

Herald 591

Chapter 591 Juminus's Struggles (Part-2)

It was natural for the ends of escape tunnels to usually lead to ports, rivers, or forests, places from where one could easily hitch a ride such as on a ship or a boat, or hide from pursuing enemies.

And in the case of this tunnel, it was the former, likely designed with the intention of escaping the city by a secret ship or skiff placed nearby the exit.

And as Cambyses made her way outside, she soaked her body in feeling the fresh, cold winter air run through her lungs instead of the stale wind back there, rejoiced in seeing the lit-up sky as dawn approached instead of the pitch darkness save of the dim glow of the torches, and stretched her body in comfort to shake off that claustrophobic feeling of that narrow tunnel.

Even for Cambyses, who could be said on the smaller size, the tunnel had felt quite cramped, never mind how the bulky soldiers in full suits of armor felt.

Perhaps that was why the first few soldiers had run towards the light at first glance.

'Seriously! If you are gonna make something like that, make it a bit bigger. If it had been Muazz who was escaping, he might not have even been able to use it,' Thus Cambyses thought to herself recalling the size of the rotund man and comparing his circumference with that of the small tunnel.

Though the reason they had made the tunnel so narrow was due to its long length, as the Muazz family had insisted that it be made very well without any water leaks, which would become harder and harder to do the bigger the tunnel became.

But whatever the reasons were for making the tunnel like it, all in all, Cambyses was very pleased with how everything had turned, for though she had not shown it, deep inside she was always afraid some unexpected problem might occur along the way.

'Maybe the tunnel will be waterlogged.'

'Maybe part of the tunnel has collapsed, blocking the way.'

'Maybe the entrance will be blocked.'

'Maybe we will get lost or stuck.'

Like Harun, Cambyses too had these fears as they escaped, but knowing they could not go back through the corridor of fire, she tucked them deep, deep below her stoic facade, and putting on a brave front fearlessly charged forward, rolling the die of fate.

And fortunately, that gamble paid off, as Cambyses could see they had emerged unscathed and completely undetected out of a small entrance designed to look like an inconspicuous cave around a remote part of the southern part of the city situated along a beach, though Cambyses would not say exactly which beach it was.

But that loss of direction was of little concern given who they were and the kind of entourage they had.

Just asking anyone in the streets would let them know where the lord's house was.

"My lady, we are out! Hahaha!"

Basking in the dawn's light, Harun was the first to congratulate Cambyses on leading them out, with the man then letting out a burst of boisterous laughter, feeling more blessed than he had ever felt.

'It was a close one!' The man sighed a breath of relief at his close brush with death.

Though it had to be noted that this was not the first time the man had faced death, as his previous occupation of being a mine supervisor had made him face the grim reaper multiple times, appearing before him in the shapes of landslides, with even one managing to catch him and burying him alive.

Only a miraculous rescue had saved him that day.

But those were during the days when he was a lowly civilian, whereas now he was a full-fledged noble.

Harun had certainly grown to appreciate his life a lot more now, and this event made him all the more aware of the preciousness of it.

While the other two were much more stoic.

With the first thing Menicus even saying, "My lady, do you think it was wise to set the manor on fire?"

"What will you tell Lord Alxx when he gets back? Especially if Lord Menes manages to take it back quickly?"

"Given how well we lit it, there is no way we can put that fire out. It will need to put itself out....after burning everything around it."

It seemed the old man was still salty with the decision, feeling Cambyeses had been too reckless.

"Hopefully the fire will not spread out," And Grahtos in a low voice muttered this in support, though his quiet octave resembled the strength of his explicit support for Menicus.

He still did not dare oppose Cambyeses openly.

To this Cambyeses only curved her thin lips in a taunt and after sending a sneer of derision toward Menicus said, "You are still holding on to hope that Menes can rescue the manor? Heh! Are you even sure he is alive?"

Clearly, Cambyeses had lost confidence in Menes hence the remarks and the dangerous route she had sent him on.

Cambyeses was not done yet though, as after saying this, she then posed,

"Heh! If you are so confident then why didn't you stay behind and prove it with your life? Why run?"

And this made Menicus blush a bit, as him accompanying them tacitly showed his level of faith towards Menes.

Though he liked to believe the manor could be saved, he was not willing to stake his life on it.

And seeing this Cambyses finally breezily waved her hands, and finished by saying,

"Whatever happens to the manor, I will personally talk to Alex about it. You don't have to care."

And with this done, she turned to the soldiers and decisively ordered, "Now, let's stop wasting time and go to the western district. I have a city to protect!"

At this moment Cambyses looked more of a general than Menes.

As this group was making their way back towards the defenders gathered on the foot of the hill, on the opposing side, standing outside the door to the manor was the king of Tibias- Perseus.

And currently, he was in a pretty pleased mood.

For he saw the attacks against the manor were proceeding pretty swimmingly.

There was still a little resistance at the door, but it was of no big concern for he could see it was being worn down pretty quickly.

The wooden door had already been shattered, and his soldiers were now engaged in a melee with the scant defenders holding the door.

Sharp spear thrusts going toward the Zanzan defenders could be seen and the sound of heavy shields bashing against them could be heard, as Perseus's men tried to dislodge them from their position

And though the defenders tried their best to hold on, given their astounding numerical inferiority, it was hardly a contest, and a breach through there was imminent.

And as if there was a further signal of better things to come, he also saw that his men had finally managed to get the portable ladders they had bought with them set against the walls leading the windows on the second and even third floor, and they had already commenced the climb, smashing them open with axes or hammers before entering the manor through there with almost no opposition.

This oversight had of course happened because Juminus did not get enough time to close off all pathways leading into the manor.

So not only Juminus was being attacked from the front, where he was barely able to hold on, but a part of the enemy was also pouring in from another side, making his defense effectively futile.

"Men upstairs! There are enemies coming from upstairs!"

And this devastating news was delivered by one of the many women Juminus had sent throughout the manor in search of Cambyses, to which Juminus felt like being kicked in the guts.

But Juminus still reacted quickly, turning to his assistant, and ordering,

"Quick! You go hold of the staircases! Form a choke point with the men! Before the enemy can flood downstairs and destroy us in a pincher attack!"

Hence, Juminus hence was forced to deploy his reserve forces to go and guard the mouth of the various stairs and winding corridors instead of using them to reinforce the forces holding doors.

And at this point, Juminus knew the battle, if one could call it that was effectively lost.

Till now, in his heart he had held a bit of hope to be able to defend the manor for a while given they had around a few hundred strong men and the building had been designed with many choke points all

around the houses, negating the enemy's superior numbers and helping them in exactly the situation they were in.

But once he heard the windows were breached, being a resident here he knew very well just how many windows the manor had, and he also knew almost all of them were undefended.

So even a fool could see that it was only a matter of time before they were drowned in a flood of thousand men from all sides.

There was no way to win.

So by this stage, Juminus only hoped to hold the intruders off for as long as possible and kill as many of them as possible.

Chapter 592 Perseus In The Manor (Part-1)

"Haaah! Charge!"

It was with a huge euphoric roar and a jubilant shout that Juminus suddenly saw the dam of men burst open along the back door, the wall of armored flesh no longer able to withstand the tide of spears and shield bashes crashing against it.

The defenders there, under the constant poking and prodding of the phalangites' sharp spears and unable to effectively attack back, were finally forced back from the mouth of the door, opening up a gap for the Tibians to exploit, and letting the red soldiers of death flood into the manor, thus finally destroying the last of the manor's defenses.

Following this triumphant entry, the Tibians then immediately began to initiate a massacre, surrounding and killing anyone who resisted and dying the floor red.

As for Juminus, contrary to many of the men running in the opposite direction, towards the front door in hopes of escaping through there,

Clang

He fearlessly brought out his sword and began to charge toward the enemy, ready to kill as many as possible before he himself was inevitably killed.

The acting guard captain had no intention of surrendering and being taken a prisoner, and intended to die a martyr.

Slash!

And with his fearless charge, he even managed to cleanly decapitate a Tibian soldier from the back as he was out of his formation, the young man's severed head sporting an incredulous expression like he was yet to realize what had happened.

But that was where Juminus's glorious killing spree ended, a pitifully ephemeral spree.

Because instantly alarmed by their comrade's demise, a few of his nearby brothers immediately reacted, sending merciless spear thrusts from all directions toward this sudden attacker.

And their numbers were so numerous and their attacks so multi-vectored that Juminus had no time to deflect even a single strike.

And so the man could only instinctively sway his body to try and place the attacks on parts of the body least important to him as a way to mitigate the damage, but even then ended up suffering a stab wound to his right arm, a puncture of his left shoulder, a deep hole on his right thigh and two deep penetration into the stomach.

"*Urgh*" Juminus could only let out a groan of regret as he felt the stinging pain at being hit, his mouth coughing up thick spittles of blood because of his injuries, while the momentum of the thrusts threw him off his balance and made him stagger.

But even with these grave injuries Juminus still stood, his legs violently wobbling and shaking as they tried to regain their posture and then counterattack, while the attackers retrieved their bloodied tips from his body and got ready to finish the job with a second jab.

