

Herald 641

Chapter 641 Camius's Tibias Report (Part-1)

The tour of these two major projects, both of which were aimed at finally making Zanzan a clean, beautiful, city to live in, had taken Alexander the entire day.

And by the time he was finished, Alexander noticed the sun slowly dipping down the horizon, turning the sky from blue to a shaded orange hue.

Dusk seemed to be settling in and he noticed that the workers were all finishing up their work for the day, both exhaustion and relief evident on their faces.

He also did not notice when they had come, but a few opportunistic hawkers seemed to have suddenly apparated around the perimeter of the work site, selling all kinds of refreshing fruits, hearty meals, and delicious snacks to the hungry people, their smell and sight making everyone salivate.

There were a few who even sold groceries such as vegetables, eggs, and meat.

The idea here most likely was to catch the men such as the supervisors who might not feel like going all the way to the market if they wanted to buy something for their family and would much prefer to buy from them right here to save the hassle.

Alexander could not help but marvel over this practice and felt that shrewd businessmen existed everywhere across time.

Alexander even noticed a wheeled cart selling all types of wooden and earthen toys, such as dolls, carved horses, small pottery sets, etc. all targeted toward men who have kids at home, tempting them to take something back as souvenirs.

And even Alexander, remembering there was one about to come into this world, felt like buying something.

So acting on the spur of the moment, he did, buying a beautiful wooden doll painted in vibrant red, black, and gold, for if he had a daughter and a similarly beautiful toy horse with a cart attached to it for if he had a son.

And it was with these souvenirs that he finally felt it was time to get back and finish his tour for the day.

While the next few days proved to be a fierce one.

Every day, as dawn rolled over into morning, Alexander would almost feel his skin burning as the intense heat wave would descend upon the city like the sun was waiting to burn the city down.

It appeared Zanzan was experiencing a heatwave.

And given the scorching temperatures, Alexander decided prudently to stay inside the shade and comfort of his house for the following days, content with fooling around with his girls who too decided to play hookey from their work.

Alexander especially enjoyed himself in a giant wooden bathtub with them, using water and soap to play all sorts of naughty games with them.

He cleaned the girls' all the nooks and crannies, paying particular attention to their flowers, using his turgid tool to scrape off any dirt much to their delight.

This dry spell lasted a few days, with the relief coming on one particular late afternoon.

On that day, the sun had finished baking the city with its intense radiation like the preceding ones, but suddenly the unbearable heat began to slowly die down around the later part of the day, replacing it with a cool, refreshing breeze, and slowly a darkening sky.

Weather in Zanzan during the summers was generally unpredictable and it was very natural to have unbearable heat like this during the morning, but torrential rainfall followed by a slight chill during the afternoons and night.

And because Alexander had been cooped up in his house for the last few days, seeing this refreshing weather, he decided to sit outside on his back porch, wearing a light, blue tunic and feeling the comforting cool breeze carrying the smell of salt from the sea flow over his skin, as the bright sky got supplanted by a cloudy, almost threateningly dark cloudy, indicating the imminent arrival of a massive storm.

And as for the company, well he was currently entertaining a guest.

Dressed in fine, colorful clothes, with expensive shoes, and fingers adorned with sparkling jeweled rings, making him look like a bonafide merchant, it was his spymaster- Camius.

It seemed even when he was visiting Alexander, he worked hard to keep his disguise as a rich and successful merchant, with the backstory of his visits being that the pasha really liked his new wine.

"Things inside the city are pretty calm. Some people were a bit frustrated with all the wars and the siege, but with the grains and money you have given, people have mostly forgotten about that."

Camius casually reported while taking a bite of the pear from the fruit basket served in front of him as he slouched back on the comfortable chair.

"Hmmm! They better be. I spend more on them per head than I do on my wife,"

Hearing the good report Alexander replied in a playful tone, though it was somewhat true.

Alexander would be confident in claiming that there was no lord not only in Adhania but even in the whole world who spent more on his subjects per head than him.

Although he did not know the exact figure off the top of his head, Alexander would say he spent at least half a billion ropal on this city alone, counting all the war reparations, the free food and medicine, the infrastructure projects, the new industries he set and everything else.

So if after all that the people were dissatisfied, well tough luck, Alexander could do nothing about that.

Hearing this Camius lightly smirked, while Alexander being in a good mood, threw a few large black grapes that were in front of him with a certain spring to his wrist, taking them one after another into his open mouth.

He found them to be very sweet and juicy.

So juicy in fact that some even spilled out onto his lips.

"This is good. Where did you buy these?" Alexander could not help but ask offhandedly.

Camius had bought these as gifts when he came to visit.

"They are good... aren't they!" Camius readily answered with a nod, saying, "I use them to make the wine. I buy them from a good merchant who brings them from Tibias."

"I first met him when he came to sell grapes...he's got a good vineyard...cheap...oh some people were complaining about the price hikes of....."

While answering Alexander, Camius started to trail off on his own, meshing in some of his intel in the process, while occasionally pausing to clear his mouth of the fruits.

And Alexander like a diligent audience listened attentively, sometimes stopping him to insert his own comment or casually inquire about some details.

The men appeared to be very comfortable around each other and in fact, this type of gathering between the two was not anything rare or uncommon.

Alexander would almost monthly, if not every fortnight invite Camius to his house, having him for lunch or dinner while listening to the various domestic and international issues that the man had managed to dig up.

Of course, all this reporting would be buttressed by light-hearted banter like this.

"Anyway, how was your trip to Tibias? How did it go? More importantly, how did you manage to get in so quickly?"

And at last Alexander to the real meat of their conversation.

The real reason why they were having this conversation.

Because Camius had managed to enter the fortress city of Thesalie, that one which stood at the mouth of the entrance from Zanzan to Tibias.

And since that city would be Alexander's first obstacle, he was eager to know everything there was to know about it.

"Hehe, well answering your last question first, you actually answered it yourself, hehe," Camius first said in a mysterious voice, which drew an intrigued look from Alexander.

He did not get it.

"You know... this grape. You asked about this grape," Camius tried to nudge Alexander towards the answer, even picking up the large, black berries to show them to him.

But Alexander could not connect the dots of how his innocuous comments about the fruit could get him the answers.

And even if he could, he was not in the mood to go through all the mental gymnastics to try and guess it.

Not when the far easier method of Camius simply telling him existed.

"....." So Alexander only flattened his lips and looked placidly at Camius.

While Camius, seeing Alexander not be in the mood for these games, brusquely shrugged his shoulders and gave him the straight answer that he was looking for.

"I got inside Tibias through these grapes."

"Remember that wine recipe you gave, it needed grapes. And while I was looking for suppliers, I met a certain merchant who was selling them."

"I bought a bunch and after liking his quality bought a few more in bulk purchases."

"At that point, we got to talking."

"I told him I really liked his fruits, said why I was buying grapes from him, and lastly asked him if he could give me these grapes in really large numbers."

"Unfortunately the man shook his head saying his vineyard was tiny."

"But fortunately, the conversation did not end there. He did give me a silver lining. He said that his son who had a vineyard in Tibias which could be big enough for any needs and that he could get us in contact if I wanted to."

"So a few weeks later I met the guy."

"And after a couple of talks, and liking my wine, the man finally asked me to come see his vineyard."

Chapter 642 Camius's Tibias Report (Part-2)

As Camius succinctly finished his retelling, Alexander seemed more interested in the fact that there was a Zanzan man whose son lived in Tibias.

That was as rare an event as finding a golden hare.

Never mind the bad blood between the two, the faith of Ramuh also very explicitly forbade such union and even actively sought to persecute them.

And if all that was not implausible enough, not anybody would own a vineyard.

Typically it belonged to nobles or very well-to-do businessmen.

After all, wine-making was a skilled and labor-intensive process, meaning it required both deep knowledge and a lot of start-up capital.

And if they did indeed have these then what were they doing struggling in Zanzan?

Judging by Camius's words, the father might not be struggling, but he was not flowing with cash either.

And even if he was, given the disasters that had befallen Zanzan, why hadn't he chosen to leave?

There was a myriad of questions that came to Alexander's mind;

"His son? Lives in Tibias?"

Thus the surprise in Alexander's tone as he posed.

"Mmm, I too was surprised as much as you when I first heard it doc," Camius frankly responded in a familiar tone, addressing Alexander like so in private, before adding,

"As Krypso tells me, he married the daughter of a Tibian noble. She met him during one of his travels and then chose to run away with him."

"Apparently it was love at first sight," Camius said with a mirthful smirk, while Alexander's brows twitched as having actually encountered such a cliché story.

That girl was both very stupid and very brave.

And Alexander also could not help but think if he had a daughter, whether she might do such a thing.

While Camius continued,

"Anyway, after they ran, and the girl changed her faith to Ramuh's, at first the girl's understandably furious father disowned her, even swearing to never see her."

"But after the couple had their first son, that began to change. It seemed after knowing he had a grandson, the old man's heart softened."

"And after a few years, he eventually patched things up and even invited the couple to Tibias."

