Jamider (Earl) Tikba was showing himself to be quite the orator.

The second one was:

"He is the road that leads to Paradise. Following him is following the will of Ramuh, and thus the will of the gods. We will not follow you to Hell. You cannot make us."

And the last one was the most simple one:

"Bah! I swore an oath to follow him, and I will follow it to my death."

This particular sentence was uttered by Jamider (Earl) Yuuseq, who Alexander could see as a military man judging from all the visible scars on him, and figured him to be a man who wore his heart on a sleeve.

'A man of his word who would not back down no matter the circumstances, that was the vibe the man gave.

There were of course the main outer reasons.

While naturally there were other hidden reasons as well, such as some of the nobles had treatries with Amenheraft and Pasha Muazz that got them preferential treatment during trade or access to a specific resource and which Alexander of course would not and many times could not grant them as he himself did not have access to that.

Or defensive guarantees that they felt Alexander could not grant them, or worse still, those defensive guarantees might have been against Alexander himself.

There might also be shared interests in various kinds of entertainment the nobles took part in that Alexander detested. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

And then lastly there was the always simple case of racism as Alexander was a Thesian, and not from Adhania, hecen was not one of them.

And this was a particularly sore sticking point for some of the more hawkish nobles, who were determined to never serve Alexander no matter what just because of his birth of origin.

So if you thought in modern times the people who did not vote for a leader just based on their color or sex were bad, they really should come to visit Zanzan.

Alexander was of course aware of these prejudices about him, but there were only two things he could do about it.

Either kill all of them and destroy racism at its source.

Or slowly try to convince them to change their minds.

And the side effect of doing something similar to the first one was something Alexander had already tasted, with Djose's war.

And so Alexander really had to focus on the second one.

And to induce that effect, after hearing the reasons, he first put his right hand under the table and from there brought out a large leather-bound rectangular bag, an ancient version of the modern briefcase.

And as he opened the leather straps binding the bulging bag and then brought out the stacks of paper from inside it, and then started to neatly organize them, he first very politely smiled and said, "Thank you for your honest answers. It goes to show that all of you are men of conviction. I can respect that."

But then gave them the cold, hard truth,

"But let us be real and not waste our time bickering over the treaty, the deal, the armistice. the legitimacy of who is king and who is not or whatever else for that matter. It does not really matter."

"Because if it did matter and any one of you wanted to resist us to the bitter end, then you would have never come here in the first place."

"So!" Alexander forcefully uttered the word as he then looked straight ahead gazing his eye into his counterpart's eyes, "In the interest of saving both your and my time, I have written down our list of demands. And then a list of the benefits we are willing to provide if you join us. Please have a look."

After he said this started passing copies of the paper to each of the other 25 people there until all 26 people had in their hands 3 leaves of A4-sized paper.

These papers were attached to themselves using metal paper clips which Alexander asked his chainmail workshop to manufacture, and as the group focused their eyes on the first pages, they found the white sheet to have the demands written on them neatly in bullet points.

Just from the handwriting itself, it looked like it was almost a work of art.

Which was not inaccurate considering it was done by Mikaya.

No matter what others might say about Mikaya, she was a genius artist, Alexander would give her that.

And it was also one of the reasons he had asked her to write these.

With the other reason being because Alexander was just learning how to write Azhak, and currently his writing looked like that of a child's.

So he did not want to embarrass himself in front of the nobles and make them underestimate him even more.

So here came Mikaya.

And since the original script was quite long, and Mikaya would have to write it 26 times in flawless handwriting, the price was certainly not cheap.

But it was certainly weird.

Well, perhaps not that weird given it was Mikaya, who, in much keeping with her character had not demanded any royal for they were worthless in her eyes.

But had instead demanded that Alexander spend a few nights with the three girls right after Pasha Farzah left.

The reason for the 'after Pasha Farzah left' condition was obvious, while the reason for Mikaya making that particular request was likely sort of a revenge.

For Alexander had barred her from going to her usual weekly entertainment as long as her father was here.

For though Alexander might be daring, he was not suicidal, and would never take the chance of Pasha Farzah accidentally discovering her daughter was not home, or worse...she was there.

No matter how small that chance was.

All these miscellaneous thoughts crossed Alexander's mind as he looked at the papers in front of him, and then looked across the table to see if everyone got them.

And once he would see a small, white parchment in everyone's hands he began.

