

Herald 651

Chapter 651 Reminiscing About Mikaya (Part-3)

The man standing in front of Alexander was one of the people with a fast brain and very good people reading skills.

And so reading the subtle clues was able to accurately guess Alexander's status, though not his exact identity.

But he did not need to do the latter.

Just the former was enough to send him into a shocked stammer.

"Ahhh! My apologies my lord...I mean sire....I mean...no..ummm...I suddenly remember I something to do."

The man was barely able to form a single coherent sentence as he shook like a leaf, and then turning to the cashier suddenly bought everything he had in his pocket and shoved it into his hand, "Here! He is my brother! This is my treat!"

And then turning to give Alexander a big smile, said "Brother! Have a good day! Sorry I could not accompany you!"

With this an instant later he was gone, trotting and even slightly breaking into a run as he tried to get away as far as possible from Alexander.

To him Alexander appeared like a malicious beast, one from whom he could not wait to run away from and hide himself in the sea of people.

While Alexander, gazing at the retreating back of the unknown man, at first felt a bit amused at the overreaction.

He did not think his politeness would have been seen as something so scary.

So he could not help but break into a short, hollow chuckle.

But seeing this, a small part of his heart also felt happy and faltered.

Because the man's reaction was the perfect evidence of Alexander's power.

Or at least the power of the social class he resided in.

This was what it meant to be a noble.

Wielding such immense fear and respect just by one's presence alone.

It was a feeling Alexander found intoxicating, and something he came to appreciate to the fullest after he had lost all his powers for 10 whole years when his existence was equal to a pebble on the road.

Before that painful experience, back in his previous life, Alexander's mindset was the same as the ordinary masses, going about his life without too much care.

And like the typical man, he would regularly slight the ambitious and power-hungry people he would sometimes see in the news, people like businessmen, politicians, and military leaders, as being too greedy and soulless.

He would even wonder why these people worked so hard and struggled so much to stay or obtain more power when they perfectly had more than enough means to enjoy a happy, relaxed life.

But now in his current life, he could finally empathize with them.

He understood that those people understood that the real way to get happiness was to get more power.

More power meant more ways one could determine one's own fate.

And the amount of work they put in to achieve it was just part of the 'fun'.

For them work was not a chore, but a rewarding experience.

Just like for Alexander, all the work hard work he did to develop his fief was not at all painful, but a pleasurable event, in doing which he could get respect like he had done just now.

He had not even needed to tell him who he was for the aggressive man to back down like a wet cat and run away shivering.

It was an event that needed to experience to really understand the feeling

Alexander had never expected to experience this type of profound feeling in such a place.

But Alexander did not also ruminate on the man's action.

A big part of him was also very impressed at the man's intuition and quick thinking.

Not many people possessed such keen insight to instantly recognize the strength of their opponent, especially when they were disguised.

'Did he recognize me?' Alexander even wondered.

Though that did not really matter.

Alexander was not concerned about his identity getting revealed.

Other than the simple fact that the man might not have identified Alexander as Alexander but simply understood him to be a noble, even if he had, the man seemed to be clever enough what was best for him.

It was because of that he had changed his address of Alexander from 'lord' to 'sire' to then 'brother'.

He clearly understood that Alexander or in his mind a noble was here incognito and that he wished to stay that way.

And so even when caught off guard, that man tried to very cleverly spin his words in that way.

This went to show how quick-witted and on his feet he was, a rare trait to have indeed.

'He would have made a good spy.' Alexander even half absently thought.

And then thinking on a whim, suddenly turned to ask two of his bodyguards,

"Go after that man and bring him to me. Make sure not to hurt him."

And with that the two men were off to follow that man with hurried steps.

While Alexander very casually left the line, drawing nobody's notice given everyone was too busy looking at the beautiful painting, as he then inconspicuously entered a part of the building accessible to only the staff.

Here, Alexander came in front of a gate, being guarded by two men whom Alexander personally knew as being from his mercenary group, and so seeing their boss and his familiar bodyguards, they let him in immediately.

After this, Alexander left his men to freshen themselves in a room, for he did not want anyone who encountered Mikaya day to day to see her in that state, while he took a few twisting corridors to finally arrive at his destination.

Alone.

Swingggggg

The heavy oak door that was guarded opened with an oily squeak, and as Alexander walked in, he finally got a look at the back during operations.

And honestly, it was nothing too crazy as one might have anticipated.

For instance, the centerpiece of the attractive, Mikaya only had a slightly bored face, as she laid down on a velvety, soft devan, wine glass in hand, while occasionally moaning.

To her left, Tajia was in a similar position, biting on an apple while occasionally whimpering, her face lightly flushed.

As for Nafia, well she seemed to be the odd one out, as she had her head buried into the pillow and loudly moaning, crying fantastically vulgar words some of which even sounded new to Alexander.

Truly she was the one enjoying this the most.

Alexander's entry at first did not cause any commotion.

In fact nobody even barely paid attention to him.

Because these doors would constantly open and close, bringing in new food and wine, while removing the bowls and trays.

This peace lasted until one of the many girls attending to the three's all kinds of needs suddenly turned her head to spot Alexander.

"Ahhh! Who are you!"

She immediately screamed.

No unauthorized person was supposed to be able to get here.

'What are the guards doing?' She thought in panic inside her head.

"Alex! You finally came to see me!"

While the girl's panicked shout also drew the attention of the chief performer, who upon seeing Alexander, gave a short exclamation of surprised joy, immediately sending him a large grin.

Just from his exchange alone, one would be hard-pressed to think this was anything but a normal meeting between friends as if Mikaya was just running over to hug a friend she had not seen for a long time.

Whereas in reality, the girl in the conversation was naked, strapped to the wall, and being pounded from behind.

"Yes, well you are currently the talk of the entire city. I had to come and visit, haha," Alexander,

very much like Mikaya, also appeared very nonchalant witnessing the scene placed in front of him, replying this in a mirthful voice as he slowly approached her with leisurely steps.

"This new look suits you," Then having gotten close enough, commented this.

And what he was referring to here was how Mikaya's hair was no longer that stunning snowy, silver white, but dyed pitch black, in order to of course disguise her.

"Thanks! Sister Tayin helped e...Ahhh!...that's a big one!" Mikaya had attempted to answer that in a loose, breezy, but it seemed a particularly large one had entered her, hence the soul-stirring moan.

Hearing which the primal lust in Alexander swirled like a whirlpool.

Mikaya really was a succubus.

"Hehe, well did you enjoy the show at the back? How was it?" The Matrak princess quickly recovered from her pleasurable haze and asked this without a shred of shame.

She even sounded eager to know what Alexander's experience was, excitedly adding,

"Did you use me? How was I!"

While Alexander playfully posed.

"What makes you think I went there? Could I have not come here directly,"

"Hahaha...well for one there that's raging boner, so that does not sound too likely," But Mikaya cleverly pointed out.

And she was right.

Alexander certainly had been roused by that previous scene, hence he sported the boner the moment he saw his scene.

It appeared that even in this state, Mikaya's mind was sharp enough to notice this small detail and more impressively make that connection.

Mikaya's intelligence never failed to impress Alexander.

Which was all the more why hearing such an accurate argument, Alexander could not help but sigh a bit in his heart.

He had said it many times, and will say it many times more, Mikaya really would have been his perfect woman if not for that 'tiny massive' flaw.

Chapter 652 Reminiscing About Mikaya (Part-4)

If Mikaya had been just a bit more prude, Alexander would have seriously considered having her in his family.

But as of now....

"Haha, well maybe I'm just glad to see you. You look stunning," To Mikaya's clever argument, Alexander could only forcefully chuckle this.

And the girl very proudly replied, "Yes, I know. Thanks."

Mikaya had been always one to flaunt her looks.

"Nice of you to come my lord! Welcome!"

Finally, as the two finished their greeting, another voice rang from Mikaya's side, Tajia's, who very similar to her mistress gave Alexander a very relaxed greeting.

And then, as if searching for something, she looked around and having found it, called,

"Ah girls, what are you doing just standing still? Come greet your master!"

Tajia found the attendant girls were all bunched together and trying to move towards an inconspicuous corner of the room like they were cornered prey in front of an apex predator.

They were smart enough to recognize Alexander's identity given how the powerful, mysterious mistresses they attended to seemed to be so chummy with him, as well as the fact the guards outside had not made a peek even when one of them had screamed so loud.

There was even something about how Alexander moved about the place, with a confident, powerful gait, as if he owned the place.

Which he literally did.

All these combined as well the title they called him by made these workers fairly certain who could he be.

And unsure of why he was here, the girls instinctually bunched up together, as if seeking security in numbers.

To these girls, even a jolly Alexander appeared somewhat intimidating, especially given the unexpected place he was in.

While Alexander, at Tajia's mention too finally got the chance to turn his attention to these hard-working work girls, who were here to attend to the three during their work.