'So this is it huh!' And seeing his fate written off the walls, Juminus could only let out a mirthless smile.

There was no way he could live the next strike, but even as the approach of the grim reaper was imminent, the man did not feel any fear.

Instead, the emotion he felt most strongly was perhaps regret.

Yes, regret!

But not regret at doing being able to win the battle or even properly defend the manor, but regret that he had not been able to find his mistress yet.

He envisioned her being in a secluded part of the manor, hiding, all alone and afraid, and then came the scenes of what the Tibians would do to her after they found her.

That was the thing that scared him the most,

In his mind, Juminus truly regretted not being able to save her.

'Ahhhh, but maybe dying might not be so bad. Perhaps I can ask for her forgiveness now,' But following this a sense of relief seemed to also wash over him, feeling the joy of the burden of heavy responsibility leave him, as his mind at one point substituted Cambyses for that little girl.

Bang!

But that impending multiple strikes of doom never came.

Because just as the second thrusts were to be made, from the back, another soldier suddenly struck Juminus on the head with his spear, the iron tip crashing right against the steel helmet and the chainmail underneath with the force of a truck, creating a loud, clanking sound, and almost spitting his head in two.

And though the helmet, made of superior material managed to withstand this without snapping like a bronze helmet would have done, thus preventing Juminus's head from being popped open, it could not absorb the sheer momentum of the hit, thus making him dazed and start seeing stars all around, as several of his teeth got knocked out and even made him almost bite his tongue off.

Thud!

But even though the strike did not outright kill Juminus, the force of the impact, compounded with the other injuries on his body was enough to render him incapacitated, as he hit the stone floor with a dull, thud, even breaking his nose during the fall.

And immediately after a pool of blood began to surround his motionless body, as he bled copiously from his wound, his mouth, nose, and even with thin trickles from his head, turning the floor nearby a rusty red.

'If is not dead yet, he will very soon be,' Seeing this all the soldiers commented.

And then turning to give a nod of thanks to the man who had helped from behind, the soldiers left in search of other prey, for there was an abundance of it.

But what they didn't know was that though Juminus was down he was not out, for the man's injuries were nearly not as grievous as they looked at first sight.

The chainmail had worked superbly to mitigate a lot of the damage, plus the weapon used to hurt him, the spare was never a good killing instrument, but a great wounding weapon, designed to create holes and only large wounds.

Thus it still remained to be seen if the man could still come out of his alive.

And while Juminus lay unconscious on the floor for the time being, one of many, many corpses or half corpses dotted across, the Tibians brushed past them and proceeded to gradually take full control of the entire premises.

With one side breached, it only took some time for the soldiers holding the staircases and other choke points to be flanked and then killed or captured.

While to add to the cheer on top of bad news, by this time, Leosydas had at last also managed to break through the front door on his own, thus linking his forces with his king.

And with this done, the resistance of the manor was effectively over for all men were killed or captured, while the women and children faced a fate much worse.

And for them, in a sort of macabre twist of fate, whereas before the manor offered the promise of safety and security, and a place they literally killed to get inside, now suddenly that same manor turned into a caged hell with no escape.

For though most of the soldiers attacking the manor were not as crazed and furious as the ones outside, who had already descended into levels of depravity rarely seen in the civilized world, and even started engaging in necrophilia or worse right in the open, but even then, these were still enemy soldiers conquering them after all.

And at this point in time, it had become somewhat customary to engage in such practices.

With the higher-ups turning a blind eye to it all and tacitly approving it, as they knew many men joined the army mostly for the allure of booty and women.

So forbidding this practice could cause desertion en masse or even foment a rebellion.

And besides, most of the higher-ups became higher-ups doing these things, and so in many cases, they even encouraged it as a kind of morale boost, with some of the more extreme even directly taking part in it with their entire unit as a 'bonding experience.'

Hence the insides of the manor quickly turned into a hellish venue, as most of the soldiers started to engage in mounting the unwilling women and children taking refuge there, viciously tearing off their clothes and pouncing on them to taste that soft, succulent flesh.

Some chose to start doing it right away in front of everyone, not caring who saw or stared.

While others, being a bit more bashful, and being inside a manor, chose to take their unfortunate victims to one of the many vacant rooms, many times accompanied by their friend, for there were thousands of men and only a couple of hundred women.

And in there these women were forced to pleasure multiple men at once as they were violated many, many times over in every orifice, with them finding an ever-increasing long line of men still waiting for them after each shot.

In fact there were so violently preyed upon that most did not even have the time to let out loud cries as their mouths were always occupied, hence only capable of letting out pained, muffled whimpers.

Thus soon, as if hurt by seeing what was happening inside, the whole manor began to sound like it was breaking down, producing a heart-wrenching sensation for anyone with a heart.

And as Perseus at last entered the manor, his heart filled with euphoric elation, it was also somewhat damped by the surrounding sound but chose to ignore it.

It was the cost of war and he was willing to pay it gladly

Chapter 593 Perseus In The Manor (Part-2)

"My king! Hahaha, it seems you have managed to capture the manor all yourself. Looks like I was never needed, haha," A few whiles after Perseus entered, Leosydas too made his debut, and quickly came to meet up with him in the outer hall room, greeting his liege with a joke and a victorious smile.

And upon placing his eyes on his friend, and already knowing what he had done, Perseus's eyes widened in pleasure as he too replied with a large grin,

"Oh, it's good that you are here! This time we could not have won without you. You really are the hero of Tibias!"

And he meant it when he said so because without Leosydas's attack from the other side, he knew they would still be stuck on the other side even now.

"That's *cough*, *cough*," But just as Leosydas was about to answer, he suddenly started violently coughing, and with it came clumps of blood and gore, as the man bent down subconsciously clutching the areas around his wound.

"Leo! Wha...your wound!" And seeing this Perseus immediately understood what was going on as he rushed to support his friend.

And he was not the only one that came to Leosydas's rescue for everyone in the room did too, with one of the nobles then quickly shouting, "Doctor! Get a doctor. Leosydas's wounds have opened up, get a doctor!"

It seemed that all the movement and strenuous activity in the past few hours had snapped the man's delicate stitches and opened the gaping wound up, even causing a huge amount of blood to flow out of the tight bronze armor.

It seemed the stitches were very well torn.

While Perseus, seeing his friend in this position, was in no position to consider anything else, and quickly ordered him to be moved to a nearby bed in any of the nearby rooms, with him personally accompanying him.

But before he left the scene, he left with these series of instructions to his adjutant,

"Clean the manor up! Gather all the prisoners and move them to the dungeons. Throw the dead bodies outside!"

"Then take the kitchens and start preparing a hot meal. The troops are exhausted."

"And after that get back control of the army and start to organize them."

"We will launch an attack and take the city before midday."

Perseus vomited this quick list of incongruent but connected activities from the top of his head, going on to show that no matter how busy he was, the king was still a competent leader, able to recognize what was needed from him with just a thought.

"Yes, my lord," And immediately came the answer with an accompanying salute.

"Oh!" But before the man could go off to carry out these tasks, suddenly Perseus's low hum reached him as if the king remembered something, and so he turned around to hear the man dressed in luxurious armor say,

"But before all that, secure the treasury. And then bring to me all those related to Alexander, wherever they are."

"*Nod*" The adjutant silently bowed at this, though he really did not want to go door to door looking for his target when all those things were happening.

As a man, he really had no interest in seeing other men naked and busy doing 'that'.

But just as he pictured this, suddenly he stopped, not choosing to immediately leave.

Instead, he fidgeted his eyes a bit, as if he was contemplating whether to say his idea aloud.

But he was still not sure how to say it.

Until finally, knowing time was limited and Perseus was not going to stand around all day waiting for him, he plucked up his courage and asked,

"Umm, Your Majesty....would it be possible...umm perhaps may I take one of the concubines?.....Just for a day or two!"

The man added the second sentence very quickly, already sporting a deep crimson blush on his face as he asked so.

And seeing this Perseus was at first a bit surprised.

While this silence made the young squire feel afraid as he thought he had asked something very improper.

"Oh....Pooofff....Hahaha," But such concerns were blown away by Perseus's boisterous laughter who had only been surprised at the man's reaction as he had asked the question.

pandasnovel.com And as the adjutant raised his eyes at this sound, he was greeted with a toothy grin, as the king added,

"Oh, I remember you are still very young, haha."

"But I never thought you were that inexperienced, haha. Be sure to visit some brothels come we go back, hehe."

Perseus got a good chuckle from this as he never expected anyone would ask permission for something so obvious, while the young adjutant who has joined Perseus as a way to gain experience felt his cheeks burning up in embarrassment. I think you should take a look at

The young man was quite conservative in love, and though he heard of such things before, this was essentially his first time seeing it up close and personal, hence the shame.

And so it took monumental courage for him to ask that 'shameful' request.

While Perseus treated it as if he was asking for some bread, only breezily waving his hand and saying, "Yes, yes, you can have any woman you like. Now, go, go," as he almost shooed him away.

"Any woman!" But the adjutant did not go and only stood there in exclamation.