Chapter 488 12 Nobles Vs Alexander (Part-3)

Alexander began by pointing to the papers in his hand and offering, "Although, the conditions written here are pretty simple, but for everyone's ease, let me read it aloud, and expound on each point."

"I believe that will make it easier for everybody"

Alexander offered this method not only for its utility purposes but also because some of his council members like Grahtos could not yet read Azhak.

And then finished his opening statement by saying,

"If you have questions or objections, or rebuttals, please note them down, and ask after I have finished speaking. But please do not interrupt while I'm speaking."

With this said, Alexander looked around to see if everyone was on the same page.

And after seeing no one object, Alexander smiled and nodded, "Then let us begin." as he then pointed to the papers and commenced the discussions.

"Here, right on the top of the paper, you can see it is headlined 'General Offer'." Alexander started, explaining, "This means that these demands apply to all of you, whether you choose to join King Ptolomy or not."

"And right below are these demands written in bold points."

Alexander then used his index fingers to trace the first of the bullet points which were all shaped like a beautiful flower,

"The number one of these points is obvious- We demand that all of you must become neutral actors in the following conflict between Amenheraft and His Majesty Ptolomy."

"This means that in the case of a conflict between us and Amenheraft, you must promise to not side with him."

"Of course, that means we will not force you to side with us either." Alexander elaborated.

And then moving on the second time, Alexander declared,

"The second point is that you must abolish all trade barriers between Zanzan and her allies with your fiefdom and engage in free trade with us. That means no tariffs or taxes when our goods enter your cities, and no toll for the merchants when they enter the city."

"And certainly nothing such as a road tax, or other similar extortions."

Following this Alexander offered, "And of course, we will do the same for you."

Then came the third point.

"The third point is that you must allow safe passage of our goods through your territory. The merchants must not be attacked or harassed in any way on their way to business, and if they are attacked, you must aid us in every way with the following investigation."

"And in exchange, we will ensure the same."

"The fourth point is that all of you must remelt and remake all of your personal coinage and adopt a common currency that is used by us all. This will be done so that merchants will not need to waste enormous amounts of their time making conversions between tens of different currencies."

"This will make trading between us easier and faster."

"And we will give you the exact details of the coin later."

Alexander here was referring to the fact that although the ropal was the most commonly used currency in Adhania, as it was issued by the royal family which was the richest family in Adhania and thus had the most gold to print the most money, but it was not the only kind of currency there was.

No, in fact, there were hundreds of different kinds of other coins in the market, all minted and produced by various nobles, most of them owing silver and gold mines.

And though this gave the nobles the power various economic and political power, it also meant that with this many coins with this many variant values in circulation, many times just calculating the change from a transaction took several times more than the time for the actual purchase.

Alexander had experienced a similar thing in Thesos where each city-state issued its own currency, and he knew very well just how inconvenient it was, causing him to many times avoid going to the market just to dodge that hassle.

He did not want a repeat of that here.

Moving on to his next point, Alexander then loudly stated,

"The fifth point is that you allow us to open both King Ptolomy's temples and Goddess Gaia's temples in your territories. And guarantee the protection of these divine houses and its residents- i.e- the priests and priestesses."

"Rest assured, all of you will be allowed to pray in your solely Ramuh temple with no problem. And your priests and priest trees will be protected just as well as ours."

"But you will not be allowed to open new temples in our and for that matter in your territory without permission from us."

Alexander had discussed this very issue with the Pasha Farzah and the others, and it was determined it would be best to let the nobles practice whatever religion they wished.

For now.

As a forceful conversion would only sow the seeds for rebellion.

So for now the strategy was containment, which would be done by restricting the number of temples built.

Alexander then continued saying,

"The sixth and last point is that you will restrict your garrisoned men to 50 men for shordars (barons), 100 men for talukdars (viscounts), and 200 men for Jamiders (Earl). And you are not allowed to send notices to raise levies without our express permission."

"For we will not allow you to raise armies that could threaten us."

After this long recitation, Alexander paused to give the nobles some time to digest the six points demand and observed the nobles to be reading and re-reading the bulleted points.

And as one would expect, they were divided into three groups. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

Firstly for some, the terms were not as harsh as they had expected and they were quite pleased with it.

pandasnovel.com They had certainly heard of Alexander's demands that he had iterated to the nobles during the ransom exchange, and came in here with that mental preparation.

So seeing the absence of a 1% land tax made all of them very glad.

