

Herald 671

Chapter 671 A Second Deal With the Margraves (Part-2)

At Lady Miranda's objection, Alexander quickly proposed this,

"If even 20,000 strong men are not possible. I can reduce the number to 10,000."

"But in that case, these men must have families."

"And they must all come to Zanzan with them."

"I will not buy them as slaves, but take them in as immigrants who must stay here as farmers for at least 20 years. After that, they can get a plot of land, or they can choose to return to Galiosos, whichever they want."

This alternative idea got Lady Miranda's attention.

"Hmmm,"

So she hummed, finding the idea much more palatable.

She did not immediately say yes, but she did not vehemently oppose it either.

Instead, she got to calculating the pros and cons.

While Alexander, satisfied that the opposing side was considering it, continued his listing,

"Secondly, I am aware the Margrave family is quite advanced in mining and metallurgy."

"So I want some experienced miners, let's say a hundred, to help me open new iron, gold, and silver ores in the Cisran Hills."

"Thirdly, we have a severe shortage of blacksmiths here in Zanzan. So I want to have about a hundred blacksmiths move to Zanzan."

"They will work here, learning how to use the new steel, as well as teach a few new apprentices from here of their craft. transferring their expertise "

As Alexander was saying this, he noticed a visible flinch from Lord Janus, as if he had something to say, but did not know whether he should interject.

But Alexander chose to ignore that for now and instead continued,

"Fourthly since Lord Janus has said that you are struggling to rebuild your navy, I want to contribute. I want to send 2,000 men to Galiosos to help rebuild your navy, as well as be trained as sailors by you."

Alexander felt that instead of relying on his one shipyard, it would be far better to send a part of his crew to the Margraves and learn from them.

"And lastly, I wish to form an alliance with the Margrave family through a marriage with Lady Miranda."

Alexander very boldly made the last claim, feeling that since Lady Miranda was young and available, he should tie the knot as soon as possible to ensure the allied Margraves stayed an ally long into the future.

"....."

Hearing Alexander's five points were a lot to take in for the two nobles so they took some time to properly understand the implications of what he was asking.

"I'm sorry, Lord Alexander. But I will not be able to fulfill your last request. I'm still grieving over my husband, and I want to mourn him a bit longer," Lady Miranda gave her response regarding the last request first, unequivocally rejecting Alexander.

Which surprised him a bit given it was her who had subtly shown the thought of such a union first when she had very openly kissed him on the cheeks just before leaving previously.

It was because of that incident that Alexander even considered making this offer.

So Alexander wondered what changed.

"But if my lord wishes, I do have a few suitable cousins. I am sure they will be fine candidates too,"

Lady Miranda, as soon as she declined Alexander's offer, made sure to instantly add this alternative proposal so as to not appear too dismissive, but Alexander simply waved his hand with a light breeze, and said,

"Haha, if my lady is not interested, then forget it. It was wrong of me to suggest such an inappropriate idea at such an inconvenient time anyway,"

Alexander was not interested in anyone else because they likely did not matter.

So if he could not wed the matriarch, then he would rather not waste his time.

Besides, given the current circumstances and the trade volumes the two parties are going on, Alexander doubted they would be falling out anytime soon.

So he was not that desperate.

While Lady Miranda, seeing Alexander not appear to be offended, was much relieved.

A sweet feeling that was as fleeting as the passing dawn for she heard Alexander say this next,

"Since Lady Miranda has not objected to any of the other conditions, I premise those are all acceptable?"

Alexander had very strategically chosen to strike now when the other party had just rejected one of his proposals, and he had so graciously acceded to them without any objection.

Which made rejecting his other requests right now without losing face that much more difficult.

Something Lady Miranda was well aware of which was why she went a bit red.

Of course, she had objections but felt her face skin was too thin to argue.

And this made her want to nod and avoid the embarrassment.

"*Ahem*" But her much older counterpart had developed a much thicker hide over his life and quickly interjected before the young lady could commit such a mistake.

When it came to business and losing potential millions, no amount of skin was too much to lose.

'*Tsk*, Pity' And upon hearing the aged cough, Alexander could not help but muse regretfully in his heart.

He was so close.

"Lord Alexander, we have no problem with the second request. We would be more than happy to help you open up new mines," Lord Janus started with the good news.

Before going to on to describe his problems,

"But that 10,000 men you asked for. Just them we have no problem. But if their families were also involved....well that would be close to 50,000 to 60,000. This is too much!"

This was his first problem.

"Yes, but those are mostly women and children, Not strong working men. Surely it will not affect your lands that much,"

Feeling like Lord Janus was misunderstanding, Alexander elucidated as such, adding,

"Besides, I'm asking you to take farmers out of your lands. You can choose beggars, the homeless, the abandoned,.... those not wanted by society"

"As long as they are not sick and crippled, and have no criminal records, I will take them."

Alexander lowered his requirements even further.

"....bu ...but still ...it's 50,000 ..." Lord Janus muttered under his breath, still appearing reluctant.

So Alexander pressed, "Lord Janus, I'm not asking those people to be slaves. They only have to live here for 10 years."

"I'm even offering them land after that! God! I'm the one losing money here!" Alexander sounded incredulous by the end, looking at Lord Janus with befuddled eyes.

He was offering them such a good deal and yet the man was refusing!

"That...the offer is not the problem. In fact Lord Alexander's offer is more than generous."