Because according to the unspoken rules of the Tibian military, in case of a large city's capture, the city lord's main wife and daughter were said to belong to the highest person in command.

And though it was no ironclad law, and many times the soldiers capturing the women had their way before presenting them to their command without facing any consequence, this time it was different, for this time it was the king himself who was in charge of the army.

As such it was expected that Cambyses should be handed over to him unharmed.

But Perseus did not seem to be in the mood for this, thus said to his adjutant, "Yes, yes, I'm not interested. Take any number of women you like. Just be sure to finish what I said," as he gave the man full reign to choose anyway.

"Thank you! Thank you, Your Majesty!" And hearing Perseus was relinquishing his claim of him, this of course got a huge grin from the young man, who excused himself with a salute and then quickly started to search for his destined one.

Though that euphoric glee quickly turned to bitter frustration when even after a solid half an hour he turned empty-handed.

"What do you mean you found no one?" The young man snapped at a captain whom he had tasked with leading the search.

"I'm sorry my lord. But we sent men to every room and even asked the women present here if they related to the lord. But none replied." The captain hung his head a bit low as he answered, adding, "We even asked if they were nobles, *shake*, *shake*."

The man answered with a gesture from his head.

He too was feeling a bit dejected as being unable to accomplish the task even when he was given 4 phalanx units, which were more than a thousand men.

"....." While the adjutant hearing this turned silent.

According to the captain, his men should have visited every room with 'occupants' in them, and it should not have been hard to determine who was a noble and who was a peasant even at first glance.

Noble ladies simply had fairer skin, smelled better, and even generally more beautiful.

Even if the woman lied and kept quiet, the soldiers enjoying her should have ratted her out.

And it should not even have come to it.

Because generally, noble women would either commit suicide in such cases or come forth on their own volition to prevent getting gang-raped by the common soldiery.

Because even if their fate was to be violated, most preferred to be taken by one or two military leaders rather than drown in the filth of the common mass.

Because can you imagine what the crutches of those soldiers who had walked and fought for so long might be like?

Or when it was the last time they took a bath?

The filthiness and hygiene around there need not be said.

And it was even not uncommon for many women to retch and vomit just from the smell coming from there.

Hence all this made it all the more baffling that Cambyses had not been caught yet

"Could they have escaped?" So the only real possibility lay there, as the adjutant pronounced with deep bitterness to his voice, while the captain stayed silent, not having anything to add.

But this silence inadvertently proved to be a tactile admission, as the adjutant then silently cursed to himself, 'Dammit!'

He had found Cambyses quite attractive upon first seeing her on that wall, and when the manor had been taken, very much wished to take her, a desire which had been further fueled up until now by all the explicit scenery all around him.

But now that bird had escaped, possibly through a secret passage, while he was left with a rock-hard boner.

No man liked being blue-balled.

But that frustration did not last long.

For it was soon filled with fear, as suddenly one of the soldiers was seen sprinting towards him full speed, his face filled with terror, and bringing his legs to a screeching halt at the last second he shouted towards the adjutant, "Fire! The manor is on fire!"

Chapter 594 Perseus in the Manor (Part-3)

In the time that Perseus's adjutant had started to look for Cambyses, he did not forget to carry out his king's other orders too.

So with his command, parts of the army all began to carry out each of the tasks.

One of the groups got to clearing the dead bodies, starting with the most visible ones laying on the first floor.

These corpses were all carried or dragged by their feet out of the manor and thrown into a nearby heap, soon to be buried or cremated, though not before the Tiibans would strip them of everything valuable—their armor, clothes, shoes, jewelry, and even things like gold teeth.

And it was among these piles of dead bodies where lay JU as well, still breathing, still unconscious but fortunately no longer bleeding so profusely.

And even more fortuitously he was placed around the top so he did not get crushed in the heap and in such a way that he could still breathe.

While another group got to work taking count of the prisoners captured, though a full number would take a while given many of the captured were still busy upstairs servicing the men.

So for now they only took stock of the men, among which were obviously the soldiers who surrendered, the servants and slaves from the manor, and also some staff from the workshop, with the most notable one perhaps being Gajopk, the glass maker with the immaculate mustache, though currently his bushy hair seemed to have lost a lot of its luster.

Everyone there, amounting to a roundabout of two hundred (200) was soon gathered in small groups, and after a part of them, including the glassmaker was sent to the dungeons, the people in charge were informed there was no more space there, and so the remaining were moved to outside the manor, around the front courtyard.

A point of note here would be none of these prisoners were shackled or bound like actual prisoners.

Instead, they were left like prisoners of war (POWs) seen in documentaries, unarmed and kept within a boundary, within which they were free to move around, but always kept an eye on with some armed guards on patrols to prevent escape.

And this was a similar case in the dungeons, where the iron gates were not locked, mostly because the Tibians had not found the keys yet, and so the Zanzan men simply stayed inside a jail without a lock.

But there also didn't need to be.

Because the real locks were right in front of them, twenty thousand of them, in the form of Tibian soldiers.

So every one of the captured men sat still like a harmless puppy, not daring to cause any trouble.

Then there was the group who went around the manor in search of 'treasure', or more specifically looking for the treasury.

And after a bit of searching, and through a few narrow, inconspicuous corridors, they managed to find it.

"Hahaha, this must be it!" Standing in front of a large, very heavy-looking wooden door the small group of men exclaimed, certain that it was this kind of vault door fit to safeguard the treasures of a lord.

And once they found it, without further ado, these men quickly got to working, using the massive hammers they wielded to smash against the locks, which though sturdy, were eventually forced to concede, cracking open after one too many hits, to at last reveal all the contents hidden beyond it.

"Th...this is....oh my god I must be seeing things! How is there so much!"

And as the men there entered the sanctuary with their torches, the dim glow of the fire bouncing back from all the shiny gold and silver coins laid strewn about, they were astounded to find just how much wealth there was, so much so that momentarily they even suspected their own eyes thinking the glare from all the gold had caused them to start hallucinating.

And the reason for this complete incredulity was that in front of them laid literally heaps of gold and silver coins, not just one but multiples hills, all rising into the sky like towers made of literal gold, glittering under the light like stars from the sky.

Among them too were many precious gems such as rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, sprinkled all around the room, both as only the stones themselves, and also embedded in various gold jewelry, ornaments, and vessels.

While lastly the entire room was furnished by a few paintings here and there, most featuring a particularly fat man and supposedly his kins, along with a few nude paintings of beautiful women, all giving the treasury almost a more 'refined' touch, as if their presence there worked to offset the gaudiness of all the gold and silver in display.

At least that was the impression soldiers who opened it got as they swung their torches around in order to get a better view of the room and try and confirm there really was as much gold and treasure as they thought there was.

And once they were convinced of the reality of it all, the men felt faint for a second time, though this time it was out of sheer joy.

"Rich! Rich! We are rich! Who would have thought a single city would have this much wealth! We are gonna be so rich!"

One of the men could not help but cry out loudly in ecstasy, just barely stopping himself from breaking into a dance.

Though this reaction was of little surprise given the men had never seen even a hundredth of this much wealth gather all in one place.

He could have been hardly at fault even if he had started singing.

In fact even if Perseus was here, perhaps he too would have lost his composure. as he himself had never seen so much gold piled up like that.

"Ho..how much do you think there is?" At last one of the other men asked this all-important question, though he actually sounded a bit fearful when he posed it, seemingly afraid the answer might be bad for his heart.

"....." And at first, he got a wall of silence, as none of the others had the slightest idea either.

The treasury seemed as immense as the vast ocean to many.

"Tons...it has to be tons! Yes, tons!" At last one of the men blurted out, his octave becoming stronger with each sentence, as he became surer and surer.

'Tons?'

And at first, his answer confused the others because the units did not match.

Until finally they caught it.

The man answering had given up on calculating the amount of money there and resorted to guessing the weight of gold there.

It was an absurd thought of these regular men, but they were also facing an absurd amount of money.

200 to 250 million ropals was that much money.

And weighed an absurd 5 tons.

Which for context was about 40% of the annual gold produced in the whole of Adhania, totaling about 12 tons!

So the men's incredulity was of little wonder.

"*Clang*, *clang*, we should inform His Majesty as soon as possible."

"Yes, *clang*! I'm sure he will be very happy when he knows."

"And *clang* will likely reward us very handsomely,"

It was finally a while later that the men had gotten their bearing back, and decided to do what was expected of them.

But not before each swindled a few extra coins for themselves.

And this was the origin of the *clanging* sound, as the men grabbed fistfuls of ropals and tried to stuff them in their pocket or in anywhere else that would fit really, as long as it did not become too conspicuous.

Because though this practice was openly known, as it was only natural the soldiers would take a nibble at the treasure they found, but it was never explicitly condoned.

For even if the amount of wealth taken was minuscule when relative to the gigantic pile, even a rounding error to many, but still, according to the laws of Tibias, even a single gold dust taken during a campaign belonged to the king and the king alone, and it was up to him to distribute it as he saw fit.

And this was especially true this time given Perseus was personally in charge.