Many even liked the commerce-originated demands of Alexander, viewing it not as Alexander trying to suck them dry and give nothing back, but rather trying to boost trade and income between them.

Something Muazz was very damn cared about, because the fat noble already made enough money to not know what to do with it.

They even liked the particular restriction on the number of garrisons, as it would allow them to save some money.

This thought came about due to them being neutral and in the heart of Alexander's territory. meaning any attack by Amenheraft's force would have to be met by Alexander's forces to secure his perimeter.

So Alexander would have to come to their aid to protect his borders, but Alexander himself could not attack them due to the treaty

It was a win-win in some's eyes.

Such penny-pinching, money-grabbing thoughts were particularly prevalent among the shordars (Barons) and some talukdars (Viscounts), who were really not that affluent for nobles and were generally a lot more receptive to Alexander's demand.

The second group was in the middle, with some concerns and some positive thoughts.

Such as some not liking the new religions and others the garrison restriction.

And lastly was the group that was completely against it, with either one or more points that were a non-starter, or they simply refused to bow to Alexander due to ideological reasons.

Alexander gave all three of the groups about ten to fifteen minutes to go through the short points, which he felt was long enough for some of them to have memorized the short points, as he then finally asked,

"Does anyone have any inquiry regarding these points?"

"....." First, there was blanket silence.

Until one shordar (Baron) spoke up in a slightly quivering tone, "The sixth point..... regarding the garrisons...how will we know you will not attack us after making us weaker with this deal? Can you guarantee it?"

As this was asked, Alexander noticed several heads nod following this, buttressing the concern.

But he casually blew it away with a sneer and snark.

"Heh! Weaker? Why would I need you to be weaker?"

"You are already weak!" He mocked and then said,

"If I had wanted to, I could have attacked you the moment I defeated Djose, and learned of all of your treacheries."

And then in a hard, commanding booming voice, he shouted,

"So do not dare speak of fears of me breaking the treaty."

"Because all of you here know better than anybody else what it is to break a treaty."

"Remember it was you folks who broke the armistice first."

"I only attacked Jabel because my spies told me that an attack was being planned against my city from there."

"And once I did and caught the rats,... Voila! Would you look at that!"

"There was Muazz's son and a high-ranking military Jamider (Earl) there skulking, planning, and plotting."

Alexander was very forceful in his rhetoric, mixing lies with truths, and coincidences with accidents, until no one knew which was which.

As he then swung his arms forcibly and declared,

"And do not bother telling me you had no idea of the attack."

"Because I will never believe that all 12 of you collectively, with all your spies and relatives had no idea that a 60,000 army was coming to attack me."

"That was a clear violation of the treaty."

"Where were you then!"

Chapter 489 12 Nobles Vs Alexander (Part-4)

Alexander's slight tirade was a calculated one, one meant to crush the last bit of resistance some of these nobles might have regarding Alexander's takeover.

And it worked to a degree, as the eloquent Takba replied to Alexander with a light smile,

"My lord, we are aware of our situation. And I also believe I speak for the majority of us when I say that we do not have any problem with most of the proposed demands."

"Indeed many of them will likely make us richer."

"So, please, let us turn the page and you can show us what you want to offer to those who side with you."

The man was an accomplished negotiator.

Hearing this Alexander gave an acknowledging nod to him, and then with a smile turned the page, saying,

"I'm sure all of you have noticed all the unique trinkets and baubles Zanzan has to offer. So join us and you can be also a part of that."

As he then pointed to the letters on the page,

"Here you can see that I have listed the various things Zanzan produces, its market value, and the price at which we are willing to sell a certain amount of it annually to you."

"And to aid you even more in that decision, I have even calculated the estimated profit you will be making from these commodities."

Alexander has a smooth, almost oily tone to his voice as he said this, and then simply paused to let the nobles read the offer and the quotes numbers.

The offer was written like this:

Iron - Market Price per kg- 50 ropals

Special price per kg- 25 ropals up to 20 tons for Shordars (Barons)

up to 30 tons for Talukders (Viscountss)

up to 50 tons for Jamiders (Earls)

Estimated profit: Shordars (Barons)- 500,000 ropals

Talukders (Viscounts)- 750,000 ropals

Jamiders (Earls) - 1,250,000 ropals.

The same list went for all the other goods, filling up the entire second page, and giving a detailed breakdown of almost all of Zanzan's 'delicacies.'

The nobles noticed that Alexander was offering a consistent discount of 50% to his retainers up to a certain quota based on their peerage.