Knowing why Alexander was offering such a good deal, and feeling like he was taking advantage of it, Lord Janus quickly said so to placate Alexander, and then revealed,

"But the problem is like I said, transport. Transporting so many people is too risky!"

Here Lord Janus thought he had managed to corner Alexander, but the latter was ready, instantly replying "And that was why I asked you to let me participate in your shipbuilding! This way we can build a bigger navy faster!"

"..." Here, Lord Janus was quiet.

Not because he was very impressed by the idea, but because he did not think Zanzan had anything to contribute to this effort.

'What do you know about shipbuilding?' He said to himself, barely controlling himself from rolling his eyes in front of Alexander, as he knew well of Zanzan's pathetic shipbuilding expertise.

When Alexander had made his fourth point, he had not even seriously considered it because frankly, they were too busy to be babysitting 2,000 amateurs.

Now, Lord Janus did very well to hide this disdain, but Alexander could guess what the old man was thinking knowing the prevailing conception other powers had for Adhania's navy.

But Alexander had a few tricks up his sleeves that no other had.

So taking advantage of Lord Janus's brief silence, Alexander first said,

"I understand that Sybarsis's shipbuilding is second to none in this region."

"Each of your ships can carry around 250 slaves or 500 tons of cargo compared to our tiny ships only capable of taking 100 tons."

"So it is natural to think less of us."

And then confidently posed,

"But that was in the past."

"Here in Zanzan, we have built a ship that is five times as strong as the average ship and carries 2,500 tons!"

"So I believe Zanzna can contribute much to the restoration of your navy!"

"What! Is what you say true?" Alexander's grand declaration of course drew the attention of the two nobles, especially from Lord Janus who was a capable shipwright himself, his family having a few shipyards.

So Alexander's declaration was naturally very noteworthy to him.

"Yes, it is. I swear to the gods." And Alexander very solemnly promised such, further adding.

"And if you let us learn your shipbuilding and naval warfare techniques, I will share the designs for the new ships right here, right now."

"I might even buy dozens of such ships from you!"

And Alexander's last line seemed to be the critical hit, as Lady Miranda, who was silent till now suddenly chimed,

"Okay! We accept."

"Great!" And this produced a great beaming smile from Alexander.

Instead of relying on one dock to make hundreds of ships, while trying to figure everything out for himself, Alexander was very happy he was able to export this work to others, and even get much-needed training and technological transfer in the process.

To exchange so much for only the idea that they should use iron pegs instead of wood was too cheap!

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Lady Miranda's acceptance of the deal naturally made Alexander very pleased.

Given her family's facilities and expertise, Alexander was hopeful he would be able to have a functional navy faster than he thought.

"Please wait here, let me fetch you the blueprints,"

And so, in return, Alexander quickly showed them the ships they were building, and how they were able to get such a huge size.

"Using iron pegs instead of wood! Ingenious!"

Lord Janus was both very surprised and a bit bitter that he had not been able to think of such a simple solution sooner.

But at least he knew it now, and with his expertise as a shipwright, did feel that with this stronger skeleton, a much bigger ship could likely be built.

Which made the aged lord very happy.

"Hahaha, good, good, with these new ships, we can definitely beat the Kaiser family in the water. Definitely! Bastards won't stand a chance"

He loudly roared in elation, knowing that even if outnumbered, these ships would be able to take multiple ramming attacks before going down, thus allowing them to stay in the battle and fight for longer.

And as long as one could fight, they had the possibility of winning.

He hence even turned to Alexander to even propose this,

"Hahaha, Lord Alexander, I'm currently looking for a suitor for my granddaughter. Would you be interested!"

The old man seemed to want to make Alexander his kin for inventing this new type of ship.

A proposal that Alexander gently rejected.

Instead, taking advantage of the old man's euphoria, he added this,

"Actually, I have another ship I was thinking of building. But I seem to not have the experience to," as he then quickly showed the two his blueprints for a huge barge-like cargo ship, the same one he had shown Lady Inayah.

"We will make the ship of wood and concrete."

"This type of ship will be very stable because most of its hull will be underwater, so it won't tip over easily."

"And we can fill that massive hull with enormous amounts of cargo."

"I estimate it will be able to hold 10 times what the usual merchant ships can carry, at least 10,000 tons!" Alexander sounded very excited, as he continued,

"As for moving the behemoth, we will use huge sails to harness the power of winds."

"We are already building a new port to accommodate these vessels, but we lack the expertise to build it."

"So I was hoping the Margrave family would be interested!"

Lord Janus seemed to think he noticed Alexander's eyes were twinkling as he posed the question.

"Hahaha, well let us first build the first kind of ships first. Then we can talk what the others," But he gently rejected Alexander as such.

Frankly, Lord Janus thought the size and cargo capacity Alexander was hoping for to be a bit on the fantastic side.

He did not think building such a huge ship was possible.

Whereas Alexander was not discouraged, and pressed, "But with this, we can trade across the Mad Sea all year around? Should building it not be a priority?"

"Thign of the voluem of trade? It will be enormous."

"And safety! Even bad storms won't be able to sink it."

Alexander truly believed such a ship was easily possible, and it would be so much that the rickety dingy they currently used.

It only required skilled and knowledgeable shipwrights to bring it to life, something the Margraves certainly had.

Thus Alexander's eagerness about the project seemed to be oozing out.