And they did anything and everything here, from serving them food and drinks to massaging them to fanning them if it was too hot, to adjusting the softness of the pillows to a million other odd jobs.

Whatever the three fancied their whims, these girls were there to fulfill them and make sure the trio were as comfortable in their stations as possible.

"It is a pleasure to meet you ladies." Towards the wary women, Alexander sent a kind smile and then asked, "Would you kindly give us a moment alone?"

Alexander did not want other bystanders to listen in on his conversation, even if they were fairly low-level workers.

"Y...yes," And the girls were in fact very pleased to hear the request, and answered as quickly as possible, almost stammering in the process.

And then after a hurried bow, attempted to leave.

Attempted because just as they were leaving, suddenly Tajia's languid voice rang out,

"Oh! Kajoli, you stay. The rest of you can go."

And at this, Alexander clearly saw how the request produced a deep, blush on that cute, oval face, as the now abandoned by her colleagues, now alone girl asked in a shy voice, "What can I do mistress?"

Though something in that tone told Alexander the girl knew.

"Heheeee," And it seemed Tajia knew that too as she only wiggled her finger to gesture the girl to come in front of her.

"I want a drink. Open up." And once the girl approached her close enough, Tajia said so in a neutral tone, as if ordering a drink in a bar.

"Umm..." But the girl did not immediately fulfill the request, as she first turned a bit awkwardly to look at Alexander, the flush in her face apparent.

Clearly, she was embarrassed to do what was being asked of her.

But this hesitation only lasted a moment.

She knew she was in no position to oppose anything.

So at her mistress's request, the girl deftly undid the strings holding her one piece together and let the thin linen cloth fall soundlessly to the ground, like a feather without making nary a sound, and voila, she presented herself before Alexander in her full glory.

Alexander had not accepted that to happen.

The girl appeared young, with cute dimpled cheeks and equally small, cute breasts, with two black beans being placed on them.

Her tummy was a bit sunken, the hips curved outward to show her approaching womanhood, and her modest butt bulged outward

She was no world-shaking beauty, barely above average, and raising his brows a bit at the act, Alexander felt if Tajia intended to use her to pleasure him, he would be disappointed.

Alexander's standards were a bit higher.

"Hehe, since lord Alexander is here, here is a little show from me,"

But Alexander would not be disappointed, as saying this, Tajia strongly grabbed the girl by the hips and dragged her towards her, making sure the girl's snatch was directly in front of her, which she then without any further ado began to eat out.

"Ahhh...mistress...so good, ohhhh... so deep....yes...eehhhh you're already biting,"

And immediately the moans the girl began to let out sounded otherworldly to Alexander,

He never would have guessed this shy type of girl would have this kind of pipes to her or that she would be able to sing so melodiously.

Either Tajia was that good, or the girl was that sensitive, or more likely both.

"Ahhh...yes...bite harder mistress...tear it apart...ahh...more...coming...coming...so goodd...cominnngggg..."

It took Tajia less than thirty seconds to make the girl come.

And not only did she come, Alexander clearly saw how her hips buckled when she reached her orgasm, before shooting out a great stream of fluids into Tajia's face.

"Hehehe, well I bet you have never seen anything like that before huh, my lord?" And once Tajia pulled her completely flushed with the girl's juices face out from her crotch, posed this in a very confident voice.

After all, squirters were quite uncommon, and even considered by many to be myths, so she thought Alexander might have never seen this.

"Di...did she pee?" And Alexander was content to play along, having no intention of revealing his wife's skills to outsiders, as his eyes widened to look at the glimmering water flowy freely down Tajia's face.

"Hahaha..." And this got the predicted reaction from the two, who chuckled out loud.

Even Kajoli pressed her lips together to stop herself from smiling in fear of being rude to Alexander.

She did not think the city lord was so verdant to sex.

"Why don't you try and find out?" While Mikaya offered Alexander this with a twinkle in her eyes, tempting him to try the new snack.

But Alexander very gracefully declined, "Thank you. Maybe some other time."

He would have tried it so openly even if he genuinely did not know about it.

"Ahhh, where are you going girl *pah*."

In the meantime, at Alexander's decline, the girl had attempted to separate herself from Tajia's grasp thinking her part was over, but ended up getting lightly spanked by her mistress on the flanks for the mistake.

"We are not done here. I want to eat more,"

Saying this Tajia pulled her girl even closer, then in a playful twist started to pour some wine over the girl's wet snatch, letting red liquid coat the short patch of black grass thoroughly, almost as a kind of seasoning, and then resumed her meal, making Kajoli produce a lust stirring background music for Alexander.

Facing her mistress's attack, Kajoli could only try to steady her wobbly legs and endure, as she felt the pliant organ hit all sensitive spots and drive her craze.

"Sometimes if we want something to occupy our mouth, we use the girls. Kajoli is our favorite, hahaha" While from the side, Mikaya provided some commentary.

"Ahhh...mistress not the ass too...ohh...too much...*squirt*..*squirt*...ahhh...again...I'm dying...*squirt*...*squirt*."

And it seemed the two had already moved up their play, as Alexander could see one of Tajia's dainty fingers stuck deep inside the pink hole, while she kept eating the poor girl out even as she was coming, and making Kajopi scream louder and louder.

The duo seemed very occupied so Alexander decided to leave them alone to it.

And instead turned his focus to the last one in the group.

"Nafia! How long are you going to feign your ignorance!" As Alexander turned to face that outwardly shy girl, Mikaya's questioning voice shot towards her first.

And it was not that soft, flirty one that Mikaya usually spoke in.

It was cold and authoritative, implicitly ordering Nafia to greet Alexander.

Mikaya was in fact very displeased that Nafia had yet to greet Alexander even after so long.

After all, there was no way she could have missed Alexander's presence until now,

Even as further evidence, Mikaya keenly noticed Nafia had stopped screaming out all those vulgar words, now only content to chewing her lips and moaning.

Clearly she was embarrassed

But knowing what her mistress was like when angry, once she heard the order, Nafia instantly pulled her head off the cushy pillow like she had been shocked and quickly turned to Alexander to give a flushed welcome,

"Hel...hello my lord."

And though it was completely unintentional, the fact that she would pull off such a shy, embarrassed face even in that state, Alexander found it to be very alluring.

He felt this type of red, blush with a slight tinge of pink on the face was something only a newlywed, virgin should have been able to pull off.

"Hello to you too, my lady," He then greeted cordially.

Chapter 653 Reminiscing About Mikaya (End)

"Hello to you too, my lady. You look very beautiful," Alexander, like with the other two women was very nonchalant with the greeting, cordial yet cold and unfazed.

Though given the circumstances it was something very hard to do.

"....." And following this, an awkward pause followed

Nafia still tried to appear dignified and shy, as she averted her eyes in bashfulness, while Alexander did not know how he should address her proclivities.

"By the way Miss Nafia, I enjoyed seeing your little golden shower back there. As expected of a true noble, you even pee beautifully."

Until finally he said this.

Alexander felt that given everything he witnessed, and the current circumstance he was in, there was little point in trying to play coy.

To this Nafia blushed furiously, while Mikaya broke into uproarious laughter, as she teased 'Hahahaha,...you hear that girl...he saw you do that....hahaha he saw everything."

Nafia had been able to enjoy all this to her heart's content even though she knew how wrong the morality of it all was because she felt secure that no one knew their identity.

Except for Ophenia nobody knew who they were, and during their stay, they used fake names.

Mikaya was called Flower,

Nafia was called Leaf and

Tajia was called Petal.

And that was how even the attending girls called them, with an addition of Miss.

These girls knew nothing more than that these three were mysterious and powerful ladies and if they knew that was good for them, they should follow everything they say.

But Alexander was not like that.

He knew both their faces, and with him so openly revealing the act, it finally shattered that illusory facade of decency Nafia had built in her heart.

"Ahh! This one is big... so good...yes...yes...fuck...fuck...go harder,"

And so soon, Nafia's face started to contort, from that once shy, demure maiden to that a lusty whore lost in pleasure.

Since everything was laid out in the open, she felt no longer the need to keep holding back that curtain,

And as Alexander witnessed the transformation, it was so extreme that he would have had a hard time believing it if he had not seen it for himself.

It was as if a completely different entity had possessed Nafia, a succubus.

"See? What did I tell you?" And from the side, Mikaya knowingly commented such, finding herself vindicated at having said that Nafia was the party animal of the group when Alexander refused to first believe her.

And here Alexander would one hundred percent agree he was wrong.

"Hahaha, yes! This is the real me. Ah! I love this so much. I love sex so much. Oohhhh so good!"

And hearing her mistress reveal her true self, Nafia made no attempt to hide it, even deciding to join in, lewdly shouting,

"And these cocks are so hard. Like fat clubs! Nothing like the peasant ones we thought it would be."

"Ahhh...they reach so deep too,"

"Every time I get pounded, my pussy and ass quivers. And when they fill me up, it feels so hot...like I'm getting branded."