Namely, iron, salt, paper, soaps, glassware, woven fabric, and sugar were all being offered to the nobles at a price where the nobles would be able to make money hand over fist if they were to re-export to other territories.

pandasnovel.com And at the end of the exhaustive list, the page simply concluded by totaling all the estimated profits together.

It read:

Shordars (Barons)- Around 2 million ropals

Talukders (Viscountss)- Around 3 million ropals

Jamiders (Earls) - Around 5 million ropals.

The numbers that were written there were huge and the nobles read and re-read the page to make sure everything was in good order and that Alexander was not trying to hoodwink them.

And the reason for this caution was strangely not out of doubt.

But incredulity.

For the profits that Alexander was promising them were truly out of this world.

For example, a shordar's (baron) annual income was only around 500,000 to 600,000 ropals and here Alexander was offering them 4 times the amount.

And such an offer similarly affected the talukdars (Viscounts) and Jamiders (Earls) who earned around 2 to 3 million and 10 to 15 million ropals a year.

As a matter of fact, just the first point, the iron sales would have been enough to make most nobles seriously consider jumping ship.

And so given the huge list of offers, the men there sat and read and re-read the terms until they could recite the numbers by heart.

But even after all that time, they could not find any blatant flaw with Alexander's assumptions.

In fact, some were even of the mind that Alexander was underpricing his goods and believed they would be able to fetch a bigger price.

Hence the allure of the large amount of money made many who had been on the fence before to strongly consider siding with Alexander, while those who had liked Alexander's offer had pretty much made up their minds.

And even those staunchly opposing nobles were kind of in flux, their greed and desire for potential economic prosperity strongly wrestling with their ethics and values.

But none of the three groups said anything yet.

Because there was still one more page left to go. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

And who knew what kind of bizarre things would be written in there?

So after a while as the de-facto leader Lord Tikba raised his head up and addressed Alexander in a neutral voice, "We have no problem with the offers on this page."

"May we move on to the last page?"

Alexander on the other hand was actually expecting to see some of the nobles jump and join him by now.

But seeing no such luck, he nodded to Tikba's suggestion and then wordlessly flipped the page, before again starting.

"It is only natural since we are giving you so much in return, we also expect you to fulfill some additional obligations and duties."

"Here they are. Please let me read them around."

Alexander then began.

"The first point is what you have all guessed."

"If you join us you must pay 1% of your yearly harvest as military fees to help pay for the salaries of the men that will keep your lands safe if Amenheraft attacks you."

Alexander dressed the tax as a kind of military contribution.

And then tried to soothe that burn with the following words,

"But in exchange for that, you will not be obliged to host us or entertain us or send any annual gifts to us."

And then continued.

"The second point is that you cannot raise or lower any taxes you levy on your farmers or merchants without first notifying the Zanzan council."

"All tax increase or decrease must be prior approved by a two-thirds majority in the Zanzan council."

Alexander at this point raised his head to say, "Now, you all must be wondering what is the Zanzan council and who is its members."

"Well, that nicely brings us to our third point."

"The Zanzan council will be the ruling organization that will actually govern the province of Zanzan and all its settlements."

"You will get to know the details of how it works later, but basically it will consist of all the nobles who join us and they will get to collectively vote on issues regarding the future governance of the province"

"So the third point is that after you join us, you must keep a representative of yours here in Zanzan who will vote on your behalf, such as your brother, father, or successor."

Alexander discussed his demand for hostages under the guise of democracy.

"The fourth point is regarding the royal tithe." He then said, elaborating,

"Whereas the neutral nobles are free to give the 10% of their farmer's produce to whichever temple they like, you will not be allowed to do so."

"For you, the nobles of Zanzan, you must give 5% of the tithe to King Ptolomy's new temple and 3% to the new Gaia temple."

"That means the tithe will be 8% and not 10%."

"This is the grace of His Majesty Ptolomy, who does not want to burden his subjects with a load they cannot bear," Alexander managed to say this sounding quite pious.

Though it would be not the presents but the nobles who would be the ones really benefitting, as they would be able to nick that 2% from the peasants and make a 1% profit that paying Alexander his 1% land tax.

And Alexander had no problem with this.

Because it was really not the peasants who were with the power here, and they were not the ones he needed to keep happy.

No, for that were the nobles, and for now, in the initial stages of his empire building, Alexander knew he would have to throw out large incentives to motivate these men to switch sides.