And it was Lady Miranda who decided to put a step on his brake pedal, pointing out,

"Lord Alexander, brand new ship designs are never easy to build. It takes years to get everything right! Especially a ship as revolutionary as yours."

"Going by what you said, nobody has ever built something like that. The hull, the sail, and the rigging will all need many people to properly build."

"But I'm afraid currently we are too occupied to help you right now. We need to focus on rebuilding our navy."

And Lord Janus quickly supported her,

"Yes, yes. This ship is very revolutionary, but it does not seem very suitable for naval warfare. So really cannot spare the manpower. Let us come back to it perhaps later."

It seemed that though the two were content to pay his new design beautiful lip service, they were not actually all that interested in building it.

Mainly because they found the dimensions too fantastic to think it was possible.

This rejection did hurt Alexander because he had thought a family expert in shipbuilding would be able to see his vision.

But it seemed he was wrong.

"...Then could I commission you to build you one?"

So, seeing a collaboration was out of the question, Alexander then asked if he could throw money at the problem and solve it.

He believed that once he could show his ship was actually possible, everyone would be building them.

"Please allow me to apologize. But I'm afraid all our docks are already too busy," But naturally Lady Miranda made this statement, as the Margrave family was trying to rebuild its navy as soon as possible.

"But we are willing to help build a prototype as soon as our docks clear, my lord!" And then, as if to appease Alexander, Lord Janus quickly made his offer.

"... *sigh* ...mmm," And only got this anemic, not even a proper reply.

Alexander knew such an opportunity would be years away and made sure to express his dissatisfaction.

And it worked as his unenthusiastic reply set the room into a slightly depressing mood, letting a stifling atmosphere settle in.

Something Lady Miranda quickly tried to rectify this by saying,

"Ah, my lord, we have no problem giving you the 50,000 people or letting you join our shipbuilding."

"We agree to both those requests, no problem!"

"And even that concrete you said the ships will be made of. We want to buy them too."

Lady Miranda wanted to show Alexander the things they did agree with and even expressed her interest in buying more stuff.

To which Alexander only lightly replied,

"I'm afraid we currently have a shortage of cement. So if my lady wants it she will need to give about 1,000 workers so I can set up new facilities."

He knew Lady Miranda was not serious which was why he made the offer and sure enough, Lady Miranda rejected it,

"Ah! That's unfortunate. Perhaps another time then."

After her initial awe with this cement, Lady Miranda had grown out of her love for the white powder, because to her it did not seem all too special.

They could build similar structures with their own methods and so saw no point in spending so much to obtain the product.

"Okay, so what about the blacksmiths? I noticed Lord Janus flinch when I proposed that!"

Feeling there was no use beating the dead horse, Alexander then let his dream boat go for the time being and went on to his last request.

"Ahh...that." And Lord Janus produced awkward face.

After rejecting Alexander like that even he felt a bit embarrassed to again object so openly.

But it was only for a while as the old man thickened his skin to point that,

"Blacksmiths are usually part of many trade guilds my lord. So asking so many of them to move..."

"Guilds! What guilds" But before Lord Janus could go on Alexander harshly interjected in a slightly annoyed tone, saying,

"You by now should control all of their iron ore supply. What do mean they will object? The day you stop giving them ore, the day they die."

Alexander would never buy that such a huge family could not order around a mere hundred artisans.

They were not that weak.

He further added,

"Besides, I'm not asking them to become slaves. I will even allow them to return to their homeland once every year."

"I just want them to work here for 10 years, then they can leave. I will even give each of them a generous parting gift."

Alexander's insistence on these blacksmiths was because there was indeed a shortage of them in Zanzan.

Particularly, he wanted to open his own shop selling cast iron products such as pots and pans, cutlery, farming tools, and many other kinds of civilian products to cater to the masses.

This would be a far better way to use his refined iron rather than sell them by the ingots.

But to set up such a large production facility he would of course need blacksmiths, a lot of blacksmiths.

Furthermore, he hoped that with more blacksmiths, he would be able to start making plate armor far enough along the line.

That was still a long way off, but he wanted to start on that journey now.

Which was why he was a bit frustrated when denied this progress.

And seeing this, Lady Miranda felt it would be better to just come and say the real reason for their objection,

".....Lord Alexander is right. We indeed can send you these blacksmiths."

"But you see these people also know various smithing techniques that are exclusive to our family."

"I'm sorry, but we cannot reveal them." Lady Miranda sounded very firm on this.

Those secrets that she was referring to had been learned over generations after all.

Anybody would be unwilling to share them so easily.

But Alexander only chuckled at this myopic view, feeling these two were still living in the past.

And decided to point out the obvious.

Chapter 673 A Second Deal With The Margraves (Part-4)

Hearing Lady Miranda's reason for not wanting to send the blacksmiths, Alexander very quickly pointed out the archaic thinking they were under, saying,

"I'm afraid the secret that your family has is not applicable here, my lady."

A bold statement that drew curious eyes from both, who heard Alexander explain,

"Because the smithing techniques you have developed were only for iron extracted using the traditional way."

"That process that has a lot of impurities, we call slag."

"But the way we make iron is different. It has much less slag."

"So our iron's properties are totally different from the traditional ones."

"That's why it is so strong."

"And that is also why the way to forge them is also very different."

"You can ask any blacksmiths if you do not believe me. my lady."

"But the fact is the secret forging techniques you have is not useful to us. So you can sleep assured, hahaha,"

Alexander lightly chuckled after knowing the reason why they did not want to do it.