So what the soldiers were going was stealing from royalty, the punishment for which was death by quartering, i.e.- by having one's limbs tied to four different horse or ox carts which were then pulled in all different directions, thus being gruesomely dismembered.

But these men did not seem too bothered by that threat, only making sure that they did not overdo it.

And so, once these men had filled their pockets with as many coins as they could possibly carry, they finally decided to move on.

"Wait! Do you smell that?"

But just as they were about to, suddenly the distinct smell of smoke, began to hit some of the men.

"*Sniff*, *Sniff*, Yea...what is that?" And with one man pointing it out, the others too began to notice.

"Come on let's go. It's coming from there. Smells like smoke," So the group diverted their course and started to follow their nose.

And then they saw it!

An entire lower wing was completely engulfed in flames, the heat coming off searing anyone even trying to get close, while the dense choking smoke turned that part almost pitch dark.

The men instantly understood this was no small fire, but a raging inferno.

Chapter 595 Perseus in the Manor (Part-4)

It was not only the treasury group that had detected the fire.

Others had too, most notably the groups tasked with preparing the meal.

This group of 'culinary experts' had raided the kitchen looking for supplies to start cooking and was at first ecstatic to find the place stacked to the brim with all kinds of food, grains, meats, fishes, vegetables, fruits, and wines of every kind.

All fresh and of the highest quality available.

This stacked pantry was to be expected given the kind of people that lived here and the guests that it entertained, but nevertheless, it made the men who had been on the same dull diet for so long to cheer in elation.

"Haha, brothers we are gonna feast tonight." They cried.

But as soon as one said that, suddenly one of the walls on the far side of the kitchen abruptly collapsed, and long lashes of flames began to snake out of it, spreading its influence to the rest of the structure, setting the rest of it on fire and turning the wood into charcoal.

"What!" And hearing the alarming sound and seeing the intensity of the flames, the men were shocked.

This was not something any of them remotely expected.

Thus they instantly stopped whatever they were asked to do and bolted upstairs, rushing to inform the higher-ups of the situation.

And this was how Perseus's adjutant got news from multiple sources about the raging inferno burning right underneath them.

Which for a time made the man even feel like he was in a burning wok, about to be fried to a crisp.

"Get the men to put it out now! Go!" He thus gave the order and then rushed to inform Perseus.

Who once heard the news, quickly approved the order.

Neither man had seen the fire personally, but the reports they got were vivid enough to grant them his urgency.

And as time went on, they quickly began to get solid evidence that it was very real, and perhaps even bigger than expected as soon they began to somewhat smell the fire, which had started to permeate through the first floor.

Furthermore, they noticed the entire floor begin to somewhat darken, as the charry smoke particles filled the air, giving it an ashy color when placed against the sun.

'The fire is huge! Is it even possible to douche it before it spreads?'

And as these signs became apparent, Perseus, began to fear the scale of the inferno, and how far it could have already gone.

And such fears were shared by this adjutant too, who pondered to himself, 'Perhaps even with all the men fighting it, it will not be enough to save the manor,'

"Your Majesty, perhaps we should order an evacuation," Hence he suggested.

But Perseus rejected this.

"No! There is no need, it is only a small fire." He reassured out of nowhere, and then added, "We cannot abandon it so quickly after spilling so much blood. The soldiers will not like it."

These were all good reasons, but the real why Perseus did not approve the evacuation was for one real reason, and one real reason only- Leosydas.

The doctors were still restricting his wound, and to stop that and then move was not something Perseus was willing to do.

Hence the decision to stay was made.

And thus he only urged his adjutant to commit as many men as possible men to the firefighting effort, urging him, "Theony, you must put that fire out as soon as possible. Use as many men as you want. If water does not work, use sand!"

The fact that Perseus had addressed the man by name went to show how important this was to the king.

And so upon receiving the order. thousands of men were deployed to stop this infernal attack.

But given the time it had to grow and flourish undetected, the fire had truly and well-caught hold of the manor in its fiery grips and seemed to be determined to take the building and everyone unlucky to be still inside it to hell.

Hence given the immense size of their adversary, and how the moment they extinguished a part of the flames, another lick instantly grew to replace it, the Tibans felt they were almost fighting the mythical nine-headed hydra.

No matter how many pales of water they threw, from no matter how many directions, the flames still kept on advancing, surely and steadily.

Of course, it was not like the Tibians were being hyper-efficient with their tactics as well.

These were still peasants turned soldiers, not a trained unit experienced in fighting fires.

So, first of all, it took them quite a while for the man to organize themselves, which let the fire grow even more, enlarging itself exponentially with each passing second as feeding on one piece of wood gave it access to two more, and gulping down on the two let it have four more.

Secondly, there was a shortage of water in the manor, which was a given it was the ancient times without any modern utilities.

So no opening the tap to refill one's buckets.

And speaking of buckets, the Tibians much of their confusion found many of the wells were missing their buckets, not knowing those had been repurposed to carry arrows.

So even getting water from the wells proved challenging, and more importantly, slow, as all the wells were situated outside the manor.

And lastly, there was the challenge of actually getting to the fire to fight it.

And this proved perhaps the most difficult ordeal given the structure of the manor, which, with its long, narrow corridors acts as excellent smoke storage rooms, thus unwittingly creating a black protective shield of miasma around it.

Most men even trying to remotely approach it found themselves coughing uncontrollably, their eyes tearing up, and their lungs burning.

Hence, despite having more than ten thousand potential firefighters, Theony found himself losing the battle.

And as time went on, the smell got worse and worse, and the smoke even more prominent, so much so that, unable to bear it any longer, many men began to evacuate the building on their own.

"Lord Theony, it's no use! That part is completely overrun. The flames have taken the first floor and are rising to the second floor." And soon this report came to him from the same captain he had sent to look for Cambyses.

"....." Proceeding that the captain then shot Perseus a meaningful look.

A look that the adjutant clearly understood.

It meant to warn him that since the fire had spread this far, it was only a matter of time before it made its way here.

And there was little they could do to stop it.

'Fuck! How could such a fire been lit?' Theony cursed, with many possibilities crossing his mind, from an accidentally spilled lamp oil catching fire to intentional malicious sabotage to even the work of the gods or demons.

"Get the men out!" Then at last the man gave the order without Perseus's permission, choosing to evacuate the premises, as he then rushed to inform Perseus of the deteriorating situation.

"Oh! And tell whatever idiots left upstairs too!" But just before that he shot this reminder too.

Because it was possible that many of the men were still oblivious to everything, still swept up in their revelry, especially if they were upstairs where the smell of smoke was yet to become too noticeable.

"You imbecile!"

And While the captain followed Theony's order, him unable to accomplish Perseus's got him a loud scolding from the man himself.

Leosydas was in no position to be moved, and desperately needed bed rest, and so the change in events made Perseus furious.

To which Theony could only hang his head low.

But even to Perseus locked in his room it was becoming clear how dire things had become, as by now the entire first floor reeked to smoke, and so after a short outburst, he approved the decision, and soon people began to leave the building like ants on fire.

Most used the many open doors, some climbed out of the windows using the ladders still in place and other desperadoes simply jumped out from the second or third floor, and fell to the soft ground, expertly rolling around to dissipate the impact and avoiding any injuries.

The evacuation was occurring smoothly and the Tibians even remembered to bring their prisoners with them, though not because they particularly cared for them, but because to them, they currently walking piles of money.

Each of them could go anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 ropals depending on the buyer and the condition of the slaves, and so the soldiers would be foolish not to care for something that was worth one to two years of their salary.

" *Trumpet*! Attack! Enemy attack!"

"*Trumpet*! *Trumpet*!"

But just then, in their most vulnerable time of need, came the dreadful trumpet call signaling the impending attack from the enemy!

Menes had launched his counterattack!

The general had found it surprisingly easy to escape the manor as Leosydas's men were nowhere close to attacking the front of the manor then, once he reconnected with his army, and was informed of the fire by Cambyses, he patiently waited to see the smoke rising from the hill before deciding to launch the attack at this time.

And like he had predicted, this caught the Tibians completely off guard, both because of the distraction, and because the morning mist hid their approach till the last minute.

Chapter 596 Attack Up The Hill (Part-1)

Cambyses and her group quickly sped through the road leading to her manor, and on her way, he found the city in an uproar, with many of the streets still filled with confused civilians lingering around in hapless fear while the city guards tried to get them to return to their homes in an effort to maintain order.

It seemed there was a general sense of panic in the air, and words such as these began to filter into Cambyses's ears.

"War! War! War! It's been nothing but war for the past four years."

"When Lord Alxx took over the city, he said we would have peace. What peace!"

"That's right! I'm sick of it all,"

"Fuck this once a meal! I'm so hungry!"

It seemed most of the people were teetering on severe war exhaustion, and if Perseus kept up the siege for long, the people might break before the walls did.

'I will need to ask Her Twin Highnesses to give better sermons. And have Bartholomew crack down harder on dissidents.'

Hearing this Cambyes hence decided as she rushed past them, feeling the eyes of bystanders turning to look curiously at her, before instantly gazing away when noticing the armed escort.

