

## **Herald 501**

### Chapter 501 Naval Dreams (Part-5)

Lady Inayah did try to ask Alexander why he needed the six months, and what was the issue, but he simply avoid it and said there was an issue but he would be able to soon solve it.

And the conversation ended there.

Between Lady Inayah and Alexander, that was.

While Pasha Farzah was far more interested in knowing the capabilities of this new ship than building it.

Or maybe one might say its limitations as the longer he looked at the replica, the more skeptical he became of its viability.

And so he expressed such doubts as such, saying in a deep voice, "Hmmm, this ship is very good in design. But I do have concerns," as then turned to ask Alexander, "But I believe there will be a demonstration?"

"So let's see how it performs before I speak them out aloud. I could be wrong."

The aged man said this with an unusually grave voice and a deep wrinkle on his forehead as if something great was troubling him.

'I really hope I'm wrong about this,' He said to himself.

While Alexander for his part could not think of anything wrong with the trireme and felt this was the superweapon that would enable him to dominate the seas not only around Zanzan, but the entire Middus sea which all these superpowers shared a coastline with.

And to accomplish this he had even added to this design that he did not tell the others.

For instance, in addition to the steel pegs, he also used cement as a binding agent between the vertically stacked wooden planks, further strengthening them, and then replaced the bronze ram with hardened steel.

All this meant that his ship was sturdier than any other ship, hit harder than any of them, and could not be also at sea unlike most of them.

Needless to say, Alexander was thus very proud of his creation and so was eager to prove the aged man wrong, thinking this ancient man did not know what he was talking about.

Thus, to showcase the prowess of his 'improved ship', Alexander had the steel pegged trireme whose one side had been destroyed again dragged out to sea, and its good side was made to face this 'improved ship'.

The intention was to use the double-hulled ship to ram the poor half-destroyed ship again and attempt to split it in two in just a single strike, thus showing the sheer difference in magnitudes of power between a regular trireme and this improved version.

While to an outside onlooker, the whole experiment looked like that Alexander just really disliked the poor steep pegged trireme.

But as a bit of time went by, it became apparent that for the little new guy, it would appear fortunately luck was on its side.

Because as soon the 'improved ship' was told to row out to attack the trireme, Alexander immediately noticed the problem that Pasha Farzah might have foreseen.

He noticed that this 'super ship' could barely move!

From the shore, he could clearly see the close to two hundred oarsmen put all they had into rowing the oars as fast as they could, but still could only get the ship to advance at a sluggish, sleepy pace, almost like it was moving through goo.

It seemed that this bid to make the ship superstable Alexander had made the trireme too heavy!

In fact, it weighed almost ten times as a regular trireme, but the number of oarsmen was the same as a regular trireme.

Meaning the ship could only move at 1-2 knots.

Ramming at such speeds would be harmless to most enemy ships, that is if they ever manage to get hit in the first.

Because if you get hit by something moving at such speeds, you got no one else to blame but yourself.

"I knew it." Pasha Farzah immediately let out a sigh of regret after seeing this, saying, "Not only is the ship too heavy, its hull is too deep. So the enemy is able to retreat to shallower waters, it won't be able to pursue them in fear of getting stuck in the sand or coral."

"Worse, it might not even work as a cargo ship because it won't be able to port at most harbors due to that long hull."

Pasha Farzah seemed to be raining freezing cold water on Alexander's parade.

And the fact that these were all mostly true made it feel even colder as Alexander felt he was hit in the guts with it.

Pasha Farzah was right on all fronts.

Most of the harbors of this time were quite shallow and might not be able to accolade the lengthy bottom hull, while if Alexander send these to battles, the enemy would simply swerve to the sides and

hit them on the flanks, and since these ships would not be able to row away, the enemy could simply board them to neutralize the soldiers.

It appeared that Alexander had made a magnificent but ultimately not very good ship.

"Bu..but could not you make the ships bigger? To make them carry oarsmen. Or use more sails?" While Lady Inayah, who was very much disheartened by Pasha Farzah's analysis, quickly gave these proposals, hoping to save this lovely ship that had the potential to earn her so much money.

Now on the surface, her suggestion seems to make sense.

There was also the historical precedent in Alexander's past life where ships much bigger and much heavier, weighing as much as 1,500 tons were propelled using sails and the power of the wind. I think you should take a look at

But Alexander could only shake his head ruefully at this, indicating that it would not be possible, making Lady Inayah's heart almost bleed.

And there were several reasons why it would not work for him in this particular circumstance.

One was that making the ship bigger would also make it heavier.

So they would be back to square one.

And as for building bigger and better sails and rigging, it was possible.

But it would not help in this situation.

The reason being how naval battles were fought in this time and age.

Which was by ramming.

This meant ships would ram other ships, and if they got lucky they would immobilize the opponent in the first strike thus making the enemy unable to participate in the fight, following which the attacker would back up their ship and go ram another ship.

Or if they were not that lucky, they would board the rammed ship and kill all its occupants, before backing up to continue the fight elsewhere.

So as it could be seen, the ability to back up one's ship was critical in naval battles of this time.

Something that was not really possible using sails.

Which was not a problem for ships in the 16th century as they used cannons to hit ships hundreds of meters.

But it was a problem for Alexander who had no such weapon.

And he also did not know the recipe for gunpowder to make those weapons.

So it appeared that his dream of dominating the ships during an invincible fleet of concrete ships would have to sleep for a while longer.

Now to be fair it was not all doom and gloom for Alexander.

Not as much as Pasha Farzah was making it out to be anyway.

Because Alexander could at least think of a rebuttal about the harbor problem.

So turning to face Pasha Farzah, he first said with a smile, "Thank you for your insight my lord. This is exactly why I wanted your esteemed self to view these ships and give your opinion. It seems like this concept ship was a bit of a failure haha," he lightly chuckled.

But then claimed, "But I also believe you are incorrect about it being a bad cargo ship because it cannot access most harbors."

"For you see, this trireme might look like the height of an ordinary trireme, but actually it is a lot taller. It's just that a lot of it is underwater as the concrete hull also drags a lot of the boat into the water."

"And so its cargo space is a lot more than it appears."

As soon as Alexander claimed this, a small fire was lit in Lady Inayah's eyes, who had been until now listening to the men speak a bit listlessly as she really did not care.

But now, given where she thought Alexander was going, she was suddenly very interested, for she could easily guess what Axx was about to say.

Which was, "So I believe that given the option to carry more cargo at one time and much more safely, most ports will be willing to expand their port to accommodate us."

"Because it will make them richer!"

"Yes! Yes!" The moment Alexander finished, Lady Inayah let out a burst of joyous shouts, her eyes dilating in glee.

What Alexander said made perfect sense to her, and she believed that even if this ship could not revolutionize warfare, it would certainly be able to revolutionize trade.

"Hmmm, perhaps. How much can it carry?" Pasha Farzah asked tracing his chin, still a bit skeptical.

The amount of increased cargo would determine the ship's usefulness.

And he was not disappointed in this, as Alexander gave quite favorable numbers.

"This one is just a prototype. But if built properly, at least a few thousand tonnes...around 5 to 8 tons."

This was massive, as regular cargo ships of this time only could carry 1,000 tons, and hence Alexander's new ship found its life elsewhere.

Chapter 502 Naval Dreams (Part-6)

"So, where is the next ship?" As the fate of the second ship was decided, Pasha Farzah was eager to see the next one.

But only got a nervous chuckle from Alexander.

This was because the third one had been a fully concrete tub boat, and Alexander had initially wanted to show it off as a miniature version of what his ships would ultimately look like.

But since even the cement and wood ship was too heavy to maneuver quickly, he felt that that was not even worth showcasing.

"I've been told that ship has had some problems. So maybe next time," Alexander made up the lame excuse, and then quickly diverted the topic.

"Now, as for the reason why I wanted to show you these ships."

"What I need the most are some experienced shipwrights to help with the construction of the ships. And some good sailors to man them."

Zanzan had neither of these and so Alexander hoped to turn to them to procure some.

And was instantly replied back by Lady Inayah.

"Okay. I will lend you a thousand workers and sailors." The noble lady did not even blink an eye as she readily agreed to this massive amount.

The reason for which was revealed in the immediate question that followed, "So how fast can you make these ships?"

'These ships' naturally referred to the large cargo ships and it seemed that Lady Inayah could not wait to get her hands on them.

"That....this is a brand new type of ship. So I can let you know only once the shipwrights get a look and give me a timeline." Alexander gave the reasonable answer, before slyly adding,

"Also I'm a bit short on workers. So the more workers I have ....." Alexander did not need to spill it out as Lady Inayah immediately flashed her palms and readily said,

"I will get you another thousand more. Will that be enough?"

It appeared the merchant lady was really eager for her new ships.

"Hahaha, yes, yes, much obliged." Alexander heartily chuckled as having got these extra hands.

The regular time for building a trireme was 6000 man-days, and so with so many workers, Alexander was confident in being able to produce these ships quite quickly, provided his cement supply could keep up.

While Alexander and Lady Inayah celebrated the creation of their new ships, Pasha Farzah, who was listening in from the sides, seemed to be in a far more pessimistic, or one should say realistic mood.

