

Herald 561

Chapter 561 Cambyses's Struggle (Part-4)

The reason why Cambyses had come up to the wall herself was precisely because she had guessed what Perseus might do.

Or more precisely it was Menicus who had guessed so, and then had met with Cambyses one afternoon to suggest,

"Since Tibias has shown interest in peace talks, it is likely they will directly appeal to the people to surrender. We should think of a way to neutralize that."

And Cambyses's mere presence seemed to have done just that, for she noticed only a little disturbance or confusion among the soldiers.

Then, to boost their spirits even more, she decided to give a short speech of her own, as she then shouted,

"My valiant defenders, hear me now! Today, we face an enemy, our eternal enemy Tibias, one who seeks to crush our spirit and erase our city from history."

"Their king is a twin-forked serpent! Do not listen to him. For all he speaks are lies."

And at this moment, Cambyses flashed a piece of paper and waved it around, claiming,

"Here I hold a peace treaty signed between Tibias and us just three months ago. But the brutes of Tibias decided to break it and attack us anyway."

"They are godless heathens who have no respect for the heavens themselves."

Being a theocracy, the people of Zanzan were much more easily influenced when gods were involved, and thus Cambyses painted the enemy in a negative light using this.

As she then reminded them,

"Furthermore, remember this year's harvest. How great it was."

"The enemy lies when he says he has no grain. For we certainly have plenty of grain."

pandasnovel.com "Do not be swayed by them."

"For they speak only the deviled tongue."

Cambyses loudly appealed to them as such, before quickly flashing another small note.

"Here I have a message from the Pasha himself. I was sent to me this very morning."

"In here he says that he knows about our predicament and is rushing here with an army as we speak."

"He will be here as soon as possible." Cambyses exaggeratedly claimed, before ending her speech with this promise,

"But until that happens, until my husband returns and destroys Tibias, know that I will stand beside you no matter what."

"Today, we may stand at the precipice of a great battle, but look around you!"

"See the many brothers ready to fight with you."

"Know that we far outnumber the enemy."

"Remember the glory of our walls that have withstood for a thousand years, built by our ancestors who faced trials just as daunting as this."

"We stand here on the shoulders of those who came before us, and we will carry their courage and honor into this battle."

"So rest assured, together, with the blessing of the gods and our ancestors, we shall emerge victorious."

"For I know that we are not just defenders of stone and mortar; we are defenders of our people, our land, and everything we hold dear. " Cambyses said the speech as if she and her forefathers had lived in Zanzan for generations, and finished with this,

"So glorious soldiers, do not be afraid!"

"Raise your swords, your shields, and your bows!"

"Show the enemy the strength of our resolve and the fire that burns within us and have your name forever etched into the annals of history!"

"Ramuh blesses us all!"

As soon as Cambyses finished saying this, in complete contrast to Perseus's speech, across the entire wall, sounded loud hurrahs, as the men burned with fighting zeal.

Being reminded of their ancestor, their hated enemy and the gods all worked to pump the men up.

And hearing these jubilant roars, Cambyses could not help but comment this in relief, "Thank goodness, I had Azura and Azura to write this speech. Because could have never come up with something as good as this."

Yes, that very ornate and rousing speech was actually constructed by the twins.

Which was not something really surprising if one thought about it.

Because for someone like Cambyses, who had just started to learn Azhak and spoke it with a heavy accent, being able to write this compelling speech was way out of her league.

And as for writing it in Thesian and then translating it, well a translated speech could never have the same impact as one written in the original language.

Hence Cambyses asked the twins for help.

And the sagacity of this move really showed if one looked closely at the quality of the speech that was written.

The speech hit all the right notes at the correct paces, letting the defenders feel the high of each emotion individually without overwhelming them, for all of it to build up to a crescendo at the end. I think you should take a look at

This was a very particular skill the twins had developed after having been at the temple from a very young age, where they learned to read and write and regularly make and give their own sermons.

This had helped them to learn to read the emotions of the masses quite well, especially with regard to the gods, with perhaps the best evidence of that in this particular speech being the last line, where they had intentionally skipped the name of Goddess Gaia.

Because the people of Zanzan still did not like her.

Sure, they tolerated her in times of peace, but in this time of strife, the twins were not so sure.

And when they let Cambyses know this, she decided to defer to their judgment.

As the defenders of Zanzan, cheered and steeled their spirits, Cambyses could not help but smile as she felt that staying late to memorize that speech had been worth it.

While, as she retreated from the ramparts, some of the council members who were nearby surrounded her, looking very eager and pleased, as they asked with a grin,

"My lady, is it true? Did Lord Alexander respond? What did he say?"

They had all been worried at the delay with Alexander's response, as it should not have taken him more than a day to write back.

"Mmmn, have a look," Cambyses only hummed and nodded at the inquiry, as she handed over the small note, and it was quickly passed around for all eager eyes to read.

And once they all finished examining it, Menicus was the first to let out a sigh of relief, saying, "This is good. I was worried that my lord had landed in some difficulties. But seems everything is fine over there."

The old man seemed to be more worried about Alexander's well-being than the current siege.

And it was because Menicus was pretty confident in holding the city even without any reinforcements.

And was only worried that Alexander might have landed himself in some kind of hot water.

Because if that was the case, they would be powerless to do anything from all the way over here.

And all the others nodded to this.

Cambyses nodded particularly hard, as she had been especially worried the past few days.

'He should not take this long. What's taking this long,' She could be sometimes heard mumbling out loud, something which really worried Mean and Opehenia.

And they tried their level best to comfort her.

Even the usually distant Gelene tried to offer some words of comfort.

But given the intense pressure Cambyses was in, having to organize so many things, simple words were not efficacious.

Because Cambyses did not only need Alexander's comfort.

She needed more guidance as well, about Menes, about defending the city, about accepting deals from them.

Hence, for the past week, it had actually become customary for her to visit the aviary herself every day, just to confirm if a message from her husband had arrived.

This was of course completely unnecessary given the caretaker there would have immediately informed Cambyses if there was.

But still, Cambyses insisted, visiting the bird coups as much as three times a day, morning, afternoon, and night.

And this even caused the man in charge in there, an old man named Pollop to say, "My lady, such delays are nothing unusual. Especially during winter."

"Master is probably caught up in some bad weather."

The man was experienced enough to know what might be going on instantly.

And though Cambyses's head understood, her heart did not.

So imagine her relief when she got the message just around dusk yesterday, where instructions alleviating all her doubts were written.

Thus she wholeheartedly agreed with Melodias when he said this, "It is good my lord is coming back. His presence will help to boost the troop's morale."

"Seems we only need to hold for only a while."

As Alexander's side cheered both with fighting zeal and the promise of reinforcement, Perseus only pursed his lips as he silently returned to his army, whereupon he actually met Leosydas sitting in a carriage around the front line.

And meeting his meeting who appeared much rosier, he half sneered,

"Well have a waste of time. Why did you bother writing it? And why did you bother having me memorize it late into the night?"

Yes, Perseus's speech was also written by someone else.

"Haha," Leosydas only chuckled, and declining to answer, he asked with a smirk, "So the hard way it is then?"

"Yes!" Perseus heavily nodded, his eyes suddenly giving off a chilly light, as he then turned to order a nearby herald, "Tell the men to prepare the new weapons. We will tear this wall down before dusk!"

Thus soon the bloody siege began and the battle for the city was placed on the balance.

Chapter 562 Perseus's Struggles (Part-1)

In some ways, Perseus was glad the enemy chose to fight.

Because that meant he would get to try his new toys.

"Let's show them the might of our new weapons- The catapults. I want to use it to grind their fighting spirit into dust.... under the heel of my stone volleys," Perseus loudly proclaimed, wanting to defeat the soldiers at their highest morale and thus deal the greatest blow.

Thus, with the king's command given, the curious wall defenders patiently waited, as they observed the enemy not launch a mass charging assault, or start lobbing arrow volleys as one would expect, but only move some strange wooden contraption on wheels up close to the walls, stopping around 100 meters from the walls.

Once there, a few soldiers then moved to then load a large rock onto a bucket that was attached to the arm, before another soldier at the back quickly pulled a level, making the arms shoot forward and upward.

Shoo And an instant later, the twenty-kilogram stone inside the wooden bucket-like structure almost soundlessly flew through the air, before

Thud, it impacted the stone walls with a dull, low thud, before rolling harmlessly down and cracking a bit in the process.

While atop the walls, this demonstration made all the defenders have this exact thought. 'What was that! Did they really throw that big a rock from so far away? How!'

The initial shock of seeing the new weapon made many slightly panic.

With the sound of the impact and the subsequent slight chaos among the soldiers being large enough to even attract the attention of the council members still present nearby, many of whom rushed up to the ramparts to have a look at what was all that commotion about for themselves.

And as they laid their eyes on the very distinct shape of a catapult, squinting their eyes they could help but mutter, "What is that!"