A chortle that slightly got onto Lady Miranda's nerves as she then in a slightly frosty tone replied,

"Still....we are willing to fulfill my lord's request in some other ways."

She did not like Alexander slighting her family's proud smithing history and so made this choice anyhow.

"...." Which made Alexander pursed his lips.

It was hard to be reasonable to an unreasonable person.

He did not think the other side would be so boorish.

"I agree with Lady Miranda here, Lord Alexander. We cannot hand over those secrets, useful or useless. Please, is there any other we can help?."

And Lord Janus too expressed his solidarity with his partner, feeling Alexander was exaggerating the differences between the techniques.

'Or why else would he want our blacksmiths?' He reasoned as he thought their expert knowledge was definitely still valuable.

And he was right in thinking that because Alexander did try to pull a bit of wool over their eyes.

Perhaps the iron he produced was not as difficult to work with as the traditionally produced one, but you still needed some expertise to handle it.

And he had hoped he could get the Margrave blacksmiths who had generations of experience in forging iron tools to teach him these.

"Hmmmmm," But since that 'free' lesson seemed to be not an option, Alexander got to thinking while humming.

He could ask for other stuff, perhaps like precious gems or good timber, but he also really wanted those blacksmiths.

And at last, he made up his mind.

"Since we are talking about revealing secrets, then how about we exchange one from each other's." He enigmatically proposed, and facing the pair's curious glances delineated,

"Zanzan has developed a farming method that has seen its agricultural output double in the last year. We are willing to share that secret in return for teaching our men your smithing and forging techniques."

"How does that sound?"

Yes, Alexander had decided to reveal three of his farming tricks- the heavy plow, the three-crop rotation system, and the horse collar.

This was primarily because it was not really a secret per se.

His council members all knew it, as well as the nobles who joined him.

And by that reasoning so did the farmers under them.

So it was not really a secret when almost all your farmers, which accounted for ninety percent of the population knew about it.

This meant anybody with a sufficiently open eye and ear would be able to figure out most of the stuff if they just tried looking into it for a bit.

Furthermore, the heavy plow could be bought at stores, so could the horse collar, and the three-crop rotation was out in the field for everyone to see.

The only thing that Alexander kept to himself was the use of manure and compost as fertilizers and his selection of crops in certain fields, such as peas which added nutrients back to the soil.

So Alxx felt it was totally worth it to reveal these techniques that were pretty much out in the open if it meant he could get so many experienced blacksmiths!

These hundred blacksmiths from the Margraves could get him seven to eight hundred new blacksmiths five to seven years from now.

And those could get him another seven to eight times their number again in the next half a decade.

And with that many experienced artisans, perhaps he could finally start making his full body plate armor.

He was really looking forward to that.

But since that process was still such a long way off, Alexander felt he should start right now.

"....."

Alexander's big claim naturally drew astonished looks from the opposite side,

If not that Alexander had shown himself to be a trusted ally, they might have even sneered at his face.

Because doubling anything was very, very hard. I think you should take a look at

But since Alexander had spoken, they had to take what he said with weight.

And it took a while for Lady Miranda to finally gather her thoughts and speak up,

"If what my lord says is true, then that is certainly a gift from the gods."

"But I also heard you are the one who came up with the way to make iron so cheaply. Would it be possible to exchange that secret instead?"

To call her greedy at this point would be an understatement.

"Or how to make the sugar?" And her partner seemed even more.

"No. It's this or nothing." But Alexander was unequivocal in his reply.

The two that they wanted would have been out of the question no matter what.

And it appeared the other side likely knew this which was why when his reply got only a wry smile, not a crestfallen look of disappointment.

So then Lady Miranda asked something more reasonable,

"...what you said about our techniques not being so useful. Is it really true?" She wanted confirmation again, reasoning that since Alexander had discovered a new way to make iron, he must know something about crafting it.

'Yes. I swear by the gods!' And Alexander was very clear in his reply.

"And the farming technique..... can really get us double the produce?" Lady Miranda then sought this confirmation, still sounding a bit skeptical.

"It did for us. Hopefully, it will for you too."

"Even if it does not double, I guarantee it will at least increase it substantially." Alexander did not try to be a snake oil salesman and was as clear as possible about the technique's efficacy.

"Then we accept." And hearing such, Lady Miranda at last agreed.

"Great!" And finally having achieved a lot of what he wanted, Alexander cheered.

And then listed,

"So to summarize, I will give you the products that you wanted and in exchange get money, 10,000 men and their families to work the fields, new miners to open new ore veins, and a few of my men will learn shipbuilding from you."

"Right?" Alexander posed.

And almost immediately the obvious omission he made of course got pointed out.

The two nobles could not believe Alexander missed the thing they were talking about just now.

But Alexander here produced a sly chuckle as he breezily waved his palms and said,

"No, no, how can that count? I'm getting that in exchange for my agricultural secrets. That is a separate deal altogether, haha."

At Alexander's rhetoric, Lady Miranda and Lord Janus felt tongue-tied.

That was technically true, but somehow also not.

But Alexander did not seem to notice the strange face at all, as he went on so,

"So it seems that only three of my five requests have been made."

"And to make up for them I want the more precious gems, expensive stones, and the following weapon in these quantities."

"30,000 crossbows with 10 million bolts."

"30,000 swords" And

"20,000- halberts."