This was the instinctual response of commoners when spotting a noble, to try and be as inconspicuous as possible, so as to not bring any potential harm to them.

While Cambyes had no time to particularly care about any of this.

Instead, as Cambyes quickly made her way on foot, she suddenly spotted a familiar face among the patrolling guards, once a fellow member of her mercenary group, and now the leader of hundred city guards, or as they were formally called- Policemen.

And given his relatively high status, Cambyes eagerly asked about the state of the city.

"Peterio! How is the situation in the city?"

"Ahh! Chief Commissioner!" Hearing Cambyes's familiar voice and seeing her in the flesh, the man instantly produced a large grin while addressing Cambyes by her title, as he ran over to salute her once he got close enough.

"We are so glad to see you are okay. All of us were getting worried. Especially supervisor Bartholomew!" The tall, lean man with a surprisingly large beard then greeted.

"I'm fine." Cambyes curtly replied, and then inquired, "Where is Batholomew? At the station? Is he okay?"

"Yes! The supervisor is fine. He is at the headquarters trying his best to maintain order in the city." The man promptly replied, before shaking his head a bit wryly, and reminiscing,

"*Sigh*, it was a mess at first. People running all around. Crying, running, screaming."

"No one knew what was going on. Many thought the enemy had already broken through. And so everyone tried to run for the temples."

"Because of it, in the darkness, there were even reports of several small stampedes and trampling. I heard quite a few died," the man's voice turned a bit regretful as he said so, adding,

"While at the same the temples were soon overflowing."

"And it was only after we got there and started throwing people out the situation got better."

The man very organically gave Cambyes the past report of the city, before turning a bit cheerful and adding with a light smile,

"But things have gotten a lot better now."

"Supervisor Bartholomew was one of the first to come to the police station and quickly displaced units of all important points along the city, as the temples, the markets, and the slums, calming the people there and bringing order."

"And now that morning has come, and there is no sign of the enemy breaking through, much of the panic has settled."

"People's fear of losing the city has slowly subsided, and they are becoming calmer."

"Maintaining order has become a lot easier."

Peterio gave a sunny smile as he said so, though, the tiredness in his voice would not be concealed.

Clearly the last few hours had been very draining for everyone in the city guards.

"That's good. Give Bartholomew my thanks," Cambyes was honestly very relieved to hear the report.

This subordinate and friend of his had managed to perform his tasks much better than many others she could name.

It seemed the mood in the city was perilous but not yet mutinous.

While Cambyses let off a relieved sigh of relief, Peterio was finally unable to suppress his curiosity plucked up his courage, and took the chance to suddenly ask, "By the way madam commissioner, how is the situation there? We heard the enemy had taken the manor hill!" The man's eyes darted in that direction as he inquired in a shaken voice,

To which Cambyses stoically replied in a neutral tone, "Everything is under control. General Menes is leading the troops to drive out the enemy from Zanzan. There is no need to panic."

And though Cambyses wanted to sound like she reassuring them, she actually sounded like one of those news reporters that would come on TV during an ongoing coup to say everything was alright and everyone should stay home even if the entire city behind her was burning.

"Ahhh...I see." But for the guard captain, whatever the truth was, and how much of Cambyses's claim he bought. the man could only nod and accept. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

"Mmn, you go now," While Cambyses, finished knowing what she wanted to, decided to dismiss him, but before that at last added, "Oh and remember to spread that you met me, and I am alright. The people should be less worried then."

"Yes, ma'am. I'll tell Supervisor Bartholomew right away," The man saluted right away, and with that interaction concluded, Cambyses quickly resumed her paced walk, and soon after spotted the large gathering of men at the foot of the western hill that was meant to go rescue her.

And once she let her presence known, it instantly generated a wave of relief and cheer from gathered troops, and even Menes personally came to greet her at once,

"Cam....My lady! You are safe!" the joy in his voice evident.

The reason for this was of course obvious.

The troops felt their morale soar seeing the acting ruler of the city among them, while for Menes, who had been previously threatened to come and rescue her, seeing her behind the lines safe and sound made him very reassured.

Because the dreadful consequence of Cambyses dying under him was something he was very well aware of.

As for how she was here, that would wait.

"Mmm...it seems you are too," Repling to Menes's greeting, Cambyses very nonchalantly shot back, showing neither pleasure nor displeasure at the man's survival.

It only seemed she only passively accepted the gods' judgment on this one.

Following this exchange, without much further ado, Cambyses proceeded to ask how the preparation for the counterattack was going.

"We are ready to match at your command," And Menes instantly replied, knowing Cambyses would not like any other answer.

"Good! Let's start now!" And Cambyses was very eager, further urging the attack by saying,

"I set the manor on fire before I came here. If there is a chance I would like to retake it before it burns down."

But this revelation first made Menes produce an incredulous look, "You set the manor of fire? Why? How?"

The man, like all the others, had never even considered that.

pāndāsNovel com "....." To this Cambyses only gave a wall of silence, not bothering to explain herself, and simply waited for the general to obey.

"We did so before we escaped via the tunnel. We would have taken you with us, but Lady Cambyses was worried that doing so would delay your organization of the army." And it was here Menicus quickly chimed in with half-truths, attempting to fill the silent void before it became an awkward staring contest.

While inside, the old man then cursed himself, 'Seriously! What is with this girl today!' Cambyses was not at all acting like herself.

"Oh! Right...hahaha, right!" While Menes lightly chuckled, unknown if he really bought it or was actually aware of Cambyses's intended punishment.

But for the time being, this did not matter, for they had more important things to consider.

And regarding that thing, it was Menicus who turned to Cambyses and advised regarding her decision to launch an imminent attack, saying,

"My lady, given the large fire we set off, perhaps it will not be possible to put out by the time we get there."

"Hence, maybe we should be more prudent and prepare a bit more. Attacking uphill is always dangerous."

Menicus was by nature a prudent man, and knowing the enemy would be likely expecting them, he wanted to gather even more men.

It must be said even now, groups of the reserves that had been acted were joining the formation.

But Cambyses only waved her hands and in a bitter, dismissive tone said, "We have waited long enough. We have waited the whole night. We have waited for you old farts to come to our aid for hours!"

"Now attack!"

Cambyses had reasons for her hawkish attitude, and it seemed after losing her manor and all the resulting setbacks, she had lost her patience.

She wanted that hill taken now.

And seeing the young lady's fowl mood, none of the commanders dared to argue.

Chapter 597 Attack Up The Hill (Part-2)

"Okay, okay, let me arrange the frontlines into the proper formations and start climbing up."

Hearing Cambyses's absolute instance, Menes quickly acquiesced to placate the girl, but before fully bending over, he cleverly asked for this concession,

"But since the manor is on fire, may we delay the attack until we can start seeing the smoke? The morning fog is yet to dissipate and climbing up will be far easier with a visual sign."

"And if the Tibians are inside the manor, they will be too distracted managing the fire, so we can even catch them off, guard."

Menes's proposal was of course sound in theory, and there was little to nitpick about it.

Except that, it also basically wanted to throw the manor defenders under the bus as sacrificial lambs.

And this made Cambyses think for a split second, weighing saving all the men, women, and children versus increasing her chances of taking the manor back.

And at the end of this dilemma, the latter cause won.

"Okay." Hence Cambyses showed herself to be at least patient enough to give Menes that.

And with that, it was only around 8 in the morning, with the lazy wintery sun finally deciding to peek out of the downcast sky, sluggishly and slowly sweeping away the morning fog that Menes at last caught sight of a whisper of a thin, black trail slowly rising into the horizon.

The Tibians had inadvertently given him the signal.

And immediately upon seeing that, the charge up the hills began, though this advance was not accompanied by the usual trumpets or drums which was used to let the commanders and soldiers of the army's movement.

Instead, the officers were told to move only after they had visual confirmation of the thin smoke tentacle rising into the sky, all done so that the attack was as silent as possible.

Shoo, *Shoo*, *Shoo*

And the tactic worked as the Tibians only became aware of the enemy after they were hit by the first volley of crossbow bolts, which appeared out of the still dense fog like ghosts.

"Enemy attack! Enemy attack!"

The rear guard that was placed in front of the manor as the first defensive screen finally woke up to the danger they were facing only after their comrades all around started to fall in droves.

Menes, to show off Zananz's strength, had cleverly placed a large number of crossbowmen and instant bow users in the very front echelons, intending to use them to disrupt the enemy's formation as they ascended up the hill.

Hence, the now defender-turned-attackers let out storms of arrows and bolts as they advanced, with each crossbow unit being replaced by the one immediately behind it once they finished firing, intended to always keep the enemy suppressed and not let them have any time to regroup.

And this constant storm caused quite a few casualties, as the Tibians, given the current circumstance regarding the fire and general chaos, were caught totally out of the formation, and even these blind volleys managed to find quite a few high-value targets.

"Rear guard! Forward! Forward! Stop the enemy from taking back the hill!"

And it was only after Menes was only 100 meters from the mouth of the hill that the enemy managed to respond coherently, with the bravest of the bunch picking up their large shields to get in formation even though the arrow barrage.