Shoo, *Shoo* *Shoo*

While in the meantime, the other catapults started to launch their own projectiles, some failing to make the distance, but most hitting the wall, with one even going over the walls to narrowly miss a defender.

Perseus had arranged all the 30 catapults that the Kaiser family had given him along the right part of the wall, intent on focusing fire and bringing down that section of the wall.

And as the king deployed his secret weapon, seeing these never-before-seen devices, there was no doubt in anyone's mind this was the thing that gave Tibias the courage to attack such a well fortified city head-on.

'So this is the new weapon the king was talking about. To think there could be a weapon to lob up huge stones at such distances!'

Even many of the veteran soldiers were impressed seeing the weapon's range and power, to say nothing of the green ones.

And so for the first two volleys, the wall defenders just stood there, not knowing what to do

Until....

"What are you gawking at? They are shooting at you! Shoot back!" The initial shock and awe finally wore off, especially among the veteran soldiers who were present there, with Menes barking this particular shout.

The armored giant was personally present on the rampart at the time, as he, along with many of his colleagues had gotten up to see the new weapon himself.

And then seeing the soldiers just stand there like wooden ducks even after an attack, he quickly snatched a crossbow from a nearby recent recruit who had become frozen with fear, and then as if to show how it was done, fired the first shot after taking aim.

And though it ultimately missed, the shot did its intended job, which was galvanizing the troops to join back in the fighting, as they felt their slight panic instantly dissipate upon seeing their general take personal charge.

Thus soon return fire began to rain out from the walls, and given the number of defenders there were, and how close together Perseus had put his catapults, the crossbowmen managed to concentrate their fire heavily on the enemy operators manning the weapons and managed to score quite a few kills even on their first volley.

A result which naturally caused a great deal of celebration to break out among the Zanzan ranks.

While Perseus suddenly felt his heart skip a beat faster in anxiety as he saw as many as ten of his men die just like that.

Which might not sound like a lot, but given that only around 200 of them used the catapult, losing such a large proportion on just the first volley was very brutal.

Never mind that these men were special troops specifically trained to operate and use these weapons, as not any Tom, Dick, or Harry could properly load, aim, fire, and most importantly maintain the weapon.

Especially not when the average peasant was not so bright.

'When did the enemy have so many skilled archers?' Thus, seeing the dead bodies, Perseus swore to himself in surprise, even wondering if they had so many trained deadeyes, why they did not use more of them in the previous battle.

For the king was of the opinion that perhaps if Menes had used more crossbowmen and used them more cleverly, the battle could have swung the other way even with the presence of the elephants.

But that was a mystery that could be solved another time. I think you should take a look at

Because right now, Perseus's main concern was to get his men out of the arrow range.

"Pull back. Move back a hundred meters (100 m)!" He thus loudly shouted, even frantically waving his arm around to signal the retreat as he tried to save as many lives of his men as he could before the next volley of fire came.

And fortunately for him, given the crossbow's low rate of fire, and Perseus's own rapid order, the rest of the crew managed to retreat with relatively few casualties and re-set up their siege machines at around 200 meters distance.

Now, the reason why Perseus had not set this up right from the start was because this new weapon had a range of just about 200 m, meaning it was able to only barely cover that much.

And after testing with it, Perseus actually found that its success rate of actually hitting a target at these extreme ranges was quite dismal, as many times, the projectiles would simply be not able to cover this distance.

And the accuracy only started to improve at around the 150-meter mark and became quite good at 100 meters.

Hence, given that Perseus did not expect the enemy to have too many skilled archers, as he had only met around 1,000 of them on the battlefield, he had decided to boldly set his catapult at its most optimal range.

A decision that proved to be quite bloody for him.

So he changed tactics to the following.

"Shoot from here. And use smaller stones if you cannot reach the walls using the twenty kilograms." He said to his catapults.

And then turning around, he ordered, "Send the archers and slingers forward. Tell them to harass the defenders. Keep them from attacking our siege machines!"

So after a while, the siege changed to this, with the catapults throwing irregular and sometimes even weak volleys at the walls, while the Tibian archers tried to draw the crossbowmen's fire atop the wall.

But that stalemate did not last long.

Because the losses seemed to heavily favor the defenders.

Tibias seemed to have far more casualties than Zanzan.

Which was already expected as the attackers.

But even still the losses were far more than expected.

And this happened not only because the thousands of defenders on just that section of the wall far outnumbered the around 2,000 missile troops (there were around 1,000 javelin men who were kept in reserve) sent to thwart them.

But also because the Zanzan defenders were on top of a wall, meaning the increased elevation gave their arrows a greater range, so they were able to easily reach even the catapults at the back.

Hence though those precious men at the back were safer, they were certainly not safe.

And it was as such that the first day of the siege ended, having lasted from morning to dusk, though after the first few hours, the rest of the fighting was pretty light, with only sporadic exchange of arrow fire and the occasional one or two catapult fires.

And as such, it also ended with relatively few overall casualties on either side, but with Zanzan definitely coming up top.

A result that worked to very much please the higher-ups of Zanzan who felt very confident in their victory even against the new weapons, while the same outcome managed to very much frustrate Perseus.

"Dammit! When did this cursed city have this many good archers!" The king could not control himself from slamming his fist on the table in his room as he thought back on the day.

This was a day that was supposed to have been a glorious one for him.

He had expected if not take Zanzan, at least have a significant dent on it.

But he only ended up feeling like he had been drenched in rain.

And so after thinking a while, and pointing the reason to all the skilled archers, he summoned his adjutant and ordered,

"Go and interrogate the prisoners about all those new archers."

"Where did they get it from? How much they are being paid? Why they are fighting for Zanzan?"

"I want to know everything."

Chapter 563 Perseus's Struggles (Part-2)

Perseus's assistant received the order immediately with a salute and proceeded to quickly carry it out.

The result of which he presented to his king a few days later.

But alas!

For though Perseus had hoped for some groundbreaking answer, one which he hoped to use to solve his predicament, the news he got was far more pessimistic and worrying than he could have ever guessed.

"My lord, at first when we questioned the captured men with regards to the new archers, none of the men were able to give us any answers."

"Even after we roughed them up, and asked quite a few of them, they still gave the same reply, that they had no idea of any new archer regiment being hired."

"And after a while, he began to believe them. Because it was clearly impossible for so many men to be lying."

"And I was about to report that to you," Here the adjutant, who was giving the summary of the report in front of Perseus's war council paused a bit to take a breath, before continuing,

"But it seems the gods are with us."

"For one of the soldiers after taking quite a bit of beating suddenly understood what were asking about and at last spoke the truth.

"He said that their lord had invented a new kind of bow called the crossbow that allows even peasants to shoot like expert marksmen. And that is how the enemy is able to have so many archers on the walls."

The adjutant sounded pretty pleased that he was able to extract this information.

While the same information worked to make Perseus quite distressed.

"What! Are you telling me there is a way to turn peasants into expert archers? Were we being shot that for the past few days by simple peasants? I can't believe it!" This was not shouted out by Perseus, but by a high-ranking noble next to him, one of the few lucky ones to survive Laukash's charge.

And very evidently, contrary to the adjutant's cheerful demeanor at having accomplished his task, the portly man's mood was quite sour.

With the mood being shared by Perseus too, who nodded and reasoned, "Hmmm, it is indeed hard to believe such a weapon exists. I thought that the enemy was putting its best troops at the front to try and hold the line."

"And my wish was to grind them down first, break their will to fight and then break through them after in one way."

"But if what the prisoner said was true...if Zanzan can turn all its peasants into expert marksmen....well." Perseus's thoughts trailed off as he did not want to think about that inevitable consequence.

Then he suddenly turned to his assistant, and with narrowed eyes pointedly asked, "It is true, right? What the prisoner said....you did confirm it? He did not lie...right!"

Perseus's last word was more an order than a question.

As Perseus finished his speech, the adjutant felt all the eyes in the room fall on him and facing such piercing gaze from such high-level men, the poor man suddenly began to question the validity of his own report.

Because if these powerful men one day all together proclaimed the sky was purple, the adjutant would have probably joined them.

And so, given the top leaders seemed to not like the answer, the man started to sweat bullets.

He knew many, many people were offered for delivering far less unsavory news, which were sometimes true, sometimes false.

He did not want to become like one of them.

But fortunately, the adjutant did not become the assistant to the nation's most powerful man without any wits or merits.

Hence facing this situation, instead of bullheadedly trying to insist his report was the truth and make many of the men displeased, he quickly said this, "My lords, in my excitement, I made the report hastily after asking only one soldier. Let me go out and ask a few other prisoners. Then we will surely know."

And this request he was granted by Perseus himself with a quick nod, and in this way the man managed to extricate himself from the situation.

And then, after observing the situation around Perseus and his war council for the next few days, and after being relieved that the high command really wanted the truth and not just a sugar-coated lie, he presented his second report, which was far more detailed.