"But Krypsos declined initially, saying Zanzan was the city he was born in and Zanzan would be the city he died in ."

"But he did agree to send his son there eventually."

"And even took refuge there when the drought hit."

"He only came from after a few months you took control."

"Whereas his son stayed back. He already has quite a successful wine business there."

"And that's the story of a father having a son with a vineyard." Camius finished the story.

Hearing which Alexander could not marvel at the thing called fate.

Who knew his randomly chosen recipe had managed to get Camius such a golden opportunity?

At the time of his choosing what type of wine to make, he had only chosen that because there was no such type of wine in the market and Alexander really liked its taste.

"Huh! Who knew? I guess coincidences do exist," He could not help but say.

"Mmmm, I guess," And Camius nodded along, saying, "And if you think about it, then it would seem that I really managed to get inside Tibias because of you, doc, haha." Camius chuckled.

"So how did you get inside? By selling your wines to the son?" And then Alexander again asked how the specifics.

"Yes, that's right."

"That son is a real wine sommelier. And we became best friends after sharing a few bottles."

"The man absolutely loves the stuff."

"And it seemed the nobles he sold these to using his grandfather's connections also shared this feeling."

"So he was always back for more."

"This went on for six-eight months."

"But the problem that came afterward was that I was unable to meet his ever-increasing demand."

"You can only move that much grape on carts quickly enough before it loses its taste after all."

"So right after the war ended, he one day came to me to propose that I set up a branch shop in Tibias."

"He said that way I can use all the fresh grapes I could ever want right from his vineyards."

"And even make it cheaper as the grape would not have to transport for a hundred kilometers."

Here Camius paused a bit, as he turned to Alexander while articulating his thoughts, before continuing,

"And I was of course tempted by this."

"As you know Thesalie is basically a military fort housing a city. For outsiders like us, getting inside is too hard."

"Even the native merchants that trade in and out of there have to be approved by the trade guilds there."

"So of course I wanted to go."

"But I was also skeptical and wary of the man's proposal."

"I wondered if he was sincere. And even thought what if they kidnap me to get the secrets of the wine?"

"But talking to the man for some more, those fears eventually alleviated."

"Primarily because the son asked for one-third of the profits."

"This was a lot....which paradoxically was also how I was able to tell the deal was not too good. The man wanted the money."

"And so I accepted."

"I joined his caravan and after a week of travel reached the city."

"And when I did, and looked at the city...." Camius paused here a bit, as if deliberating whether he should really tell what was in his mind, but a split second later finally made up his mind, saying, Well let me tell you, Thesalie really is as formidable as they say."

"In fact, I think I will be doing it a disservice when describing it."

"So urge doc to go see it for yourself if you can."

"But if you want a description, here it is."

"It's perched on a huge hill, surrounded by similarly hilly, wooded terrain all around, much like the Cisran hills in fact."

"Only a narrow, about three men wide, curvy, twisting road leads to the gates."

"Its walls looked as sturdy as Zanzan's itself, and was manned by literally an army of sentries armed with bows and arrows."

"Any army even trying to get close would be turned to hedgehogs by those men."

"And if all that was not enough, if the wooden hills, the narrow paths, and the archers still could not stop the army, they still had one last option, a giant ditch dug all along the length of the wall."

"Meaning no ladder rushes or siege towers."

Camius seemed very impressed and also scared as he gave the recount, before turning to Alexander with a bitter, almost defeated look to say,

"I know that you are planning on attacking it doc. But frankly, I have no idea how you are going to overcome the defense. They really seem too formidable." Camius ruefully shook his heads

It seemed the centuries Tibias had to develop its defenses had been well spent.

And hearing his spy master's description. Alexander felt a slight headache.

At first it seemed like Camius was describing a much more formidable Zanzan.

And then, judging from Camius's recount, Alexander felt like he would be attacking something akin to the walls of Constantinople.

Expect he would have no huge, big ass cannon that would lob a 1 ton stone into the walls.

He did not even have good trebuchets, much less gunpowder.

Now, Amenheraft had managed to avoid that problem by circling around it.

He had sailed across the sea and attacked one of the vulnerable port cities, capturing it and then proceeding forward.

But that certainly was not an option for Alexander who lacked any kind of navy and had not a blue ball's chance in hell of developing one in just two years.

'I should go and have a look once I get the chance,' So Alexander decided to make time to go see the obstacle for himself at some point.

"Okay, the city walls are formidable. But what about its insides?"

Then throwing the worries about the attack out of his mind, Alexander asked Camius to keep describing what he saw.

"Oh! it was magnificent. The city is huge, having close to 200,000 inhabitants, with 20,000 militiamen guarding it."

"There are huge, magnificent houses as well as many dingy abodes strewn about."

"There is a giant river running through the city, and it is from here the populace gets all its drinking water."

"This river also flows towards the interior of the country, and I saw many sailboats moving up and down it, carrying all kinds of goods."

"It also means that unless there is a total blockade of the entire city, they can still be supplied."

"There are also canals dug around the city that divert some of the water to nearby farmlands outside, while many nobles also have their own personal irrigation systems for their gardens."

"And it was in one such vineyard that I stayed."

"It was luxurious."

"The accommodations were nothing short of excellent, with expensive food, wine, and even women to keep me company."

"While the vineyard was as large as it was lush and vibrant."

"And because it was already the end of summer when I got there, I got to taste all the ripe grapes firsthand,"

"And let me tell you, there is a reason Tibias is famous for its grapes. We must have it"

"In fact, when we take the city, I think we should try and take it with as little damage as possible to the vineyards. They are precious!"

Chapter 643 Camius, Alexander And Trade Guilds

'You call him your partner, yet, you are planning to swindle him of everything, haha'

When Alexander heard Camius describe the vineyards and how they should try to spare those after taking the city over, he could not help but roll his eyes inside his head and chuckle.

Alexander wondered how that merchant and his son would feel if they knew the man they had led into their house and showed him all the hospitality was the very man who was planning to rob them of everything.

But this statement also reassured him that Camius knew where his loyalty and priorities were here, here in Zanzan and with Alexander, and did not let the prospect of business and the allure of gold blind him.

Of course, even if Thesalie was captured, it did not mean that Camius's partner had to die or have everything taken away.

Alexander would be happy to let them keep most of everything if they submitted to him.

And besides, by what Alexander could gather from the context, what Camius was likely trying to say was not plundering the vineyards over from that son, but that the vineyards around the city were a major economic resource and they should try to not destroy them.

Alexander gave an approving nod to this, for vineyards were a difficult and skill-intensive endeavor to set up.

And then asked,

"What else? Is there anything else of value in and around the city? Skilled men? Good farmland? Gold?"

"The wine industry seems to be the city's most defining aspect. There are also some nice jewelry and clothing shops I saw when I visited the market, and a couple of artisans."

"But nothing too eye-catching."

"As for mines and such, well, I heard the river is full of fish. I can let you know more in a couple of months."

"The son helped me set up a branch shop in the city's market district. And it's among the affluent part."

"So I left one of my trusted men in charge there, he has a good head."

"I told him to make connections with the nobles using the wine and find out more about the city."

"In a couple of years, we should have a sprawling spy network in Tibias, hehe," Camius appeared very pleased with himself.

And it was indeed good news.

"That is good. Looks like your business is really taking off." So Alexander congratulated.

"Yes, it is, I will not lie." And Camius did not try to fake being humble in front of his friend, saying,

"In Zanzan, my shop is pretty well known."

"At first, I was helped by Menes and others from our mercenary groups coming to always buy wine from there."

"And when other people saw high-level folks like them, council members, city guard captains, etc. visiting me regularly, they began to get curious."

"They started trying my wine and the rest in history."

"The wine soon became very popular and the orders just kept coming in and never stopped from there."

"Now if you want to buy my wine, you will need to wait at least three months, hehe!"

Camius said so while lifting his hands and wriggling his fingers at Alexander, showing off all the expensive rings on him.

It appeared the man had decided to treat himself a bit with his first paycheck, while Alexander smirked at the playful gesture.

After this display, Camius continued, saying,

"As for in Thesalie, even as I was setting up shop, some trade guilds have already asked me to join, offering partnerships and other deals."

"I have not responded yet, but they are expecting one soon."

"What should I do, doc?"

Camius turned to Alexander for his opinion.

And for a second, Alexander subconsciously furrowed his brows a bit.

He did not at all like trading guilds.

As for the reason why, well there were myriad reasons.

Now these guilds were not evil per se.

They were set up with good intentions.

They worked to protect its members, helped them have a unified voice, and looked after them if ran into difficulties.

They also helped the consumers by ensuring the quality of products, and even standardized measurements.

For instance, a carpenter guild could set guidelines for the dimensions and construction of wooden products, and make tools using a single unit.

All these Alexander had no problem with.

In fact, he approved it.

But his main sticking point was one thing and one thing only. I think you should take a look at

And the thing that got on Alexander's nerves was their price-fixing method.

Basically, guilds would fix prices for all their products and worse still stop others from selling below that price, claiming these men were using fraudulent, unscrupulous methods to create products of low quality, and that was why they were able to sell them for so low.