And unfortunately for Tibias, many of the troops here were Leosydas's personal entourage, and being experienced veterans knew in such an ambush it was wrong to run away from the enemy, but form up and go towards them to prevent their advance.

Hence with some of the most experienced veterans of the past years there to guide the others, they were able to mount an effective defense at the nick of time, with the scattered men quickly bunching up into phalanx units, and just like Juminus had created a choke point at the mouth of the hill, they did too, their huge shields covering almost their entire body and their long spear dangerously pointing downhill, preventing anyone from coming close.

Looking at Tibias's defense, it seemed the time had come for them to repay the favor toward Zanzan.

"Haahh!"

And soon, the static phalanx formation was charged at by the legionaries with a loud shout, as the soldiers at the front threw their pallas once close enough, and then crashed into the phalangites.

"Push! The enemy is buckling! Push!"

And as always, the initial pila attack and subsequent charge proved quite effective, sending the hastily prepared, outnumbered phalanx units recoiling, as they tried to recover their lost formation due to the casualties taken and cope with having many of their shields being rendered useless.

For any phalanx unit, this attack, this two-in-one punch from the legionaries at the start of every battle, was always the hardest move to absorb,

παΠδαςNovel.com 'Dammit! Why now!' While from the back, Perseus got the chance to see this rare spectacle for himself, and naturally cursed, even turning to his adjutant to scold him,

"Why had we not detected them sooner? The enemy had such a large force right underneath our feet! Imbecile!" I think you should take a look at παΠδαςnovel.com

"..." Theony only lowered his head feeling the king's glare, and then muttered, "Mostly probably because the morning fog hid them your grace."

It seemed that just like the mist had helped Leosydas in the pincher attack, now it had switched sides to aid Zanzan.

"Dammit!" And seeing so Perseus repeated his curse, clenching his fist and feeling this could not have come at a worse time.

Many of his men were scattered given the raging inferno roaring right in front of him, one which made him, who was standing relatively close feel like he was inside a furnace.

In fact, if one touched his copper armor, one could even get a light sear given how hot it had become.

But this heat was nothing compared to the bitterness he was feeling.

For as he gazed at the building which by now was well and truly up in flames, with licks of flames even shooting out of the second and third-floor windows, hot smoke filling the air all around, and the crisp crackle of wood breaking and decomposing playing near his ear, his heart could not help but bleed.

He had sacrificed literally hundreds of his best men to get this, plus his closest friend, without whom it would have been pretty much impossible to even be here, had his wound opened and lost a lot of blood to help him get this, even causing his current condition to become critical.

But now all that effort was all up in smokes.

Perseus swore that if he could get his hands on the person responsible, he would boil them alive.

But this loss of the manor was not the only tragedy Perseus had to deal with.

Because just like vultures attracted to the smell of dead meat, it seemed the enemy had decided to attack them at their most vulnerable, and the thinly manned phalanx lines were in danger of shattering.

"Reinforce! Quickly reinforce!" Hence, like many of his officers were already shouting, Perseus too joined, screaming his heart out and waving his arms animatedly, pointing every able-bodied man to go to the phalanx's rescue.

And fortunately for him, and unfortunately for Menes, they succeeded.

The thinly manned phalanx line soon began to grow thicker and stronger as armored man after man started joining the faltering unit, bolstering it, and forcing the legionaries to soon back down in the face of mounting casualties.

"*Sigh*" And seeing such Menes could only let out a small dejected sigh.

Though this was not something he was surprised by he had still hoped to avoid it by using this sneak attack.

But it seemed it had failed.

It seemed that the inherent advantage of a choke point with its ability to nullify numerical advantage, coupled with the deployment of the phalanx unit who used spears as their primary weapon was too much to overcome for the legionaries equipped with their shorter-ranged swords.

Thus after the initial push of the charge was negated, the phalanx units counterattacked, retaking much of their lost grounds, and the battle devolved into a slow grind, where phalangites poke at the legionaries, and the legionaries thrust at the phalangites.

It was honestly quite boring to watch.

And after a while of this, the lines stabilized, and no one was going anywhere.

Which was a great heartbreak for Menes, and a joyous event for Perseus.

"Form up! Form up, Once the enemy is exhausted, we will charge down the hill and destroy the enemy." Pr shouted, the resulting stalemate giving him enough time to reform his close to 19,000 men into proper fighting formation.

Yes, the 5,000 unruly mercenaries had also at last decided to rejoin him, with a preliminary casualty count of both parts combined giving them a total of thousand (1,000) men dead or wounded, with roughly half of it being in the iron plant due to the coal mine explosion, half of it in taking the manor.

"Mistress, I'm sorry." While Menes seeing the crawling progress could only say this to Cambyses.

But the expected scolding did not come.

Instead, the girl only lightly shook her head and said, "No, it's alright. As Lord Menicus said, attacking uphill is always hard."

And then ordered with a light smirk, "Let's take some men and attack via the cement plant. Give the enemy a taste of his one medicine."

It seemed Cambyses had not forgotten her blunder.

Chapter 598 Attack Up The Hill (Part-3)

Seeing the legionaries unable to climb up the hill and take the point, Cambyses began to think of an alternative avenue of attack.

And soon the way she had lost her manor came to mind.

A memory triggered by seeing the manor that she lived in, that she liked so much being up in flames and roaring with crackling fire and smoke right in front of her.

And as she did, her mind connected the dots to remember that there were other ways to reach the manor via the cement plant too.

Particularly the route used by the workers to take the cement clinkers from the kilns located in the southern part of the city to the crushers via the western district.

So attacking the manor via that route was certainly viable.

And as she came to that conclusion, the lady also could not suddenly feel a cold, freezing chill run down her spine.

Because she just realized that way of attack, she also realized just how lucky she had been.

Because if Leosydas had chosen to drive his troops into the city via that route, bypassing the manor, instead of coming to help his king, then Zanzan would have been most likely lost.

Because with his 6,000 to 7,000 men, present right inside the city center, they would be able to cause so much chaos and confusion that trying to put up any sort of coherent defense would be futile.

Every soldier would desert or break and run, trying to save his own skin, just like when Cambyses's frontlines broke at the manor.

After all most people had family in the city and the thought of their family dying while they were off fight would weigh heavy on everyone's mind.

So at that point, the soldiers would no longer be thinking of fighting and resisting, but gathering their families and running.

And given that this nightmare of a situation had not happened, Cambyses could only put it due to heaven's intervention.

'The gods are with us. Alex is really Gaia's chosen,' And this event and how she rationalized made Cambyses change all the more towards a zealous devotee.

In fact it could be said that by now Cambyses's faith might even give Ophenia a run for her money.

Whereas the real reason why Leosydas had not done so was much simpler.

It was because he was Leosydas.

Being the loyal follower he was, it was almost impossible for him to even think that upon seeing his lord alone and in trouble he would just leave him to it alone and instead take his own army through an unknown path that led to who knew where.

Remember, the entire surrounding was pretty dark at the dark, many parts covered with fog, and the only light other than the iron and cement plant was coming from the manor, shining like a beacon to everyone around.

So rather than take a dark, unknown route which could very well cause him to end up outside the city as far as Leosydas was concerned, it was a far safer bet to march towards the brightest object in the area, one where his liege was fighting, and one whose capture promised the end of the war.

Thus though it was certainly very close, and Leosydas had missed a massive opportunity he had no idea of, it also had a low chance of actually happening in real.

While back in the present, after Cambyses suggested her plan, it also woke the others to the potential of the attack.

"That!" Menes at first tried to say something against it, but after thinking for a while, found he could not find any major fault with it.

"Tha....that is certainly possible," The giant general hence agreed after a bit of rumination.

"Good! Then have Melodias lead that attack," So without wasting any time Cambyses instantly delegated.

And with the order given, the word was soon passed down, and under the recently arrived second in command Melodias, soon part of the army was rerouted, and ordered to perform a flanking attack.

All while the fighting to retake the hill continued.

But no matter how much the legionaries tried on this front, any breakthrough any time soon seemed very unlikely.

It appeared that even when the attackers were on the relatively much flatter side of the hill, having become so after centuries of erosion through regular use, it was still very hard.

But vice versa, the phalangites also had trouble pushing the legionaries off.

One because they really did not like fighting in rough terrain, and so tried to simply stay still and poke anyone trying to attack them,

And also because an additional variable was soon introduced against them.

It was done by Menes, who saw the lines go nowhere and with his forces thinning as Melodias took a large chunk of men with him, decided to change his tactics and widen his formation.

'If they want a grinding war, then I'm sure to play along,' Menes somewhat spitefully swore, and gave the following order,

"Have the crossbowmen spread around the sides of the hill. Then tell them to specifically target the phalanx units holding the mouth of the hill." I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

"Let's see how long they can take that!"

There was a hint of anger but also some playfulness mixed in as he said the last sentence.

Menes's thinking was simple.

Instead of the archers being kept at the back doing nothing in fear of causing friendly fire, it would be far better to spread them out and then have them launch arrows into the rear ranks of the enemy.