"Your Grace, my lords, over the past few days I have talked to a lot of captured soldiers about this 'crossbow'. And what the first prisoner said is indeed true. It has been confirmed by many others." The man said confidently, before unscrolling a piece of papyrus sheet and pointing to a drawing on it,

"Here, one of them even drew a picture of how it looks. Though none of them knew during it actually worked."

It seemed the trigger mechanism of the weapon was still a mystery to many of the soldiers. I think you should take a look at

The adjutant's report left no doubt in the mind of the Tibian high command that the crossbow was indeed a real thing, and the threat it posed was very great.

In fact some seemed to think it was unsurmountable.

Because in the days preceding the two reports, the siege had not stopped, and up until that point the results were not looking very optimistic for Tibias.

For the hail of arrow fire from the enemy worked to make almost any attack on the wall impossible.

Even those famed catapults that the Kaiser family had promised to be able to 'break the very gates of heaven' were proving less than effective.

With the single biggest reason being the presence of the crossbowmen and their range.

Forcing Perseus to not only operate his machines at the edge of their range, limiting their effectiveness but also forcing him to disperse them all along the huge one-kilometer-long frontline in fear of concentrated arrow volleys, thus limiting their lethality, as instead of focusing fire, the weapons now dispersed their damage all along the wall.

But Perseus seemed to ultimately have no option to effectively deal with the crossbows available on his hands.

Hence the siege continued just like that for the next three weeks, with the first week seeing the highest peak of the fighting, as every day at the crack of dawn Perseus would send wave after wave of his archers to engage the walled defenders, while his catapults tried to damage the walls as best as they could.

Casualties on both sides in those seven days were significant, most dying from arrow fire, with a few unlucky ones even being claimed by once in a blue-moon lucky catapult shot.

But that period of high zeal and frenzy only lasted a little while, as war fatigue began to quickly settle in.

While Perseus could see this was in no way going anywhere.

Hence he decreased the intensity of the fight over the next two weeks until near the end it was perhaps only one of two hundred men launching what could be said as being essentially harassing attacks against the enemy, just to keep them on their toes and deny them rest or comfort.

On those days, the fighting would last perhaps for about half an hour to at most one, where there would maybe be some sporadic exchanges of only a few arrow fires and the occasional one or two catapult shots that seemed more ceremonial than functional as if the operators were actually testing if the catapults still worked rather than trying to destroy the wall.

A half-hearted effort that the defenders were able to ward off even in their sleep.

And speaking of sleep, the siege devolved into such a boring affair that the wall defenders found themselves yawning and dozing off most of the time, as they saw that the attackers seemed content to just sit on their doorsteps, blockading their city and doing nothing else.

But honestly, most sieges were like that.

A whole lot of waiting and not a lot of fighting.

While simply hoping the enemy gave up before you did.

Especially if you did not have the proper siege machines.

That was why sieges were usually universally detested by any attacking sides, as starving an entire city was actually quite hard.

And to top it all off, the weather itself did not work to make the situation any better.

Because as December arrived, the Icy Queen of Winter seemed to have announced herself in her full fury this year, as the skies became eternally downcast, and the weather began to drastically turn for the worse, with frequent blizzards and constant hails, turning the entire place into one cold hellscape.

Neither side wanted to leave the fireside, much less fight in this condition.

And in this situation, the city dwellers certainly had it better in this situation, as most had solid structures to take refuge inside to fight against this biting chill.

Even the defenders up on the walls had portable stoves set up all along the perimeter, burning coal to keep themselves warm and awake in their watch.

Not to mention the defenders were rotated every night to keep them fresh.

While the attacking side fared much worse, being forced to hole themselves inside their tents, which though thick and strong, could never be an equal substitute for stone and wood.

Hence most of the Tibian soldiers just sat inside their tent or around a large campfire wrapping themselves in as many blankets as they could.

And did nothing else.

It was a very boring siege indeed.

Chapter 564 Perseus's Struggles (Part-3)

As the days went on, the outcome of the siege seemed to become clearer and clear to Perseus.

And when a particularly hard blizzard hit them around the first week of December, the same one that made Alxx stop his journey, the attacks stopped completely.

The weather was too serious and visibility too poor to conduct any type of offensives.

And so Perseus simply sat in his tent with his chin on his palm, thinking and ruminating, all wrapped up in thick clothing and even a fur blanket, while a raging fire burned inside the room to make it a bit more bearable to live in.

But even then it was quite cold.

Though the chilly temperature did nothing to alleviate the hot temper of the man as he was predictably in a bad good.

His 'divine weapons' were proving to be less than effective, he had a bunch of dead bodies with nothing to show for it, while his soldiers mostly sat around in their tents, doing nothing.

Well, nothing useful anyway, as they ate, slept, performed bodily functions, and drank to pass the time, with some even breaking military discipline and doing things like playing dice and other types of gambling.

Perseus was of course quite a bit aware of what was going on in his camp, and seeing around 35,000 men sit and do nothing, while his supplies and food rations depleted at an alarming rate as it was winter and everyone was hungrier than usual, for the body burnt far more calories than usual to try and stay warm, he was internally quite incensed

But ultimately chose to turn a blind eye anyway.

He understood the soldiers were doing this mainly because they were bored and had nothing to do to spend the time and since he also had no way of motivating them to do anything either way, this infraction was allowed to pass.

'Well at least they are visiting the brothels' Perseus half-joked, actually somewhat happy that there was no nearby large settlement from where the soldiers would be able to get this illicit pleasure.

And so as they waited for the storm to pass, for the time being, Perseus retreated to his tent as he tried to think of a new strategy to tackle this problem.

And to help him to do that, he asked for the advice of his most trusted man- Leosydas, inviting him into his tent.

"So how are your wounds?" The king first and foremost asked the worry in his clear.

"Stings like hell in the cold!" And Leosydas sourly spat back.

This weather really made him understand just how bad it was to have an open wound in the cold.

It constantly ached, and on particularly cold nights, which was every single night, the pain would get so bad that he would have to have hot bags of water placed on his wound just to reduce it a little bit, just enough so that he could at least get some sleep.

It was quite the torture.

And even now, even as he sat in front of a warm hearth, the wound still gave off a throbbing pain.

Hearing his friend's bitter tone and seeing him be in significant pain, Perseus did not offer any words of comfort.

He knew his friend was too proud to take it anyway.

Instead, producing a teasing smirk he suddenly asked him in a joking tone, "By the way, did you know we captured the man who tried to kill you."

"His name is apparently Layksah. Is there anything you would like to do to him?"

Perseus sent Leosydas a very knowing look, his innuendo being clear.

And given the amount of pain that the enemy rider had caused him, it would not be strange for Leosydas to want some revenge.

Even if he did not outright kill Laykash, just denying one of his meals of the day, or making his accommodation a bit more unforgettable would work wonders in making the man's life quite difficult in this weather.

But Leosydas, hearing this, only turned to look at Perseus's smirk, and put on a very serious and stoic face, to only loudly say, "Stop joking! What would I want to do with him? Why would I want to do anything to him?"

"We are at war. And I tried to kill him as much as he wanted to kill me."

Leosydas genuinely felt offended at Perseus's suggestion, feeling it would soil all his honor and dignity if he were to extract some sort of petty vengeance on the enemy soldier just for hurting him.

Because according to him and most military people of the time, whatever wounds and injuries one suffered during a war were a sort of mark of pride and manliness.

And as for the ones inflicting that damage, well they were just soldiers obeying orders, or people defending their lands.

There was no sin in that.

So in a way, it was a 'what happened on a battlefield, stayed on a battlefield' kind of like thing. I think you should take a look at

Strange for sure, but these were strange times indeed.

"Hahaha," And Perseus of course knew this mindset, which was why he had asked the question with a teasing smile, his intention being only to lighten the mood.

As he then additionally informed his friend,

"The man says he was the leader of the enemy's right wing."

"*Whistle* quite a high officer...a big fish. We should be able to get quite the ransom for him."

The eagerness in the king's voice was palpable.

And Leosydas chimed in with his thoughts as well, saying,

"Mmm, that is indeed a good idea. The siege is proving difficult, and the opposite side has already expressed interest in the prisoner exchange. So we should try and keep as many of them alive as possible."

The math here was simple, more alive prisoners meant more money.

And Leosydas further urged Perseus,

"Make sure to keep them in good tents given the weather. And that they are properly fed and clothed. Dying because of a cold or fever would be quite a loss for us."

If someone from the outside were to hear Leosydas speak now they would think he was the king, but this was the type of bond Perseus and he shared, and thus the former diligently nodded to the latter's suggestion even though their ranks were in reality the opposite, while Leosydas finished by saying,

"Also that officer named Laykash. He told that he had broken his broken and it hurt quite bad in the cold. Arrange for a slave to take care of that."

The man seemed to be quite concerned about his big prize losing its value.

And hearing his news, Perseus was naturally surprised and could help but exclaim, "So you have already talked to the prisoner! That explains it!" as he then felt his previous offer had been quite moot.