Half of Alexander's demand for these weapons was in general for his own consumption.

For the crossbows, he intended to have 10,000 to 15,000 of his men be equipped with them during his upcoming offensive with Tibias.

And to make sure he had enough ammo, he ordered that massive pile of bolts.

The same went for swords, to equip his men with enough equipment.

Many of the swords in his shorage were starting to show their age and Alexander felt it was high time he changed them.

As for the halberts, well Alexander wanted it mainly because Cambyses had informed him that the city guards were asking her for a complementary weapon in addition to their primary weapon- the sword.

Because although the sword was good in close-quarter fights such as in a tight alley, but the men also felt it would be nice to have something that had a longer reach.

Something with which they would keep the enemy at bay.

And the weapon they came to prefer was the halbert.

As for why they wanted that particularly instead of a spear, well it could do everything a spear could do, poke with the pointy bit at the end and shove a group of people back by horizontally holding the wooden shaft and using it as a bar.

But they could also do this additional task, which was to use the huge metal axe head to easily smash through wooden doors.

And this was not only useful for breaking into criminal hideouts.

As said previously, cities had a dangerous tendency to catch fire as well.

And this tool could be used to not only kill and maim but also save trapped victims by smashing open doors and windows.

Chapter 674 A Second Deal With The Margraves (End)

Now the volume of weapons he ordered was still too much for Alexander to consume by himself.

Never mind, he also had his own production, which too was churning out these out.

So why want so many?

Well, for one, he thought of selling some to his allies, Ptolomy and Pasha Farzah.

But more than that, Alexander hoped to send some of these to Iyizarid, as a way to egg them to attack Syabarsis.

He did not know if it would even remotely work, but hey, no harm in trying right?

But he did not reveal this to the two nobles.

Because well they had just been almost destroyed over false charges of colluding with Iyizarid.

So if Alexander were to honestly open up and say that he wanted to buy weapons they manufactured and then sell them to Iyizarid to encourage them to attack the duo's country, well then he doubted they would be very forthcoming in their delivery.

It had to be iterated that most of Sybarsis till now ambivalent about the Margrave family.

But if weapons made in their workshops using their unique smithing technique were to make their way into the hands of their most hated enemy, and then, if it was somehow identified, well, then the entire country of Sybarsis might turn against it.

No sane group would make such a dangerous transaction.

So they didn't.

At least, the Margrave family was not aware that they did.

All the weapons bought from them would be under Alexander's name who was an unrelated third party, free to sell weapons to whomever he liked.

What could Sybarsis do to him anyway?

So Alexander was pretty looking forward to trying it.

As Alexander made his requests, naturally Lady Miranda and Lord Janus upon hearing the huge orders felt their eyes bulge a bit.

"Wha...t?" They half exclaimed.

This was almost an order equivalent to asking them to equip an entire army.

Which was not unprecedented for the Margrave family.

But certainly very rare.'

They were also stunned that Alexander was asking for so much in exchange for the deal.

If they accepted, a significant of their blacksmiths would be occupied producing weapons for only him.

Something they were reluctant to do as they themselves were in the process of rearming themselves.

So Lady Miranda tried to haggle, "My lord this much...."

But Alexander had at last run out of patience, so flashing his palms said in a stern tone,

"If you cannot even give me this much, then let's reduce the goods. I believe I have been far more than accommodating,"

Alexander made it clear he would no longer negotiate.

"..." And this made the two nobles produce a difficult smile.

"This amount of weapons....is my lord expanding his army? Will there be a large campaign soon?"

Following this, Lord Janus then asked Alexander's reason why he wanted so many weapons, and got an affirmative nod on both.

But Alexander did not reveal why he was doing so and who was his target going to be.

And Lord Janus did not ask.

These plans were usually kept secret and it would be seen as prying into other's business if asked.

"Hmmm, 30,000 crossbows will cost 100 each, so 3 million ropals."

"!0 million crossbow bolts will be 8 to 10 million,"

"The sword and halberts will be 5 million total."

Instead, Lord Janus loudly gave out the cost, and then turning to Alexander said,

"My lord, the cost of the weapons is not too much. It is quite within the budget."

"But I'm afraid it is the quantities that are the problem, especially given our current circumstances."

"Delivering all of them by the end of next year will be hard. We might need another six months to a year."

Lord Janus was very frank and simply said they currently did not have the spare capacity to accept and deliver this massive order on time.

"Okay, then focus on the bolts and crossbows. I want at least those by the end of next year." Hearing so Alexander compromised as such.

He was not maddeningly desperate for these weapons and could afford to wait.

In the meantime, he could also try and open diplomatic talks with Iyizarid perhaps.

"Haha, good! I knew Lord Alexander was reasonable!" While Lord Janus hearing Alexander's concession naturally cheered. I think you should take a look at

And it was as such another round of trading with the Margrave family was concluded.

Then over the next week, all these agreements were finalised and ratified, while the council members as well as the nobles were informed.

The minor details were also worked out over several more meetings, such as the question of what would happen to Alexander's shipyard now that a lot of them would be going to Galiosis.

And the answer to that was that it would still be open, but the scale of the operation would be truncated.

Also, there was the problem with transporting the 50,000 men, women, and children as raised earlier, and Alexander gave the Margrave two years to move them instead of the initial one.

And with all these work done, Alexander's busy week ended in the blink of an eye, and suddenly he found himself at the port, standing in front of a huge ship.