"Brat, how are you gonna field a navy? You don't have the men or the expertise."

"That....for now, I want to just protect my shorelines. And more specifically my capital."

"As for the trade routes, I will leave the merchants to defend them themselves."

Alexander was currently too weak to do both and hence the compromise.

Hearing the immediate task Alexander wanted his navy to do, Pasha Farzah ruminated for a while and then suddenly proposed, "Hmm...if your job is to just defend, then perhaps even these new ships can be useful."

This was a complete u-turn on what he had said just a while ago, and sensing the two curious gazes, the old man quickly explained,

"What I mean to say is that you can park these heavier, better-armored ships near the shore and let the enemy ram you."

"And then, if you can make the ships large enough and you can fit a lot of soldiers in there, then even if the enemy boards you, your outnumbering soldiers can kill them."

This seemed like a viable tactic, and though the flaws in it were obvious- the most glaring one being that it was up to the enemy to decide whether they would engage or not, leaving Alexander with no initiative, there were still merits to the plan.

"Yes, that might work. But we can discuss that in length in the coming days," So he said he would talk more about it later.

And then quickly added, "As the men...well I was hoping you would lend me some like Lady Inayah here."

Alexander had noticed Pasha Farzah was yet to offer him any assistance.

But here, the man, in a completely opposite fashion to Lady Inayah, instantly rejected him,

"Don't come to me looking to borrow men."

"I never bothered to have a navy because half my ports freeze during winter and the other half have some half have kind of natural disasters happening to them all the time of the year."

"So the only one with any kind of navy experience in Adhania is Inayah's family and Djose."

The reality was that Pasha Farzah's own fiefdom traded with ships only in the summer months from March to September, while his entire province only had a few ports at the southern edge of his province at were operational all year around and those were all in the territory of his retainers.

So the old man never bothered to develop a navy beyond a few patrol boats which he had converted from large fishing trawlers and relied mostly on wall cities to defend against naval invasions while using internal land trading routes to supply those cities in case of a blockade.

Thus though the old man had some theoretical knowledge about the navy based on the tactics of naval combat he read in books, but he lacked any real combat experience. I think you should take a look at

Neither did he have any experienced personnel to share with Alexander.

This revelation was quite a surprise for Alexander who had assumed very much otherwise given the man traded a lot with Thesos, who in general were a sea-faring ethnicity, and plus when he had first met the man in Adhan, he had also arrived via ship to first Agnirat and then marched to the capital.

So Alexander thought he possessed a large navy to protect his trade routes.

But it seemed that those were really all Lady Inayah's ships.

Hearing this dismal condition of Pasha Farzah's navy, from the side, Lady Inayah could not help but lament its sorry state, "Lord Farzah, I have repeatedly urged you to build a navy. But all you do is leech of mine."

"If you had led by example then Adhania would have had a strong army and navy."

But was instantly rebuked by the old man by this, "Bah! What do I look like? Made of money?"

"The army already costs me an arm and a leg. With a navy, I will become a pauper."

Navies naturally cost a lot of money.

Ships needed to be built which required expensive materials and expert craftsmen, sails had to be woven, ropes manufactured, and tons of bronze bought for the ram.

These then had to be regularly maintained as wooden ships rotted and worms bore into them, sails tore and had to be patched, and ropes replaced.

Then there were the sailors needed to man them, who all had to be paid quite a higher price than the peasant soldiers, and lastly were the regular drills needed to keep their skills sharp.

All these cost a lot of money.

And as Adhania was a country with a massive landmass, meaning all nobles had to keep an army to protect their fiefdom, there was simply no coin left in the purse to also field a navy for most of them.

But as Lady Inayah would point out, this apparently was not a problem for Pasha Farzah.

"\*Sigh\*, your treasury is overflowing with so much gold that you had to build a second one. Why not build a navy with it instead?" She pointed incisively.

As a person with the spirit of a merchant, Lady Inayah was one of the rare nobles who would rather always invest her earnings than store them inside her treasury to gather dust, something Alexander would certainly appreciate.

But the old-fashioned man simply brushed this suggestion off.

"Hah! Why bother? I can ship all my goods by land if I want to. So building a navy now will be just like dumping gold into the ocean at this point."

And then he spread out his palms and in a resigned tone to point out,

"And besides, we are already so behind the other powers at shipbuilding by this point that it will take us decades to catch up."

"So it's better to concentrate on our army instead."

"That is our strong point and we should stick to it."

"Rather than wasting money on things we aren't."

"Because there are some things some nations are naturally good at, such as Cantagena is good at sailing and we are good at cavalry."

Pasha Farzah was the epitome of the conservative noble, who felt it was always best to play it safe.

While Lady Inayah hearing this droning talk she had heard a million times before vented,

"Last time, I saw an eight-row trireme from Exolas. The captain of the ship called it a octreme."

"And even said Cantagena was already using a ten-row trireme called decareme."

"And here we are using a three-row trireme."

"Can you really allow our great country Adhania to fall so behind?"

Lady Inayah pleaded.

But Pasha Farzah only reiterated his previous point, "Yes, they made have advancement in ships."

"And here we have made advancement in the cavalry. The stirrups Alexander invented will revolutionize cavalry warfare"

"Like I said, some nations are better at some things than others."

It seemed the old man was adamant here, thinking that in winning the civil war, the role of a strong navy was minimal

So it seemed for now Alexander had only Lady Inayah to help with his navy.

Chapter 503 Adhania's Navy

The tour of the naval base came to an end with the showcase of the second new ship.

And as for convincing Pasha Farzah to join in the effort, it proved to be ultimately unsuccessful.

Even when Lady Inayah pointed out in an incredulous tone, "But with Alexander's new ships we can catch up to the other powers and become invisible both at land and sea. Won't you join us even then?"

The old man still did not want to commit resources to this endeavor, only saying, "To win the civil war, we need a strong army. That is our most important immediate need and we should focus on that."

"Having a navy can wait."

Lady Inayah had heard this type of myopic thinking for most of her life, and the fact that the most powerful man in Adhania refused to invest in a navy even when such glaring evidence had been presented to him hurt her.

But this type of mindset had been developed for generations and it was hard for any noble to change, with DJose and her family being the only two exceptions.

And the source of this bitterness came from years of frustration, as she was really one of the few voices in Adhania's court who really gave a damn about the navy.

But had managed to do actually nothing.

This was because most of the nobles were far more concerned with the land army, with this pragmatic decision coming about due to three main reasons.

One was due to geography as Adhania was a huge country with massive a landmass of around 4 million sq km but with only 4,000 km of coastline.

So most noble fiefdoms were landlocked and most battles were fought on land with the maximum use of the water element being using river boats to transport troops.

As a side note, this dead focus on land warfare was also one of the reasons behind the development of Adhania's famed cavalry, and also why Agapios could land so many troops uncontested and march straight to the capital.

And this focus on land army nicely led to the second reason- money or lack thereof.'

Because after financing the army, there was usually no money to finance also the navy.

And this was not a problem unique to Adhania as well, as Cantagena had the opposite problem, possessing a strong navy, but a weak army.

And this was something that was seen in Alexander's previous life as well.

For example. one of the reasons why the English were so successful in colonization, much more so than the French was because France also had to maintain a large land army, meaning they could not compete with both the Royal Navy on the sea and wrestle away the good parts of the world and also take on other European powers on land.

And since having a large army was paramount to protecting its borders, the French were forced to husband its resources towards that and so could not dedicate everything to maintaining a navy as the island nation could.

And thus they lost a series of critical battles, the most notable being the Battle of Trafalgar, which enabled the Royal Navy to rule the seas unhindered for almost a century and a half.

While the last reason for Adhania's lack of a proper navy, and in Lady Inayah's opinion the most important one was because it was an institutional policy.

Generations of Adhanian kings had discouraged trade, claiming that Adhania lacked nothing and that it was a country fully self-sufficient with all the resources it could ever need- fertile land, abundant food, and rich mineral deposits.

The kings had done it both because they perceived themselves as racially superior and so deemed trade with those lesser than them as demeaning, and also because restricting trade gave them more control over their domain.

Which was also why they even viewed trade with other powers as a scheme by foreign powers to try and suck Adhania's resources for themselves.

Thus, with all these combined, with due to a lack of want among the people, a lack of funding, and through imperial pressure from above, the people of Adhania saw no need to take risky voyages out to sea and trade with or conquer other lands.

And so most of the nobles remained blind to the benefits of owning a strong navy.

This was also another reason why the drought was so bad because the nobles were not either allowed to or felt their ego hurt to buy food in the international market.

And so they rather let their people starve rather than import food and damage their grandiose image.

It also had not helped that Adhania had mostly burnt all bridges with both the trading superpowers Cantagena and Sybarsis over various disputes, mainly unilaterally killing all their merchants who step foot on Adhania, and so they were in fact not even willing to trade with Adhania anyway.

'\*Sigh\*, Adhania is too isolated from the rest of the world. I have again and again urged His Majesty to change policies....but it has fallen on deaf years.'