So, with that said, Alexander moved to his penultimate point.

"The fifth point is that you must implement various infrastructure development and policies as demanded by the Pasha and his council."

"For now one of that is the most important is the building of roads connecting all the friendly noble territories with each other and with Zanzan, both to help boost trade between ourselves and also to allow the army to quickly reinforce any part of the frontlines."

"And to aid in that endeavor, we will demand that each shordar (baron) hand over 50 men, each talukdar (viscount) 200 men, and each Jamider (Earl) 500 men temporarily to that these roads can be built within the next year."

"And lastly, the sixth point is that whatever filthy practice you do, such as the kinds those traitors in Jabel confessed to before dying, killing, raping, and torturing, clean them up before they ever see the light of day. And swear to yourself to never do it again." Alxx had a very harsh tone to his voice as he said this, and then strongly warned,

"Because if I ever get even a whiff of such things being committed by you or your kin, you will be immediately kicked out of the group, and depending on the gravity of your crimes, the council may even decide to declare war on you."

With this said, Alxx then remembered an additional occurrence, and lightly added this as his very last point,

"Oh, and as for your various customs and traditions, I will join in some and absence in others."

"And I will understand if you choose to do the same."

Chapter 490 12 Nobles Vs Alexander (Part-5)

The various customs Alexander alluded to was most certainly the Adhanian noble tradition of gifting women to one another.

One in which he made it abundantly clear he was not interested in participating as then Alexander ended his long list of offers and demands for joining him.

While arriving at the end of the three-page demands and offers the nobles sat quietly for some time.

Thinking.

Reading.

Whispering to one another.

Then reading.

And then thinking some more.

It seemed they had a lot of talk about among themselves.

And seeing this Alexander smiled and suggested, "Of course, you do not have to answer me right now. You may have the week to decide."

But then with the same smiling face threatened, "But remember, you have to acquiesce to either one of the demands. Because if you do not agree to either of the options, we will not have any other options either."

"So any questions?" Alexander ended his threat of total destruction against them with an innocent inquiry in a light jovial tone.

"....." And like the first time, Alexander was at first given a wall of silence.

But this time perhaps because of the naked threat rather than the absence of any query.

But finally a brave shordar (Baron) in a low voice slowly spoke up, "*Ahem*...my lord, these 50 men that you ask for, ...and cost of the various constructions....who will pay for them? Us? Or...."

"No." Alexander firmly shook his head, "All of it will be paid by the Zanzan council using the taxes collected from all of us. That's why we ask for these contributions. To be used for the collective betterment of you."

Alexander tried to paint this practice in as positive a light as possible, and then added,

"Or by borrowing money from other sources."

Here, of course, Alexander was referring to himself, who had around 300 million ropals in his treasury and was about to make another 500 to 600 million from Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah combined.

So Alexander was damn sure that once he set up the bank, he would become one of the biggest lenders around this part of not only Adhania but in this region of the world.

"My lord, sparing 200 men for us year-round is a bit too hard. May you reconsider?" Following the question of the other shordar (baron), this time a talukdar (Viscount) made this brave request.

But Alexander was a bit irked by this and brutally shut him down with simple maths,

"The 200 peasants would produce for you around 1 million ropals worth of produce."

"From that, you would have taken 20% as taxes. Meaning 200,000 ropals."

"And here we are giving you 3 million in profit."

And then very pointedly asked, almost as if to show his frustration at the nobles still whining about the deal,

"So what are you complaining about?"

"Even if we wanted 2,000 men, we still would have suffered a loss."

pandasnovel.com "Never mind the fact those 200 men will be needed for just a year or two, whereas we will give you these preferential rates for much, much longer."

"Hmmp..." Alexander very loudly snorted, appearing quite angry.

And it caused Jamider (Earl) Tikba to quickly intervene on the other man's behalf,

"No, no, that was not what Lord Yanoosh meant my lord."

"In fact we are all very fond of the conditions you have proposed. The amount of money you are willing to give us is most generous."

"And what we are most grateful for is that you have not demanded any land for us. Or asked us to change the officials who run our territories. Those are usually very common orders."

"So the amount of favors you have shown us we dared not dream a thousandth of it."

"Thank you,"

Tikba first placated Alexander with a thick, heavy, layer of flattery.

And then helped the talukdar express his concern, "But what Lord Yanoosh was actually expressing his concern about was that he might not be able to grow enough crops to feed himself."