And after this, Perseus nodding in tune with his friend commented,

"I already have done much of what you asked. And I will have that Laykash be well taken care of, rest assured." before saying with a slight sigh, "Haaah. hopefully, we can get back part of our campaign cost from this."

Perseus's lament was over the fact that since they even had to discuss this, even if only privately, it still went to show at least tacitly just how little confident they were in being able to actually win the siege.

"*Sigh*", it seems we have underestimated the difficulty in taking Zanzan. Their walls are really something," Perseus hence added a second sigh quickly after his first, bitterly saying,

"It feels like punching a mountain. Not even Thesalie's walls might be as sturdy as this."

Perseus subconsciously crunched up his eyebrows as he said this, trying to think whether that was really true or if was just him imagining things as he was looking at something some distance away.

But Perseus swear the sound the stones made when they hit the Zanzan walls was distinctly different from when they were tested against other walls.

They were much lower and muted, with a duller thud, as if it was hitting a much denser stuff with much less air or emptiness inside.

Perseus could not quite put his finger on it, but he certainly felt like Zanzan's walls were much more solid.

And he was absolutely right.

Zanzan's walls were indeed different from the others of the time.

And the fact that the man standing quite a far away was able to determine this went to show how sharp the sense and intuition of this king were.

Now to understand the difference between Zanzan's walls and the rest, one had to know how the other walls were made.

And these primitive walls were made using a rubble core, using a technique, very unimaginatively called 'rubble masonry'.

The way this type of construction worked was after laying the foundation, first, a primary structure would be made of stones and other masonries.

They would be stacked atop of each other in courses or layers, in quite a haphazard way, with them barely able to stay together without falling over on their own.

Next over this unstable structure, a primitive mortar, made of mainly slaked lime and ashlar (finely ground stone or pebbles) would be poured over, intended to act as a binder.

And slowly over time, once fully filled and coated, this slurry liquid would slowly solidify and harden, and at last after a while hold all the rocks together within its matrix, making the rubble of stone now solid and strong.

Chapter 565 Perseus's Struggles (Part-4)

The naming reason behind the rubble core method was quite evident once one knew about the technique.

But forming the rubble core did not mean the end of the wall's construction.

Far from, that might be actually the easy part.

As it could be done relatively easily given it was not done in winter, or more specifically during winters where the temperature dropped to zero, as the water in the slaked lime and slurry would freeze, halting the chemical reaction that would solidify the mixture and destroy the rubble core as the water would expand into ice.

But anyway, that small inconvenience aside, with the rubble core formed, then a veneer or shell needed to be formed around it, both to protect it, but also to give it some much-needed additional strength.

Because given the weak mortar used, and the core's asymmetric construction structure, it was actually unable to properly redistribute the forces acting against it, meaning it was prone to breaking if hit in its weaker points.

So this outer shell would be made very specifically, by skilled artisans who quarried, cut, and shaped the stone into appropriate shapes, and then fit them together like jig-jaw puzzles, all to give this relatively thin layer a much greater strength as it was able to spread the energy of the impact all throughout the structure.

And it was this strong but thin outer structure, combined with the thicker but weaker main structure that together worked to give a wall its toughness and strength.

As for the reason why the entire wall was not made as such, well that would take too long, and be far too expensive to be used in any meaningful quantity.

Hence the compromise.

And this was how almost every large defensive wall was made.

Except one.

Alexander's one.

Well to be fair, half of Alexander's wall, because he had not torn down the wall Pasha Muazz's ancestor had built.

Instead, he had added to it, by using bricks and concrete made from Portland cement, to add a second, much stronger front layer.

That wall was made like any modern would be, with bricks, concrete, and using wooden logs as substitutes for iron rods.

And though this second layer that much thinner than the first layer, the combination and techniques of much modern knowledge were not something an ancient catapult could overcome.

At least not in a short time with such low numbers.

Hence there it was of little surprise that Perseus had run against a brick wall.

In fact, given Perseus only had 30 of them, it could have even been argued that even without the rest of the walls, just with the second layer, Zanzan might have stood and stood well.

As Perseus complained about the walls, like his king, Leosydas too felt the walls were too hard, as even with the low-intensity fire from a relatively small number of catapults, he was sure they should have done more damage.

Surely at least some bits of the outer structure should have been chipped off.

But they got nothing.

And this did make him worried.

But instead of guessing it was because of some super futuristic building material like a prescient prophet, Leosydas simply chalked it up as the Kaiser exaggerating about their weapon's capability and the catapults being too less effective at such distances.

"The wall is a problem. What about the other side?" Leosydas wanted to probe for weakness around the southern part of the city, the part facing the sea.

But Perseus shook his head to deny that dream, saying, "Our spies say that too is well guarded. Apparently they had a recent war where their ports were blockaded, and so the walls had been thickened and new, thicker gates installed."

"Attacking that will be no use. And anyway, if he did that, we would not be able to place our catapult there."

"Not to mention we do not have any ships with us, and the weather is terrible."

"I will lose half my soldiers to the sea gods even before landing on the harbor."

So a flanking maneuver with the intent of attacking a weaker section and overcoming the defense with surprise and speed was out of the question.

As for the reason why Tibias did not try a naval blockade, one was because they thought these catapults would be enough to win even a front assault, two was because they did not really have the number of ships or the manpower to man those ships, and lastly, three. because of how rough the seas around here became during winter.

Thus Leosydas changed his tactic to this,

"Then should we do a ladder rush? Throw everything we have at one go and hope to catch the enemy unaware." Leosydas sounded very optimistic as he said, furthermore pointing to Perseus this fact, I think you should take a look at

"Remember the enemy has no ditches around his city. So it might actually work. Especially if we do it at night."

In times of sieges, it was not unusual to dig a ditch around a city, in fact it was pretty common.

The reason was to deny the enemy being able to just waltz his siege towers right next to the walls unimpeded.

If there was a ditch there the invaders would first need to fill it up before they could approach the wall, all while the wall defenders would be able to rain arrows, stone, and other hot materials like tar, boiling water, sand, oil, etc, onto those attempting to do so.

But the reason Zanzan had not done so was because the siege was too sudden and Perseus was too close to the city to try and attempt such a huge endeavor.

And this was especially the case given the cold, wintery soil, which made it feel like digging through concrete when trying to do so, meaning the speed would have been too slow anyway.

But even without the presence of a ditch, Perseus only shook his head in denial.

Because he felt his friend sounded a bit too optimistic.

Night battles were certainly not as easy as Leosydas was making up to be.

They were generally quite hard.

And it would be tens of times harder if it was against a city that was as well defended as Zanzan.

So he struck the idea down saying, "The risks are too big. And the enemy is quite vigilant. I have seen they have even installed large fire pits atop the walls to make it easier for their soldiers to stay warm and still be on lookouts."

"I have already lost too many men in the last battle. A failed wall assault would cripple me." Perseus was understandably unwilling to throw everything to a roll of the die, especially when that roll was so heavily stacked against him.

Not to mention if he did not succeed, not only the campaign would come to an end, but losing so many men might even shake his throne back home.

Also, it would not only be the men directly killed in the fight who would end up as casualties.

Because given the weather, the risk of frostbites was a very real possibility, and couple them in wounds and cuts, the bodies would start to very quickly rack up quite nicely.

The Germans understood this reality with every single bone of their body even they attacked the Soviet Union, where at some points, the hospitals had more people admitted for frostbite than gun wounds.

And though Perseus did not have that particular historical lesson to draw from, he did know of other incidents where armies were destroyed by it.

Hence the caution.

And Leosydas of course understood this, as he nodded and said, "You're right. Ladder rushes rarely work, and most of the time it only works to increase the casualties on the side attempting it," before letting a sigh of resignation and shaking his head.

While Perseus took that idea and decided to bash it a bit more,

"Mmn, you are right. Plies, don't forget the amount of archers they have up there. Half our men will turn into scarecrows before they even reach the foot of the wall."

Perseus here was referring to how a man who had been shot too many times would have too many wooden arrow shafts pointing out of him and making him seem like that.

As he then added, "And even if they do manage to scale the walls, the men would still need to then fight to clear it."

"And given the number of defenders the enemy seems to have, they will be able to quickly reinforce any breakthroughs and throw us off the wall in no time."

"No ladder rush will work to win us the war," Perseus seemed to vehemently toss that tactic into the bin.

"You're right, you're right...it was foolish of me to suggest it." And Leosydas frankly admitted this mistake, though he was just spitballing here.

But then frustratingly added, "But what else can we do?"

The unsolvable problem of the crossbow seemed maddening to him.

"Could we try to win the siege? Starve them out?" The man asked a bit weakly.

But Perseus dashed it with a shake of his head, "We do not have the ability to enforce a full blockage. So with the ports open, Zanzan's allies will surely be able to keep it supplied and fed."

"Don't forget their city lord is not in the city. So he might very well be coming from the capital with help." Perseus did not know it yet but he had made quite the precinct prediction.

But he still could not precinct his problems away.