But when his adjutant first heard of this, he was confused, and let his skepticism be known, saying,

"That...but won't they be completely exposed, sir? Most men have not bought even their pavises, and surely the enemy can just shoot back."

He reasonably argued.

To which Menes only snapped and said, "So what do you want them to do? Just stand around twiddling their thumbs!"

"If they did not bring it, it's their fault. They can die for that mistake for all I care."

Menes would rather have something change worse for him than suffer through this stalemate for much longer.

And besides, with the large number of 'archers' he had, at around 10,000 to Perseus's available 2,000, and enormous stockpiles of arrows at his disposal, Menes was confident he would be able to suppress any counterfire.

"Yes, General," While Menes's scolding got his subordinate to instantly comply.

And so, Perseus was soon forced to confront this new type of attack, where the enemy deployed their 'peasant archer army' as he had come to name it, along the sides of the hills which were relatively free of clutter, and instantly started to rain down incessant arrow fire on them, even more cunningly targeting only specific units.

And though each volley reaped only a meager number of lives, as most bolts pinged off the heavy shields or the bristling walls of spears held high up into the sky by the rear echelons, even a small number of lives lost were still lives lost.

Furthermore, Perseus was experienced enough to know that though these individual one or two casualties were nothing game-changing, but taking such damage per hit would surely add up over time.

And this slow but constant trickle of loss, would sometimes worryingly be even more damaging to one's army's morale than a sudden large loss.

Because the long period time of constant attack gave time for the fear and terror every soldier had going to battle to work its way in, seeping in slowly to every bone and muscle and polluting one's focus.

Perseus had firsthand seen such phenomena unfold before, where the frontlines looked solid one second, but with only one stray man deserting, everyone broke and the lines disintegrated.

And very much wished to avoid the same fate for his own army.

But then the question arose how?

Because although he could identify the problem, figuring out the solution was another matter entire.

"How many archers do we have?" Came the obvious inquiry to Theony.

And he get them it was nowhere enough.

"Perhaps we can send our phalanxes down? These archers are completely defenseless with not even a single infantry defending them. They will break even before we reach them," Thus army's third in command, Mithriditus, proposed this to Perseus.

And this braindead idea, caused Perseus to unnaturally flare up.

"Fool! This is what the enemy wants," He was there to loudly and heavily rebuke him, and then started explaining in a didactical way, "We have been able to hold the enemy off till now due to using the difficult terrain to our advantage."

"But if we go down to meet the enemy, we will be giving all that away."

"And for what? A few measly archers?"

"Once we are down there, the enemy will need no archer. He can just use his huge infantry to surround the small force and then decimate us!"

"You want to send our men to die like that!"

By the end of this speech, Perseus had gone from lecturing his student to severely scolding him, while the man in question dropped his head so low that if the ground could part, he would have fallen down

'I was just making suggestions,' The old man bitterly thought, feeling Perseus was being too harsh on him.

And this was true, the reason being due to all the pressure he was in.

Little did he know it was about to multiply.

Chapter 599 Melodias's Flanking Attack (Part-1)

To say Perseus was currently not in the best of moods would be an understatement.

He was cranky, angry, and frustrated, all of which was of course due to a storm of reasons that hit one after another consecutively.

One was that he had been on the march throughout the night, meaning he was sleepless, tired, and hungry.

He was meant to get some food after taking the manor, but that never happened due to the second reason, i.e.- 'his house' being set on fire by some scoundrels.

And tying to that same reason was how he had to now face the bitter pill of disappointment at having accomplished his goal of taking the manor but still not having achieved the desired result- i.e.- the capture of the city.

As for why, well came nicely to the third reason- Cambyses's escape and the fierce counterattack under her order, one which had them pinned to the hill and was slowly whittling down.

Perseus was still unable to think of an effective strategy out of that one.

Fourthly was the deteriorating condition of his friend, who seemed to have gotten worse due to the general loss of blood and also all the recent movement.

And the fifth and perhaps the biggest reason for his bad mood was that he had no one to rely on in this time of need, having to be a one-man show.

This had happened primarily because when Laykash had shattered his left wing, a lot of experienced and veteran officers had died then, leaving a temporary 'competency vacuum' in the army.

A problem that was recently exasperated when a lot of personal bodyguards, who were experienced warriors and leaders themselves had also died to Juminus's arrow fire.

So to plug those gaps Perseus had no other option than to install the leftovers, and many times even people from other parts of the administration.

With their abilities being questionable at best.

The poster child of this being perhaps Mithriditus himself.

Mithriditus was never a military leader and almost had zero experience in leading anything larger than a thousand men.

No, he preferred to let a few of his retainers he trusted to do the heavy lifting.

While he applied his talents to civilian administration.

And it was where he shone like the sun.

The man had gotten the respect he commanded not by relying on his father's name, but by slowly climbing up through Adhania's court.

He rose from a minor civil servant to an important clerk, to the protegee of a great minister to becoming a great minister himself, as time and time again he showcased his genius at managing coin, skillfully handling Tibias's commerce until finally he became the country's treasurer.

And in all these years, it was almost entirely his credit that the books were in black and not red, which was especially impressive given the massive war they had.

In fact, as a side note, it was in the interest of keeping the books black that he had recently contacted the Kaiser family, which inadvertently led to him brokering a series of deals between the two all of which culminated to the situation both sides found themselves in.

So it could be said it was Mithriditus who was the unwilling mastermind behind the chain of events.

But that was where praises for him had to stop.

Because when it came to the military,.... well, his caliber of generalship quickly became evident when Mithriditus had made that suggestion to Perseus without considering the bigger picture, something Leosydas would have never done,

And what made it even worse was that given Leosydas was in no position to fight, the commander of the army after Perseus by default went to Mithriditus, as he was the next highest ranking noble.

And it was also that realization that made Perseus even more anxious, for being a genius military leader, he hated incompetent subordinates.

But being also the king, he knew he could not sideline Mithriditus for someone else unless he had a very, very good reason.

No trumped-up charges would work against such an aged and prestigious man unless Perseus wanted to earn the ire of all the nobility.

Thus in some way, Perseus scolding the man could be seen as him trying to teach the noble about military affairs.

Though the way he delivered the lecture ensured Mithriditus had thrown all the lessons inside the trash bin a second after it had entered his ear.

Thus ultimately all this meant was that Perseus was left to try and handle everything on his own.

While TH, being right beside the king and knowing this was not how one talked to a noble as powerful as Mithriditus quickly chimed in to try and soothe the man's sore heart, saying in a comforting tone,

"My lord, what His Majesty is trying to say is that our men are more valuable than the enemy's! So it is much better for us to keep to the high grounds and let the other side tire itself out." I think you should take a look at pandanusnovel.com

"That would be far more prudent."

It was not unknown how much of this was truly Perseus's intention and how much it was TH's own personal interpretation.

But that did not seem to matter as Mithriditus had by now gone silent, and after giving a stiff bow to the king, he silently excused himself.

While Perseus treated him like thin and only pursed his lips trying to think of a way to turn this around.

"Are the phalanxes not yet ready? Why is it taking so long?" And after a while, he turned to ask TH this, for the plan he at last came up with was to charge the enemy downhill with all his men simultaneously and hopefully break them in one go.

It was basically Mithriditus's plan but with a lot more men.

And though TH very well understood this, if they wanted to keep his head he knew he had to keep his mouth shut.

So he promptly replied, "Yes sire, they have mostly formed up. All we need is your command and we can start!"

"Good, then...." But Perseus never got to finish that sentence.

Because a sharp, high-pitched cry suddenly pierced his ear, one which shouted,

"Enemy! Enemy from the left! Quick! The enemy is coming from the left!"

And this instantly made everyone, including Perseus spin their head towards the hill housing the cement plant, and the huge silhouette of Melodiass's force marching towards them became as clear as day to every one of them.

Dressed in blue, these 15,000 infantrymen kicked up a whole lot of dust, as if announcing the approach of a raging storm, with the thundering boom of their steps making the nearby tress shake and vibrate, while they hurriedly charged down the hill, eager to draw blood.

And as they did, Melodias was filled with joy at seeing the terrain, for this hill had almost no trees or any other obstacles along its slopes, meaning he could fully deploy his troops along the slope in the standard formation without worry.

The reason for this deforestation was due to the workshops that laid on these parts, and thus the entire hill had been cleaned of its wooded landscape to make space for living.

Most of the cut trees were used as firewood for cooking and running the various furnaces, or turned into furniture, while the empty land was converted into farmland, used to feed the residents there, and let small animals like chickens and ghosts graze.

A plot of it was even planted with the 'magical' crop of Zanzna- beetroots.

All of which meant Melodias could charge straight towards Perseus without the worry of a chokepoint, just like Leosydas had simply hours ago.

"Fuuuuuckkkk!" And seeing this Perseus, could not help but let out an enraged roar like no one had ever heard.

He simply had not had the time or thinking space to even consider that the enemy could outflank them via that route, as this was not really apparent from where he was standing.