And though sometimes this narrative of fake products held water, most of the time it was a way of stopping others from undercutting them and taking their business.

And it was this that Alexander found particularly rage-inducing.

Because to him, it was a clear and blatant attempt at stifling competition and preventing innovation by barring others from reducing their prices.

After all, if a product's price was fixed, well the consumers would always go for the trade guild-approved one where they would be certain of the quality instead of a new start-up's untested one.

This was why all kinds of trading guilds were banned in Zanzan.

Normally this would have been a very difficult thing to do, as trading guilds held a lot of power in the city, being the cash machine they were.

Even a powerful lord had to make concessions to the combined might to the people who produced the bulk of his income.

But Alexander was helped by the fact when he took over Zanzan, it was basically empty of these people, meaning he could do whatever he liked.

And as for now, well, Zanzan was still not a bustling trading hub.

And also its biggest merchant was also without a doubt Alexander, meaning he could push everyone around as he pleased and suppress anyone trying to form any trading union.

After all, if a group of artisans tried to put pressure on Alexander by threatening not to work and even disrupt the market, to try and starve him of money, well Alexander had his own business revenue streams.

He could play the same game, unlike a traditional noble who had no direct way of participating in the market short of arresting the merchants.

In this way Alexander was very different from most other nobles, as he had a complete monopoly on all the new industries like sugar, glass, etc. as well as an iron grip on the food markets because most of the

farmers that lived here worked on his land, meaning they were his employees who were paid a certain wage while Alexander took all the food for himself.

And as for the artisans, well the same rule appeared, almost everyone worked for him, either in the workshops or in the military as engineers and blacksmiths.

So there were not really any free artisans who could start a guild here in Zanzan.

But that would certainly not be the case in Thesalie.

And because Camius knew Alexander's extreme dislike for this type of guild that he asked for his permission to join one.

"Of course, you will join," And Alexander's answer was surprisingly quick, sounding like it was a no-brainer.

He further said,

"Any lone merchant is too vulnerable in front of these giant organizations. Never mind we are outsiders there."

"If we do not show face to their invitation, the guilds there can find a hundred different ways to shut us down. They might even steal our wien recipe!"

As Alexander said this, he then turned to look directly at Camius and in an intrigued voice asked,

"But you should already know this, so why ask?"

"Hehe, well I was thinking if we could start our own guild," Camius said with a slight blush, scratching his cheeks.

"You know, if you were to sell more of your things through my shop...then we could really make something big."

Camius sounded very ambitious.

"...." And hearing this Alexander pursed his lips, thinking it over.

While Camius tried making his case by adding,

"It is not really a bad idea if you think about it. Guilds are not all bad you know."

"I would even say they are a necessity. Merchants are people with a lot of money but no real authority. So if they did not band together, the nobles would steal everything from them."

"Besides, though they have their controversies, you must admit they are also beneficial to the society."

"They help take care of the widows and orphans of their community, ensure customers are not swindled, and even the apprenticeship process which produces new artisans are conducted through guild affiliated networks."

"I don't think banning them will be feasible in the long term."

"...." Alexander stayed silent for a while, not immediately answering yes or no.

Camius made some good points.

So it took him a while to organize his thoughts.

And then he said,

"Well, let's talk about that sometime later. We do not have to deal with it right now and I will think about it in the meantime."

"For now, you just concentrate on joining a suitable guild and see how they operate."

"And what I want to know more is what have you heard about the war? How is the mood there? What do the nobles think? And the people?"

Chapter 644 Visiting The Port

Alexander felt the concerns about the trading guild to be premature.

Whether they were a credible threat or not, they were years away, and so rather than decide their fate right here and now, felt he could wait and see.

So, instead, he turned his attention to figuring out how Perseus's failure to take Zanzan had affected Tibian society.

"About that....I did try to find out in a roundabout way. I asked the son if the people there would not like because of the recent war, and all the deaths."

"And his answer seems to be one of relative ambivalence, saying most of the people might not be happy to see me but would not be too aggressive either."

"It appears that though the nobles and the people are not happy with the loss, they are also not in any mood to rebel or even oppose the king."

"Most people seem to have never really thought taking Zanzan was possible, and so even when the king returned with only half his army, they just shrugged and accepted it."

"Also...apparently there are records of Tibian kings losing their entire armies trying to take Zanzan."

"So the people are used to it. I'm afraid there is no chance of using that to sow discord, doc."

The disappointment in Camius's tone as he said so was palpable.

"*Sigh*" And so was it in Alexander's regretful sigh.

It appeared that though through this defeat, Perseus lost a lot of prestige and could not wield the respect of the nobles as once before, it was still nowhere enough to make him topple from his throne.

Perseus still shined for his achievements against Amenheraft and his legitimacy to rule remained unchallenged.

Also, he had come really close to taking the city, only failing at the last minute.

So the nobles simply swallowed the bitter pill of defeat, chalked it all up to the gods and fate, and after Mithriditus used the last of the Kaiser family's funds to placate them. simply shut up and got back to licking his wound.

While Perseus, heartbroken by his friend's loss, decided to go into half seclusion, handing much of his duties to his successor Philips, and placed Mithriditus as his right-hand man to help the inexperienced boy out.

This act also unintentionally helped cool many dissatisfied voices, as they saw it as Perseus stepping down for his defeat, if not forever at least for a while.

Hence the court of Tibias went quiet for a bit but was still relatively stable.

Perseus would not need to sleep with one eye open.

Alexander would come to know about this later, once Camius had enough time to infiltrate deep enough into Tibian's inner circle to be able to access this information and both men.

"I see, that is not indeed regretful," But for now, Alexander was rueful that he could not cause any discord in the country, before posing,

"And what about their army? How is that?"

Alexander really hoped losing 20,000 men would be enough to cause some sort of effect.

"Doc, I just got there. I will need some time to know all this stuff, hahaha" But Camius reminded Alexander as such with a chuckle.

And this caused the other to blush a bit.

"Hahaha, sorry, sorry, I got ahead of myself a bit," Alexander admitted.

Camius would get this information eventually and tell Alexander that Tibias's army appeared to be badly mauled and was in the middle of rebuilding itself.

That they had lost a lot of officers in the wars and even going by optimistic time frames it would take at least a few years to even a decade to rebuild them.

"They seem to be afraid that we will attack them during their weak period. So apparently they have increased the garrison in the city by another 10,000, bringing the total to 30,000," Camius would add.

But currently, those were all the main points Alexander had to discuss.

So once this was over, the pair got to chatting over useless banter, with Camius at the very end also asking Alexander to also sell him some of his exclusive products in order to help him expand his business, but Alexander gently declined, replying that others had already bought all his stocks and that he would have to wait a while.

Camius would nod his head with difficulty at this, but accept and once he finished his dinner there, the meeting finally came to an end.

The start of the following day was a very cool one, as it rained for almost the entire night and Alexander even woke up to the pitter-patter of heavy rainfall. I think you should take a look at

And as he enjoyed the soothing sound of rainfall kissing the earth, while eating a hearty breakfast of pancakes, with butter and honey, he could help but also feel a bit regretful that there was no tea or coffee.

'Ah, sitting on the veranda, enjoying a hot cup of tea while listening to the sound of rainfall..oh that would have been the life,' He said to himself.

But he had yet to find any tea where, whether it be in Thesos or Adhania, so if we wanted to have it, it was likely he would have to discover the new world.

And coincidentally, today he was going to check the site from where that exploration might start- The port and the shipyard.

The cloudy day finally began to clear up at around the time Alexander finished his meal, and by the time he was meeting Diaogosis at the port, the day was as bright and as scorching as any other day of August.

Alexander had been worried that some of the roads might have been water-clogged given last night's torrential rainfall, but it seemed that the sewers and the extreme heat of the sun worked together to make that possibility disappear.

Thus Alexander was easily able to keep his appointment.

"My lord, welcome," Diaogosis was there to greet him and after the usual pleasantries, took him around the site, showing him around.

The new port was very much a work in progress.

There were a few thousand laborers employed here, all toiling diligently under the scorching summer sun, the majority of them busy moving massive stone blocks quarried from the nearby hills to various

parts of the site, each with a unique symbol and number indicating its destination, being transported on sleds pulled by men and animals.

It seemed ordinary wooden carts were too heavy for these multi-ton behemoths, hence the use of these slow-moving transport, which many times would have their paths lubricated with water to ease the sliding.

Or if it was possible, a few even had logs underneath them, effortlessly rolling over them, though the problem with that was that the logs at the back had to be constantly manually placed at the front by workers.

All this meant that moving anything was a time-consuming process, with speeds resembling a snail's.

Seeing which made Alexander wonder if he should build carts out of iron, but thinking of the challenges posed when shaping iron into that shape was enough to shelve that idea far, far into his mind.

"We at the moment are mainly building the underwater pillars which will hold the port. That's why everyone is dragging stones, earth, and bricks around," Diogenes helped provide some commentary as they moved.

And along the way, Alexander saw exactly how they were doing it.