Lady Inayah would regularly and spookily sigh this, as she blamed it on the successive policies of all the previous generation of kings, the last one being the one she addressed as 'His Majesty', who was Amenheraft's father, and who most of you will remember had Lady Inayah as one of his mistresses, and also the man she had helped poison with the help of Pasha Farzah and the Queen Mother. I think you should take a look at

And afterward, not content with balming just deceased men, she would also balme the blockheads at the court for being myopic.

'They see having a navy as costing too much. But these idiots don't understand that the trade they can do using the navy will more than makeup for it.' She would lament.

But not was all doom and gloom for our pretty lady.

For it seemed the gods were finally smiling upon her.

As due to the machinations of fate, circumstances had arranged themselves as such that finally Adhania was slightly opening itself up to the outside, courtesy of Alexander who, like her was very much keen on trade, and had kind of forced Ptolomy to loosen these demands, with the king being too weak to enforce his will.

So with this silver lining the trio returned home, and over the following days, Lady Inayah relayed her experience to the Queen Mother, hoping to get some royal support.

And it worked, as a few days later, the shrewd redhead would manage to cajole the aged Pasha to contribute a thousand men to Alexander's docks, showing that the imperial woman had quite the silver tongue.

And as such, the following days for Alexander seemed to be going quite well, with him mostly doing the same clerical work and letting his subordinates oversee the rapid improvement of his fiefdom.

While in a city, long, long away, around the end of July, unbeknownst to him and even beyond his wildest considerations, his name was being uttered in the hallowed halls of a great, lavish palace, whose ceilings seemed to touch the skies, and its marbled walls glistened under the golden sunlight of noon.

And in that grand palace, in the presence of a great number of nobles, two men were having a discussion.

"Your Majesty, this Alxx...he is the one who stole your land from you. Zanzan is rightfully Tibias's" A splendidly dressed corpulent man, whose silky robes seemed to be on the verge of bursting from straining against his body had a toady smile as he slightly lowered his head and said this.

While the man whom he said this to, a man dressed in military garb with very handsome features, sitting on a resplendent throne opposite the man and being fanned by two gorgeous topless women, put his hand on the chin and nodded with a grave voice,

"Hmm, I do agree with what you said, Lord Kaiser. Zanzan will belong to Tibias. And one day the whole of Adhania will be conquered by Tibias."

The king's words were overflowing with dreams and ambition as he said so.

But then he quickly returned to reality,

"But we have just fought a bloody war in Amenherfat for three years. And are in no position to go to war again so soon." He said shaking his head while adding,

"And we have also managed to achieve our initial goals- Toppling Amnehrast"

"And I heard this Alxx played a pivotal role in that. Amenherast would have likely won if not for him. So in that sense, this Alxx and we should be allies."

"I even heard he is a fellow Cantagenan."

"So it is difficult for me to agree with your proposal to attack Zanzan this winter."

But though the king's words seem to indicate a rejection, this tone did not seem too reluctant.

It appeared that the man was fishing for more benefits from this dignitary from afar.

And sensing this, the rotund man let out a wheezy laugh,

"Haha, Your Majesty please call me Clive. Even 'Little Clive' if you want."

And then said his main piece

"It seems Your Majesty is well informed about Zanzan."

'Yes, this Alxx indeed a Thesian. But please allow me to point out that he has betrayed his blood by becoming a dog for the Adhanians."

"He is no kin of you, great king."

"And as for Tibias's hardship in launching a winter offensive, our Kaiser family believes it can lend a strong, strong lending hand....if Your Majesty so wishes!"

Chapter 504 Fateful Talks

As it could be easily guessed, this conversation was happening between the Kaiser family of Sybarsis and the King of Tibias, Perseus.

And why this was happening was also pretty apparent.

With the Kaiser family's plot foiled for now in Galiosis, they quickly pinpointed one of its main reasons as being Alxx's help at the critical moment.

And so they wanted him gone, both as revenge and also because they wanted to cut off this ally of the Margraves.

Hence, the meeting with Adhania's natural enemy Tibias with the promise of significant aid in return for attacking him this winter.

And hearing this dignitary from the rich family allude to 'significant' help, everyone in the court felt quite eager.

And even the king leaned a bit forward, and very interestedly asked,

"Oh! How much is the Kaiser family willing to give...I meant invest?"

The specific word choice very easily gave away the king's mood and detecting this, Clive first paused and produced a confident smile, drawing out the tension, before finally laying out his offer, "To help Tibias's economy, we are willing to offer several things."

"First we are willing to make a one-time, in full deposit of 75 palkis...just so that Tibias can get itself going."

The moment Clive said the amount, as expected by the rotund man, it made everyone in the crowd draw a cold breath of air and produce an audible \*whoah\*.

And this was the exact reaction the envoy was hoping for.

And the reason for this could be understood if one knew the value of 75 palkis, which was 2.5 tons of gold, or 125 million ropals.

This was an enormous amount of money even for Adhan, much less Tibias, which was much poorer than her neighbor.

And once the court calmed down, the dignitary furthermore promised, "In addition to this we are also willing to lend some of our famed war elephants to aid in the battle."

"Ships to help with the logistics."

"And lastly a promise that Tibias will get to keep all the land it occupies."

All these aids were very lucrative offers, especially the promise of the elephants, which were considered the secret weapons of the Kaiser family and not easily given.

It appeared that the Kaiser family was really willing to go all to try and topple Alxx.

While hearing all these promises, the king put on a thoughtful face.

Nobody in this world was running a charity and ever give free money.

So he first wanted to find Sybarsis's angle on all of this.

"Why does your family want to attack Zanzan? I don't recall you having any big grudges with them."

"And why do you need us?" He posed.

"Haha, well to answer Your Majesty's second question first, Zanzan and we are not exactly close. And so the logistical challenges it poses is quite large." Clive gave a reasonable answer

And it was true to a certain point.

Just shipping the supplies to those soldiers at such large distances would take nearly a month.

But the much bigger reason was that they had no fleet to speak of currently, and by the time they had built up one, who knows how things will have turned out.

It was certainly possible that by that point the Margraves would have also built up their own navy and challenged the Kaiser Family at sea.

So it was deemed much more viable to use the local forces to target Alexander.

Having answered one of the king's questions, Clive addressed the other, "And as for why we want to attack Zanzan.....well Adhania has been weakened by its recent drought and civil war."

"So we feel it is the best time to strike and force it to open trade with us."

Here Clive blatantly lied, because he did not feel it was necessary to inform the king of a small country about their internal squabbles.

While the king of Tibias, Perceus, hearing of Clive's reason gave himself some time to think, as his court advisors stepped up to offer advice to their liege, both in favor and against the war.

Those against naturally informed the king of the high casualties they had sustained in the last three years, and how any more lack of strong-bodied men would gravely affect their ability to grow food.

While the war faction pointed to the apparent weakness of Zanzan and reassured him that Sybarsis would have their back.

And as was expected, the latter faction won.

Because 125 million ropals was too big to pass away.

Even if the army ate up half of it, there would still be enough left over for the nobles and the kings to feast lavishly.

So the king had his mind made up.

Almost. I think you should take a look at

For he had one last inquiry.

"Lord Clive, the walls of Zanzan are strong and robust. Breaking them is out of the question. And climbing over them is very difficult."

"So how do you propose we win this siege?"

"And win quickly. Because I do not want Zanzan to call for help."

For the nobles present at court, this had been always a very tough question.

Breaching walls was always very difficult, which had been the bane that prevented them from conquering Zanzan City.

Though in fairness it was also a kind of boon as Adhania too had not been able to breach their fort situated at the mouth of the Cisran hills, thus resulting in the stalemate.

And so all the nobles present thought this messenger from afar would simply suggest the usual approaches, massed ladder charges, combined with siege towers.

With all the usual problems that came with it- for the former, it was huge casualties and a low rate of success, while the latter needed a lot of time to build and set up.

That ran opposite of what Perseus wanted, a quick siege.

Thus imagine their surprise when Clive promised this, "Haha, rest assured Your Majesty. My family has built a weapon capable of firing a 20 kg stone 150 meters away. Using it, even the famed walls of Adhan will turn to rubble!"

Clive here was naturally describing a catapult, or a torsion catapult to be exact.

As he said so, the news of the existence of such a weapon naturally a great deal of commotion among the nobles present, and even the king started to interrogate the man on the matter.

"Really! How! How can such a weapon exist?" He asked.

But Clive declined to further comment on the matter, only saying, "If Your Majesty is willing to go to war, we are willing to lend you 10 such weapons. You can find out how they work then."

The confidence with which the portly man said left little doubt in Perceus's mind that this weapon was really real and could really do what the man was saying.

Hence he began to seriously consider war with Zanzan just after one year of respite.

'I wonder how the men will react?' He said to himself, though he was not overly worried about that since with the 125 million ropals in cash, he would be able to soothe any discontentment away.

Thus Perseus declared, "Thank you for your offer, mister dignitary. We will think about it and give you an answer soon."

This ambivalent answer might have sounded strange to some, given all the talk about the war, but Perseus said this because he had sent an ambassador to Zanzan with certain demands and he was still waiting for the man to return.

But he really held no hope that his envoy would come back with anything useful, largely because the demands he sent were unlikely to be accepted by Alexander, or for that matter anyone.