"Ahhhh...just like now... it burns...ohhh...another one....without even a second to rest... ehhhh...harder! Do me harder!"

Nafia appeared barely be able to form any meaningful, coherent words by now as she lost herself to pleasure, but not before turning to look at Alexander and saying,

"Thank you! Thank you for letting me experience this Alexander! These cocks feel too goooood! "

It seemed Nafia had finally snapped as she then started to try to thrust her hips too, and if not for the robust wall securely binding her, Alexander would have been concerned about her breaking the whole thing down just so both their lips could mate together.

That was how enthusiastic the girl appeared.

And seeing Nafia in this state, Alexander strangely did not feel the gleeful rush of euphoria he thought he would feel upon seeing her get humiliated.

Matter of fact he began to feel even a bit guilty for pushing her along this path.

This was not a thing a normal human being did.

And he felt a bit of regret at being an accomplice, perhaps even the mastermind of this.

However, it could also be argued that Nafia was really always like that and Alexander had simply helped to break her out of her shell.

Regardless of which argument one took, it still left Alexander a bit regretful over what he had done.

But this poignant reflection was very short-lived, for it was shattered by Mikaya's sharp lustful moan,

"Ahhhh...yes that is right. These cocks do feel very good...even those back home don't always feel so good. I'm impressed"

Mikaya was there to attest to Nafia's claim.

"So I'm guessing I was able to keep my promise and deliver the quality you desired, hmmm?"

And at this happy news, Alexander had a slightly smug look on his face, though he really owed all this to the shiva drug.

It really worked wonders.

In fact, he did not merely owe that drug for enabling him to keep his promise.

It was also a massive boon to his business.

The regulars here of course had begun to take notice of their changes after a few trips, and so soon the exploits of the brothel began to spread like wildfire among particular groups of city dwellers.

Many men spoke in hushed tones in taverns or private meetings of going to a certain place had gotten them a larger organ.

And in that way, Ophenia's Heavenly Red Petal's reputation began to soon surge

And the sacred priestess of the Temple of Gia was of course there to play this situation to her advantage.

Ophenia claimed that many of the girls here were blessed by goddess Gaia and that eating, drinking, and sleeping with them might help them enlarge their organ size if they were devout and secure enough in their wish.

And the men, who had no idea that many of their drinks were spiked with the shiva drug, bought Ophenia's claim hook, line, and sinker.

And as they bought the drinks and ate the food, just from that alone, Ophenia was able to collect more than 10,000 ropals monthly a ludicrous amount for a brothel of that size.

And since the drug until now had yet to show any side effects, and it raked in so much money, Alexander too had no problem with this experiment continuing, and letting Ophenia fill her purse.

Mikaya, upon seeing Alexander's smug face as he commented, kind of felt ticked off Mikaya, and as she sneered,

"Heh! Why are you acting so smug? Wasn't it you who promised this so that you get to see us be humiliated?"

"Well, how do you like it? Does seeing us like this satisfy you?"

"Us getting used by plebians whose face even we can't see."

And this reminder brought Alexander back to the thoughts he was having.

'Perhaps all this was a mistake.' A small voice inside of Alexander absent-mindedly mewled.

"Hahaha, what do you mean, my lady? I only thought of this because I thought you would enjoy this. I thought I was being a good host."

But Alexander pushed those thoughts away for now, as he answered with a hollow chuckle as such, then quickly changing topics, asked,

"By the way, how often do you work? Is this a weekly thing?"

Alexander did not know the trio's exact schedules, that he left to Ophenia.

Now, Alexander's forceful way of changing the topic certainly did not escape Mikaya, but frankly, she also did not care.

It was an open secret why Alexander had put them here.

So she did not bother to expose Alexander and humored his question,

"We work 3 days a week, every alternative week for a total of 6 days a month."

"On Saturday, we each take one client one on one for 600 ropals."

"On Monday, all three of us are available for a foursome. That costs 2,000 ropals. But if you come with 9 or more people, then you get a discount, it is 1,800."

"We love to get all three of your holes stuffed at the same time...ahhhh," As Mikaya said, a sinful cloud of breath escaped her, as if she was remembering all the kind of stuff she had gone through during that even in her short time here.

And then even enthusiastically added, "Of course, bringing more than 9 is also no problem. We can easily take two cocks in at once. The more the merrier, hehe,"

Alexander's lips only twitched at hearing this girl who seemed to have no bottom line.

While Mikaya finished her answer,

"As for Wednesday...well we do this."

"And then we take the next week off to let the legummum do its job."

"That's it really."

And that was really all Alexander wanted to know.

"I see. That is very impressive. I can see your business is going very well."

He said though the stiffness in his voice was apparent.

That was because when he had heard of Mikaya's rate, his heart shook as if it was stuck by a mini earthquake.

No sane man should spend that much just to sleep with a girl for a night.

And he took a bit to recover.

Afterward, Alexander chartered a bit more with the girls, nothing really specific, and having been there long enough, felt it was time to return.

But as he returned, that little, innocent mission he had sent two of his men out for, would soon grab his attention.

Chapter 654 A Separate Journey

As Alexander left Mikaya and the others, he still could not warp his head around the prices Mikaya had quoted, particularly the combined one.

'2,000 ropals for one night with the three of them'.

That was ridiculous.

And all that those three needed to do was spread their legs a bit.

'I wish I was a girl,' Alexander hence could not help but half mutter.

For context, a peasant earned less than 2,000 ropals a year, and if that was to be converted to the modern time, one night would set someone back 70,000 dollars if he lived in the states, the median salary there.

It was an eye-watering price fit for only kings.

But judging from Mikaya's tone, they seemed to have no shortage of clients.

In fact they might even have too many.

Though if one thought about it, it was quite understandable.

Given how beautiful the three were, especially Mikaya, Alexander felt that if had the money and their circumstances were different, he would have also booked a night with this succubus or if possible all three succubi.

They were that charming.

And it was not all like these men were cheated out of their experience.

No, in fact they were very well entertained, very well indeed.

Neither Alexander nor OP knew what went on in Mikaya's personal room when she had these sessions.

Because frankly, the two were not at all interested in knowing all the things the men did to the three.

As long as the men did not hurt anyone, both Alexander and OP did not care what happened to Mikaya or her two sisters in crime

That was also why Alexander was unable to understand the allure the trio possessed.

The kind of experience the three gave to their clients was mind-bendingly out of this world and almost addicting.

Mikaya's private room had all the toys she could have asked for and she made sure to use all of them to entertain the men who paid as much as their month's salary to get this opportunity even when they split the cost by coming in a group.

So it was really not as easy as just spreading the leg as Alexander was making it up to be.

And the three were made to go through almost every depraved a man could think of as the men used them.

Other than the usual things one could expect in an orgy such, as group fellatios, simultaneous multiple penetrations in all types of positions, and being touched, groped, and squeezed all the body, they were also played with using all the toys.

For instance, Mikaya might be made to sit on the wooden horse, wriggling in discomfort as the guys teased her, sucking, pinching, and pulling her cheery buds.

Sometimes they even gagged and then hit her with a crop leaving red lashes on her fair skin as the edge dug into her vulnerable flower, making her groan in pain and pleasure.

In one of the sessions, the guys even got Nafia to sit facing her, and then used two nipple clamps to attach each other's nipples together, keeping it taut so that when one wiggled, the other moaned in pain at her nipple getting stretched.

The men had a good laugh seeing the two try and pull the other towards each other to lessen her own pain, while the men constantly teased them by things like tickling them to prevent that.

There were of course numerous more examples of such, like being blindfolded to guess the cock, by either the above or lower mouth, being tied up in all types of postures such as having the hands and feet bound, thus being at the men's mercy, being stacked up atop one another to make a tower, and many, many more.

The things that these men got to experience in the few hours they were with the three was something they would have never even dreamt of doing with even a whore, forget their wives.

It was a once-in-a-lifetime unforgettable experience.

And most men would find themselves completely drained by the end.

So if one thought of Mikaya's service like that and not a regular occurrence, well then her prices were really not too outrageous.

When Alexander was about to just leave after finishing his meet and greet with Mikaya when she tempted him to stay a bit longer, saying,

"Ahh, Alex, you came from so far away. I can't let you leave empty-handed! Stay! At least let me take care of that tent of yours," as she then opened her mouth and swirled her tongue, "It's all clean and unused here, see...ahhhhh."

And Mikaya was right in claiming that.

But Alexander felt even though he could not see it, having another man have the same girl he was being with was too big a hurdle to overcome.

"Perhaps another time. Have a good time." So he quickly made his exit saying this, but not before clearly hearing Mikaya send the word "Prude!" towards his way.

Something which Alexander let in through one ear and threw out the other.

Instead, when he rejoined with his guards in the back room, he was more intrigued to see that the two he had sent to fetch the man had not returned yet.

Alexander was sure they should have been back by now.

After all, how long did it take to catch up to an unarmed man and ask him to follow them,

So he asked around for confirmation.