"Well then my lord, till we meet again," The gruff voice of Lord Janus rang out.

Yes, Alexander was here to see off his two guests.

"Lady Miranda, Lord Janus, I would have asked you to stay for a few more weeks. But fall is approaching and I fear soon the sea will become very rough."

"If you do not leave soon, I'm afraid you will not be able to return for a few months."

"It is truly unfortunate that you have to leave so soon." Alexander's face was warm and sunny, his voice cordial, but laced with a bit of bitterness.

It was as if he truly regretted that they could not stay a bit longer.

And standing next to him, a heavily pregnant Cambyses also chimed in,

"Yes, it is truly regretful we have bid you goodbye so soon. Lady Miranda. I had hoped we could have spent a bit longer."

"Please take care during your voyage. I will pray for your safety."

It seemed that over the past few days, the two women had grown very close.

This was not something orchestrated by Alexander, but simply due to their respective status.

Both were the matriarchs of their respective families and given they were currently allied, it was only natural they would get to know each other.

And apparently, In the last few days, Cambyeses got a lot closer to Lady Miranda, especially after getting a few critical advice from Lady Miranda regarding her pregnancy.

Advice which helped her tremendously in calming her nerves.

Cambyeses had been acting out more and more frequently the closer to her delivery date and she was really grateful to the noble lady for helping her deal with all the stress.

At Cambyeses's goodbyes, Lady Miranda too replied very fondly, holding Cambyeses by the palms, and sweetly saying,

"Yes, I too will pray for you and your child's safety. I believe that the gods will surely bless you with a beautiful healthy baby."

"And next time I come, I will be sure to come with a lot of time on my hand."

"I bring Marcus with me as well. Then our children can play together, hehe." Lady Miranda warmly giggled.

And it was with such cordial words and warm goodbyes that the two guests finally left Zanzan.

Lady Miranda and Lord Janus stood on the bow of the ship until the port disappeared into the horizon, finally at which point, the elder gentleman turned to cautiously ask,

"My lady, why did you not take Lord Alexander's marriage offer? I think he suits you very well."

Lord Janus of course did not buy Lady Miranda's excuse of mourning her husband.

The lady did not hate her former husband, but she was never madly in love with him either.

The couple was mostly apathetic to each other most of the time.

So in the mind of this aged man, he felt Lady Miranda rejecting Alexander to be a grave mistake.

He saw Alexander as being well-mannered, rich, smart, having unfathomable potential, and best of all currently weak.

Yes, he thought of Alexander as being relatively weak, with a tiny territory, but with an enormous possibility of becoming something huge.

A perfect suitor in his books.

It was something akin to discovering facebook, or google, or amazon during these companies' early years.

Anybody who knew of these companies' potential would have been foolish not to invest in them.

And in that same vein, Lord Janus felt that if Lady Miranda did marry Alexander now, her words would carry much weight even later through the year, which would ultimately benefit House Margrave tremendously.

Lord Janus especially eyed all the new stuff coming out of Zanzan, which Lady Miranda being his spouse should have been able to pry some bits and crumbs out.

Hence he felt it was a great pity that the lady had rejected him, and even done so decisively that it left Lord Janus no way to intervene and try and salvage the situation.

Thus he hoped Lady Miranda had a really good reason to not accept the offer.

Chapter 675 A Brief Passage Of Time

At Lord Janus's inquiry, Lady Miranda had this to say,

"Uncle Janus, Adhania is a polygamous country. And ours is a monogamous. I'm afraid we have too different a way of thinking."

"For me personally, I think I will never be able to stand the idea of my husband sleeping with another woman so openly."

"Now, the men in Sybarsis are not too dissimilar. They also keep mistresses and fools around frequently."

"But they at least try to do so in secret, away from their wife's eyes, behind a curtain so to speak."

"Even if everybody knows, they at least try to keep that veneer of modesty."

"But in Adhania it is all open and legal. And they have so many types of women too! God!"

"Wife, main wife, concubines, maids, servants, whores.... the list goes on!"

"Ah! So filthy and debauchorous!" Lady Miranda seemed genuinely appalled at the thoughts, as she then flashed her palms and declared in a final tone,

"I'm sorry, but I am unable to accept such prurient behavior."

"Even if Lord Alexander is a charming man, even if I find him attractive, unless he gives up all his women, I cannot agree to this."

"And given how close he and Lady Cambyses are, that is impossible to happen."

It seemed Alexander and the noble lady had too far a differing ideology to be able to come to terms.

At least for the moment.

"I see. Then forgive this old man for asking," And hearing Lady Miranda's answer, Lord Janus very differentially replied.

Though internally he posed, "Why did you then do that last year?"

He was of course talking about that small kiss she had given Alexander.

And the simple answer to that was that at that time, facing the predicament she was in, Lady Miranda was willing to do anything to ally herself with anyone.

Even if meant seducing a much younger man just to win his support.

But now that things had changed, her thinking too had flipped.

Given they had just won the war and were safe for the foreseeable next few years, Lady Miranda no longer felt desperate to ally herself with a power no matter what.

Especially through marriage if it meant she would have to share her consort with other women.

Furthermore, she was no longer the widowed, doe-eyed girl from a year ago, helpless without her husband and one who could not even properly negotiate a proper business deal.

No, currently she was the most powerful person in the Margrave family, its matriarch, seeing over vast swathes of territory and in control of the fate of millions of men.