The Cisran Hills were really a byzantine collection of hills covering a huge area and covered in thick undergrowth that even if the king had state-of-the-art modern reconnaissance assets such as satellites, GPS, and drones he still might not have been able to spot that route going from the city to the hill.

So being outflanked as such was not really a discredit towards him.

But discredit or not, at the end of the day, all of this did not matter.

The only thing that mattered was that Melodias had caught them unaware and was rushing to attack them.

παΠdasNovel.com And now it was up to Perseus to decide how to react.

But as it would seem, Perseus was suffering from a bit of 'rage quitting', where he seemed to have lost his will to fight, as evidenced by his enraged wounded roar, which made every single person in the camp feel their hearts somersault, and even some nearby birds were seen flying off from their trees at the sudden noise.

But then again, if one was in Perseus's shoes, perhaps one might sympathize, given he had gotten so close, but was about to be thwarted at the last moment.

As to whether he could stop it, or whether Melodias would be able to smash through them, well, the time to tell that was!

Chapter 600 Melodias's Flanking Attack (Part-2)

"Quick! Turn quickly! Get in line! Form up!"

With Perseus suffering from a mild mental breakdown, Theony decided by himself to temporarily take charge of the army, putting it upon himself to try and change the tide, or at least stymie it long enough for Perseus to escape.

And to that effect, he instantly ordered the already gathered phalanx units at the back to turn to face the new enemy.

And as he gave that order, the young man thanked the gods that they had spotted the enemy at the earliest moment, just as they were crossing the peak.

'Oh, everything is still not lost! We still have some time,' He optimistically said to himself, as all the soldiers used every bit of the time they had on their hands to try and reorganize their formation.

While up above the hills, Melodias, upon seeing the enemy starting to form up along the wooden walls of the workshop, intending to use that as a defensive crutch, could not help but *tsk* a bit in his heart.

Only if he could have carried out a sneak attack like Menes did.

But he understood that was basically impossible to do.

After all, it was hard to hide a marching army on top of a hill in broad daylight.

"Charge!"

"Break through!"

"Take back our city!"

And so the officers and commanders seeing the enemy line up urged their men to march faster, wanting to make contact with the enemy as soon as possible.

But the steep slope of the hill meant such a rapid move was never really possible.

And if pushed too hard, the entire army risked tripping and tumbling down the hill, smashing into the enemy in the form of a giant ball of human flesh.

Perhaps an effective cannonball tactic, but definitely not recommended.

So the officers soon realized it would be far more prudent to take it slow and maintain a coherent formation, thus giving Tibias the slightest chance to try and defend themselves.

Shoo, *Shoo*, *Shoo*

But though the Tibias got to form some sort of a solid line, it was nevertheless hastily organized, and so when the rain of pillas came, followed by the charge downhill, the legionaries roaring, *Arghhhh*,

The phalangites nearly snapped from the casualties suffered then and there.

It was a very heavy charge, and along some points in the line, Perseus noticed that the legionaries had pushed them back by as much as a hundred meters.

And as if energized by the success of his colleague, Menes also ordered an almost suicidal charge along his line, intending to catch the shaken defenders off guard or at the very least pin them down so that they could not provide assistance to the other parts.

"Charge! Charge men! Do not let the other side take the glory for your efforts. Remember they were only there because you fought tooth and nail here," The giant was heard loudly urging.

"My lord, retreat! Please retreat! I will hold them off!"

While on Perseus's end, his adjutant came to him with this plea, which implicitly meant, 'We cannot keep the line for too long. I will command the rear guard. You make your getaway!'

"..." And hearing this report, Perseus clenched his jaws so hard that he felt he would break his own teeth.

'So close, yet so far,' The man could not remember how many times he had thought of that exact phrase in the last twelve hours.

But seeing things develop to what they had now, the goal really seemed too far.

The enemy was attacking from both sides and the forces Perseus had gathered in hopes of launching a counterattack were now being deployed to hold the other front.

Even for him, to win against close to 30,000 using his 18,000- 19,000 in an open battle of attrition was impossible.

And this was not even considering how tired and exhausted his troops were after the entire night march.

Sooner or later they would break.

And understanding this, Perseus was forced to accept reality.

But he was not yet resigned to it.

So he ordered Theony,

"You go take control of the frontlines personally. Try to hold on for as long as possible."

"I want to stay here a bit longer and get some of the gold in the manor." as he looked up at the manor in front of him.

Perseus noticed that the flames on the first floor had subsided by now, probably due to having eaten up all its fuel.

And while the inferno was still raging on on the second and third floor, even filling much of the first floor with smoke, Perseus still wanted to try his luck getting to the treasury located in the basement.

While hearing the command Theony was baffled, even feeling like he had just been struck by thunder.

The adjutant simply could not believe greed would manage to take hold of Perseus at this crucial time!

Sure Theony had his subordinates inform him about the literal mountain of gold underneath the manor, which, being the loyal adjutant he was, then had off-handedly mentioned it to Perseus during one of his many reports about the fire.

But how could he have ever thought it would come to bite him now?

"Your Majesty, is it really the time?" It took Theony the courage to question the king, though what he really meant to say was 'Now is not the time!' in an alarmed, exasperated voice. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

"Yes, it is!" To this Perseus replied in a very stern voice, saying, "Even if we cannot get the city, we have to get some of the gold."

"Or I will not be able to answer to the people."

"....." The king's explanation did not produce an understanding look of acceptance in Theony, but his eyes only bulged and if not for the natural etiquette he had been groomed with from birth, he would have even gaped wide.

'Why does it matter whether you can answer to the people or not if you end up getting captured or worse?' The man said to himself.

And as if sensing this incredulous gaze, Perseus produced a wry smile that Theony had never seen his king have before, as he then pointed his head up into the sky and in an almost mournful voice explained,

pandasNovel.com "A lot of nobles died in this campaign. And when I go back, they will want me to show something for it."

"So whether I die here, on top of this hill, or leave empty-handed, it is all the same!"

"!!!!" Theony had never thought about it that way.

'It seems that even kings have their difficulties,' The young man said to himself, feeling he learned something critical about life today.

The master that he viewed as all-powerful, holding the image of a man able to command the entire country to sit and stand at the utterance of a single word was scattered, and Theony understood that even someone called 'The king' was not out of reproach.

Indeed a lot of nobles, many of them very heavyweights in their own right had died in this campaign, and as the supreme general of the army, these families would surely hold Perseus responsible, demanding land or gold as an indemnity.

".....I understand." Thus, understanding where his king was coming from, Theony at last produced a nod, promising, "I will try to hold on for as long as possible. But please hurry your Majesty. We haven't got much time."

"Good! Then I will leave here to you then, Theony."

No one could understand just how much it hurt Perseus to say this, but some evidence of it could be seen from how the man sounded a bit choked and if one noticed clearly, even had reddened eyes.

If he could, he would not have resorted to this dangerous gamble.

"Then.....please exchange armor with me, Your Majesty!"

Theony then suddenly made this request, intending to take his place.

And this made Perseus almost tear up.

But silently he complied, knowing how significant that would be.

And so soon the costume change was done and as Theony left, he only gave a regal bow, and then silently left towards the frontlines.

And got a roaring cheer from the crowd who thought the king himself was joining them.

While Perseus looked at the back of his man with teary eyes, knowing this might very well he saw the man.

Either he might die, or Perseus might himself be captured after failing to escape.

"Be sure to surrender once the enemy breaks through. Kings are profitable to capture,"

And as Perseus and Theony changed clothes, he had urged Theony this.

And now seeing the man go, Perseus's eyes lingered on him for a while, before finally he decided time was of the essence and turned his horse to go find Mithriditus, asking him to head the 'gold expedition'.

"Your Majesty, you go! And it will take as much gold as I can, and meet up." And hearing this Mithriditus did not shun away from his duties, but like Theony, only urged Perseus to leave first.

But Perseus would not accept, stubbornly saying, "No! There is no point in me escaping alone without the gold. I will go with the gold, or I will die."

And then to shut Mithriditus down, he pointedly said,

"And don't bother bringing up the Kaiser family. You should understand better than me that they will likely find a way to make trouble for us given this result!"

And this made the old man go silent before he was forced to give a nod.

So soon, some of the men in the rear, and even some prisoners were quickly recruited to try and excavate the gold, wrapping their entire faces in whatever clothes they could find to fight the smoke, and after douching their entire bodies with water, they ran inside the still scalding hot building, additionally carrying buckets of water to use if needed.

But soon they came up empty-handed,

Because it seemed that although the first floor was relatively cooler, the basement was still like a burning inferno, as the heat was unable to escape through the narrow gaps.

Meaning no one was able to remotely approach the room, not to even mention enter it.

Cambyses had managed to save her gold.

'Darm!'

And hearing this, Perseus felt his spirits break, as he understood, by delaying so much, he had lost even more men and got nothing in return.

"Retreat! Retreat! Retreat!"

While seeing things going where it was, Mithriditus took it upon himself to shout this order, though, without the bugle that sounded the retreat, he could only use his voice.

But nevertheless, this signaled the end of Perseus's resistance.

Cambyes had won!