But Hemicus shook his head.

This was definitely strange.

"Did they get drunk along the way? Or did they get bored of waiting for me and go to have a bit of fun?" So Alexander humorously chuckled.

Although the two were late, Alexander did not freak out, for these were well-armed and well-trained.

The thought they could be in danger never even crossed Alexander's mind.

At best he thought they might have gotten lost given the darkness outside.

Whereas these men were currently really in a spot of hot water.

They had followed the man just as Alexander had instructed, but the man moved too quickly for them to easily catch up.

They were hampered by the fact that given the night, their visibility was low and furthermore, this shabby man seemed to know the city like the back of his hand and kept being able to dodge them.

'Where is he going?' The bodyguards were puzzled.

Until finally, the man stopped.

Because the man seemed to have arrived at this destination- an inn.

'*Knock*, *Knock* Finally I made it,' He said to himself knocking on the now-closed establishment, while wiping the sweat off his brow

He would have never expected to run into a noble in such a place.

'But fortunately, the man did not seem to have taken my crude talk as an offense,' The shabby man then said relieved, unaware that he had been followed.

This was because the man had subconsciously expected Alexander to follow him, and kept looking out for him, missing the two inconspicuous bodyguards silently trailing him.

And as for why he had taken such a winding route, well that was the precautions he liked to take due to his job.

One could never be too careful after all.

But though this was usually a foolproof method, the man in his panic had been too lax during the escape and allowed the two bodyguards to still keep track of him.

"What a waste of time,"

And having finally caught up, one of the bodyguards grumbled as he went to bang on the light wooden door to the now-closed establishment.

"*Bang* , *Bang* , hey buddy open up. We want to talk to you!" He loudly called out.

But instead of getting the usual response of the door opening or even a reply from the other side, his ears only picked up hurried footsteps and seemingly panicked shouts.

He could not make out exactly what they were saying, but it seemed it was some kind of orders going about in hushed whispers.

"*Bang* , *Bang* , hey! Open up!" And seeing this dealy, the man knocked again, this time much more forceful.

Creaaaakkkk

And finally, there was an answer, as an old man peeping through the gap in the door.

"What do you want at this hour? We do not have any alms, go away!" He gruffly said in an annoyed voice, his eyes expressing disgust at the two.

"What! Fuck off! Let us in old motherfucker!"

And seeing this skeleton of a nobody treat them, people who served right next to the city lord as beggars very much ticked off the bodyguard, as he shouted excitedly.

Bang!

While his colleague was much more hot-tempered and directly kicked the door open, the flimsy door not standing a ghost of a chance facing the strike from such a strong man, as it swung open, sending the old, considerably weaker old man flying.

"What! What happened!" And as the door crashed open, panicked shouts quickly began to ring out all over the inn.

"Shoot! Shoot them!"

And at that order, *Twang!*

Suddenly a crossbow bolt hit one of the bodyguards squarely on the chest.

"Urgghhhh," And the strike sent the man reeling back a few steps, as the bolt poured all its momentum into him, before sticking itself deeply into him.

But there was no blood.

The cuirass, chainmail, and thorax combination had saved the man.

It was apparent that what they had discovered was no innocent, ordinary inn, but seemingly a hideout for a group or gang.

Chapter 655 Spy Ring

"Yo...wha ...what...!" Seeing his partner get shot out of nowhere right in front of him, and be sent reeling, the other bodyguard slightly panicked.

But only slightly.

Because an instant later his training kicked in and he turned his head from looking at his partner to locating the enemy.

And then, in a complete twist to what an untrained man would usually do, which was run backward and try to create distance between himself and the shooter, instead, this armed man charged forward!

Because in such an ambush, where the enemy was so close, running away would only be gifting the enemy one's defenseless back as target practice.

The shooter would be able to take all the time he needed to prepare his shot and then shoot again.

And due to how close they were, he would have a pretty good chance of hitting his target.

So the right thing to do facing this situation would be to instantly draw one's sword and charge forward, beelining for the man seen wielding the unmistakable weapon.

And that was exactly what the bodyguard did, instead of panicking at the sneak attack and running, he attacked.

'Who are they! How did they get their hands on a crossbow!' And as he ran, such questions swirled inside that bodyguard's mind.

A crossbow was a heavily restricted item in Zanzan and something even a noble would have a hard time getting their hands on.

But all these questions could wait.

Since they had stuck first, it meant they were the enemy.

And enemies needed to be killed.

Slash! Splurt! Bang!

The bodyguard made the less than the 20-meter distance between him and the archer in less than four seconds, giving the poor guy barely any time to even lower his crossbow, much less start reloading it.

And then in the blink of an eye, a flash of silver hit his eyes, immediately before his unarmored body was struck by a violent diagonal slash, the steel blade parting the flesh like butter, rupturing multiple organs and even cleaving many of his bones in two.

A short burst of blood splurged from the wound, his mouth started dripping the same liquid, and the man then fell like a stone on the ground, still and lifeless.

He was dead.

"Aghhhhh!"

At the same time, seeing his partner's success, the other bodyguard also shook his body to life, and with a mighty roar, lunged forward on the old man still on the floor, stabbing his heart deep with the sword, and then retrieving it rusty red.

It was two for two.

"Kill!"

And then, having made the other party go into shock at reaping two lives in the blink of an eye, both men instantly took advantage of, as they started to hack and slash at anyone and everyone in sight,

And it seemed other than that one crossbowman, the remaining still-alive people around them were all unarmed.

But this was to expected.

After all, they were in their home, and it was quite late into the night.

Why would they be armed inside their own home?

And who would have expected that two armed men would come knocking on their door without any rhyme and reason?

As a matter of fact, the only reason they were even up was because tomorrow was a weekend, and so they were drinking late.

"Surrender! We surrender!"

And as the two men added two more enemies to their tallies, the last remaining three wisely decided to surrender, as they kneeled to the ground and held their hands high.

"Who are yo...arghhhh," The man who just shot attempted to question the two, eager to know who these men were, but suddenly felt a stinging pain across his chest which took precedence.

He had not noticed it until this moment due to all the surge of adrenalin, but now that everything was calming down, the sensation in his chest began to return.

And it was a painful, stinging sensation.

It seemed that though there was no blood coming out from the wound, for the arrow had clogged the wound, but still the arrow had gone through, piercing flesh.

The shot was too close and too energetic for even the multiple layers of armor to be able to completely stop the arrowhead.

And judging by the amount of pain the man was in, it might have gone quite deep.

"You okay?" Seeing his partner winch in pain, the other one asked in concern.

"I'm okay...." The reply was a bit forced, as the man clenched his teeth a bit before quickly adding, "Go get the guards. I will stay here and look over them."

"...that..."

Hearing this his partner of course was a bit reluctant, for he was not sure whether to leave his injured partner all alone here, who would then also have to keep an eye on the prisoners.

With that thought, the man turned to glance at the three captured targets, who were kneeling on the ground, unarmed and shivering with fear.

And when their eyes met his, they only trembled with terror.

They were not a threat.

So the man decided to do as his injured partner suggested and get the cops.

Besides, someone also needed his partner to get medical attention.

And that could only be him.

So leaving his wounded partner in charge of the watch, the healthy man hurriedly exited the inn to locate the nearest patrol.

Alexander would first get the report of this unforeseen chain of events early morning the next day as Hemicus would wake him up to inform him that one of his men was in the clinic, stuck by a crossbow bolt.

The information would first shake Alexander in shock, and then make him furious, for the crossbow was an extremely restricted item.

Outside of war and practice ranges, it should have been impossible for anyone to have personal access to it.

So how could one of his men be shot by so?

Thus Alexander immediately ordered a full investigation of the entire events, starting from the inn where it all started, to interrogating the two men captured to try and know who they were and how they got their hands on the crossbow, to lastly why they shot his men.

And Alexander put himself personally in charge of figuring everything out

And after a full week of intensive work, the entire picture revealed itself to him.

Firstly, regarding the inn, well it seemed that it was actually a hideout.

A hideout for spies, Muazz's or more accurately Amenheraft's spies.

The proprietor of the establishment was that old man, one of whose daughters had some connection to Muazz, something like a working maid, according to what could be gleaned from the captured three's interrogation, though it was not exactly clear.

As for its inhabitants.

Well officially, the men that lived there, lived there as guests,

They were a mixture of locals and outsiders, the former recruited because they knew the lands and the latter being experienced men who came here after being transferred from other parts of the country, their goal to use their expertise to form a functional spy ring in the city.

And after asking them some more, they revealed in excruciating detail what they intended to do and how they intended to do so.

For instance, their first stage was to just gather the local news, something anyone living in the city could know.

Then they planned to start controlling a few small gangs and street rats.

Lastly, they wanted to insert their ears in merchants, one or two city guards, and if possible even some military officers.

This was viewed as a multi-year project and they were just about to start.

Getting to know this Alexander was frankly impressed by the amount of resources Amenheraft had at his disposal.