Chapter 566 Life Inside A Siege (Part-1)

The situation inside Zanzan for its part had become relatively calm.

At least much calmer than during the start, when many residents genuinely feared the city might be lost.

There were even some very hushed whispers of it being 'all the Thesians' faults', as some of the populace pointed the blame squarely at Alexander and his origin as the reason for their defeat, implying they were incompetent due to their place of birth.

But to be honest such opinions were very, very rare, and only resided in the most extreme of extremists, their numbers so low it hardly managed to stir the waves as of yet.

And though there was the possibility of their voices being amplified if the situation developed in certain directions, but after Perseus's boisterous first-week offensive, which saw both sides trade quite a bit of casualties, the intensity began to die down.

The siege attacks became light, and after the men got over their surprise of the catapults, they found they were not really that big a deal to deal with.

So without that fear, such rhetoric failed to stir much resistance in most of the city's populace.

Instead, with Perseus's attack being so easily staved off, especially after his so-grand speech that hyped up his so-called divine weapons, most of the commanders began to feel quite optimistic about their ability to hold the walls.

But though the external problems did not seem to affect Zanzan that much, all was not sunshine and rainbows for Cambyses inside the city.

For one there was the usual stress of running the city during an active siege.

And though she left the day-to-day nitty-gritty of managing the soldiers to the military leaders, she still wanted to at least hear how everything was going, and then make suggestions based on that.

For instance, in one of the reports Menes stoically said, "Yesterday we executed three men for falling asleep during the night watch. And sentenced another five to fifty cane strikes for dozing off in their stations."

This strict instruction was written by Alexander personally, as he felt there was nothing as dangerous as a watchman falling asleep, thus giving the enemy an opportunity to waltz right into one's camp unimpeded.

And Menes seemed to agree, which was why he decided to follow the order to the tee.

pandasnovel.com While Melodias, who usually was a bit more lenient with his troops a bit disapproving slightly shook his head and added, "Poor lads. They simply dozed in the cold just as Menes was making his rounds. Bad luck."

He felt that in this bitter cold, it was very easy to want to shut one's eyes and nod off a bit, especially given the enemy was very unlikely to attack at night and so wished Menes could have been a bit more lament given the circumstances.

While Cambyses hearing this said, "Lord Menes did the right thing in following my husband's orders. Those falling asleep during the watch indeed deserve to be put to death no questions asked," before turning to look at Melodias,

"But I also believe Lord Melodias raised an interesting point."

"It is indeed very cold. And many soldiers might feel it is too hard to stay focused for so long staring blankly into the black night."

"After all these are new recruits and not trained soldiers." Cambyses added understandingly, before cautioning Menes, "And frequently executing them will not be good for morale."

So she then suggested, "So I propose trying to make life up there a bit more bearable for the men."

"Since Lord Melodias has brought up the issue about the cold, perhaps we can install some kind of portable stoves to keep them warm,"

"We have a lot of iron just lying around. Why not use them to make the stoves?"

"And we have a lot of coal. Let's use that as the firewood."

This idea came to her when she remembered seeing Mean bringing a small earthen stove to her room to make it warmer.

"Yes! Yes! That is a great idea. Giving the soldiers something to stay warm around will definitely improve morale and prevent them from dozing off," Melodias naturally was ecstatic at having anything that could prevent further executions, adding with a large grin,

"Hahaha, my lady truly cares for the soldiers. They will surely be overjoyed to know you think so much of them."

While Menes too quickly joined Melodias in buttering up Cambyses a bit, a side reason being he still felt guilty about losing and hoped Cambyses would not push Alexander too hard to punish him, as he said, "Yes, I agree to."

"Furthermore, my lady's idea of making it out of iron is truly ingenious. We will simply need to cast the thing, so making it will be much faster than pottery. I can have the stoves distributed around the walls in a week!"

After becoming a general Menes had spent some time around blacksmiths designing new types of weapons or simply overseeing the production of them, and so the man had gained some rudimentary knowledge about metalworking. I think you should take a look at

Hence the man was able to make that comment.

Thus with that Cambyses's portable stoves were soon created, which was just a hollow iron cylinder with many small holes in its walls, where coal and other kindling would be put and then lit, while the holes would work to let in air and keep the fuel burning.

And this was just one of the ways Cambyses contributed to the war effort.

But though the military affair of things was going quite well for Cambyses, contrary to Perseus's expectations of Cambyses leading a rosy life, currently she was facing all kinds of internal problems.

And among all the domestic problems, the main one was undoubtedly the problem of overcrowding inside the city.

When the populace of Zanzan got the news that there was an enemy army, most of all who lived around the city naturally flocked to enter inside its strong walls to take shelter, resulting in quite a large population spike.

And the fact was Zanzan city was already relatively quite small and on top of that was currently going through a renovation, meaning it was simply unable to properly house such huge numbers of men, women, and children.

And so given the lack of proper housing, and the general congestion, the city administrators and city guards found it hard to keep law and order in the city.

Cambyses in her office every day would receive more and more reports of crime and thievery as opportunistic scums tried to take advantage of the situation, with the number of incidents increasing every day.

And the limited number of city guards seemed to struggle up to their necks to try and deal effectively with it all them.

Furthermore, given that a lot of the populace was recruited into the city garrison, many bad fish had managed to slip through the net, meaning a lot of these scoundrels were actually armed and dangerous.

Making the job of the city guards ever more dangerous.

In fact there was one particular incident of some of the guards being jumped in dark alleys by such people and many were even killed.

An incident that forced Cambyses to draft some of the original mercenary members from the military into the city guards, and then lead a punitive task force against that part of the city, resulting in the capture and subsequent execution of a few hundred people.

The snow-covered streets of Zanzan had become red that day.

But at least after that day, the city cooled down for a while.

As for Cambyses, while dealing with this mess she only said this to herself in relief, 'Thank goodness I listened to Menicus and took care of well-known troublemakers beforehand. Otherwise, things would have gone nasty.'

Yes, things could have certainly gotten much worse without the original resident rats of the city.

But without the experienced big fishes present to lead the mostly inexperienced shrimps, though the many incidents were hard for Cambyses to suppress, it never got out of control.

Another reason why these problems were irritating but ultimately small scale was because many of the criminals were not criminals per se, but desperadoes, and simply took the crooked path when they could not get the basic necessities using the straight and narrow.

For example, in this cold, the populace always found itself though not starving but certainly hungry, though the populace was not freezing, they were certainly cold, and though the populace was not dying of sickness, certainly diseases like cold and fever were everywhere.

Then was the sanitation issue, where the rudimentary public toilet system and the still-under-construction sewage system could not handle such volume.

Filth had soon began to build up all around Zanzan, and the sanitation workers proved simply too few to tackle it effectively.

In fact, given the widespread disease of mostly innocuous diseases such as cold and fever, combined with the intense crowding and now the build-up of such huge piles of filth, Cambyses was pretty sure that if it was not too cold, surely a plague would have gripped the city.

And to avoid that, the lady had quickly ordered all fecal matter to be dumped into the nearby sea, while thanking the gods they had not been blockaded this time.

Though the side effect of that was the port water soon began to change color and a pungent, ammonia smell began to daft into the air from there.

But still, that was still better than a plague.

And like this, Cambyses still managed to keep the city ticking, even through the hard times.

Chapter 567 Life Inside A Siege (Part-2)

As the blizzard died down after a few days, and once the surroundings started to change from hellishly cold to one that was just bitter, Cambyses felt the enemy pick up the pace of their attack.

It seemed Perseus was willing to try his luck at a second throw.

And so the attacks were restarted with renewed vigor while the wall defenders worked to keep the enemy at bay, staining the snow-covered ground with dead bodies.

While inside the city, the populace tried to make do with whatever they had.

Life was certainly not easy for them inside.

Though they were not starving, they were certainly hungry.

Because while the city still provided them with food, it was only one meal a day for everyone except the currently stationed defenders up on the wall who were actively fighting, this concession being so that they had the energy to keep on fighting.

Hence, the amount was just enough to keep them from starving and rebelling, but certainly not enough to sate their hunger.

And it was still quite hard to pass the day with so little food, especially in this cold where the body burnt energy so quickly.

Hence many tried to find alternative ways of procuring food.

Those who could afford to would bribe the cooks to set aside a part of the cooked meal to sell to them later.

Or bribe the city guards to give them a second meal by asking them to turn a blind eye when the same man queued up twice, or even simply giving them a bigger proportion.

As for those too poor to take this crooked route, many would resort to stealing others' meals or even bullying it off them, with women and children being particularly the preferred target of choice, as the men would swindle off it them by saying they did not eat that much.

And the tragedy was in such situations the much weaker side usually had to relent to such coercion, or else have their entire meal forcibly taken.

So this situation soon gave to the rise phenomenon where one could see many women and children, and even some frailer men finishing their meals around the serving stations, to avoid such a fate.

Not that this was in any guarantee of safeguarding their food.

As after a while the men in charge got smart to this idea and started to command everyone to bring all the given food back to their hideout before eating them.