In fact, he had just sent the man to scout Zanzan and assess its fighting potential, and figure out its defenses,

So, though the king said the decision about the war was like it was an issue still up for debate, it was in fact really a done deal, and he just wanted to hear that man's thoughts on the matter.

"Ahh, excellent! Then I shall await the good news," Clive sensing the meeting was over, gave a bow and asked to be excused.

But before he could leave Perseus had one last question.

"Wait! You said we would get to keep the land. What about the loot?"

Here the military king was asking about the booty they would get when they sacked Zanzan.

"Ah yes, I almost forgot," Clive also let a small exclamation at this question, as then flat out said,

"We would like a share of the booty. Let's say 80%."

"....." Perseus remained silent for a while.

It seemed that the Kaiser Family planned to recoup all their investment through that.

And he had really no problem with that.

And so straightforwardly nodded and said, "Hmmm, okay, we can come to an agreement around that value."

And Clive remembering one last question inquires, "Ahh, Your Majesty, how many men are you able to field? It must be large enough."

"About 30,000 to 40,000. Rest assured." Was the instant, very confident answer.

Which seemed to please Clive as he determined to be adequate, and thus with a smile and one bow, the fateful meeting came to an end.

And about a week later, Percesus's envoy, who was also his best friend and occasional lover Leosydas arrived, bearing the fruits of his expedition.

It would be his words that determined whether Zanzan would have another war in just three months.

One which it had no idea was coming.

Chapter 505 Alexander's Transaction

Alexander was completely and blissfully unaware of the plot against him.

Instead, he was more busy haggling over the price of goods he was set to sell Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah.

The time of departure for the two was nearing and Alexander had presented the final bill to each of the two nobles.

The bill read:

2,000 tons of civilian iron- 100 million ropals.

500 tons of military-grade steel -100 million.

One crossbow and instant bow sample with ammunition- 10 million.

500 tons of white sugar - 50 million.

10,000 tons of brown sugar -100 million.

10,000 tons of salt - 10 million.

Glasswares of various kinds - 20 million.

Soap, paper, and lingerie for - 10 million.

All of this was to be sold to the two over the coming year.

And seeing the huge numbers listed, Lady Inayah could not help but let a wry smile, as she reminisced about how she clearly felt very smug initially when landing her feet in Zanzan with the 300 million ropals budget her father had given her to purchase goods from here, and even thought the man was being way too generous and joking that her aging father might be going senile.

But after the initial meetings with Alexander, she was astounded to find that the transaction would indeed need 300 million ropals, and when she sat down to renegotiate the price to somehow recover her pride, she all of a sudden found the price tag had not only decreased, but some increased to 400 million.

But who could blame her?

Seeing all the new blingy things, she just could not help adding more stuff.

It was like she was in a mall full of exotic things.

But this unrestricted shopping spree had the inevitable consequence of maxing out her 'credit card' and so, as Lady Inayah sat next to Pasha Farzah, she had the desperate intention to haggle with the 'shopkeeper' and bring the price down, though asking any shopkeeper to give a 25% was a tall order for anyone.

While in the case of Alexander, he had his own list of demands, which he presented to both the nobles.

And in that, he wanted all the usual stuff:-

Horses and other draft animals to be used as beasts of burden, both for transporting materials in his industries and also to plow the fields as Alexander had plans to massively increase the amount of cultivated lands soon.

Slaves of various quality- The strong but untrained ones would be sent to work the fields and mines, or in any number of his industries, the most notable being the sugar-making firm that was scheduled to increase its output not just 10-fold, but around 400 times.

This enormous increase came about as previously Alexander had planted only 40 hectares of the land around his manor house with beetroots, whereas now he had done over 15,000 (fifteen thousand) hectares of it.

So Alexander was in need of tens of thousands of men just for that.

Then there were specialized slaves, which were mostly artisans such as carpenters, blacksmiths, weavers, etc.

No economy could ever have too many of them.

And the last two kinds of slaves were the most desirable types of slaves there were.

One were educated slaves that were used as bookkeepers and accountants, and even as teachers for the children of affluent folks and nobles.

While the second one was as you would have guessed were beautiful women.

Alexander mainly wanted these to give as gifts to his retainers and soldiers in the future for great accomplishments.

Afterward, Alexander wanted to buy grains, meat, and other produce, all in enormous quantities to stock up in case of emergencies because he was not yet self-sufficient in that and as seeds to increase this cultivated farmland.

And lastly he wanted a few thousand educated men to come to Zanzan to work as clerks.

"We have too much of a shortage of low-level administrations in the city." He said as he made the demand, the reason being he had killed or exiled almost the entire educated group of the city, i.e- the priests and nobles.

And though that was undoubtedly the right move, it also made administrating the city very hard for Alexander while also making many policies such as the slave management plans he had drawn up some time ago unable to be implemented.

Hence the ask.

And fortunately for him, it was soon granted.

Pasha Farzah had no problem with this demand, as he had intended to send some educated men anyway, in order to become priests and clerics of Gaia's faith and then export the religion to his own territory as per the secret deal struck in Adhan.

And so with Alexander's request, it would be the perfect cover story.

He even expressed an interest to send some men to learn about the new medical technique being practiced in Zanzan.

Thus a deal where a few thousand men would work under Alexander for six years was quickly reached. I think you should take a look at

While seeing this Lady Inayah too made similar offers, letting Alexander at last rest easy knowing he would soon be having a competent group of personnel to do all the mundane clerical work.

But then the group ran into a problem.

Because the number of slaves, animals, and particularly grain that Alexander wanted was too much.

"Brat! I bought off Matrak's and Adhan's entire slave market just to buy those 25,000 men. I haven't got any more." The old man had a bit of a frustrated tone to his voice as he felt Alexander was being too greedy.

And he was kind of right on this, as the whole of Adhania's annual demand for slaves was around 100,000 to 150,000 on average.

Whereas Alexander alone, who had just eaten 25,000 was asking for another 25,000 from each of them, for a total of 50,000 men.

This would not have been possible even in normal times, never mind in this situation where the nine other provinces did not really want to trade with the other three.

So this was an appetite that could not be fulfilled unless there was a massive war with the bordering barbarians that resulted in an enormous number of prisoners of war.

And similar problems were experienced with the number of animals Alexander wanted, which were in the tens of thousands from each of them, and in the amount of grain, he asked for, which was in the hundreds of thousands of tons.

The two nobles would not be able to fulfill these requests even within a few years as they simply did not produce that much.

And as for buying it on the international market, that was also not possible because of the aforementioned trade policies, which left Adhania with few channels to buy these items from, none of whom could deliver such quantities.

But it was also not really Alexander's fault here was demeaning so much.

800 million ropals was a lot of money, and hence the quantity.

So the two sides seemed to be stuck.

With Lady Inayah trying to get Alexander to reduce his prices by repeatedly highlighting the problems they were currently facing,

"You know just as well as we do that we have just recovered from a drought. Taxes are non-existent."

"And all our gold reserves were stolen...taken...distributed by you,"

"So we simply do not have any money."

"As for the grains... again, because of the drought we have no stock, and most of the harvested crops this year will be needed to be replanted to increase our production."

"The drought might be over, but we will need at least 5 years to return to pre-drought levels of grain production."

"Just because we have lost that many men and lack so much grain seed." This was said with a long sigh, and here Lady Inayah let Alexander know of the real condition Adhania was in.

Before she finished by saying,

"And I'm afraid it is the same excuse for the animals... because of the drought a large portion of our animals have either died or been eaten as sustenance. And we need the remaining ones to farm."

"So we are sorry but paying 400 million is not possible for us."

The list of problems stated by the mature lady said were all true.

And Pasha Farzah also sang the same tune as the noble lady.

"That's right brat. I gave everything I had to you just now. All my grain reserves and slaves."

"Because I knew how bad a situation you were getting into."

"And thank goodness you managed to make lemonades out of lemons."

Here the old man sounded quite happy, before declaring,

"But I won't be much help for the next few years."

"My own territory needs much care and looking after."

Then also advised Alexander,

"Besides, you have not even eaten the things I brought out, and you are already asking for more!"

"Aren't you afraid of choking on your own food? Slaves rebelling is a very real threat. You should know better than me."

The old man seemed to have genuinely good intentions as he said the last part.

But Alexander had already thought of policies to discourage it.

And thus boldly answered, "I have expanded my territory quite a bit since I ordered all those things. And so I need more of everything to develop these new pastures."

"Can you help or not?"

And it seemed this time, the answer was not.

Hence Alexander was left to find out some other alternative form of payment.

Chapter 506 Envoys From Afar (Part-1)

Alexander talked to the two for some while, but it appeared they would just not be able to make these payments.

So then the obvious answer was to decrease the amount of goods sold, right?

But Alexander also did not want to do this because then much of the materials would just be left in his storehouse gathering dust or simply rotting.

It was not like Alexander had many other people lining up.

And as for the reason why Alexander did not simply wait till the two nobles sold their goods for a profit and had the cash to pay him back, well that was not how trades with other nobles worked.

You see, most nobles did not buy things using cash upfront.

But using credit.

And this went for everything.

From everyday essentials like food and drinks to clothes, perfumes, jewelry, and sometimes even mercenaries, where a noble would gather the money after defeating a foe and looting his possessions.