First, they had created a boundary around all the points of the sea where the pillars were going to be.

These boundaries were giant, about 3 meters in diameter, and made of strong timber.

And workers could be seen tirelessly working to fill these water-filled structures up with stone, earth, and gravel, as well as a mixture of concrete to bind them all together, slowly making the whole thing solid while all the seawater was pushed out.

And to help with that, there seemed to be quite a few giant pulleys installed close to these to be pillars as well, attached to the end of which was a giant wooden log, that was used to beat the earth and stone and make the whole structure more compact.

Sometimes workers could be also seen manually going at it.

It was a tedious, time-consuming process.

But a necessary one.

Because these pillars were the foundation upon which everything else would sit.

So currently this was the only thing that was happening all around the site, moving earth, mixing cement, and engineers directing it all.

"This here will be the basin which will serve as the core of the harbor, providing safe anchorage for the visiting fleet of ships." At one point Diaogosis said, referring to the middle of the crescent-shaped harbor.

"And there will be where the breakwater be...where the waves will crash against, protecting the interior and sheltering it from the sea's fury."

"We planned to use gigantic stones, but now are thinking of using huge concrete blocks to make the protective screen." He continued pointing to the arms that would be stretching from the crescent,

This breakwater was essential to ensure the safety of ships entering and exiting the port and had to be placed carefully.

Diaogosis showed Alexander around for a bit more, but that was it really.

The new port was really in its infantile stage, with the up till now construction existing mostly underwater, but Diaogosis reassured Alexander that despite the delays and setbacks, work was proceeding with speed and that once the pillars were completed, laying the 'floor' would be a trivial matter.

Chapter 645 Port And Lighthouse

"We have never done something like this before. Building out into the sea is already challenging. Never mind how far we are going into the sea this time. So I want to take my time and make sure everything is made with care and precision," Diaogosis said to Alexander regarding the port construction, referring especially to building the pillars

And Alexander agreed, saying that he could take his time and even gave him an extra year in addition to the already extended time frame to complete the project.

And this naturally got Diaogosis much elated.

But that elation only lasted for an ephemeral moment, for it was followed by a plummeting sense of disappointment, because of what Alexander said next.

"By the way, I also noticed we haven't got a lighthouse. It would be quite a shame to have such a beautiful port without an accompanying lighthouse don't you think?"

Alexander said so with a gentle smile.

A smile that looked about demonic to Diaogosis.

"No...no my lord. I think the current one is fine. Just fine."

"Besides, ships don't even come to port at night that often...hahaha"

Realizing what Alexander was hinting at, the stonemason stammered the answer, first trying to sound as forceful as possible and then changing his tune to a reasoning one.

But since Alexander had bought it up, of course, he was not going to back down on it so easily.

He first brushed his hands saying, "That puny thing over there could not shine bright enough to light the room it was in."

"No, what we need is a giant, flaming behemoth that could be seen from miles away. A marvel for the world to see, its light bright enough to attract ships from all over the world."

"We need a magnificent lighthouse to benefit the magnificent port."

He grandly declared.

And before Diaogosis would object in any way, he turned to face the almost teary-eyed man with a firm gaze and said in a comforting voice,

"Now, I will not ask you to do anything crazy like building it in the middle of the sea, or the mouth of the harbor."

"I wanted to do that, but thinking about you, decided against it," Alexander sounded magnanimous, while Diaogosis internally cussed,

'If you did that, you would have had to find a new project manager.'

"And it will not have to be any crazy design." Alexander further reassured.

"You can build it near the coast, and its design will be like at any lighthouse, just a bit bigger."

"Let's say... about 100 meters high."

Alexander tried to say the last sentence as quickly as possible.

But apparently not quickly as Diaogosis's eyes bulged and the man went slightly agape.

'Build a 100-meter-tall tower in one year, are you insane!' And it took him all his self restrained not to start cursing Alexander right there and now.

"...that...that is not possible in such a short time."

Alexander noticed Diaogosis visibly shaking as he replied.

And the reply was in a stoic, absolute tone.

"Oh? Not even with the cement." Alexander, seemingly unaware of Diaogosis's hidden fury only innocently inquired.

Not being a civil engineering Alexander did not really much of the project.

Sure it was big, but a lighthouse was quite a simple structure.

Just a tall, cylindrical building with a huge burning bonfire on the top which showed the ships the way to the harbor,

The inside of it would be almost hollow, there usually being only a spiraling staircase giving access to the top, with perhaps a few spare quarters for the guards and the maintainers who ensured the fire was kept lit at all times.

Unlike a building, it would not need to have many rooms or internal facilities, so it seemed a relatively straightforward project for Alexander

And as he thought of building a lighthouse, he could not help but want to build perhaps the most famous lighthouse in the world- one of the seven wonders of the ancient world- The lighthouse of Alexandria!

He remembered how he had 'climbed' onto the top of it in one game (AC- Origins) and from looking and exploring the insides, he found the lighthouse to be very grand but also simple in design, with none of the byzantine architecture one might expect involved.

So he felt replicating it in real life would be easy.

Hence he casually mentioned the specifications mirroring that, which Alexander remembered as being over 100 meters, and had even drawn up the schematics showing exactly that famous lighthouse in his free time.

And it was because of his preconception that he was unable to understand Diaogosis's extreme reaction.

"No! If you want to build such a lighthouse, even with concrete it will need at least ten years. Any less and you can find somebody else."

Seeing Alexander's tone-deaf expression as he inquired seemed finally enough to push Diaogosis over the edge as he finally snapped.

He could not believe someone was seriously asking him to build a 100-meter-tall building in just a year!

Just because there was concrete.

'Concrete is not a magic material that builds things by itself,' He wanted to shout.

And in this exchange, Diaogosis would have to be declared the winner, as Alexander was really trivializing the problems here.

Any building that was so big had to tackle a variety of challenges, such as a large enough, solid foundation, proper structural engineering to make sure the building could take its own weight, defending against attacks from the elements, and many more.

And it was the part about the elements that was especially true for a lighthouse which would be subjected to frequent gales, storms, and even hurricanes.

It was also one of the reasons why the real Lighthouse of Alexandria took 18 years to be built.

Even the king who commissioned it died before its completion, and the lighthouse had to be inaugurated by his son.

And although 18 years might sound like a lot, at the time of its construction, its speed was actually a marvel to behold.

Many later historians would even say that the construction and the speed at which they completed the lighthouse stood as a testament to the Greek's expertise and ingenuity in engineering.

So for Alexander to demand it be done in just a year just because he had a bit more convenient mortal was not really reasonable.

And even the 10 years Diaogosis asked for was not a comfortable deadline, especially given the manpower and material shortage.

So Diaogosis snapping at Alexander's unreasonable demands could certainly said to be justified.

As Alexander heard Diaogosis's harsh tone, any lesser lord might have felt offended.

But given he knew the man well enough by now, and knew Diaogosis would usually grumble but ultimately agree to most things he wanted, this time's outburst seemed to be genuine.

It seemed that man really thought he would need 10 years to complete this project, and if Alexander haggled, the man might really quit.

So this time Alexander wisely backed down, saying in a soft voice,

"Okay, first finish the port. We already have enough on our plate now. We do not have to agree on anything now."

"By the time the port is finished in a few years, I'm sure we will have more manpower and can decide how to make the lighthouse then."

These comforting words finally calmed the stonemason, who already had his hands full building the port plus overseeing the apartment, and so could do without building a new lighthouse.

And this was such that Alexander finished his tour of one-half of his schedule for the day.

And quickly made his way to the other one- The shipyard.

Alexander had built this outside the city as there was not enough space inside the city given there were two ports, one old and the new under construction.

So the site was about an hour away by carriage, which he soon covered arrive, placing his eyes on the huge wooden walls cordoning off all trespassers.

Alexander was let into the site as soon as he disembarked and as he entered the gates, the leather boots stepping over the wet, muddy ground courtesy of the rain, he was mesmerized by the hustle and bustle around him.

Or perhaps it would be more accurate to describe the energy as 'organized chaos'.

A sense of purpose and craftsmanship permeated everything here, as the rhythmic sounds of hammers striking wood and the constant chatter of craftsmen filled the air, creating a lively and industrious atmosphere.

The smell of freshly cut timber mingled with the salty tang of the nearby sea, and as the sun beat down on the shipyard, the skeletons of incomplete ships cast long shadows across the still-wet ground.

And in the distance, along the shore, Alexander saw the heart of the shipyard- several vast slipways, with sloping ramps made of wooden planks that descended gracefully into the water.

This slipway was where the magic of ship construction happened, where ships were constructed and assembled before they were put into the ocean.

So it was also where most of the shipbuilders and carpenters were, moving to and fro, carefully making precise measurements so that the selected timbers could be shaped to fit precisely with others like a fine piece of jigsaw puzzle.

The craftsmanship involved everywhere was evident a testament to the skill and dedication of the workers.

Work here seemed to be going fast and well.

Chapter 646 New Shipyard

"Lord Alxx, welcome, welcome. So sorry, I could not come to meet you at the gates, hahaha,"

As Alxx stood around the gate looking at the bustling scenery, this voice suddenly rang out, his tone loud and energetic.