Or the result was a beating and even being denied to go to get the food the next day.

Cambyses gradually came to know about this practice and tried to stop it as best as she could, but with the few men under her, she would hardly tackle such a widespread practice.

So she turned a blind eye to it for now.

But one thing she did not turn a blind eye to was an incident that happened one day around one of the serving stations.

There, a few desperados, who were too poor to bribe anyone, were too righteous to swindle from the women and children and had become too stupid in hunger, decided to start a quarrel with the servers there, demanding more food, as they even shouted, "We can't live with so little. You Thesian scums are starving while your lords eat five meals a day! Give us more!"

And this even got some of the more fiery men in the crowd fired up.

But unfortunately for the men, that place was not the best ground to foment a rebellion.

As given the station was a heavily defended point, and the guards there brutally squashed those efforts instantly without giving the situation an inkling of a chance to develop.

While the majority of the people in the queue just stood there watching and hoping that the line would not be shut off due to this and they would be able to get their daily ration.

So those troublemakers were beaten to an inch of their life, so badly in fact that it was doubtful they would be able to survive winter with the kinds of wounds they suffered. and afterward taken, or more accurately dragged to the dungeon.

And once Cambyses came to hear of the incident, she promptly ordered these miscreants to be executed in public for 'disturbing the peace of the city'.

These men might have been only trying to get a bit more food for themselves and their families, but no matter how soft-hearted Cambyses was, she could never allow actions to become a thing.

So though regrettable, it made to be done, and Cambyses made sure to severely punish them to make an example out of them.

And the results spoke for themselves, as afterward, no such open dissatisfaction about the higher-ups ever happened. I think you should take a look at

But though Cambyses seemingly suppressed, if not solved the dissatisfaction about the food shortage, it was not just that the populace was chasing around.

Because in addition to being hungry, though the populace was not freezing, they were certainly cold, as good homes able to stave off the chill and thick winter clothing were both in short supply.

And Cambyses could do little to provide them with these in such a short time.

So instead, she built temporary heating points all around the city, which were large fireplaces fueled by coal, where people could gather and warm themselves up.

And that managed to alleviate some of the misery from the cold.

Lastly, there was a chronic shortage of medicine to treat colds and fevers.

But sadly Cambyses could do nothing about that.

The clinic and its medicine were already ordered to give priority to the wounded defenders, and so in this case Cambyses could only ask the ill to pray and hope that natural selection favored them.

So to that effect, the ill and the sick were frequently seen visiting the temples and praying to the gods, to the point that the grounds there became covered with people lying around, as they hoped being closer to the houses of the gods would help them get better.

And the priests and priestesses tried their best in that regard, with Azura and Azira even regularly giving sermons and holding prayers to try and help alleviate their suffering, even if it was just a placebo effect.

While Cambyses felt the only real solution to this chronic shortage of medicine was to reduce demand, which could have been done by not letting so many people into the city in the first place.

But closing the gates to the refugee and having them potentially under Perseus's mercy also would have been a very unpopular move and since she felt she could accommodate them with some difficulties, she did, making the current situation develop as such.

But still, by implementing these various techniques, Cambyses managed to keep the city ticking, and with the military on her side, things seemed to be going relatively well, and barring any unforeseen scenarios, it seemed Zanan would hold without breaking a sweat.

And this realization was made by Perseus as well, who had grown increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress in the one-and-a-half month they had been there

And so with the new year fast approaching, Perseus felt this siege was going nowhere and sent the same delegate inside the city, to discuss further terms.

"We are willing to leave Zanzan and hand over the two thousand prisoners we have. For a total of 40 million ropals." The man named his price very directly.

An astronomical price at that.

And this made Cambyses shoot out in anger, "And here we thought you were coming in good faith."

"Pay 20,000 ropals for one soldier! Your king is delusional."

"Haha, no, no, the 40 million is both for the prisoners and for us to leave Zanzan. It is not high at all if you think about it. In fact, it is quite cheap," The man clarified with a chuckle,

"No, it is still too expensive. I saw what you guys did to the outside of our city, burning and razing our buildings," Cambyses refused the offer by pointing to the fact that Perseus had set the military complex and the brick building kilns on fire when he had started the siege, and then offered her own deal, raising her two fingers and saying, "20 million to leave Zanzan. That is our final price."

But the man refused to budge on the amount, putting on a knowing smile and saying, "Oh, but 40 million 'is' our final price."

"Or we will execute all your prisoners."

"And you will also be interested to know we have one of your officers. Laykash! I believe you should know him!"

Perseus had commanded the man to try and extract as much money as possible from them, reasoning that if they could give Leosydas so much money cash, their treasury had to be stacked.

And so the man refused to negotiate and threatened them as such.

But Cambyses, though having had the money, and even after a bit of urging from the other council members still refused, reminding them of Alexander's instruction not to commit to any peace deals without him, and angrily sent the man out saying,

"Go back. You have already broken the peace treaty and stolen from us. We will not indulge you further!"

And as such, the inherent distrust built by Perseus and the absence of Alexander made it so that the war that could have been over by now was made to drag on towards a very memorable event.

Chapter 568 Perseus's Chance (Part-1)

The delegate did not feel too offended when being thrown out of the city.

He knew such negotiations usually did not conclude with just one meeting and felt that this was just the enemy acting tough to make them lower their price.

'Hah, I'm sure you will come begging to such to get your men soon,' The man felt confident, and so responding to Cambyses's accusation of them breaking their promise and stealing money,

the man replied, "The peace treaty that you signed had no set time limit my lady. Also, we have stolen nothing. You gifted the money to us," before he returned to his camp.

It seemed like a true politician, the man had little shame.

But the news he bought Perseus did not please the king.

Killing 2,000 men would get him nothing, and each day he stayed there, his army simply ate more and more of his food and got nowhere.

Perseus was truly getting frustrated.

The siege was not meant to last this long.

"There are a lot of people around the surrounding villages. Should we conscript them to do a ladder charge," Perseus proposed to Leosydas, feeling that was the only way to use the technique- to forcibly use the nearby folks as human meat shields and pass the arrow storm that way.

He had not done so before because Leosydas had asked him not so so as to make Zanzan surrender peacefully.

But since that clearly was not gonna happen now, Perseus was eager to give that move a try.

"There were not a lot of people around the surrounding villages. There are barely any useful men, only old folk." But Leosydas only shook his head in denial, feeling paltry numbers would not be enough to launch a successful assault.

And so the war council fell into a dilemma about how to proceed.

It was at that moment that suddenly, Perseus's adjutant burst into the tent with a piece of startling news.

"My lord, our scouts have caught a Zanzan spy loitering around our camp. He says he can get us inside the city! But before that he wants to talk to you," The man delivered the sky-shattering news.

And given the current situation Perseus was in, this information of course moved him enough to want to meet the man.

"Bring him here," So Perseus immediately ordered a meeting, as he turned to Leosydas and smiled, "Well, whatever he has to say, there is no harm in listening to it, now is there?"

And Leosydas completely agreed, hence soon after entered a middle-aged man with messy hair who was dressed quite shabbily.

The coat he draped over his body though thick had many patches to it, the black color having faded to reveal a dull grey, as if it had been worn for a very long time and cleaned many, many times over.

His face was long, thin, and wrinkled, the boots covered in snow and mud, and he kept wriggling his hands together to turn them from blue to red.

"Who are you? And what do you want?" And after scanning the man, from his chair, Perseus very commandingly asked.

To which this unknown stranger politely bowed and said, "This here is a lowly slave named Mohshin. My master has sent me to express his sincerest greetings to you, Your Majesty! Long Live the king! Long Live Tibias."

This amount of boot-licking caught Perseus a bit surprised, as regular Adhanians were not so servile to Tibias.

"Oh? Who is your master then? And what does he want?" Perseus furrowed his eyebrows as came the next natural question.

"..." The thin man did not immediately answer this inquiry.

Instead, he very naturally turned to look at Perseus's adjutant, and sent him a very knowing look, knowing that he would not be getting to meeting with a nation's king if the latter did not know about his offer.

But since the king had asked, he again said it out of his own mouth, providing a bit more deal,

"Your Majesty, my master feels you have been facing some difficulties in taking the city. The walls of Zanzan are formidable indeed."

"As such, he is willing to offer your esteemed self an alternative path into the city...for a small, tiny, insignificant price of course, hehe," The man here chuckled a dirty smile, revealing his bad, yellowed teeth.

To say Perseus was 'facing some difficulties' in the siege was of course a huge understatement.

So any other way of ending it was very tempting.

But then again, this offer sounded even fisher than rotten fish.

"Zanzan...for a small price you say?" Perseus raised his thick eyebrows as he said this in a mocking tone, sneering, "If your master wanted something from me, why didn't he come? Didn't have the guts to see me?"

Naturally, Perseus was cautious about this offer.