And with us switching sides, it might also not be easy to buy grains in the open market."

As Tikba finished saying this, the specific talukdar silently nodded his head to say that was indeed the specific problem.

Alexander naturally understood what kind of guarantees they wanted, and simply said,

"Then sell the things we give you to Matrak or Adhan. I'm sure they will be happy to trade you their surplus."

"Hahaha, yes, yes," Pasha Farzah after a long time entered the conversation, loudly announcing his interest. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

As did Lady Inayah, "Of course, we are very happy to buy up all the new things."

While the Queen Mother gave a nod and smile

The much cooler reaction was because it would be far too improper for a royal member to openly show too much interest in trading and goods as matters concerning money were thought to be below the divine envoys of the gods, and best left for the lower peasants and peddlers to squabble over.

Though perhaps the royal family was the most greedy dragon out of many entities in Adhania.

For Lord Tikba, with the first trade routes secured, and with such bigshots at that, the results were far better than he could have ever hoped for, and he gave a heavy and cordial bow towards the four, "Thank you."

After this, he turned to face Alexander and then inquired about a little curious thought of his own,

"Lord Alexander, it is written in the fifth point that we must implement various infrastructure projects. If you do not mind, may we know what they could be?"

On the surface, this question appeared to be a harmless question, a simple flirt of the curious mind.

But for the ever-incisive Alexander, it appeared that this man was sharp enough to notice that those specific allocated men would be likely used in other infrastructure projects after they finished building the roads.

So those men that Alexander would acquire from them were likely to remain in his hands for quite some time.

And not just one or two years as he said.

Or perhaps Alexander could even demand even more for the other projects.

After all, he said it himself, 'I could ask for 2,000 and still make a loss'.

So who was to say?

Jamider (Earl) Tikba certainly took this thought into his mind, while Alexander clearly understood that this Jamider (Earl) was no herbivore.

No, in fact Jamider (Earl) Tikba was the real-life example of 'what he lacks in brawn he makes up for it with brains.' kind of guy,

The thin, almost sickly man seemed to trade his health for a very healthy, sharp brain.

And this particular inquiry made Alexander want to learn more about the man and even keep an eye on him.

Such a shrewd mind could both be an asset and a huge danger.

But for now, Alexander first concentrated on his answer.

'Some of the additional structures we will require you to build is a good sewage system in all the towns in order to clean the dirty streets, construct public toilets and bathhouses in the cities for better personal hygiene, and build better roads inside the cities for easier foot traffic to the markets and stalls.'

"But those are years away," Alexander attempted to play down the timeline, whereas in reality, he wanted to finish everything before the treaty expired.

So around 5 years.

Then, since they were asking, Alexander also decided to add, "Also, later we may also ask you to enact policies, such as enforce law and order in the cities to crack down on thievery and banditry, combat corruption, dedicate street sweepers to clean the streets, fine people who litter and dump waste in the city and some other miscellaneous tasks."

Alexander gave an exhaustive list.

To which Lord Tikba first gave a polite smile and nonchalantly praised, "Haha, I've noticed similar good things happening in Zanzan city. It seems the lord loves commerce and cleanliness. Truly noble qualities."

But he still did not say yes or no to either offer.

Instead, not seeing anyone else raise any inquiries, decided to take that offer of a week to think about it, and proposed to end the meeting.

"Well my lords and Your Highnesses, we have all heard what Lord Alexander proposed."

"And personally I can say I've quite liked it."

"The Pasha of Zanzan is truly enlightened. As are I'm sure all four of you great lords and ladies."

"So, may we meet here again in say...four days to give you our answers?"

He figured four days would be enough to discuss with his other fellow nobles and neighbors to come to a solid conclusion.

"Sure. Take your time my lord." Alexander too felt there was little more to discuss.

And so with polite bows towards each other, the long, almost 4-hour meeting came to an end.

As the guests were then moved to an outside, shaded garden table, where another grand feat began, which lasted till late noon.

And it was only around evening did the 16 people leave, and Alexander could talk to his retainers and allies about how the negotiations went.

"Lord Alexander is quite the negotiator. I'm impressed." Queen Mother said with a smile, while Lady Inayah added,

"Yes, I too think it went pretty well."

As lastly, Pasha Fasha said, "Yes, I'm sure the news four days from now will be positive. Let us wait."

And just like Alexander's group debated about the efficacy of the meeting, so did the nobles, and the wait began.