And Alxx quickly turned to face the origin of the sound, his eyes meeting a black man with a handsome, chiseled face, clean-shaven, with slight wrinkles on his face betraying his age.

His head as white as snow, and clothed in a luxurious tunic he walked with strong, steady steps showing he still had quite some life left in him.

"No, no, Lord Nuraman, it is perfectly alright. I know you are very busy." Alxx respectfully greeted back.

This man was Lady Inayah's youngest uncle and one of the people who had been in charge of building the family's fleet for the last 20 years.

He had a lot of experience under his belt and after Alxx came to that deal with the noble merchant lady, she had spent him over to oversee Zanzan's ship production.

The man had come here around April, accompanied by about fifty of their family's finest as well as a thousand laborers, and all seemed to be hard at work at the moment, helping Alxx's dream ships come to reality.

The small talks and greetings were quickly done, and Lord Nuraman then took on the persona of the guide, inviting in a casual tone,

"Come, come, let me show you around. We have been prearranged for you."

And then he took Alxx around to show their progress.

He showed them how the workers were all at work, cutting shaping, and processing the wood, how the ships were being built piece by piece, and what the bottlenecks were.

"The new type of ship you designed is really marvelous kid,"

The older gentleman talked very much as he would to a junior, not caring much that Alxx eclipsed him in rank as he praised him.

"The iron nails you give us are as strong as the arms of the gods themselves. The joints are so strong."

"I'm confident these ships will be able to brave any sea with no problem."

"Haha, I hope so too. Closing all shipping during the winter season, for four to six months is too big a loss."

"I want to be able to trade all twelve months of the year, regardless of the season or weather."

Alxx revealed his ambitions.

And then in a slightly eager tone posed,

"So how long will it take to build a large enough fleet of them? I'm thinking at least a hundred."

"Ohhh...don't get ahead of yourself too much kid," But the older man was there to rein in Alxx's expectations, saying,

"Come, let's look over there, There are the timber yards!"

Lord Nuraman then took the group towards several very large, very tall sheds, inside of which Alxx would see many logs and planks of various sizes and shapes stacked high atop each other."

"These are the woods we use to make the ships."

"Some are being seasoned, some, like the ones over there," Lord Nuraman pointed to a side of the yard, "they are being left to dry in the sun and salty breeze to drive away all the moisture which will give the wood their durability."

"And ones that are ready the workers are working on them for assembly, slowly turning them into the ribs, planks, and masts of the ships."

"All this normally takes at least a few months. So building hundreds of ships will take a while."

And it was not just the wood that was in short supply, so were skilled enough carpenters.

All of which meant it would take some time for Alxx to get his flotilla.

"...I see," And so Alxx, who did not know almost anything about the ship, decided not to make random comments and let the people with the know how to carry on.

After this, Alxx and Lord Nuraman walked around the yard a bit, watching all the craftsmen with tanned and weathered skin working together, passing tools and materials to one another with well-practiced efficiency.

Many seemed to even communicate in a language of nods and gestures, words being unnecessary, evidence of their expertise and teamwork.

As Alxx observed these, he also began to talk about things unrelated to shipbuilding, getting to know his counterpart better, as well as trying to tie deeper bonds with his family.

He also requested as such.

"Lord Nuraman, I have written to Lady Inayah about this before, but I'm here asking again."

"I would like you to buy some of the people in your fief. Beggars, urchins, homeless, whoever they are."

"And bring them here in Zanzan to repopulate. We have lost a lot of men in the last war and could use them."

Alxx hoped to replenish his stocks with immigration.

But Lord Nuraman did not sound too enthusiastic at the prospect, saying, "I'm afraid the drought has created the same problem for most nobles. Many do not have enough men to work their fields."

"So they have started eyeing each other's men, even offering the peasants money to leave their lords and come work for their lands."

"So, I'm afraid you will not get a lot of men through that."

It seemed peasants were in high demand throughout the country.

".....I see," And Alxx's pursed lips and flat answer told everyone how he felt about that.

'I should have gotten from Ptolomy when I had the chance. Dammit.' He then cursed in his heart, feeling he had lost a major opportunity there, and then as if an unrelated neuron got connected to this thinking process, suddenly asked,

'Hmmm...I wonder if I can get some from the Margrave family. Oh! By the way, what happened to them? I have not heard from them in over a year.'

For a brief moment, Alxx was reminded of that heavily pregnant woman, one who called herself Lady Margaret, and wondered if she had managed to save her family or even survived her delivery.

But that thought vanished from his mind as soon as it came, and Alxx quickly pivoted his attention to the man that mattered, Lord Nuraman.

By this point, the older man had brought Alxx to a very large, nice-looking building and promptly invited him inside.

The inside was spacious, with large windows to illuminate the whole structure, and generously decorated with nice furniture and beautiful carpets.

It was nothing extravagant like Alxx's house, but it was decent nevertheless, and he could even see a few servants running about.

"This house is the administrative center of the whole shipyard," Lord Nuraman introduced and then took him to show around the few large, hall rooms that were all laid out with rows of tables and chairs, each of them occupied by a man hard at work.

All of these were Lord Nuraman's men, bought from his family's territory to help run the shipyard, and they were the nervous system of the whole operation.

They helped maintain the records and paperwork, signed contracts, coordinated the schedules of the workers, made sure everything followed the planned timetable, and lastly ensured everyone got paid on time, thus keeping the gears of the place running.

Without these people, the shipyard would come grinding to a halt within minutes.

At the sight of Alxx, all of these men stood up and quickly started to greet and Alxx responded in kind, smiling and making small talk with each other, and asking things such as how they were doing, if their accommodation was to their liking, how the work was doing, etc.

While the men also tried to butter him, with some of the shrewder ones praising such as,

"My lord, this paper is a marvelous product. I heard you invented it. What a discovery!"

Following this, Alxx got a look at the books, one which recorded all the expenses, and even though he glossed over them, even a casual look at the numbers made his heartache ache.

Running this place was not cheap.

Especially hiring and keeping these officers each cost him 350 to 400 ropals a month, plus food and free housing.

Yes, Lady Inayah had insisted that Alxx covered all these men's living expenses in exchange for sending them here.

He even had to build an officer's quarters specifically for them, which was located on the west side of the yard.

And then there was the cost of the workers, materials, taxes, and lastly the initial setup cost.

All this added up very nicely to a big, fat cheque.

And going up Lord Nuraman's recent words, Alxx had to accept that this place was going to be in the red for the near-term future.

But Alxx knew this was a necessary expense.

It would be foolish not to build a navy just because it was unprofitable in the short term.

And perhaps the silver lining was that not everything was borne by Alxx but some were also carried by Lady Inayah and even Ptolomy, courtesy of the Queen Mother, who had sent some men to help,

So Alxx hoped to be able to soon start selling these ships and begin making up the losses.

As such he swallowed the bitter pill and kept pumping money into the project.

And it was with such thought that the shipyard excursion at last came to an.

Chapter 647 Finishing Last Year's Deals

During Alexander's visit to the administrative building, he also got to meet with some of the ship designers, who then eagerly showed him the various blueprints of the different kinds of ships they were building, all laid out over a grand, oak table.

Following which they very excitedly went over how Alexander's idea had enabled them to build much bigger ships, emphasizing the size of the vessels and going over how revolutionary those were going to be, as they attempted to impress their top boss.

Alexander meanwhile nodded absentmindedly and played along, though his heart in reality wanted to build even bigger ones.

For instance, what the men were showing him were sketches of triremes and quadriremes, whereas other counterpart nations were already using decarimenes.

Now, Alexander had asked if they would make him the latest models other nations were using, but unfortunately, it seemed that was beyond the engineers' capabilities at the moment.

And in that same vein, Alexander's wish to make huge barges made of concrete powered by enormous sails and complex rigging for transporting cargo all around was also shelved due to a lack of expertise.

'Baby steps. these are baby steps,' And to all of that Alexander could only reassure himself as such and hope the future held better things for his navy.

And as Alexander finished seeing everything there was to see, he at last bid the officers farewell,

"Well I've been very impressed by the job you have done, esteemed sirs." He respectfully first addressed these learned and well-to-do men,

"Keep up the good work."

"Remember the ships that you build today will connect our people, facilitate trade, make us richer, and enable us to project power across the seas."

"For His Majesty's glory!"

"For His Majesty's glory!" And the others cheered in chorus.

After exiting the shipyard, Alexander did not immediately return home.

No, because there was a guest in Alexander's carriage, Lord Nuraman, and he insisted that he come to his house for a meal, saying everything had been prepared and that the meal was hot and ready.

Alexander too was feeling famished, having traveled and walked for so many hours without anything much of substance to eat.

Sure he was served drinks and snacks, but his real meal had been at dawn, and after all the walking, talking, and moving around, his tummy was ravenous for some lunch.

So when there came a promise of delicious food, Alexander was reluctant to pass it up.