"My master is cautious about revealing his identity. Surely my lord understands." But Mohshin reasoned this with Perseus, reassuring, "I swear by the gods Your Grace, the information I bring is without a doubt true. Or may the curse of a thousand generations be upon me."

It appeared the man was eager to convince the king.

And hearing this, Leosydas decided to intervene, pulling a smirk and pointedly asking, "Then if you have all the information, why do we need your master? Why can't we make you tell us?" "I think you should take a look at

The man was alluding to torturing the information out.

To which the middle-aged only swallowed his laughter as if not to appear too disrespectful, before slightly bowing and saying, "My lords, I'm but a humble slave. If you so wish to do so, I will be too happy to oblige. I live for your satisfaction."

The man had not an iota of fear in his voice.

Though immediately after he added this warning,

"But if you did do so, I will not be able to return to my master and he might get anxious enough to notify the relevant authorities of the blind spot, Then all your efforts will be for naught."

It seemed the other side had come prepared.

"What is the secret? Some hidden passageway? A tunnel? Or an overlooked gap in the wall?" So seeing force was not an option, Perseus attempted to guess the answer.

But Mohshin simply chuckled and shook his head.

"No, no, nothing so simple. It is much, much grander! Grand enough to let your entire army through." He mysteriously said.

And this last sentence was certainly potent enough to capture Perseus's attention.

'An opportunity to attack with his entire army. How can I have failed to see such a huge flaw?' Perseus asked himself incredulously and even started to think the man was pulling his leg.

A gap that could let 35,000 people was no small gap and something people tended to notice immediately.

But that also tickled Perseus's curiosity.

'If it is really true,' Perseus felt his body heat up just at the mere thought of it.

"What is it? Tell me now!" Thus the king let his emotions get the better of him, as he barked this, giving away his eagerness.

"..." Mohshin only smile, because they had not discussed the payment yet.

And this was where Leosydas inserted himself, playing as the cooler heads of the two.

"What does your master want?" He lightly asked, and at this, the traitor turned to give the man a slight smile for asking the right questions.

"My master wished to be made a noble of Tibias for his efforts. And wants Zanzan as his territory!"
Came the demand.

And it was indeed a big demand.

Conquering Zanzan had been the dream of all Tibians, and to be able to finally do so only to give its control over to an Adhanian seemed to be preposterous.

And Perseus was just about to rebuke such a demand when suddenly his friend spoke up,

"Fine! If his information proves valuable enough, and we can take the city using it, we will make him a count and give him Zanzan as his fiefdom. Happy?"

Perseus went slightly aghast at his friend's offer, as this was quite much, and he wondered why he was bending so much to just the initial demand

'So why is Leosydas being so impatient?' Perseus wondered.

But he did not outright oppose his friend in front of the 'client'.

So turning to Mohshin, he officially said, "Yes. Just like Lord Leosydas said, if he can get us Zanzan, as the gods as my witness, I swear I will make your master a count of Tibias and bestow Zanzan to him."

"Now tell us about this hidden passageway!" Perseus repeated again, unable to wait any longer.

And given that he had teased them so much up until now, Mohshin did not keep them waiting any longer and revealed,

"My lords, as you might know, Zanzan is surrounded by three great walls, the north, east, and south. And they are indeed formidable."

"But the western side is actually open! It is only protected by the Cisran hills."

"The original rulers of the city, the Muazz family thought that no enemy would be able to scale those peaks and attack the city."

"And given it is difficult to build walls over hills, they simply did not."

"But the current lord has built quite good roads there to help with the mining there."

"So now, it is actually possible to attack from there!"

"So, if Your Grace wants, you can take your army over the hills and flank the enemy."

"They will never see it coming!"

Chapter 569 Perseus's Chance (Part-2)

Mohshin's information naturally had a profound impact on both the man.

Perseus felt his eyes bulge like he likely never had, while Leosydas grabbed his chair so hard that he felt a slight pain all the way to his wound.

Of course, they had seen noticed the western parts of the city were not protected by the walls.

But they had also noticed the steep hills and the rough ground, which was likely why the Muazz family felt they did not need to.

Any army, especially one which employed the phalanx would be unable to maintain formation when crossing it, and once the enemy attacked during that moment, the result would be similar to when Alexander defeated Amenheraft.

And Perseus was aware of this and thus did not immediately jump to hug Mohshin when the man gave the information.

Instead, he decided to probe, asking,

"Sneaking such an army over there will inevitably cause a lot of noise. How will you stop the enemy from detecting us?"

With Leosydas joined as well, saying, "That's right. We noticed the enemy has a watchtower overlooking that side. If the enemy sees it will be all over!"

"Watchtower?" At the mention of this, Mohshin seemed confused.

He could not remember any watchtower being there and so looked at the two in askance.

"You know the building we can see from here...up on the hill...the watchtower!" So Perseus tried to clarify, even pointing his finger to the side from where the structure he was describing could be seen.

And it was only then it became clear to the old slave what Perseus was talking about.

"Oh that! Haha, that is no watchtower! That is the lord's mansion, Your Grace!" Mohshin said with a chuckle, and then, suddenly thinking quickly on his feet, the shrewd man temptingly suggested, "Your Highness, if you can move your army fast enough, you might even be able to reach that mansion without alerting the enemy. And then capture all the people inside. Imagine!"

Even Mohshin got excited thinking about it, as he then added,

"Though the lord himself isn't there, you should know that all his family is there... including his new wife. And let me tell you, she is quite the beauty. I got to see her when she got married last year."

"Not to mention, it is his wife who is temporarily in charge of the city. So if can you capture her, it will be like capturing the city itself!" Mohsin really did not need to tell Perseus that.

But Perseus was glad that he did because every word that flowed out of this man seemed to sound as sweet as honey to him.

Perseus was so excited that his hands had become white in excitement as he gripped his chair too hard, and he even felt he could kiss the man.

"Is it true? Is everything you say really all true?" Perseus felt his breath quicken at the prospect of what it would mean if they were.

"Yes! By the gods as my witness!" Mohshin crossed his arms on his chest in a somber promise.

"....." And this caused Perseus to go silent for a bit, as he then turned to look at Leosydas to try and see what he thought, and for a while, it seemed the two men were talking with each other using their eyes

Then after a bit of somber quietness, it was Leosydas who turned to look at Mohshin and giving a light smile and nod, he decided to end the talks there, saying,

"Thank you for your information Mohshin. We will have our scouts first have a bit of a look around the place you mentioned to confirm everything you said. And then depending on how feasible it is, we will plan accordingly."

"So how many we contact you if we want to?" He casually then asked.

"Ah!" And Mohshin sounded as if he had not thought of that possibility, for the man had thought that this information alone would be enough to convince Tibias.

"What more do you my lords want from me? I have said everything I knew, and even if I lied, you can simply not attack!" He reasoned, unable to think of why they would want to talk to him again.

Given the inherent danger one faced when betraying his side, it was natural to meet with his collaborators as few times as possible.

But Perseus clarified "There are always unforeseen situations occurring in such things. Situations that cannot be planned ahead of and require the guidance of a local specialist," further adding,

"For instance, you said it is now possible to attack because there are roads over the mines now. Well, a guide who could navigate us through there will be surely useful. And this is just one of many unforeseen problems we might face."

Perseus's quick thinking here was able to show off the vast experience he had gained through various campaigns, as he was able to plan for contingencies ahead of time.

But Mohshin felt Perseus was being a worrywart and tried to alleviate such concerns by saying, "My lord, the way from the west is really straightforward. There is only one path and you will really need no guide."

Here Mohshin was simply making stuff up, as he had not been to the mines by himself, but said so anyway because of this,

"You see me being able to slip past the guards and meeting you this time is already taking a huge risk. I might not be so lucky every time." I think you should take a look at

This was indeed true, though it was not as hard getting out of the city as it was getting into it.

But still, it was a significant hurdle no doubt, and the man had only been able to accomplish this by using an unused, in disrepair sewage passage barely able to fit one man located near his home to pop out somewhere outside the walls.

And though he was successful in that endeavor, the experience of moving through that foul-smelling, cold-to-the-bones structure was something he wanted to do ever again.

Hence the reluctance and the made-up promise regarding the mine.

But Perseus was not so easy to swindle, and so bluntly said, "If your master wants to become a count and rule Zanzan, you will need to give us a way to contact you. I will not move my army so easily."

Perseus knew he would be foolish to simply let this valuable fish out of his grasp and vanish into thin air so easily.

Since whoever was behind this slave, was clearly power-hungry enough to betray his city.

And losing contact with such a good pawn would be too regrettable.

Perseus felt that even if the information was not truly genuine, he might still use this rat to gather other unrelated pieces of information, or in the worst case scenario sell his information for a pretty sum to the Zanzan higher-ups.

"That's right," And his friend Leosydas could easily what Perseus might be thinking and decided to back him up, as he additionally reasoned, "Besides if we cannot contact you, how will we know who is your master? And then how can we reward him?"

Leosydas wanted to make wanting to keep in touch with Mohshin a very normal thing.