And with this change in status, came a change in her mindset so.

So felt given her status her husband should belong only to her, and only her children should be the legitimate ones.

It was because of all these reasons that Lady Miranda rejected Alexander.

And hearing of this, grandfather Earl Margrave IV would approve of Lady Miranda's rejection, saying in addition to all that, many nobles would also not like having an outsider, especially someone of such low-born status like Alexander, to be their leader's consort.

Instead he then quickly arranged for Lady Miranda to get married to one of her elder cousins.

This was done hastily, with the intention to not only close all discussions over this question as soon as possible but also to strengthen the Margrave family's hold over their territory.

This would happen because with this union, the branch families would be more accepting of Lady Miranda's rule, for one of their own would be at the family's highest levels of power, meaning they all could now have a greater share of the pie as well.

As for the implications of this move, whether Alexander would be offended or brush it off as nothing well that remained to be seen.

But for now, the young lord was currently busy overseeing the fall harvest.

And it was as bountiful as last year's.

In fact it was much more overall because in addition to Alexander's, the surrounding nobles too had the time to implement his policies. I think you should take a look at

And now they were reaping his dividends.

So during this time, vast swathes of land covered in golden grains swaying gently in the breeze all around Zanzan and its vicinity was a common sight to behold.

And seeing their whole year's hard work pay off and in such huge quantities, there were huge smiles across the faces of everyone, from the farmers to their wives, to the general populace to even the nobles themselves.

The huge volume of harvest represented huge sums of money for everyone.

And after experiencing the recent droughts, everyone was over the moon that they now had so much to eat.

But before they could do that they first needed to first harvest it.

So everyone was extremely busy during this period, frantically trying to get these crops into sheds and barns before the fall rain could come in and ruin them.

So it was one of those special cases where even though currently a blistering heatwave was sweeping over the region, yes, the same heatwave Lady Miranda had encountered, most people did not wish to see the weather turn cooler and a bit more comfortable but even enjoyed the heat, wishing it would actually last longer.

Because then they would have more time to get all the crops out.

To aid in that effort, Alexander even temporarily disbanded a large part of the army, switching their sword for scythes and ordering them to go help the farmers with the raking in harvest.

Alexander would later get the report that his lands had managed to produce around 50,000 tons of grain, and another 30,000 to 40,000 tons of fruits, vegetables, and condiments, as well as tens of thousands of beetroots.

This was an amount absolutely unheard of for such a small farm area, and it even resulted in the happy problem of some nobles running out of proper silos to hold all this grain.

Which meant that if the fall rains were heavy enough, the produce would be in danger of being ruined.

To solve this Alexander then quickly emptied many of this storage warehouse for other materials, such as stone, bricks, limestone, coal, and iron, and for the moment filled them up with grain.

After all, those rocks and metal were far better resistant to the elements than food produce, and leaving them in out for a few months would not completely destroy all of them.

And unfortunately for Alexander, this move worked as all those huge warehouses were all big enough to hold all the harvested grain for the moment,

And as houses, after houses got stacked up to the roof with the golden seeds, seeing which filled his heart with the same amount of glee, Alexander did some maths.

He calculated that with this current harvest, and combined it with the food stock Lady Inayah and Pasha Farzah had already sent, it would be just enough to feed his population of 300,000 to 350,000 and the tens of thousands of draft animals for the next year.

Furthermore, both of them had also ordered a similar amount of goods as they had done this year for next year too, as Kayvan let Alexander know a few days ago, meaning he would be getting tons of new food and draft animals in the future.

So he would not only have enough seeds to sow for the proceeding year but even have large stocks of leftover grain which could be used to open up a lot of the unused farmlands for additional cultivation.

This also meant the 50,000 tons of grain Alexander had asked from Lady Miranda could be purely kept as reserves, perhaps to be used as supplies for his army when he attacked Tibias.

And this realization finally put Alexander's heart at ease over his food supply, as up until now, he was unable to produce enough to feed his own population, having to always rely on Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah to make timely delivers to him to make sure he did not starve.

But now, if everything went well next year, he would be finally able to have a little bit of wiggle room, able to survive a few months without any outside aid even if any unforeseen disaster, both man-made and natural struck.

It felt very good to have this comforting little nest of eggs.

Now, Alexander did not simply store the grain in his warehouses,

He also made sure to buy up a lot of the free grain in the market.

This applied to mostly the nobles, as all the farmland in Alexander's private lands was owned by solely him, with very, very few private farmers working there.

So in exchange for being allowed to store their grain in his city and use its facilities, Alexander made them sell about two-thirds of their grain to him.

And given Alexander made sure to give them a fair price- 1,500 ropals a ton, the nobles were glad to.

Alexander did this because one, this way he could have control over the population's grain supply, and thus their food stocks, giving him great power.

But mainly because he feared the flood of new grain entering the grain would water down its price and result in the farmers encouraging a loss.

It could even drive many out.

Which Alexander did not want to see.

So in this way, the supply in the market was controlled and everyone benefitted in the long run.

Chapter 676 Cambyses's Delivery

Alexander's reason for keeping grain prices relatively high was to ensure farmers did not quit their farmlands after one bad year.

On the contrary, he wanted to make sure farming was seen as a lucrative prospect to the people.

Because Alexander was still not self-sufficient in food and needed more and more people to join it.

And to his credit, the forced price increase worked. as farmers were able to make a decent profit, leaving them feeling optimistic about the future.