Thus instead of taking him to his house, the carriage was diverted to Lord Nuraman's house a few blocks away, near where NN and the twin's house were.

This was another of the vacant noble homes turned into guest houses with a similar style and? Alexander was let in with cordial grace by two women, a slightly old woman with few strands of gray hair appearing out of her cascading mane, and the one that attracted most of Alexander's attention, a stunningly beautiful young woman standing next to her.

Wearing a beautiful, strapless red gown, this lady appeared to be in her early to mid-twenties and fully eclipsed her counterpart in all forms.

Her dress accentuated her ample bosom, snugly wrapping it, her silky black hair was tied up in a stylish bun and her cheeks were rosy with cute dimples.

"Welcome, Lord Alexander, " And she greeted him with a curve on her plump, wine lips, her captivating dark eyes making an amorous gesture that set Alexander slightly aback.

He was surprised both by her beauty and the overly familiar greeting.

But Lord Nuraman seemed to not notice any of this, as he simply went forward and in a jovial tone said,

"Let me introduce you, Alexander,? this is my third wife- Rayana," pointing to the olden woman, and then referred to the sexy bombshell as, "And this is my newest concubine- Akisha. I just took her two months ago."

Hearing which Alexander consequently felt a light shell hit his heart in surprise.

'Old man aren't you a bit too advanced in your age to be adding new members to your harem,' He could not help but say to himself.

But hey, the man was bona-fide noble so who was he to argue?

Thus Alexander greeted them elegantly, praising their looks, and was then soon invited inside.

There he was met with a second pair of couple.

And it was someone he already met a few times, for it was Kayvan- Pasha Farzah's fifth son.

"It's a pleasure to have you, Lord Alexander," The tall, strapping man warmly greeted.

He was accompanied by his recently married wife, who appeared especially young, perhaps only fifteen or sixteen at most, possessing a petite figure with some innocent baby fat still hanging on her face.

She looked at Alexander with doe-eyes, these reflecting some of her still-held innocence, and appeared to be scanning Alexander with interest and intrigue.

And Alexander too was intrigued by her, especially thinking about the age difference between the two.

The bride seemed a bit too young for Kayvan.

But then again, this was not really uncommon.

Records of uncles marrying their nieces and even grandfathers marrying their granddaughters were common and even accepted in this society, so the two's marriage could even be described as appropriate for the time.

Alexander also remembered Pasha Farzah mentioning in one of his letters that one of his sons had recently gotten married to a girl from Lady Inayah's family as a way to strengthen the two family's bond.

The aged Pasha had then also added,

'The brat is hounding me to let him go on a honeymoon with his new bride. So I'm sending him to you.'

Which partly explained why Kayvan was here.

As for why they were staying here with Lord Nuraman, well this girl had another identity, which was Lord Nuraman's youngest daughter.

Which also meant all the people in the house were actually one family.

Small world indeed.

It was also because of this that some things had conveniently become easier for Alexander.

Mainly regarding the problem of? Zanzan's lack of proper facilities to house each of the nobles separately.

Previously, Alexander could have easily housed them in his manor and provided them with all the necessary hospitality.

But given recent developments, that was no longer possible.

So it came as a blessing that Alexander was able to ask them to share the house as a family without any embarrassment.

After all, that's what families did.

And fortunately for him, they took the idea surprisingly well, agreeing to it very amicably.

"Haha, well that's nice. It will give me the chance to know my son-in-law better!" Lord Nuraman had chuckled.

Now, Pasha Farzah had not sent his son just for pleasure.

The incumbent Pasha had also sent his son with the fleet carrying Lord Nuraman to properly oversee the goods he had sent Alexander, which were part of the 400 million ropals deal the two men had struck last year.

Pasha Farzah sent his ships bunched up with Lady Inayah's who too had a similar deal, all carrying massive amounts of grain, animals, and even a few thousand slaves, without all of which Zanzan's recovery would have been much hampered, if not regressed.

Especially the grain, when the first batch arrived in March, it really helped out Alexander, who still did not produce enough to feed his own population.

So Lady Inayah's and Pasha Farzah's ships laden with wheat, oats, barley, salted meat, fish and vegetables were all very much welcome.

Furthermore the slaves were a nice addition, something that was not originally agreed upon, but it seemed Pasha Farzah had somehow managed to scrounge together some for Alexander, likely taking a lot of them from the streets of Adhan without PP's knowledge.

Alexander had previously written to both of them regarding his losses and asked for more men, and though Lady Inayah was unable to provide extra outside of the shipyard workers, the old man responded as such, plus even secretly promised another 8,000 more from him and the Queen Mother by the end of the year

It was secret because the people would be from the streets of Adhan which PP did not approve of.

And this gesture made Alexander quite happy, as it showed that these people were willing to come to his aid when asked, reassuring him that he would have some backing if he ran into some trouble.

So when it came to returning the favor, Alexander laden the ship with some extra sugar and iron, along with the usual salt, fabric, paper, and glass products, though the last two were a bit short on quantity given a lot of their stock had been destroyed and production was yet to catch up.

By this time, these ships had completed about two-thirds of the agreed trade, with the ships due to complete their last trip for this year very soon.

And Alexander looked forward to the cargo they would be carrying.

Because Pasha Farzah promised to send the things Alexander wanted the most on the following trip, which were books and the learned acolytes.

Alexander was very excited about this because once he had the two, he could finally start his public education, using some of the books as textbooks, especially in the language courses, and employing the 'to be priests' to be part-time teachers.

In anticipation of that Alexander had even started the construction of his first schools and libraries, in very eagerness of the fact that he would at last have a way to produce officials and administrators sometime in the future.

Chapter 648 Lord Nuraman's Luncheon (Part-1)

The current shortage of learned men that Alexander was facing was something very maddening to him.

Many projects were unable to start or even if they did, were inefficient due to a lack of qualified personnel, as not being able to produce the required paperwork meant that Alexander could use the date to make informed future decisions.

So he was very eager to start his public schools and general education, for though that would not instantly remedy his problems, at least he could start making the medicine to solve that problem for the future.

But all these exciting developments were still some time in the future.

For now, though, Alexander returned his focus to pay attention to the people who had invited him into their house and exchanged some pleasantries.

"Ah! I'm so embarrassed at having come empty-handed. Truly a grave breach of etiquette, a grave breach." Alexander said exaggeratedly waving his arms animatedly.

As Lord Nuraman from the side jokingly chuckled,

"Yes, yes. That is why as punishment Lord Alexander must drink the most today, haha."

"We bought our special wine from Agnirat that you simply must taste."

"Come, come." The lord of the house then ushered Alexander to the back half of the house, the place reserved for friends and family.

He was truly being cordial to Alexander.

Before joining the luncheon, Alexander freshened himself up, cleaning his face, arms, and legs, and wetting his head to fight the blistering heat, before being personally led by the man of the house to the private dining table, where he was given the seat of honor at the head of the table.

Alexander of course tried to decline this by saying that as the senior, Lord Nuraman should have the privilege.

But the old man was adamant, saying peerage trumped all.

Hence Alexander got the honor while Lord Nuraman and Kayvan sat on either side, each accompanied by their respective wives.

And then without further ado, food and wine started to flow without restraint, as Alexander was served various kinds of Adhanian traditional dishes composed of meat, fish, and vegetables served with several types of bread.

There were stewed and fried fish of various kinds, roasted and broiled meat of rare and exotic flavors, and fried and salted seasonable vegetables to go along with at least five different types of bread.

At one moment, Alexander even took the time to try and count the number of items on the table but could go only up to thirty before losing track.

The entire luncheon very much felt like being in a medieval feast.

And as the chief guest, he was asked to taste all.

A task he found to be very daunting.

Though he was helped by the unique wine they served, which in much contrast to the sweet ones usually given, was a hard, spicy one, one which stung the throat a bit when gulped.

And though usually would have been a bad thing, with all the meat, and fish being eaten, somehow this wine helped to stimulate the throat and energize it, cleaning the gullet and coaxing it to eat more and enjoy the feat.

"Lord Nuraman, you were not kidding! This wine really deserves to be a specialty," Alexander had praised as he gulped it down by the cups, much to Lord Nuraman's approving delight.

And as soon as his cup was emptied, Lord Nuraman's newest concubine, Akisha, would be there to refill it.

That was why she did not sit down with the rest of the party to eat but instead stood right beside Alexander like a diligent maid, making sure her guest's plate was never short of any food and that his wine cup was never empty.

She paid special attention to the latter, because the faster the host could refill his guest's cup, the greater hospitality it showed in Adhania.

Furthermore, she also provided Alexander with more than just food, she also provided him with some entertainment in the form of eye candy.

Alexander quickly noticed that the sexy woman had significantly loosened the gown around her bust from the first time he saw her, so much so that it let Alexander have a tantalizing view of her deep, milky ravine every time she bent over to pour him a glass of wine, as well as hitting him with a rosy fragrance.

Alexander must have drunk twice or even thrice the amount of wine just to get that view and smell that sweet perfume again and again, by the end of which Alexander was intoxicated enough where he could only barely stop himself from grabbing those fruits right in front of everybody and start playing with them.