Building this kind of network was neither cheap nor easy.

For instance, Alexander had the money, but he lacked both the know-how and the trusted people to set similar up.

And even the intelligence network Camius had set up only belonged to the second stage.

As for Alexander's feeling at having discovered such a spy ring, well he was certainly happy, but not over the moon.

He did expect the enemy to make such a move, though he never expected to catch it, or at least catch them so soon.

But now that he had, well the question then rose, what to do with them.

Two of the three were very cooperative during their questions, singing like a canary at every question asked.

For instance, that shabbily dressed man, who fortunately had managed to survive retold in great detail what exactly happened that night.

After he had entered the inn, he found his buddies in the lobby drinking and joined them without a second thought.

"Let me have one! My heart is about to burst," He had gruffly said, as he grabbed one of his friend's cups.

And when they asked why, he told them of his experience.

But as luck would have it, it was right as he finished that a heavy knock landed on the door, urging them to open up.

And being spooked by the man's story, this demand made a few of the men panic as they envisioned the worst-case scenario.

Afterward, when one of the bodyguards had kicked the door open, well to these men, it seemed apparent that the noble's guards were going to arrest them and their operations would be immediately revealed

So one of them panicked and ordered they be shot.

And the rest was history.

Chapter 656 Laibak's Recount

Listening to the shabby man who introduced himself as Laibak recount the events of the inn, Alexander could not help but feel a tinge of regret for those men.

He felt that the people in that inn had reacted too rashly.

If they had been only a bit more sober, and thought things over more calmly, everything likely would have turned out fine for them.

Even if they did nothing but calmly and politely talk to the two bodyguards, a lot of this could have been avoided.

In fact, it could have worked out even better than they could have ever hoped for if they had just done what the two bodyguards asked them to do.

Because then Alexander would have likely recruited Laibak for his own spy agency, meaning then they would have had a mole inside the very heart of Zanzan's intelligence services, one whose cover was as solid as one could get, for he would be directly recommended by the boss himself, Alexander.

And after a few years, it would have been possible for Laibak to even occasionally get Alexander's ears, or at least Camius's.

If that had happened, Alexander's entire or at least a large part of his spy network would have been compromised.

It was a scary thought that Alexander found himself shaking a bit at.

But ultimately that had not happened.

All because they panicked and their manners were crude.

What a tragedy for them.

And it just went to show how much manners mattered.

Finished recounting the happening inside the inn, Laibak then went to go and introduce himself.

He claimed that he was sent here to be the leader of the spy ring under orders from Matbar (Marquis) Kyaum, whose fief was about 200 kilometers west of here.

And hearing this name surprised Alexander a bit.

He recalled that the man was mainly tasked with protecting Zanzan's western coastline and wondered why he was trying to set up a spy network in his city.

And lastly, he mused what was his connection with Muazz.

Because it had to be remembered, that just because someone tried to set up a spy ring in his city did not mean he was immediately hostile.

Alexander had a similar intelligence network in Adhan, but that did not mean he had any intention of going to war with Ptolomy.

At least not anytime soon anyway.

But if Alexander hoped that the Matbar (marquis) could be an ally if not just a neutral bystander, those cherry thoughts would soon be shattered when he would ask the QM, who was still living with them at the time, about the man and be informed that the man was a zealous follower of Amenheraft, and that his loyalty to him was unquestionable.

A claim that would be backed by Laibak's revelation that among his teams were two people who worked under Manuk, Amenheraft's right-hand man, leaving Alexander in no doubt as to whose camp the man was on.

After ratting out his master, Laibak then went on to describe his previous work experience and revealed that due to his work, the man had practically become a local by now.

And when he was asked to elaborate on that, the man freely revealed that he had been stationed here for almost 20 years now, starting from even before Pasha Muazz's rule, during his father's in fact.

He came here as a helping boy with a disguised merchant caravan, and over the years, the men in that fake caravan had worked hard to slowly build quite a solid intel network in the city.

And Laibak himself made large contributions to their cause, slowly rising up the ladder to become quite a high-ranking member there.

But the sweet times do have to come to an end at one point or another.

And their sweet time came to an end three years ago.

First hit by the drought and then Amenheraft's war with Tibias, many people left the city for the lush countryside, with even Laibak and many of his staff leaving for their real lord's territory to escape the flames of war and to find better sustenance.

But an unintended consequence of this action was that the web of contacts they had so painstakingly built up began to break without the people to support them.

And by the time Alexander took over the city, those networks had basically vanished, either dead, lost, or not having the same access to the same kind of information, the last one being particularly applicable to the gangs that Alexander had effectively purged, who otherwise would have worked as the city guards.

So Laibak was now sent here to do the same thing his predecessors did, building a new spy network and try and establish whatever old contacts that were left in the city.

When Alexander learned of this, the huge scale of the project Laibak was put in charge of surprised him, and it made him feel the Matbar (Marrquiss) must hold this man in great regard.

So it appeared Alexander had unknowingly caught a big fish.

"Why were you there when we first met?" Finished with that topic, Alexander then moved to this.

To which the man firstly shyly chuckled, as if it was not natural for a man to seek the pleasure of the flesh, especially when the flesh was served in such a unique way.

But then revealed a bit more reason behind his action.

He said the reason why he was at the brothel was because, well as luck would have it, that house belonged to his master, and having visited the manor numerous times in the past, the man had gotten nostalgic and wanted to see it one last time.

It was that simple.

And it was at that mention that Alexander recalled Ophenia once introducing the building as belonging to that man.

Who could have guessed then that such a small, throwaway detail could have caused such huge changes to the world?

Due to that tiny coincidence, Laibak had ended up meeting the city's ruler, who then sent his bodyguards after him on a whim, which then set off a chain of reactions one could have never seen coming.

Truly fate was a wonderful thing.

And this was a perfect example of how a simple butterfly's tiny wing flap would cause a hurricane thousands of miles away.

At least that was how Alexander saw it.

Those were everything there was to really know about Laibak.

So then came the identity of his team members.

Laibak revealed that the one who shouted 'shoot' when the two bodyguards had burst through the door was the illegitimate son of a noble, though he could not name the exact noble.

That man was sent there as the overseer of the operations, one who oversaw and approved everything, representing the will of the Matbar (Marquis). the prestigious position landing to him courtesy of his blood.

While Laibak, was the actual mule of the team, doing all the work.

And sounding by the tone Laibak described him, he did not seem to hold him in even low esteem, going as far as to curse, "That useless fucker...if he had not only screamed!"

It seemed that it was the panic of the greenhouse noble that had really started the fight.

With the boy who responded to the order being the noble's attendant and at night something even more.

As for the rest of the crew, well, they were not nearly as interesting.

Alexander of course made sure to verify all of Laibak's claims with the other two separately, and much to his happiness found to match with one of them, while the other simply refused to talk, stubbornly keeping his mouth shut.

So after a few days, he died during question.

As for the exact details, well dying during interrogation was never a pleasant way to go.

And noticing this, Alexander had one time even asked Laibak why he was so forthcoming with his answers, and the man simply said that he was afraid of pain.

It was that simple.

The man knew what it meant to get captured and had determined the easiest and best way to save one's skin, many times literally, was to talk.

And hearing so, Alexander did not know whether to describe the man as clever or a coward.

It appeared that though the man was a great spy, he was not a martyr.

And for his last question, Alexander asked how they got their hands on a crossbow.

That should have been very hard to get, given Alexander made sure that they were regularly checked and inventoried, so stealing one would immediately be noticed.

He even made sure to number them on the stocks so hiding or replacing them would be very hard.

But the answer here too was very simple.

'One of the men who used to work for me is in the army. We got him to bribe one of the guards.' "1,000 ropals, half before, half after."

"That guy then gave us the bow and to make sure that the theft was not detected immediately,? we replaced it with a fake with the exact serial number."

"That looks like a crossbow but it does not work."

"But we figured, even if it was found out, it might not matter. The soldier might simply think that this was just made shoddily and get a new one."

"While real one would have been sent to my lord."

"This was one of my primary goals."

Laibak really held nothing back on detail in his answer.

Chapter 657 Alexander's Damage Control

Laibak revealing just how casually he was able to get the crossbow caused Alexander to first have an appreciation for the simplicity yet effectiveness of his plan.

And then came the headache.

This type of security breach should not have happened.

He had guessed the enemy would want a sample of his crossbow a long time ago and did take precautions to hinder exactly that.

But those precautions hinged on each of the people employed in all the verification steps to be diligent and honest.

And to help facilitate that Alexander had even made sure to give them better perks than the rest of the grunts.

But to think they would sell one of his most precious secrets for a mere 1,000 ropals?

Though it was not something Alexander had expected, still when it happened to him, he was a bit saddened.

But that state of sadness did not last long.

For following this sadness came a furious bout of rage.

Both the men involved were arrested and then interrogated about the truth, and once they confessed to all of Laibak's claims, were court-martial immediately without trial.