And this practice meant that all the noble's suppliers, his tailors, cooks, jewelers, etc, everyone would send him their invoice at the end of the year, listing the total bill for the entire year, and ask him to pay.

So from this, it could be seen that for Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah to recoup their investment would take at least a year.

And that was if one was being optimistic.

Because many nobles, due to this practice of buying a year's worth of goods on credit would regularly go broke.

Or be almost always close to it.

This happened because as they did not need to pay anything upfront in cash, most were unable to pace themselves for they would figure a year was a long time away.

So they would freely spend money that they might not even have, kind of like how having a credit card made one spend more, but much more extreme.

And this practice meant that most nobles, unable to pay all their dues on time, would delay many payments by a long time, possibly entire years.

Hence that was not a viable strategy for Alexander who needed some gold right now.

Which also made him feel like he was dealing with paupers.

He kind of felt like he was China or India in the 1700-1800s, while the two nobles were the impoverished European powers, one who wanted a lot of things, but could offer things of little interest to the other.

But it was what it was, and with Alexander unable to find a better alternative, he was ultimately forced to give some concessions.

Thus Alexander demanded the two following things.

"Okay, I will reduce the prices by some."

"But in exchange, I want 50,000 men from either province be relocated here."

"Not slaves, but free men."

"Their new home will be Zanzan."

What Alexander was basically asking was for Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah to gather all the undesirables of the society- the beggars, the urchins, and the most abundant them of all, homeless vagrants, and send them his way.

Alexander was sure he could find some use for them, whether as industry workers, farmers, or even soldiers.

He will need a lot of men when he attacks Tibias the next year after all.

This the two nobles had little problem agreeing with.

The drought had produced not tens of thousands, but millions of people who had become broke and destitute, many of whom had become a menace to society as they resorted to various crimes such as thievery and even outright banditry to survive.

So Alexander taking them off their hand was him going them a favor.

And as for the dangers of taking in half and even full-fledged criminals, Pasha Farzah was there to offer his two cents.

"Brat! Be careful with these people."

"Many of these scums might have started as criminals because they were forced."

"But that does not mean the easy money has not corrupted them."

"For many, the taste has grown on them."

Alexander gave a thoughtful nod to this, though he was not too worried as he was confident in being able to control these men given he had a proper city guard, unlike the others.

After the first request, his next ask was this, I think you should take a look at

"I want a copy or original volume of about 2,000 books. I will pay equal to each book's weight in gold."

And when asked about the reason why, Alexander only chuckled and said, "Well, maybe I'll be able to learn some more things from them, haha."

While his real reason was to resell them after making copies using the printing press he intended to invent as quickly as he got some time in his hand.

Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah both had no objection to this, as they figured that Alexander really wanted these books to increase the number in his possession and thus boost his noble image.

After all, showing off expensive works of literature to one's friends was many nobles' favorite pass time.

So with these two demands met, the monumental deal totaling around 800 million ropals was concluded.

And in the following days, everything seemed to be going smoothly for Alexander, with the only notable thing in Alexander's radar being the upcoming departure of Pasha Farzah and the group.

Until suddenly, one late morning in early June, he was informed that two envoys, one from Tibias and the other from Cantagena were here to see him.

This was not really a bolt out of nowhere as Alexander had a pretty good hunch why they were here.

And so instead of his usual council members, the next day, Alexander chose to greet them along with Pasha Farzah, and the Queen Mother in his mansion.

"Welcome dignitaries from Tibias and Cantagena," Alexander greeted with a light smile in a jovial tone, gazing at the men, one solidly built clean-shaven man with a chilling look in his eyes, and the other with a refined, scholarly aura.

While the men very rudely completely ignored Alexander and turned to address the two people sitting next to him.

"Greetings, Lord Farzah. It pleases me greatly that the gods have favored your health," The scholarly clean-shaven man eloquently bowed to the Lord of Matrak.

While the muscular dignitary sent a charming smile toward Seelima,

"The Imperial Mother is as fresh and radiant as ever."

Clearly, the four knew each other.

Which was not surprising given Pasha Farzah and Queen Mother had colluded with Tibias and Cantagena to bring Amenheraft down.

"It is always good to see a fellow acquaintance from afar, Lord Leosydas," It was the Queen Mother who returned the greeting in a mellifluous tone, though an instant later it turned into a mocking sneer, "But I never knew you did not know the basic courtesy to first reply to the person who greeted you."

Clearly, the rude attitude the men displayed to Alexander had not gone unnoticed.

And whatever her thoughts about Alexander may be, the Queen Mother would a fool not to try save face of her retainers against two envoys who were very obviously here with ulterior intentions.

Hearing this unpleasant retort, Leosydas did not blink an eye, while his counterpart quickly stepped in to address the situation.

"Haha, well, well, this must be Alexander." He said sizing him up with a chuckle, and then with a pleasant smile said, "To see a fellow Cantagenan here at the heart of Adhania would make any Thesian proud. Petricuno speaks very highly of you."

Everyone had keenly noticed that neither man had addressed Alexander as Lord, as if to implicitly deny that title, and this action pretty much confirmed their intention of coming here.

But Alexander did not let such frivolities show up on his face, instead sent an equally pleasant smile and inquired, "He is a good man. And a great soldier. How is he?"

Alexander was not surprised by the mention of the mercenary leader as it was very likely the man had been thoroughly interrogated about the happenings in Adhania when he returned.

And it was only natural for Alexander's name to be in that report.

"Good. Good. Though not quite as good as you seem to be, hehe," The Cantagenan envoy took a small jab, to which Alexander returned the favor by saying,

"I did invite Petricuno to share in my spoils too. But the man seemed to be far more interested in fighting Exolas. How is that going by the way?" Alexander had a mocking tone to his inquiry.

And the reason for this was because Alexander knew from Petricuno the war there was not going well there.

And it had its intended effect as the scholarly man's lips twitched in frustration for the first time at being reminded of their troubles, and failed to control himself as he quite rudely said, "It would be going far better if you were even half as patriotic as Petricuno."

Clearly, the man knew quite well of Alexander's battlefield accomplishments and accused him of defecting to the other side.

While Alexander only gave a loud, boisterous laughter, and said,

"Hahaha, well I wouldn't be so sure. I'm not a Cantagenan, so who is to say I would not support Exolas? Hahaha."

Alexander made it clear that the racial or ethnicity card would not work against him.

Finally, once this mutual exchange of barbs was finished, it was Pasha Farzah who stepped in to work as a mediator and asked,

"So what brings Lord Leosydas and Lord Klysar to this little part of the world?"

To which Leosydas very bluntly replied, "You promised Zanzan would belong to us."

Chapter 507 Envoys From Afar (Part-2)

Alexander had guessed as much the moment he heard the two envoys announce themselves, taking particular note of how they had come together.

Clearly, it was to create a united voice

And the feeling was very much more reinforced by the two's attitudes.

Tibias and Cantagena had paid the price and now were clearly unhappy that their prize was being denied.

And to be fair, that was indeed the original deal between the Adhanian conspirators and the foreign powers.

Pasha Farzah and the Queen Mother had really promised to relinquish control of Zanzan in exchange for removing Aozmer (the former king) and Amenheraft from power.

So one might say the two envoys were in the right here.

But there was a slight catch.

And that catch was that technically it was not Cantagena, or more specifically the Cantagenan general Agapios who had defeated Amenheraft.

And it was the same with Tibias.

They were asked to hold back Amenheraft until the capital could be taken, but that was not what had technically occurred.

Amenherft had managed to disengage and return to Adhan to defend it.

Now this was admittedly a loophole and a gray area that bordered more on black than white, as the intended result had been achieved.

But nevertheless, this was the rhetoric that Alexander and the other two decided to go with after discussing it the previous day.

After all, neither Pasha Farzah nor Seelima would favor handing Zanzan over to the two powers over letting Alxx control it.

The latter was much a better option for them after all.

Thus once the demand was made, the Queen Mother replied in a cold hard voice without the slightest bit of warmth, "The deal was that you would take Adhan and depose Amenheraft."

"But your general failed to do either, losing two battles and letting the capital be recaptured."

"So which promise are you talking about exactly?"

While Pasha Farzah immediately picked up the conversation and said with heavy nods,

"That's right. Instead, it was Lord Alexander who accomplished both tasks, snatching Adhan back and dethroning Amenheraft."

"And that's why we gifted him Zanzan."

"We have fulfilled our promise to the letter."

"....." Hearing this, the two envoys were dumbstruck for a moment.

They did not think the opposite side would be this shameless.

"He could only do it with our soldiers. It is only with Cantagenan and Tibias blood that the brat sits where he is today. What bullshit are you sprouting?" The Cantagenan envoy Klysar could not control his emotions as he cried out loud indignantly.

While a very angry Leosydas also gruffly said,

"Your country killed hundreds of thousands of my people in the last three years. And yet we chose to trust you."

"And this is how you repay us!"

It appeared that the two men were unwilling to accept this reasoning.

And given the amount they sacrificed, it was not hard to understand why.

As for Alexander, who heard the outburst, he observed that the two men complemented each other quite nicely.

And so he decided to split the men up and deal with them individually.

As such he decided to end the meeting there, saying, "It seems the two sirs are tired. Perhaps we can continue the meeting at a later date."