If this had been Lord Nuraman's tactic to get Alexander drunk, it had worked fantastically, and only Alexander's iron will and sense of shame developed in his previous life kept him from committing such socially infelicitous acts.

Of course, Alexander did not simply sit at the table gorging on food, getting drunk, and staring at cleavages.

He also made sure to socialize.

Alexander got to know about the details of Lord Nuraman's own family, listened to some of his life stories, and to reciprocate, shared a bit of his own, like how he took Adhan from Amenheraft.

"Ahh, it is a shame Lady Cambyeses could not join us," And for his part, Lord Nuraman also talked about Alexander's family like this, to which Alexander promised to bring them around

Alexander also talked with Kayvan, asking about his father, his 'famous in certain parts of Zanzan' sister, and even his two nieces who were staying with him.

Alexander was very well aware that Pasha Farzah had sent his son to check up on Azura and Azira as a side project.

"My father is well. He wanted to come personally to meet you, my lord, but the pressures of a prime minister are really a lot. He just could not manage the time," The handsome man, with that characteristic silver hair validating his Matrak bloodline breezily replied as he drank his chicken soup.

"Yes, yes, I saw it personally when I visited him. Being the right hand of the king is hard work."

"And besides, Zanzan is quite far from Adhan. Given your father's age, it best he does not exert himself too much."

Alexander casually replied, though given the man was touching close to sixty, he did fear he might suddenly have a heart attack and collapse.

Such examples were dime a dozen, especially given after crossing the age of 50, one's mortality rate jumped to 50 %.

So Pasha Farzah dying in the near future was really a coin flip, a dangerously high possibility.

A possibility which if were to come true would be very inconvenient for Alexander, as he was yet to meet and bond with Farzah's successor, meaning deals would be much harder to reach with the latter.

Sure, Alexander had heard about Pasha Farzah's eldest son from both him and Mikaya and even knew some of the things he did for him, such as many of the goods Pasha Farzah had promised Alexander were actually arranged under that man's supervision.

But given the man was busy ruling Matrak in his father's stead. Alexander was yet to get the chance face-to-face.

Meaning that familiarity that existed with the old man simply was not present with his successor.

And Alexander really did not know how to bridge that gap either.

According to Mikaya, the entire roundtrip from Zanzan to Matrak, including the duration of the stay would take almost five to six months, thus requiring Alexander to set aside almost half the year just for that meeting.

Alexander had much better things during that time, so clearly, that was not possible.

And it seemed his counterpart felt the same way, which was why the two men, though aware, had never written or spoken a single word to each other.

So when Alexander casually commented about Pasha Farzah's health, a part of him also began to hope that this did not come to bite him in the near future.

"Haha, yes, yes, I always tell him to pay a bit more attention to his health. But does he listen...." At Alexander's reminder, Kayvan chuckled and lightly shook his head in amusement.

And then the conversation moved to Azira and Azura, with Alexander asking how he found his nieces, knowing what the man wrote to Pasha Farzah regarding it would be critical in determining the old man's opinion of him.

The first time Alexander had written to Pasha Farzah describing the result of the war and its aftermath, especially regarding the fate of his manor, the old man had been so furious that his two granddaughters were put in danger that the vituperative letter was really written out of only curses.

'You...sewer rat....you promised...how dare you,,,,you cur...I will slaughter...'

This small exert was actually from a more civilized part of the letter.

And reading it, Alexander was half amused and half afraid, dreading to think what the old man would have done if he was actually present in front of him.

Perhaps he would have been straggled right then and there.

Pasha Farzah had even formally asked Alexander to return the two to him, claiming Zanzan was too dangerous for them.

And it was only with the twins personally writing a letter to him, urging him that they wanted to stay and that they were never in danger that the old man, seeing that distinctive handwriting reluctantly changed his mind.

But even then he sent his son to go see the situation for himself.

Chapter 649 Reminiscing About Mikaya

Pasha Farzah was never a man to just take someone's word for it, so one of Kayvan's main objectives here was to find out how the twins were doing.

So it could be seen why Alexander was interested in knowing Kayvan's evaluation regarding them.

"Haha, rest assured, Lord Alexander. I have rarely seen my nieces so happy."

"Running a temple by themselves had always been a dream of theirs. My father will get good news," Kayvan pleasantly answered Alexander, his friendly and positive answer helping Alexander put some of his worries to ease.

"I'm glad. The twin Highnesses seemed to be really enjoying themselves here," Alexander thus lightly smiled.

And then brought the last, and perhaps the most important topic of the day- Kayvan's youngest sister.

"How is Lady Mikaya? Is she still in Adhan? A lot of people here miss her," Alexander asked so in a casual tone, though his lips could not help but subconsciously curve into a smirk when he said the last line.

To Kayvan it only sounded like an innocent comment, like Alexander was trying to politely say how they had all enjoyed her company.

Whereas for Alexander, that sentence had a very different meaning.

A very different meaning indeed.

According to Ophenia, Mikaya had once become quite popular in her new job indeed, with sometimes people actually lining up right from the afternoon at the brothel's entrance to get a chance at tasting her, even though the 'show' started only after dinner.

The people even gave the three girls a crass name- Heaven's three butts, as that was only the part that would be visible to them,

And Ophenia would always find the day the three performed on the wall to be the most hectic one, with her sometimes even asking Cambyses to send ten to twenty city guards there just to keep the enormous crowd in line.

They were that popular.

And intrigued by the hype, Alexander had once gone there to see the marvel for himself, in full disguise of course.

And as he arrived during his turn, the very thing that caught his eyes first and foremost was the pair of guards armed in heavy bronze cuirass and wielding a giant halbert standing next to each of the girls, for a total number of six.

For such a small space that was a lot of guards.

And that was kind of the point.

Though these girls were engaged in perhaps one of the most degrading acts, still they were nobles, and pretty high ones at all, so security for the three had always been Alexander's top priority.

And these six were there to stop anyone from getting any funny ideas.

The customers were expected to insert, pound to their heart's content, perhaps spank a bit, and then unload before leaving.

That was it.

And these guards were there to ensure that was exactly what happened.

Though Alexander did feel sorry for the six of them a bit.

For though they ensured everyone else enjoyed themselves, they themselves had to endure a raging boner for as long as the service lasted, which would be at least a couple of hours.

It must have been torture.

With perhaps the only silver lining of going through all that discomfort for so long was that once the last customer left, they could get a turn of their own, and they could enjoy without any worry of time constraints.

And even better, they would not need to even pay.

As for what they got to enjoy without paying, well those looked exactly what Alexander had imagined in his mind.

All three alabaster butts hung off the wall like paintings by the gods.

Starting from the left, the tight, lean one Alexander recognized as belonging to Tajia's.

In the middle was the biggest and most voluminous one which was of course Mikaya's.

And lastly, the softest and fluffiest one situated on the far left was Nafia's.

They had by now gone from fair white to bright pink due to the rough kneading, and etched onto them were several handprints courtesy of the spanking

As for their private parts, well after having been used by so many men, all three's six orifices looked as expected.

The puckered hole at the top had gone from a bright pink to a dull brown and seemed to have been pried open permanently, so much so that it seemed to refuse to close, allowing everyone to peer into the bowels which bubbled with white cream.

And down below, that once beautiful flower also appeared devastated, like a thousand horses had trampled on it, as the beautiful petals vulgarly spread open, showing off their now browned, puffed up, and almost abused condition to the world, while twitching constantly.

Both of them were liberally leaking white sauce, falling like little drops to the ground or snaking down the butt before plummeting.

If not for the almost magical existence of legumnum, Alexander would have written off these girls' parts as 'very experienced.' I think you should take a look at

But since that drug existed, Alexander knew in less than two weeks, these would be back to being like a virgin's- blemishless, tight, pink, and like a snugly closed petal.

Alexander still could not get over how mysterious that plant was.

While Alexander stood there, marveling at the effects of that drug, he suddenly saw a woman approach one of the girls next to him, more specifically Nafia, carrying a pail of warm water and a soft brush.

And then pausing the service on that line for a while, she began to quickly use her instrument to try and clean the two organs, scraping out the excess milk the two flowers had been fed.

And looking around, Alexander noticed the other two also had their own attendants.

Opehnia would later inform Alexander that these women were also workers at the building, but had ended up on cleaning duty that day.

As for the reason why cleaning was even necessary, well, the human body would only take that much of a man's nectar before being filled up.

And so occasionally they needed to be emptied out to let the remaining customers enjoy the renewed one.

This girl appeared very expert in her work, as if she had done this dozens of times, which she had, and so by moving the brush quickly and at knowing angles, she tried to get as much of the goo out as possible.

And after only a minute she was done, having scraped out as much as she could, and finished by giving the two holes a splash of warm water to make them clean.

Pisssss

But just as she was about to leave, Nafia seemed to have decided to relax herself.

And as the golden liquid made that fabulous arc, producing steam as it landed, Alexander could not help but wonder how that outwardly shy girl would react if she were to know he had seen her doing so along with more than twenty people.