Their bodies hung on a prominent scaffolding around the barracks for all soldiers to see, with a plaque hung around their necks describing their crime-

'For the crime of accepting bribes and trying to sell state secrets.'

And even their families were not spared.

Alexander had initially ordered their execution along with the men.

But after calming down a bit, he thought the family members should not be punished as heavily as the offender.

So he decreased it to all of them being sold into slavery for life, meaning these people would not be freed or redeem themselves.

But after a while, after he saw the faces of the little shivering children who were able to be dealt a very cruel fate and remembering his own fate once, Alexander decreased the punishment further.

He simply stripped them of all the benefits they got due to being related to the military such as the affordable houses designated for service members located in the eastern military district, the army's daily rations as well as seizing the bribe amount, both in cash and good.

And then they were thrown out into the cold streets.

And though this sounded better than being sold to slavery, that fact would be heavily argued.

Because by doing what Alexander had done, he basically left the two widows with numerous children destitute, with no homes, no money, and no job.

And though Zanzan was not like the other cities, where women had almost no opportunities to earn money without a man's help, as many could and did work in industries like papermaking, coal briquette making, brick making, etc. but even those were not easy as just turning up and getting employed.

Besides all these were owned by Alexander, and so for them to get a job, particularly with that colored record... well good luck

It was particularly bad for one of the widows because she was originally from Thesos, having only come here under her husband's invitation.

Meaning unlike the other widow she had no father or brother or other relative's house to seek refuge with from the open sky, even if for only a little while.

And she certainly could not afford the ship fare back.

So for that woman, her man was gone, and she had nothing and no one to go to.

Even the neighbors she used to have so good relations with avoided her for fear of implicating their own husbands.

Alexander's fury was that great, being even felt by the lowest-level grunt.

So the only real way for her to keep her family going would be trying to find odd jobs like sweeping and cleaning other houses, sewing and knitting on the side, and even occasionally selling her body.

And even this scenario was painting quite an optimistic view, as the more likely outcome for the woman was that she would either become a full-time working girl or sell herself and a few or all her children to slavery.

And unfortunately, in this time period, the latter was the more common one.

Because working girls were in oversupply and very few were as beautiful as MK.

In this way, her fate became the same as Alexander had decreed before, with simply a few extra steps involved.

And though Alexander did not know of all this, even if he did, he would not care.

In fact, he might have even spread them, for he wanted to make an example out of the two.

And Alexander did not limit his punishment to only these two.

He made sure to punish a lot more people, almost everyone involved.

For instance, every one of the two guards' colleagues all got 20 canes for not detecting what the two were doing.

The supervisor responsible for keeping count of the crossbows got his pay docked for two months, a few of the officers got their rations reduced for the month and two unlucky ones even got personally lambasted by Alexander.

Those two being, as you might have guessed- Menes and Melodias.

"What are you two doing? I repeatedly told you to choose people that were trustworthy. Is that what counts as trustworthy to you! You blithering idiots!" Alexander shouted almost vituperously during one of the council meetings.

While the two in question kept mute and a sullen face.

And Alexander did not just scold them.

He also made sure to show them why he was so upset.

So following his slight tirade, he then picked up one of the four items laid out on the table to make a point.

"Look! This is the cuirass my man who shot wore. Look at the hole! The bolt went straight through!" Alexander emphasized at the half an inch hole.

"And then it went through the chainmail, here!" He said while picking up the second item,

"Then it pierced through the linen thorax! This hole here!"

"And then it stuck this much into his chest!"

At his last point, he showed the bolt that had been retrieved from the man, whose blood-soaked tip and some bit of shaft were clear proof of how deep the shot had gone.

It went about two to three inches deep.

"Even when he was wearing all this, even when he donned the best armor we have because he was shot from so close, the bolt went this far."

"So what do you think happened to him?" Alexander then posed, looking around with a menacing glare at the table.

Naturally, no one had the guts to answer.

"He died. I got the confirmation this morning. The wound was too deep." Alexander flatly revealed.

Yes!

The shot had been a fatal wound!

It did not kill him immediately, but the wound it created was a death sentence, a ticking time bomb.

The doctors had been unable to stop the internal bleeding or prevent the big wound from turning infectious, and the poor man died after suffering for three days.

It was a painful way to go.

But though the death of the man was tragic, it was not exactly because one bodyguard had died that Alexander was so furious.

It was because of how he died.

And the implication of that.

Which he described to all the council members.

"Now, I know that many of you might be confused as to why his death matters?" Alexander started.

"So let me ask you what would have happened if it not have been a simple bodyguard of mine, but me personally?"

"What would happen if I'm touring the markets or the construction sites, or simply moving through the crowd when one inconspicuous man walks up to me among the sea of people, crossbow hidden behind his back, and then suddenly shoots me?"

"Even with all my armor, it might not be enough to stop the bolt if fired from close enough."

"And even if it did not hit a critical organ, just the wound it created could turn gangrene and kill me!"

"And now imagine if that person was not me but you?" Alexander had an intrigued tone to his voice.

"Imagine you are simply going about your everyday job, working in the foundry, overseeing the construction of the aqueduct, visiting after the fields the peasants are working on, taking a stroll with your family, or a hundred different things..."

"When suddenly, an unknown, faceless peasant, displeased with something like the rent you are charging him comes and shoots you from 20...30...100 meters away."

"And you would have no way of knowing when this could happen!"

"You might not even see the shooter even as you die if he shoots from an alley or from the back!"

"Can you accept such an ever-present threat?" Alexander very pointedly posed.

And at his painting of such a vivid picture, the others finally understood why Alexander was so furious and their faces went pale.

Previously, like Alexander had said, they had not been able to quite comprehend why Alexander was reacting so much to the death of one bodyguard.

Sure it was tragic but they had also managed to catch a much bigger fish, the spy ring.

But now that Alexander had shown them why the way his bodyguard died was so concerning, their eyes were finally opened.

They had not thought about it like that.

Because subconsciously, since the crossbow did the same job as the bows, they had always seen the two as the one and the same.

While in reality, in some cases they were worlds apart!

Chapter 658 Promotions and Demotions

In the minds of the council members, there was little difference between getting shot by a crossbow and getting shot by a bow.

Because in the end, it was the same thing, being shot by arrows.

And since bows had been around for literally thousands of years, in their minds, it was like- 'A man got shot to death by an arrow. Tragic but let's move on.'

But crossbows though similar in principle to bows, were also quite different in many parts.

Parts which made them a very lethal threat in some cases.

The key difference that a crossbow had was that it could be scarily accurate even in the hands of an untrained peasant and that its first shot could be launched without any warning, unlike a bow which needed to be drawn.

And it was these qualities that made it such a great weapon, both for untrained militia and for inexperienced cavalry.

But these qualities also made it a great weapon for assassins.

It was small and portable, so could be easily hidden under a shirt.

It could be fired at an instant, especially the first shot and the shot would be scarily accurate.

Lastly, the bolt it shot would be powerful enough to cause a kill.

After all, a large crossbow could have a draw weight of as much as 1000 lb of force.

And even a small one would easily go around 300 to 400 lbs.

So if one thought about a crossbow was really like a primitive gun.

And letting every Tom, Dick, and Harry have a private gun was not in the interest of Alexander.

And it had not been also in the interest of the European nobles during the Middle Ages.

Which was why it was such a restricted item then.

Something the nobles of this time could very easily empathize with, as shown by Menicus who quickly said,

"I agree with Lord Alexander here, Lord Menes. You should have been more careful over guarding this thing."

"We do not want more people committing such crimes."

He sounded diplomatic.

But the next speaker was certainly not so polite.

"Yes, yes. Such things must be banned. Immediately! What is the military doing letting these dangerous things go out so easily?"

This outburst was actually done by Harun, who was usually a taciturn man.

It seemed that the threat of having to look one's shoulder every time he went out had made the usually soft-spoken man quite anxious.

A feeling seemingly shared by many others too, all of whom too took turns pointing their finger at the two men with various degrees of acrimony.

And facing not just Alexander's glare but the combined verbal assault of all the council members as a whole, the two men could only lower their heads lower and lower as an apology.

"I...It has been truly a blunder on my part to let this happen. I'm willing to take any punishment the council deems appropriate,"

Finally, facing all the rebukes, Menes decided to take responsibility as the head of the army.

"Me too. I'm willing to take any punishment the council deems appropriate," And seeing him, Melodias copied.

Hearing the two man's admission, seemed to please the others, as Menicus approvingly nodded, before turning to Alexander to propose,

"Then how about docking a month of their pay my lord? That sounds good enough to us."

Though harsh in his words, it seemed Menicus was still sympathetic to the two men.

After all, no 'real' had been done and the threat had been effectively contained.

People make mistakes all the time and so it was no reason to punish them too harshly for too little.

But Alexander seemed to be of the mind for something a bit more extreme, as he turned to look at the two with a bit of displeasure.