He said this because knowing handing over any territory was a non-starter, Alexander had made prior plans to offer deals to them.

And seeing the current circumstances, he feared that if he said them aloud to both of them, they would swindle a lot from him.

So, with that ended the meeting there.

And as both groups discussed how to further proceed, a few days later Alexander met with the Cantagenan envoy alone.

"Lord Klysar, as a fellow Thesian, I believe that it is only natural I came to discuss the issue about Zanzan with you first," Alexander said with a smile, under the setting and with the same people around him.

"Thank you, Lord Alexander. And I apologize for my earlier remarks." The man seemed much milder now, having calmed down from his earlier tirade.

"Haha...." Alexander first chuckled but did not excuse the man, as he got to the real point, "Well then, may I know what interest does your city-state have in acquiring Zanzan? Because it is quite a long way from Cantagena. What will you do with it?"

This point had always puzzled him, even back when Ptolemy had raised the issue back when Alexander was negotiating the piece.

Klysar gave a bit of pause at the inquiry, and after turning his head to meet the eyes of both Pasha Farzah and Seelima, he began with a sigh, "As Lord Alexander had said yesterday, our war against Exolas is not going well."

"What happens is Exolas regularly launches yearly campaigns against us, and we, being unable to beat them at land, are forced to husband all our people inside under the protection of the formidable walls."

"And this has worked till now, as Exolas has been yet unable to breach our walls and finish us off." I think you should take a look at

"And this is where the good part ends."

"Because the bad part is that being unable to conquer our city, the Exolites then turn their focus to the undefended countryside, razing villages, destroying crops, and inflicting massive damages to our economy."

"And though we can recover some of it once they leave, the repeated yearly attacks are starting to affect us more and more over time."

"This is because Exolas is able to destroy our lands faster than can rebuild them."

"And so our only real hope of turning this hopeless situation is finding land beyond Thesos, beyond the reach of Exolas from which we can extract economic dividends and keep our markets going."

"That's why we Zanzan. To survive."

From the man's answer, Alexander could finally understand the reason behind his outburst from a few days.

They had spent so much on Agapios and the war, all for a last roll of the die, and now that they had won, Alexander was here denying them.

Alexander could certainly sympathize with that.

But that did not mean he could acquiesce to their demand.

Everyone had their problems, and Alexander would not sacrifice his future for the sake of others.

If it was choosing between him or them, Alexander would choose him every time over a million times over.

And he clearly let this know to the Cantagenan envoy.

"My heartfelt sympathies go out to you and all fellow Cantagenans. And I hope the gods deal justice on Exolas." He first said some flowery words, before unequivocally saying,

"But Lord Envoy should also clearly understand that me giving up Zanzan is not an option."

"And no amount of talks, deals, and promises will make that happen."

"That is the reality here."

"And I hope you can recognize that."

Alexander flatly and very plainly laid out.

And it made the opposite man purse his lips in helplessness.

He knew coming here was a long shot, but he still had to try.

And it seemed to have failed.

But Alexander's next words proved that the man might have jumped to the conclusion too fast.

As the young lord said, "But we are willing to trade with Cantagena. Adhnaia is slowly opening up to the world, and we are certainly interested in trading with a great power like Cantagena. So what do you say?"

And this produced a great glow from the man.

It was not as great getting Zanzan, but it was quite close to it.

Or it could even be argued that this way was better as they would not even have to garrison soldiers to protect the newly conquered lands.

Whichever it was, if Cantagena was able to tap into this massive market, it would be undoubtedly quite the boon.

Because Cantagena's biggest trading commodity after agriculture was its pottery, which was famous throughout the world.

So if they could sell these to Adhania and particularly the nobility, their economy was surely to revitalize, or at the least stabilize.

And the best thing was that it was not something really affected by the constant attacks from Exolas.

Potters could just comfortably stay inside the walled city and continue building.

And hence the man become quite vivacious after Alexander's offer, and over the next three days, they ironed out many of the details.

With the final deal being that Pasha Farzah, Lady Inayah, and Alexander, all three would officially open their ports to Cantagenan vessels, and even give them special privileges, such as reduced tariffs.

Klysar had wanted these ports to receive only Cantagenans vessels, in order to form an effective monopoly on the goods from Thesos, but was declined.

Instead, a monetary concession was settled upon.

This special consideration was made as a way for Adhania to mend relations with Cantagenan after a bit of arbitrarily breaking their deal.

While, in the meantime, Alexander also showed Klysar some of Zanzan's specialties, such as paper, soap, and lingerie, but not all, like iron, as he was cautious about selling weapons to others.

But Klysar would not have likely minded anyway, because of how impressed he was of one particular thing- Brown sugar.

Klysar was enough of an accomplished businessman to know the value this product would fetch in the market.

And regarding this sweetener, Alexander additionally even offered this deal,

"If Cantagena is willing to sign a twenty-year peace treaty with us, and promise not to aid our enemies in any way, we are willing to disclose the full recipe for making it."

And it made the man's heart skip a beat.

Chapter 508 Envoys From Afar (Part-3)

Alexander's offer to share the sugar secret was of course done as a way to remove a potential key ally for Amenheraft, as he feared the city-state might choose to support this rogue king in retaliation for their breaking of the contract.

And it seemed to work as this sincere offering had Klysar very enticed.

But though he was tempted to agree then and there, the Cantagenan man politely declined for the time being, saying, "I will need to consult the Senate first. So I will bring an answer by spring. And hopefully a good one, hahaha"

The prudent man felt that any peace treaty, never mind such a large one, should be run through the senators first and hear their thoughts first, as signing this would make them officially give up their claim on Zanzna.

This was not something he could arbitrarily decide.

But as indicated by his last sentence, the man was also quite confident in being able to convince the old geezers back home to agree to it as the benefits were so high.

So with that, one of the hidden dangers for Zanzan was effectively eliminated for Alexander.

And a few days later, Klysar left the city quite a happy man, his ship laden with many cargoes, all unique to Zanzan.

This batch was just a sample, meant to only test the market, but that did not detract him from the joy he felt carrying them, as the shrewd politician was very confident in these products' success.

The paper was much better than papyrus, the soap and lingerie would be quite popular with the ladies, and the sugar would capture the hearts of all.

He was sure of it.

And he even believed that by using these products not only Cantagena's economy would surge, but the city-state's almost monopolistic position in acquiring the goods, as no one in Thesos had a better navy than them, might even be used as a political bargaining chip to draw other, neutral city-states to their cause.

Klysar could smell the change in the air.

Also, as a side note, the man had asked Alexander about Ophenia during one of their meetings, inquiring, "By the way my lord, have you seen an eighteen to twenty-year-old with blonde hair in the late general's camp?"

"He was her daughter and her relatives are quite worried for her."

Alexander had sweated bullets when he first heard this, particularly because the man had asked it right in front of the Queen Mother and Pasha Farzah.

And so he could not have been happier that he had made Ophenia always keep her hair dyed, though was mostly because he did not want the slightest chance of the Queen Mother somehow connecting that color with Kefka.

Letting the queen know that he had an Adhanian royal descendant as his woman would be too much of a hassle.

It was admittedly a very small chance, but why take the chance?

And this precaution finally paid dividends here, where the revelation of Opehnia's presence would have undoubtedly greatly complicated the negotiations between the two powers.

So Alexander could confidently reply with an intrigued, and even somewhat astonished face, "Blonde? As in naturally gold-colored hair? Well, I think I would have very much remembered seeing such a woman."

Alexander made it sound like this was the first time he was hearing someone describe a person as blonde, before firmly shaking his head, and saying, "No, I'm afraid I have not my lord. And given the time passed....."

Alexander did not need to spell out the details.

If Alexander had not taken Ophenia in, she would very likely be dead, or sold to slavery.

After all, a vulnerable girl with such standout features would attract even a blind man.

"\*Sigh\*, yes, I figured as much," Klysar shook his head as he knew it was a long shot and had not really held any hope.

While Alexander pointed him to go on a wild goose chase.

"If she is alive, she is probably working in the many pleasure houses to disguise herself. You know how the women there like to color their hair."

"Perhaps my lord would like to check there?"

At this half-serious suggestion, Alexander very keenly noticed the man visibly shake, as if that very thought hurt him.

And Klysar could not keep a straight voice, as in a bit of sputtering tone he afterward said,

"Than..thank you, my lord. But if you find any news of her, may you please inform me? It would help her family bring closure."

"Sure," Alexander gave a perfunctory reply while smirking in his mind, 'Yeah, I know where is she. She's probably sleeping in my bed right now, haha.'

But Klysar left Zaznan none the wiser and so with that preventive measure Alexander managed to eke out quite a favorable set of terms with Cantagena.

And later, he would go on to ask Ophenia later about Klysar, as he doubted the man really cared about Ophenia's family, for he seemed to care more about Ophenia.

And his hunch would be proven right, as Ophenia would describe the man in a mocking, dismissive way,

"Oh him! Yeah, I know him."

"He is my ex-fiance- Samaras's father."

"But the old pervert would always look at me with lecherous eyes."

"I bet he even agreed to let his son marry me just so that he could get a chance with me."