But Mohshin already had an answer for that specific question, saying, "When my lords attack the city, I and my master will move to the temple of Ramuh. You can find us there!"

It went without saying that Perseus was expected to not attack the temples.

And so it seemed the traitor's plan was to take refuge there and when the soldiers come to meet them, reveal themselves to the world.

Perseus in all honesty had to give props to the plan.

But he still wanted a way to communicate with the man, and so flat out said, "That won't do. There are a million things that could change inside the city, and I would like to be informed of it."

"Because if by any chance my army is caught while we are climbing the hills, it will be disastrous!"

"....." And seeing Perseus be so adamant, Mohshin understood he had no other choice.

But the fact was also he really did not prepare for this

So in a bit of an uncertain tone he asked the two men, "Well if my lord has any spies...you can tell me about them and I can find and meet them at a..." but then he trailed off at the end, sounding pretty weak.

Because he found his initial reasoning had broken down.

Mohshin knew Tibias had to have some spies inside the city.

After all, how could Tibias's mortal enemy have no spies inside them?

But Perseus very quickly and pointedly rejected that idea, "No, we have no spies. Sorry!"

Was Perseus telling the truth when he said this?

Of course not.

There were several spies he knew of operating inside the city.

But he would be quite a foolish king to reveal these contacts to Mohshin whom he had just met.

And given how Mohshin had worded his sentence, it seemed he was too was unwilling to reveal his residence to the spies, and wanted to find them himself.

So for a while, the two seemed to be in a deadlock.

Until Mohshin finally improvised, offering this solution,

"Okay my lords, though it is hard for you to contact me directly, perhaps if you should want to, you could blow three long trumpet calls at breakfast, and three long trumpet calls at dusk."

"And I will come to meet you the very next day!"

Chapter 570 Perseus's Chance (Part-3)

Mohshin's proposal was something that Perseus thought he could work with.

Though convoluted, it was indeed possible to contact the man this way.

And so with a small nod, as Perseus felt there was nothing more to talk about, the old slave was at last allowed to excuse himself.

Though not before he made this request, "My lord, with our cooperation solidified, perhaps you may write a letter detailing our agreement. So that I may show any proof to my master!"

But it was quickly denied by Leosydas even before Perseus could say anything, where he said, "We do not know how you Adhanians work, but over here, the gods are our greatest guarantors. We have already sworn to them, there is no need for any mere scraps of papyrus."

Leosydas said this with great conviction and the forceful nature of his delivery made Perseus too join in, saying, "That's right. For now, let us keep everything verbal. We will call you again to make everything official later."

Though the king was internally curious why Leosydas had done so, as writing things down for future reference was widely practiced in Tibias.

While Mohshin hearing this reassurance, especially where the gods were a witness, and feeling that carrying any letter with the Tibian seal could implicate him within a blink of an eye if caught, decided to return empty.

Hence came the end of the fateful meeting.

And while the man was escorted out of the camp by armed soldiers, Perseus turned to look at Leosydas for his own two cents on the matter that had been discussed just now.

Though after hearing everything, personally Perseus doubted it could be a trap, especially given it was all open and easily verifiable.

But still, deciding to err on the side of caution, wanted to ask for Leosydas's thoughts.

And sensing the gaze and easily guessing what it could mean, Leosydas strangely did not immediately comment on his thoughts on the matter and instead only said, "Let us wait for the scouts to go and see the site. Then we can decide how to proceed."

And deciding to defer to this judgment, Perseus put off whether to trust the dubious man inside the city after judging the value of the information for himself.

pandasnovel.com So instead Perseus asked about Leosydas so easily accepting the unknown man's demands, calling out, "Leosydas, why did you accept everything the man wanted so easily? Making the collaborator a count might still be doable, but handing over Zanzan? That's....." Perseus did not sound as displeased as he was confused.

Because he did not believe Leosydas did not know about the significance of Zanzan, and how handing it over to a foreigner was a no-go, if not for any other fact than the very real risk of it rebelling again soon after.

Nor should it be any new knowledge to him that in almost any type of negotiations, it was practically a golden rule to shoot for the moon and then haggle down to something more reasonable.

So when Leosydas had readily acceded to Mohshin's demand, Perseus had even gone slightly aghast and wondered why he was bending so much to just the initial demand.

"Haha, well I did say we would make him a count and give him Zanzan. But we did not say for how long! Hahaha," Leosydas sounded very pleased with himself as he said this, as evidenced by his wide grin, as he felt he had pulled off a great prank.

And this made Perseus slightly agape.

A count was a hereditary title, meaning the title was lifelong and hereditary by association.

So what was Leosydas talking about a time limit?

Of course, after thinking for a bit Perseus understood what Leosydas talking about.

The man simply had no wish to fulfill his promise, and would find any lame excuse to break his word to the collaborator.

'So that's why you refused to give a written promise!' And with that, the event from a bit earlier too became clearer to Perseus.

As for how Leosydas intended to accomplish this, well that remained to be seen.

Perhaps the traitor would die during the chaos of the city capture, or be offed silently after being taken to a corner, or even actually be allowed to become a count and rule Zanzan for a few days until he is poisoned or even removed from the position for incompetence.

These were only some of the many ways Perseus could think just off the top of his head which Leosydas could use to remove that unknown man.

And as for Perseus, given he had sworn to the gods about this, he was unsure about how to feel about this.

Breaking a promise to the gods or even hoodwinking them using a technicality was never a small offense.

But he did not argue with Leosydas then and there, deciding to cross that bridge when they got there.

Besides this was Leosydas's scheme and however he dealt with it, was his problem. I think you should take a look at

So, as over the years Perseus had built up enough of a trust to know whatever Leosydas did, he did it for the good of the nation and the throne, he decided to leave it to Leosydas's discretion.

And instead got to working organizing his scouts to prospect that route Mohshin had alluded to, surveying the lands there and finding the potential routes ahead.

While on the frontlines, he also decided to decrease the intensity to a low simmer, making the enemy think they had given up and wishing to lull the city's defenses into a false sense of safety and complacency.

While Perseus laid out his net, the man who had set the wheels of fate in motion, Mohshin soon returned to the city via the same passage.

And upon returning to his house, was immediately called to his master's room to relay the recently occurred events.

"So how was it? When will they attack? Is it soon?" As soon as Mohshin entered the room, he was dragged to a side and asked such in a hushed but excited voice, the tone dripping with anticipation.

In fact, he was so eager that the man did not even ask if Tibias had agreed to the condition, so confident was he in his bait.

And Mohshin knowing about the man's impatient nature very succinctly, with a bit of sugarcoating gave the answer, "Yes, Young Master. I have just returned after meeting with the enemy king. And he promised to launch an attack soon."

"He did not give me an exact date, but told me that we just need to wait and be patient! And everything will unfold as planned! Very soon!"

"Good, good!" The young man nodded several times in satisfaction at this, but then his mood mercurially turned sour, and he fiercely grabbed Mohshin to ask,

"But where is the proof? Why didn't you bring any proof?" The man's eyes suddenly seemed to have turned bloodshot in an abrupt mood swing.

'*Groan*', that's why I should have brought it in writing,' And hearing this Mohshin regretted a bit at not having a concrete proof.

But he quickly gave the reasonable excuse of citing the patrolling guards being all around and the fact they had sworn to the gods so as to not requiring a written document.

And though it calmed down the man for a bit, he again pointedly flared,

"Then why didn't you get the date? Then we could have gone to the temple beforehand! Do they not trust us? After all, we have done!"

Mohshin found his master to be crankier and even more on edge than usual,

"No, no, it is nothing like that! It's just that they need some time to plan for the attack. But it will be soon Young Master, it will be soon." Mohshin repeatedly promised to placate the man.

And then quickly fetching a drink to offer to his luxuriously dressed master, said,

"Here Young Master drink this. You have not slept the entire night and are tired. Have this and let me recount everything."

Hearing Mohshin's soothing tone, the man accepted this and sat on a nearby couch while Mohshin offered a shortened, heavily colored, and edited version of the story, one where the king was much more deferential to him and his master, showering them with praise for bringing them this valuable information, and even supposedly made fantastical promises.

All while pouring copious amounts of wine for the man to drink.

And the combination of the sweet wine and the honeyed words worked wonders in improving the young man's mood.

"Great! Great! Once this city is taken, we will live like kings!" The drunk man at last began to daydream, as his face turned a touch red, and then turning to Mohshin even promised,

"And I guess also my days of ordering you around are coming to an end. Hahaha, soon you will be a freeman. Free to do whatever you want, hahaha!"

By this point, the man was swinging his head and his eyes were drooping.

"This lowly slave will be always yours to command, Young master. Mohshin is forever your slave.," While Mohshin attempted to bootlick the man like this, regardless of whether the other party could actually hear it.

Though in reality, his heart blazed at the thought.

It was the sole reason why he had decided to partake in this dangerous endeavor in the first place.

The young man would get the city and he would be a freeman.

As for how well that deal would go, time would tell.