"Hmmp! For you two, even a year's payment is nothing, so what's one month! No!"

And then turned his focus solely on Menes, saying,

"Menes this happened under your command, and I want you to fix it."

"I have never said anything about your performance with Tibias, be it the battle, the siege, or the manor."

"Especially the manor, if you had acted more proactively, it would have been certainly saved."

Alexander's tone was strong and didactic.

"But it was your colleague Melodias who broke the Tibian lines first and initiated the rout, saving the city."

"And now you do this"

"This oversight is one too many."

Hearing Alexander's vexed tone, many of the sharper council members could guess what he was about to say.

And it was exactly as they thought,

"So I'm replacing you with Melodas. You will take his post from tomorrow until further notice!"

"Tha...that!"

"My lord think is over a bit..."

"Isn't that a bit rash?"

Hearing Alexander's sudden declaration naturally some of the members experienced shock and dissent.

Even Melodias himself seemed to oppose the order, being one of the first to speak out against it.

"I accept." But the man in question seemed to know his time had come, turning to Alexander and saying,

"It is true I have not been able to perform as many expected. I thus expected something like this to happen as you returned. But thank you for giving me so long. I appreciate it."

Menes surprisingly took the news well.

And Alexander was quite pleased to see this, letting out a few extra words of encouragement,

"Mmm, you work hard and do well. And by the time we are ready to attack Tibias, perhaps things might change."

This sent a message to Melodias that Alexander's replacement might be a temporary one and that he should not start thinking the post was his for life.

This was the conclusion of Menes's demotion and Melodias's promotion.

Following that, the council members then in record time agreed to ban all crossbows from civilian use, with the offender facing as far as facing the death penalty if found housing, holding, and never mind using the weapon.

The strict penalty for the offense was not even suggested by Alexander.

Or the military council members for that matter.

It was in fact suggested by the civilian members, who seemed to be the most spooked.

And this was understandable given they spent a lot of their time with slaves and workers, even if only overseeing them.

They did not end up like in Alexander's scenario.

So it was agreed that only nobles would be able to carry crossbows with each one having to be registered and regularly re-registered with the military to ensure nobody tried to sell one on the side.

After this, over the following days, the council meeting then went on to discuss newer, better ways of stopping the weapons and armor theft, as well as industrial ones.

"My lord, the spies we caught also informed us they were all sent here to try and find out all the new things Zanzan was making."

"Paper, iron, cement, you name it. The enemy is greedy and has no morals."

"One of them even told me that it was the killed noble who had shown Tibias the secret way up the Cisran Hills."

As Alexander said so many bulging eyes and shocked faces greeted him.

Although Alexander personally was highly skeptical of the claim, as only one of the two laid testament to it, Laibak's still alive partner.

Laibak himself said it was certainly possible, but whether it was done, he was not made aware of it.

While the other man was also unable to provide any proof, only swearing to the gods that he heard the old man let it slip during a round of drinks.

Which this left Alexander in a limbo.

On one side there was the swearing to the gods which was usually very sacred.

But on the other side, he found it unlikely and thought the man was trying to lay claim to something he had no hand in.

And for now, he leaned towards the latter.

But given the danger had passed, and the man in question was dead, Alexander decided not to dwell on it too much and simply let it go for the moment.

But although Alexander himself did not believe the information, that did not mean others would not.

And believing it had certain advantages for Alexander.

"My lord! Is what you said true!" Menicus's wizened face shook like a withered tree as he asked.

"Mmmm, one of the spies confessed. So you can all see the dangers they pose." And Alexander replied with a sober face, using the half-verified information to drive home the dangers the spies presented into all their hearts.

Then reminded them,

"And although we foiled this one, remember this is just the beginning."

"Even if they failed this time, our enemies are numerous and they will try again."

"Be sure of that!"

"Many, many more will surely come."

"So we must think of a way to stop them?"

"Any ideas!"

Alexander could certainly foresee his enemies giving it another try at the spy ring and then again if they failed, and then again if that did not work.

In fact the various groups he was hostile to might simply just continue to do so until they had some sort of eyes and ears in the city.

And the helpless thing was that although Alexander knew this unless he became a prophet, he had no way of catching them like he had done this time every single time.

So the reality was they were gonna get in.

And the question was how to contain them.

Chapter 659 New Intelligence Division

Coming to terms with the fact that Alexander soon would have to deal with a lot of uninvited visits from spies, he asked for advice from his council members regarding how to contain if not eliminate them.

"....." But the council members unfortunately only returned him a wall of silence.

They could not help him.

Because they themselves knew almost zilch about spying or how to catch them.

So Alexander was on his own.

His first thought was to delegate this to Camius.

But after a few days of thinking about it, he found a better idea.

And he found it when trying to decide what to do with Laibak.

The man had been nothing but cooperative and Alexander had no intention of killing the man.

That would be a waste of his talent.

And so he simply asked the spy to come over to his side.

And unsurprisingly the man agreed with a heartbeat!

How would he dare refuse?

So Alexander gave his job description.

"You and your partner will work with the city guards. You will set up your spy ring just like you would have, but now those reports will come to me."

"I want to know everything the people say and think...be it about me, about other nobles, and even the weather."

"That will be one of your jobs. But not your main job."

"Your main job will be to keep an eye out for suspicious individuals in the city....you know the kind....your kind...enemy spies." Alexander pointedly spoke with a smirk, which also caused Laibak to involuntarily smirk.

He of course knew where Alexander was going this with.

After all, who better to catch a thief with than another thief?

As Laibak thought of this, Alexander continued,

"You are to use your people to catch other spies and stop them from accomplishing what you were ordered to do."

"You can choose your own team and will be given adequate funds for your operations."

"As for who your day-to-day operations, you will directly answer to the head of the city guards- my wife."

"I will introduce her to some time later."

Alexander was very frank with what was expected of Laibak, finishing by saying,

"Also I have another man who does a similar job to yours. I will let you two meet at a later time so that you can cooperate with each other."

Here Alexander of course meant Camius and the two would meet under asuspicious circumstances under Alexander's directive.

Now, it might seem that Alexander was being overly trustworthy towards a man he had barely met over a week.

But there was a reason for that, or there were two reasons for that.

The first and obvious one was that Laibak appeared to be very pliable, bending whichever the way wind blew.

If force was applied to the man, he wisely bent instead of resisting and snapping.

So obedience through the threat of violence was always an option against him.

And the second one was that he had a family he seemed to care very much about.

Yes, the man had a wife and several kids.

Apparently he had married a local, which was also one of the reasons he said he was practically a local too.

And those people even lived with him.

You see, the inn did not only house the men there.

On the second floor of the inn also resided many of the men's families, including Laibak's.

During the incident, they had all been asleep after the long day's work and only woke around the time the guards got there, whereupon they were all arrested and promptly thrown into the dungeon.

That was also one of the reasons Laibak spilled the bean so quickly.

At one point of the interrogation, Laibak had even said to the interrogator that as long as the man could swear that his family was safe and he could see them, Laibak would tell him everything he knew, swearing in the name of the god.

And after he was allowed to see and talk with them, the man followed up with his promise.

This went to show that as long as Alexander was able to provide him and his family with enough benefits and keep them safe, he was confident the risk and pain-adverse, family-loving man, who was smart enough to know what was good for him, would be loyal to him.

It was also because of those 'risk and pain adverse' and 'family loving' qualities that Alexander put him in charge of the counter-espionage operations of his capital city.

That way he could operate inside the safety of the city and the chances of him or his family coming to harm were very, very low.

Whereas if he were to recruit him for Camius's intelligence agency, whose focus was primarily going out to distant lands and establishing spy networks using his business as a cover, something like Laibak was initially asked by his former boss, well then the risk of him or his family getting captured and then singing like a canary was much higher.

Alexander was a hundred percent sure that since Laibak bent at the sight of the stick with him, he would bend to anybody too.

He could not expect undying loyalty in the face of adversity from Laibak.

And that was why Alexander did not simply insert Laibak into Camius's service, but formed two separate intelligence services.

One was the sword, wielded by Camius whose task was to gather intelligence from others on behalf of Alexander.

That was the foreign division of his intelligence services.

While the other was the shield wielded by Laibak, who prevented others from gathering intelligence on Alexander.

That was the domestic division of his intelligence services.

Together they formed his eyes and ears that stretch across for hundreds of miles.

Alexander would later introduce the two men, and with him describing Laibak as 'a man who prefers to stay safe rather than go on adventures' to Camius.

This was euphemistically revealing the man's traits to his close friend, who was in many quite the opposite.

Camius was very free-spirited and loved to travel the world.

As a matter of fact, he even said it once that the reason he joined the mercenary group was because his village was too small and he wanted to see the world.

Yes, the man was made enough to go battles because he wanted to see the outside scenery.

In connection to that he also never had any real relationship, and at the moment even the mere thought of settling and having a family was ludicrous to him.

Instead, his love lay in revealing new lands.