"Fucking pervert!" I think you should take a look at

To say Ophenia held a low opinion of the man would be an understatement.

Meanwhile, after Alexander finished his successful negotiations with Cantagena, unfortunately, he failed to replicate the success with Tibias.

Because no matter how much he argued, Leosydas was adamant about making Alexander give up Zanzan, as he repeatedly pointed out the lives Tibias had lost.

"You sit in that chair because of the blood we Tibians have spilled," He said this over and over again.

Even Alexander's promise of opening trade with them failed.

It appeared that the Tibians simply hated Adhnia too much to engage in friendly neighborly relations.

Or at least the upper echelons did.

And Leosydas's tone only slightly softened when Alexander promised to pay something to the tune of 100 million ropals as rumination over the next ten years, in a kind of a way to compensate the Tibians for their three years of hardship.

Which might kind of not seem fair that Alexander was made to pay for something Amenheraft did.

But this mainly was a stop-gap measure to calm Tibias and prevent them from attacking him in the near term.

He never really intended to pay the full 100 million.

His bribe limit was at best 20 million ropals or 2 years.

And after Leosydas demanded a show of his sincerity, Alexander even gave him a lump sum something close to that, to the tune of 15 million as a goodwill gesture.

While Leosydas returned the courtesy by signing a peace deal that officially ended the three-year war between the two countries.

And though this was only a hollow treaty, with it just stating that peace between the two countries was achieved and no other terms, meaning it could be broken at any time, still, it was a start.

"I will be sure to properly advise the king regarding this." And on the day of departure, it was with these last words Leosydas left for Tibias.

While Alexander seeing the man leave, was pretty confident that Zanzan had succeeded in protecting its borders for at least a couple of years.

After all, 100 million ropals even for him was a lot of money, never mind his much poorer neighbor.

And it was a thought also shared by the other two who helped Alexander come up with the value- Pasha Farzah and Queen Mother.

Everyone thought the food they laid on the table was enough to pacify the hungry, angry beast.

But how would they know that this beast's appetite had been emboldened by factors they had not even considered?

The Kaiser Family had really reacted too fast, courtesy of a few spies in the highest echelons of the Margrave family.

Or perhaps calling them spies would be wrong, because these people, many of whom were Lady Margaret's uncles and cousins, just did not bother to hide the fact about how the iron that was used to defend their territory was obtained.

And this let the maid and staff members who really were spies easily obtain and then pass along the message.

So, when Leosydas returned in early August to Ceon, the capital of Tibias, the king informed him of the 125 million ropals in one year offer he had gotten, and hence Alexander's offer of 100 over 10 years sunk to the depths like a lead balloon.

Instead, the two men now mainly talked about how to prepare for the war.

"Leosydas, what have you seen in Zanzan?"

"How are their defense?"

"How are their walls?"

"How are their armies?"

Perseus launched a barrage of questions to his best friend regarding his target.

And got these answers.

"Their armies are quite small."

"And the people under their control did not seem too great."

"But their walls were definitely formidable."

"It seems that Alexander has strengthened the walls even more."

"Attacking that will be hard."

From this answer, it could be seen Leosydas did not actually feel optimistic about attacking Zanzan due to the walls.

While Perseus only gave a mysterious laugh.

And once the torsion catapult was shown to him, the entire nation of Tibias began a general mobilization, their intention- To launch a sneak attack on Zanzan around October with 35,000 to 40,000 men.

Chapter 509 Start Of November!

Leosydas would go on to describe in great detail what he had seen in Adhnia.

The roads, the ongoing construction works, the novel, never before seen goods, and to him the most lucrative thing, the amount of money the people there had to spend, which meant there was a great amount to loot and plunder.

And at the end of his recount, Leosydas would say this,

"Perseus, Zanzan city has more potential than the entirety of Tibias. We must capture it as soon as possible," while the two men met in the latter's bed chamber.

It seemed that the greedy flies Alexander was expecting were nearer than he had ever guessed.

And hearing the rich riches that Zanzan had to offer, the King of Tibias- Perseus had no problem in ordering his army to mobilize.

So, the peasant levies were instructed to harvest their fall crops as soon as possible before joining the army, the military officers were told to collect and husband resources for the campaign, and the nobles were told to oversee the planning of the logistics.

While Leosydas oversaw the smooth implementation of the entire process.

And Perseus spent his time getting his scouts to recount the geography around Zanzan, and for his spies to reveal the relationship between Alexander and the surrounding nobles.

And in this endeavor, the king freely spent the 125 million ropals the Kaiser family had donated to him, by promising rich rewards to the peasants for joining the army, adequate injury compensation and bereavement payments in the case of death or mutilation, hiring mercenaries, buying logistical supplies and many more.

Furthermore, as Alexander had so graciously also given a large lump of money to him, Perseus did not shy away from using it and also used that to fund his campaign.

And this diplomatic folly of Alexander that would remain as a black stain on his record for the rest of his life, and he would indeed lose some sleep after knowing instead of achieving peace, he had paid his enemy to attack him.

But before all that could happen, he would first need to survive the ordeal.

And it was shaping up to be in no way a small ordeal.

As with the preparations taken care of, in late September, the king was given the following report by Leosydas regarding their assembled army:

"My lord, we have managed to in total to gather around 40,000 men."

"Among them, there are 25,000 of our own heavy phalangites."

"3,000 elite phalangites composed of men from various noble houses and many nobles themselves."

"3,000 mercenaries that the Kaiser Family introduced us to."

"5,000 elite slinger, archers, and javelin men."

"4,000 cavalry composed of scouts and light skirmishers."

"And lastly 20 war elephants donated by the Kaiser family."

So to summarize, it was:

Infantry- 31,000.

Missile Units- 5,000.

Cavalry- 4,000.

Elephants- 20.

This was in no way a small force.

And though it was nowhere near the number 80,000, which was the number of troops Tibias had used to defend against Amenheraft, Perseus was quite glad by the number of gathered soldiers.

Because that 80,000 was an anomaly, and the difference was to be expected given the nature of the two fights.

One was a defensive war where it was Adhnaia attacking them, and where Tibias's supply lines were right next to them, along with potential reinforcements and recruitment opportunities around every city and village.

While the other was an offensive war right in the middle of the winter, attacking a city some hundred kilometers away from their border, and hundreds of kilometers from their capital, and in the middle of the winter at that.

They were two entirely different beasts.

"Good!" Perseus gave a happy nod at the said numbers, and added this last instruction, "Make sure there is plenty of warm clothing for the men. Winter is not an easy time to fight in."

This was true and so typically armies avoided fighting in winter due to the cold and the lack of foraging available as most plants would die or wither, while most animals would hibernate or bury themselves inside their nests.

So armies much preferred to fight in the warmer months, i.e.- from late spring to late fall, or just after planting their spring crops until the time came for reaping their harvests.

Of course, that did not mean winter campaigns did not happen.

Winter had its advantages as well. I think you should take a look at [pandasnovel.com](http://pandasnovel.com)

Such as during this time of the year, many rivers and swamps froze, meaning it made marching easier.

And also, since winter was generally a time of rest when none of the peasants had anything to do, it made recruiting men much easier.

So one could build a bigger army.

And lastly, there was the element of surprise when attacking in winter, as the other side would usually be rolled up comfortably inside their cities, head down and relaxing with a nice hot cup of milk, mostly oblivious to the threat.

And it was these secondary and tertiary considerations that made Perseus choose this time of the attack.

Hence, once everything was arranged, and all the men were properly equipped, the king gave the time of their departure.

"We will set out in early October. And will hopefully be at the gates of Zanzan by the start of November."

And with this time determined, came around round of tribulation for Alexander.

And for the young lord, this 40,000 army had the potential to pose a far greater challenge than the almost 60,000 men he had faced just six months ago.

Because currently, Alexander was not in Zanzan!

He was in Adhan.

Meaning it would be entirely up to Menes to tackle this threat.

And to know why Alexander was not in Zanzan, but in Ptolomy's place, one had to travel back to the start of August, when one shining day, the Queen Mother requested an audience with Alexander in her private chambers around noon.

The topic- She wanted to request Alexander to come to visit Adhan with her.

So, at the behest of the queen, Alexander made his way to her private chamber, which was located on the third floor of the manor, and faced the sea.

"\*Knock\*, \*knock\*, \*knock\*,"

At the end of the third knock, the door was quickly opened by Seelima's maid, a beautiful caucasian with an oval face and a tightly bound bun, and after a solemn, flawless bow by her, he was invited in and then escorted to the person he was there to see.

And on his way, Alexander took note of the chamber, as this was the first time he had entered this particular room, and found it to be as lavishly decorated as one would expect the highest member of the

royal family to reside in- with expensive furniture, beautiful chandeliers, and intricately embroidered and jeweled carpets and carpets.

As for the person in question, he found her lazily lounging on a huge devan on the veranda, dressed in a lavish red gown and sipping cool wine, as she gazed at the picturesque sight of the sandy shore lapping against the crystalline blue waves, while a gentle, cool, refreshing air cooled her.

The view of the beach from this third-floor veranda was nothing short of god's masterwork, while the woman observing it was also one of his best handiwork.

And for a moment, Alexander had his breath taken away both because of the scenery and the beautiful woman enjoying it.