Would she be mortified?

Would she be bashful?

Or would she be happy?

The last one might sound strange, but going by the three's moans Alexander was able to pick up, Nafia seemed to be the most prolific one.

"Oh~ please... insert it a little more... um, it's not deep enough~ it's so itchy..."

"Push it in harder~please push it in harder..."

"Oh don't use your fingers... um eh ~ hurry... use your big cock... um~ fuck my slave cave."

These were only some of the moans Alexander was able to pick up that side.

And if he had not heard it personally, and unless he was absolutely certain it was indeed Nafia's voice, Alexander would have struggled to believe it was that same, demure girl.

It seemed what Mikaya had said was true, Nafia really had a second, much more lascivious face.

Splash

Alexander did not get too far with that thought, as suddenly the sound of water splashing against the concrete floor pierced his ears.

And immediately his eyes focused to see the workers who had cleaned Nafia, clean this as well.

And judging from her bored face, the girl did not seem to find the action at all surprising.

In fact, this was actually pretty common.

After all, the three could not go to the bathroom for the five to six hours they entertained the men and given it was little trouble, they simply did their little business here.

And they preferred doing it during the cleaning interlude, one because it was easier to relieve oneself when not being poked by a thick, meaty rod constantly.

Two because during cleaning, the soft bristles of the brush would brush against the urethra, stimulating movement.

And three because their little extra show provided some much-needed entertainment as the men impatiently waited for the clean-up to finish, letting those lucky ones be witness to the creation of a beautiful rainbow.

This act was actually quite a big hit.

And the other two too seemed to do this too, as upon approaching them Alexander picked out a light, lingering smell of ammonia around them, very faint but definitely present.

Evidence of their deeds as well.

Alexander would later be even told that some men with a particular fetish would try to drink it when they released or at least lick the part clean.

To which Alexander would say he did not judge.

It took quite a bit of effort for Alexander to move his eyes away from the raw organs, and on what he laid his eyes next was the real reason why he wanted Mikaya back in Zanzan.

Chapter 650 Reminiscing About Mikaya (Part-2)

Alexander's eyes were drawn to the wall next to each of the girl's white flanks because on the walls were numerous black tally marks.

As for what they represented, well that was pretty easy to guess, for Alexander saw before anyone could start enjoying themselves, they had to pay to get a small piece of chalk which they could use to draw a line on the wall, thus helping keep track of the number each girl served.

And just going by eyeball numbers, Alexander already counted 30 for each of them.

It was ridiculous and represented a huge amount of income for the establishment.

As for the reason why the counting was done like this, well one of them was that it made double-checking the money collected with the men serviced easier, ensuring there was no one slipping in one a free meal, or that the cashier was not pocketing one or two pieces for themselves.

There was also the visual appeal for the men, knowing they were able to have a girl who was so popular and wanted by so many others.

And lastly, and perhaps the most compelling reason, this was one of Mikaya's preferences, to know exactly how many men had used her.

Remember, she did this also with the goal of breaking her previous record.

In fact, the silver-haired beauty had actually wanted these marks to be on her butt, as some kind of tattoo which she could look in the mirror afterward.

But after trying that for the first time, it was found that the sweat and the touching quickly rubbed the ink off, and much more spectacularly, after some time they started, it was found that there was no more space on the flesh canvas.

Mikaya and her performance were that popular.

In fact the day after Mikaya's first service, Alexander remembered Ophelia very excitedly coming to tell him that those three in just one night had made close to 1,000 ropals!

To give some context to how huge that was, well an average night worker made 8 to 10 ropals a night or 30 ropals if three of them were combined.

So Mikaya and the duo made in one day what most others did in a whole month!

And better yet, because of how rich she was, Mikaya only took a token amount, leaving the business with most of the money.

She left about eighty percent of her earnings to Alexander, whereas other workers usually capped their commission at fifty percent, with an additional food and lodging charge of 3 ropals a day.

And it was not as if she was cheap either.

In fact, she was quite expensive,

Alexander had set the cost of admission at 5 ropal per person, or about a whole day's pay for a worker.

This was far higher, more than double as a matter of fact, of the average rate of two ropals one needed to spend a night with a decent girl.

And there, one could get a private room, a nice bed to lie in, and a one-to-one experience.

While here you could not even get to see the face of the girl you were fucking.

It was just a production line of lewd, perverted pleasure where everyone had to bear their private parts for all others to see and then insert into an orifice that was most of the time full of another's man gift, enjoy the sensation for about three -four minutes, and then you were done.

Yet Alexander planned to charge more than double the usual rate!

Normally, with this price, it would have been hard for any to five men willing to experience this, never mind the upwards of sixty men each of them served each performance.

The proposal was so ludicrous in fact that even the usually out-of-touch with money Mikaya did think it was a good pricing policy.

So when Alexander had set the price so high, she had vehemently protested, even going as far as to claim that this was Alexander's unscrupulous way of denying her pleasure.

At one point she even demanded she be made free.

After all, for the uber-rich princess, there was really no difference between something that was free or that cost only 5 ropals.

She even offered to reimburse Alexander for using his facilities, instead of charging others anything.

But Alexander had only said this, "My lady, it would be a great disrespect to the gods if you were to offer your services for free."

"They must have spent a lot of time crafting that perfect organ."

"And it would be a sin onto the gods for a lowly peasant to get to experience it for free."

"5 ropals was already cheap enough."

Alexander had good reasons for saying this.

Because he had experienced Mikaya twice and knew just how pleasurable her thing was.

Soft, plump, tight and so decadently addicting, even with Alexander's vast experience only two others could even come close, Ophenia and Seelima.

And those two had their own histories. I think you should take a look at

So he was absolutely sure the men coming to her for her services had never tasted something even a hundredth this pleasing.

Thus in Alexander's opinion to be able to experience something that exquisite for 5 ropals was almost equal to it being free.

Hearing Alexander's confident words, Mikaya then had stopped her protest and simply waited to see if Alexander was just all talk or if he really could deliver the crowd he promised.

And Alexander for his part tried his best to advertise the goods as best as possible as discreetly as possible.

After all, no matter how good Mikaya felt, it would not matter if nobody knew about it.

So a couple of weeks before officially starting the act, Alexander began handing out 'free samples' free of charge.

A group of young men, be they workers, soldiers, or even just regular passersby would be randomly invited into the red building, be given a free drink containing that shiva drug, and then be asked to taste Mikaya for free.

And though upon seeing the novel arrangement for the first time, many men would be initially reluctant due to having to do the act in front of everyone, once they had a taste, all of them without exception would start swinging their hips like monkeys.

Mikaya made sure to squeeze them with all her might to get them hooked and given the succubus's skill, the average players could barely exceed the 2-minute mark, with many finishing before half of that.

She was that good.

So the news of this prowess as well as the the never before seen service soon spread like wildfire, first among these testers' friends and even family and then simply through hearsay.

And then with a bit of marketing hype before the opening day, the people lining up to taste Mikaya was overwhelming even at those exuberant rates.

And her two 'sisters in crime' seemed not too far behind either.

For though Alexander never experienced them himself, the length of the line of men waiting to taste them spoke clearly of their popularity, and seeing how quickly both were able to wring out their prize from the men, almost keeping up with their mistress, their skills were certainly on par.

And as Alexander observed the ongoing process, the smooth, seamless operation seemed to speak of almost a kind of lasting harmony.....if one kind did not take into scout the kind of business being done here.

Alexander was satisfied with how the operations seemed to be running and having seen everything here, he decided it was time to go meet the three in person backstage and hear of their experience from the horse's mouth.

When suddenly,

"Hey, buddy! What'cha gawking for! Sticking it in or get out of the fucking way! Stop wasting all of our damn time!"

Just as Alexander was about to move, this crass, almost violent curse hit his ear.

And turning around, he saw a shabbily dressed thin man with bad teeth glaring at him.

Clearly he was getting impatient that Alexander had been just standing there not doing anything for so long while he was in the back with a raging boner.

"Ah, apologies good sir. Please you can go. It seems I'm really too shy to do this, haha,"

Facing this hostile man, Alexander reacted very politely, quickly stepping out of the way, and gesturing him to go in front of him.

He even slightly bowed to make the deal sweeter.

After all, Alexander of course had absolutely no intention of tasting any of the three in this state.

But whereas this cordial invitation should have made the man go hop and skip past him, instead, a scared, almost terrified look appeared on that dirty man's face.

Normal people did not talk like that.

If it was someone of similar status as him, they would have instantly cursed back, not politely made way for him.

And having lived long enough, the man knew exactly the kind of people who talked so elegantly.

Nobles!

'What are they doing here?' He went pale-faced as his eyes started darting.

First, it landed on Alexander, who appeared very clean and refined with a calm demeanor.

Not phrases one would commonly use to describe a commoner.

And then like how a cautious prey could sense predators, his instinct told him he was being glared at by several very sharp-eyed individuals.

And these men seemed to be very angry.

Of course, they were Alexander's bodyguards in plain clothes.

And as these glares pierced the man, he suddenly felt faint.