It was also because of that he loved his current job so much, because he could go to so many places and being a merchant even meet so many different people.

From beggars to peasants to other traders to even nobles, people from all walks of life came to talk and meet with him.

It was a very rewarding experience.

But until now, he had not been able to take advantage of his opportunities for he was tied down by the fact he had to also oversee the domestic part of the surveillance, meaning he could not leave for another place willy-nilly.

His subordinates still needed someone to report to after all.

And then he needed to report those to Alexander.

But now that Laibak was there to take care of that little inconvenience for him, Camius felt almost liberated, like he could simply spread his wings and go do his thing with no problem.

So Camius was very graceful in accepting Laibak, and very openly revealed all the contacts he had made around the city.

And Laibak in contrast, under Alexander's guidance, gave Camius and his men a few tips and tricks about the trade called spying, things he had learned from painstakingly years of experience.

And it included how to recruit informants, how to arrange bribes, how to hide from the authorities, and a million other things.

On the hands-on experience, Camius and his men were very happy to learn.

And in this way, through a completely whimsical twist of fate, Alexander had managed to double his security.

Something he was very pleased about.

Previously, when Camius reported something, Alexander would always take it with a pinch of salt.

Not because he thought Camius was trying to deceive him,

But because it was very likely Camius was getting only a look at the picture from just one side.

But now with? Laibak, Alexander would get two perspectives, especially about his domestic situation.

A new set of eyes and ears so as to speak.

And speaking of eyes and ears, Alexander at one point approached Laibak with the intention of asking if one set could be installed on Matbar (Marquis) Kyuam or better yet Amenheraft himself.

"You were set here as a spy. Could you continue that?" Alexander asked hopefully.

And this made Laibak first produce a wry smile.

'Man his new master was greedy!' He thought to himself.

Not only had he pouched two spies from his enemies, but he was also now urging them to become double agents.

And that was after killing five of the seven of them, including a noble!

That's what you called an optimistic man!

Chapter 660 Double Spy (Part-1)

Alexander's greed of wanting to use Laibak to spy back on Amenheraft was really something else, especially given the very public way he had caught the spies.

Though not every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the city knew about this, most high-ranking people were aware of the massive catch.

So what Alexander was proposing to pull off seemed very, very unlikely

"....."

And that was why Laibak was silent when asked about it as if he was trying to think of a way to gently decline Alexander.

But as he thought about the problem, and played around with the details, suddenly he began to feel it might not be actually possible,

Granted it would not be easy, but the chances of it being possible could not be immediately dismissed.

The key point was the times they lived in, where it took very, very long for information to travel.

So given only a short time had passed, and the other side was nary aware, setting up a cover-up story might just be possible.

It would need a lot of padding up, and whether it would hold up to scrutiny was another question, but if given the proper resources by Alexander, Laibak felt he could try and attempt to make something up.

He was not very optimistic about his chances, but he at least could try.

And so he said,

"I could try doing something. But I would need a lot of things to go right for me."

"First and most importantly of all, I will need to somehow explain all the deaths, especially Lord Kazak's."

"Then I will need to find a way to explain how me and my wife survived."

"I will also need all my neighbors to verify everything I say."

"It would not work if I came up with the best convincing story, but the neighbors living around went around telling everyone how the city guards raided that one inn next to them that one night."

"If that happened, the other men sent by the Matbar (Marquiss) will easily figure that something was up."

"So everyone living around the inn must collaborate on whatever I say happened."

"And lastly, a lot of people, with some of the officers know about our capture. That needs to change."

Laibak showed himself to be quite quick-witted as he was able to make such a detailed list so quickly, and then finished with the caveat,

"If all that can be successfully pulled off ...then I can maybe form a spy network that thinks works for the Matbar (Marquis)...whereas in reality...."

Laibak smirked, not needing to explain further.

While Alexander, hearing all of Laibak's requests found them to be quite reasonable.

And if he could fulfill them, he would really be able to strike a gold mine of information, able to both deceive the enemy and also pick up on their chatter, as the order Laibak would receive might be indicative of the plans his 'masters' are planning.

It would be like striking two birds with one stone.

So the question now arose was how to fulfill those requests Laibak made so that this could happen.

And Alexander addressed the last concern first.

"The ones who know about your capture are not many."

"You do not have to worry too much about them revealing anything."

"But since you asked, over the next few days, we will fake the capture of several more spies."

"This will help muddy the narrative so that even if our some smart man comes across the arrest, he will not know which ones the people are talking about."

"At best, he will think your comrades' deaths and the spy capture were a coincidence."

Alexander proposed this plan based on the fact that in this age most people did not use exact dates to refer to things.

Instead, they commonly used the names of the days of the week.

Dates were only really used by nobles and merchants due to book-keeping conveniences.

As for the average Joe, well, most were illiterate to know which day it was.

But more importantly, this did not really matter to them.

Ninety percent of the population were peasants who really cared what season it was rather than knowing the exact day of the month.

And this meant that if people were asked about any previous events, they would answer like, 'it was a week ago, or a month ago, or a few months ago.'

So by doing what Alexander was proposing, anyone trying to investigate would get all his days mixed up since the events would have happened quite close together when viewed from a year or even a few months from now.

"Tha...that's great. Yes! That can work! Definitely work!" And Laibak seemed to quite like it.

With that decision made, there remained only for the three other conditions to be solved.

And Alexander decided to go sequentially, starting with the first one.

"How about a burglary? A couple of thugs break into the inn, gets spotted, a fight breaks out, and all of a sudden five people are dead?" Alexander proposed how to make the five deaths seem natural.

"Hmmm.... thieves do not usually kill. Not five grown men at least."

"And when they are spotted, they always prefer to run."

"Thieves that break in at night are normally not killers."

"And also... thieves prefer to go after individual houses, not huge inns with so many people, perhaps even one or two guards."

The scenario is unlikely."

Alexander had been somewhat proud of his plan, but seeing Laibak so effortlessly tear it to shreds, exposing so many holes that it looked like a porcupine had gone through it that, Alexander was momentarily even a bit shamed.

Then he went to go back to the drawing board.

And after a while came up with this.

"Then how about it happening outside? The men are walking in the market. They suddenly get into a scuffle:

"Within a blink of an eye, it escalates into a brawl. And before anyone can understand what's happening five people are all dead on the streets!"

Alexander was pretty pleased with this one, feeling he had managed to think outside the box.

After all, where those men died did not really matter, just that they did.

"Hmmm," And even Laibak had to give credit to this plan had some good points.

But then pointed, "Lord Kazak rarely went outside. And when he did, he carried an expert entourage of very good fighters with him."

"In fact, if those men were not drunk and unarmed when your bodyguards found them, my lord, it would not have been such an easy fight."

"So to think some street ruffians would kill them in the streets....one or two of them might be possible if they got jumped ... but five of them is too much."

Laibak pointed out the devil in the details, further informing,

"Besides, most ruffians like to act tough but can only bully the weak. Show them a bit of armor and shining steel, and they will pee their pants."

"So if I gave this excuse, many will probably think the ruffians were disguised assassins. And then everything will get too complicated."

Thus it seemed that even this relatively good idea got shot down.

"Then what do you suggest?"

Finally, out of ideas, Alexander asked Laibak to think of a solution himself, the tone in his voice a bit annoyed.

"Ummm...." And after a bit of hesitation, Laibak gave this idea, "How about a fire?"

"Fire?" Hearing so Alexander furrowed with brows.

He did not get it.

Where would fire come here?

And besides, anything that had to do with fire was problematic, especially in a city that was made basically out of wood.

And it seemed Laibak also knew this which was also he said with such hesitation.

But Alexander did not immediately shoot down the idea.

Since Laibak brought it up, he must have a good reason.

So Alexander signaled with his eyes for Laibak to continue.

So the man gathered his thoughts and proposed the plan he had been thinking about for some time.

"I was thinking something of a story like this-" He began,

"One of the nearby houses at night catches fire and slowly then spreads to the inn."

"But everyone in the inn is drunk or asleep ...so they could simply fail to wake up in time."

"So they burn to death!"

Laibak's proposal seemed very short and easily plausible.

And it became even more realistic as he added the following details, which seemed to conveniently address the second point too.

"As for how I and Naimir survived...well since it was a Wednesday, I could say I saw sleeping in a brothel. And I had taken Naimir with me."

"And then if I was to be asked why I was sleeping with a whore when I have a wife?"

"Well, I could say because my wife and the kids were staying with my father-in-law."

"And this is not anything uncommon."

"Every year she takes the kids and stays at her father's house for three days and three nights."

"So I could say she was away and I was with a whore. This is also something I sometimes do when I'm lonely."

"It all fits perfectly!"

"And better yet, with this story, I can also very easily explain how my wife and kids lived."

"What do you think my lord?" Laibak looked for Alexander's approval.

'What do I think my lord! I think I would have kissed you if you were a girl!' And this was Alexander's internal praise!