He once again found why Seelima was the previous king's favorite mistress and he could help but imagine how this gorgeous woman would look in a swimsuit or a bikini.

In fact, he was so distracted in imagining that sexy view that he even failed to notice that there the Queen Mother had company, as another woman lounged beside her.

"Ah, Lord Alexander! Welcome! Glad you here." This sweet greeting was said by a voice very familiar to him, for it was Lady Inayah, who was similarly relaxing like the Queen Mother and was wearing a long blue gown.

Alexander had heard them chattering when he first entered the room and it seemed they had been gossiping.

The ebony lady's mellifluous voice helped Alexander break out of his trance of staring at the Queen Mother and he quickly and lightly bowed and greeted,

"Greetings Your Royal Highness."

"Greetings Lady Inayah,"

"It is a pleasure to see both of you."

At which point Seelima turned her head to lightly smile, and say in a pleasant voice,

"Ahh, Alexander, the pleasure is all ours! We were just talking about you"

Before she quickly got up and gestured with her hands, "Come, come, sit. It's good that you are here!"

She said this leading Alxx to a large round table that had been laid down right next to the veranda railing, from which one could simply smell the salty sea breeze.

And as Alexander sat down, he was intrigued by why two of the most powerful women in Adhania wanted to talk to him.

The Queen Mother had not told him anything beyond the fact that she wanted to talk to him about some things regarding Zanzan and Adhan.

So with much curiosity, Alexander occupied one of the chairs, while the other two women cushioned their flanks on the soft pillowy chairs next to him, as the maid served them fruits, snacks, and most importantly wine, before excusing herself.

And once alone, Alexander began, "So, how may I be of service, Your Highness?"

Chapter 510 Talks With Seelima (Part-1)

As Alexander sat down with his drinks, he noticed the Queen Mother perform a certain wave with her hands toward the maid, and seeing it the girl quickly excused herself to wait by the veranda door.

And this made him remember that even before, he had remarked that the communication between the two seemed almost telepathic.

In fact, Alexander could not remember a single he had heard the two speak to each other or even the maid speaking at all.

It was as if this servant existed like the wind, ever ready to serve her mistress from the shadow without causing the slightest bit of disturbance.

Perhaps that was how real royalty was served.

Anyway, once the setting was set, Alexander got down to the main talks, asking why he was called here.

And this question was met with another question, as Seelima gave a sweet smile, and asked, "Alexander, what do you think of Ptolomy? And be frank and tell me the truth."

It appeared at a glance that the Queen Mother was interrogating Alexander about his loyalty.

And this type of out-of-the-blue question made Alexander a bit surprised.

He had envisioned a lot of scenarios before coming here, but this was not one of them.

Because he could not remember a scenario that would make the redhead question his allegiance.

'And what does she mean by 'be frank? When are nobles frank with each other?' Alexander wondered what her angle was.

And for a while he ruminated on whether to reply with the same platitudes that would one give when asked such a type of question, glorifying and exalting the king, and debasing oneself.

'No, there must be more of a reason why she called me here,' But ultimately decided to give the Queen Mother some large kernels of what she wanted.

Alexander wanted to see where she was going with this.

So he began with a light smile, "Many are under the impression that I have a low opinion of His Majesty."

"That I see him as weak."

"That he is someone I can disregard."

"Some even think I show myself as someone better than him."

"That I'm a god. Heh!"

Alexander targeted this smirk explicitly at Seelima, who was always suspicious of Alexander's title of 'Divine son of Gaia'.

Before slowly shaking his head, and saying,

"But that is not true at all."

"In fact, in some ways, I quite admire His Highness."

"Being able to survive the cut-throat court politics so long and then even succeed in overthrowing one's...well since I was asked to speak frankly,...undoubtedly much more capable brother, is no small task."

Though that survival had much more to do with the Queen Mother keeping him safe, than his actual abilities.

But let's not split hairs here.

Since Alexander was asked the question, he was forced to point out some good qualities of the man.

And after saying these flowery words Alexander gave the truths the Queen Mother mother had asked for, saying,

"But it is true there are certain aspects of His Majesty that I dislike and disapprove of."

"He has a weak nature that makes him malleable to his retainers' influence.... which I will admit I have also taken advantage of."

"But that is not the part I dislike of."

"No, the part that I dislike is that sometimes, when he feels like he is being manipulated by his advisors, he will randomly give out orders that go against all logic, just to oppose the advisor advising him.

"And this would be done at random, not always taking into account whether the man was trying to manipulate him or just advise him."

"So sometimes His Majesty Ptolomy is like a child, a child that has a flaming specter he can point at anyone."

"That is dangerous,...both for him and others around him."

"And thus I generally always wish to keep a safe distance from him."

Alexander had gotten to know a lot about Ptolomy's shenanigans from Pasha Farzah, and depending on those he had made the following statement.

At the end of which, he managed to portray himself as a loyal, but cautious retainer, one who kept his distance from the king because of the good of the realm.

While the Queen Mother said in a solemn voice, "But nevertheless, he is the king. Chosen by the gods."

"And one we must follow."

It appeared she was trying to wipe Alexander's doubts about Ptolomy and make him submit.

But how would Alexander so easily do that?

And so said with a little chortle and a small smirk,

"Yes, chosen by the gods. Like Aozmer was. Like Amenherft was."

And this made Seelima visibly twitch almost imperceptibly.

The message here was clear.

'If you could depose two 'so-called' gods, what's another one?'

It seemed that by killing Aozmer and outing his son, the Queen Mother had inadvertently damaged the halo she herself was trying to project now I think you should take a look at [pandasnovel.com](http://pandasnovel.com)

And she cursed Alexander for being so sharp.

But what was done, had to be done.

Seelima would never regret killing her husband or dethroning her stepson.

So instead she decided to use Ptolomy's weakness to say this,

"It is true Ptolomy has a...soft heart. Even as a child, he could never say no to anyone." The Queen Mother said this in a slow, longing, tone, as if she was recalling fond, innocent memories.

And then a moment later her normal voice returned, this time a lot firmer, as she finally got to the point she had been working towards,

"And it just as you said Alexander, he gets easily swayed by his advisors. And that's why I would like you to come to Adhan and advise him for some time!"

"I trust you far more than many of the other advisors there."

This offer came out of nowhere, and one would think Alexander would consider such a prestigious position even hypothetically.

But he did not.

He did not entertain the thought for even a second.

Because whatever Ptolomy did or no matter how things changed in Adhan, Alexander simply did not care.

And he let this be known with two simple words, "Haha, not interested."

"I appreciate the offer but I have too many tasks at Zanzan. So I'm not interested."

The reply could be considered quite crude, as normally royalties were not rejected so firmly and to their face.

But Alexander did not care.

Asking him to leave Zanzan and go work for that manchild was not something he would do even in a million years.

While the Queen Mother, facing this straightforward rejection, did not lose any composure, as she had indeed expected this, and tried to cajole Alexander another way.

She cautioned him by saying, "But Lord Alexander, are you not afraid that some scoundrel at court might plot against you?"

"Particularly given your newly acquiring wealth."

"Greedy eyes produce jealous plots you know."

"What if Ptolomy is fooled into making absurd demands and causing a rift between you two?"

She mentioned.

And this hypothesis of hers did have some weight to it.

The evil minister turning the king against his loyal subject was a classic technique that had been repeated many times over history.

But this time it was different.

And Alexander did not take this seriously, as he only let out a short, curt snort, "Hah! The two people who control the court are Lord Pasha, and you, Your Highness."

"So how is going to plot against me?"

"And even if they do, what can they do? March an army to Zanzan?"

"Good luck!"

Alexander did not buy Seelima's rhetoric, as he only saw it as her plan to divide the court and set one retainer against another, and thus keep one faction from becoming too powerful.

This was something Alexander was very well versed in doing himself with his own retainers, but he personally would never take the bait.

Instead, Alexander let it be known that he only really cared about Zanzan, saying,

"I'm not interested in court politics of Adhan."

pandasnovel.com "I was told to rule Zanzan. And I will focus on accomplishing that."

This was a problem for the Queen Mother as she wanted him to mix with the other nobles and form factions and fight.

Zanzan's potential seemed too scary to this shrewd woman for it to let it grow unchecked.

But she also did not have too many options to deal with it as Zanzan might be their trump card against Amenheraft.

So the Queen Mother tried to play the balancing game.

Hence putting in an intrigued face, she then said in a slightly dreamy tone, "Oh? Even if someone like Pasha Farzah gains control over the court? You know how powerful he is."

"And he has brought up the issue of marrying Mikaya to Ptolomy."

"Can you be okay with that?"

Now, Alexander did not know whether that part about Mikaya was true or not.

But that did not stop him from being barely able to stop himself from laughing out uncontrollably.

If Ptolomy really did marry Mikaya it would be the joke of the century.

And Alexander also highly doubted the authenticity of the news, because from what he had observed, Alexander did not believe Pasha Farzah would risk another of his daughters to get the royal crown.

The man had been burned once, and given how Ptolomy had treated Nanazin, Alexander did not think the old man would take the risk.

So Alexander only chuckled and replied, "Haha, then I will give my best wishes to Lord Farzah and the royal couple."