And speaking of the future, Alexander's future successor or if not that, his future princess was about to be born.

It was already mid- September and the mid- wives told them that Cambyses would go into labor not any day, but any hour.

She was already a bit past her nine months after all.

"Aghh! It's so hot! When will it cool down," And it was on one such night that Alexander and Cambyses were in their beds, with the girl's head resting on Alexander's lap, while fanned using her palms.

As Alexander sitting with his back resting on the headboard looked down to observe the current state of his wife.

And it was a very sexy one to view.

She wore her usual nightwear, which was a thin, sheer, sleeveless negligee that only covered her breasts but parted down the middle, emphasizing her swollen belly.

And it was truly a swollen belly, a size Alexander did not think Cambyses could reach, as it bulged out quite a bit in front of her, even pointing out her belly button and making it more prominent.

While down below, where she did wear a T-back thong, now there was nothing because Cambyses would occasionally leak a white, yellowish liquid called leucorrhea.

This was a totally normal thing during pregnancies, but Cambyses hated it because it made her feel her she was peeing uncontrollably.

Hence Cambyses shamelessly had her legs wide-eagled, with one of her hands constantly wiping over her petal using a linen cloth to keep it dry, an endeavour she was failing miserably given the situation.

All while letting Alexander see everything.

And this new look really tempted Alexander, especially as he fantasized about Cambyses bouncing on him with her swollen belly, the heavy tummy carrying the crystallization of their love swaying lewdly with their movement.

He even half regretted not doing anything with Cambyses when he had the chance out of excessive caution.

"I will be sure to do something next time," Hence Alexander swore.

As for this time, he busied himself with her breasts, as currently his hands were inside her negligee, gently playing with the pair.

They had definitely grown a bit due to the pregnancy.

"It should be cooling soon. By the way, how are you feeling," At Cambyses's throwaway comment, Alexander too replied casually, instead more focusing on massaging her.

Over the past month, he slept with Cambyses almost exclusively as he made sure to always calm her through physical intimacy as long as he was home.

"Ah! Stop pinching. My milk is coming," And it seemed one of his massages was a bit too strong, as pinching the nubile bud caused it to squirt out a tiny stream of white liquid, staining the jet-black linen cloth covering it.

Yes, Cambyses had of course started lactitating, starting from around the start of the month.

And Alexander did have a few suckles at first, finding the taste sweet and very immoral, but afterward, Cambyses started denying him the nectar, saying, "No! It's for the baby!"

So Alexander contented himself to stimulating her mammaries and turning the thin cloth covering her breast darker as it became wet with leaking milk.

And as if for revenge for not letting him have a taste, at Cambyses's complaint, he not only stopped, but teased her even more, kneading and squeezing the soft puppies, and at one point even pinched the cherries between his fingers so tightly that Cambyses howled in pain and pleasure, even arching her back, and thrusting her hips forward as she lightly came.

Alexander knew Cambyses did not really dislike him playing with her breasts, and given she had not had the D for almost nine months, he would periodically help her release so that she did not become pent up, as there were some times she joked while stroking her tummy, "The second this little bugger is out, we are gonna have so much sex! I so miss that feeling of getting skewered."

As the couple engaged in their therapeutic intimate acts, Cambyses then once again posed a question she had already asked for the umpteenth time.

"Alexander, what would happen if I can't give you a son?"

"Not what if I can't give you this time? What if I just can't?"

"You know Aunty Kaysa that used to live next to us back in Argus? She gave birth to fifteen daughters! Fifteen! All girls!"

"What if I'm like that?"

This was perhaps Cambyses's biggest fear.

And Alexander had already exhausted all the possible variations of 'Then we will try again' and 'I will love all of them regardless' a long, long ago.

He even went all scientific mode and told Cambyses that it was the man who determined a child's gender, not the woman. I think you should take a look at

And this was a hundred percent true.

Men have XY, while women have XX chromosomes.

And since each parent gave half of his or her chromosome to his child, it was only the male who was responsible for determining the sex of a child.

Something that Alexander tried to explain in a very watered, appropriate for the time way.

Using all these ways Alexander was able to drive these haunted thoughts from Cambyses's head each time, but it would all only be temporary, as after a while, they would soon be back, taking perch inside Cambyses's head like an especially clingy ghost.

So this time, Alexander decided to give a straight answer.

"If the main wife is really unable to give birth to a boy, the general convention is the man's eldest son became the heir, regardless of who his mother was."

"But since it's you, if the worst of the worst really does happen as you fear, then I will let you have a say in who I choose as my heir."

"Do you accept that?"

Alexander was very mechanical in his answer, and hearing this out of the norm answer, Cambyses swung her head as if she had been electrocuted, and found herself gazing at a pair of somewhat cold, emotionless dark pearls.

Alexander was serious when he said this.

And looking at it, Cambyses's heart suddenly ached like it never had, as then producing a hurt face, she broke any from the intimate contact they were having and abruptly turned around, burying her face into the pillow.

And a few moments later, whimpered sobs began to drift across the room.

She wanted to hear comforting words, not the cruel truth.

And seeing her reaction, Alexander too knew he had messed had messed up, as he pursed his lips in frustration.

He had let his irritation at the same hackneyed discussion get the better of him, whereas he should have gone with the sugar- coated lie, knowing how erratic women tended to be during their pregnancy due to all the hormone imbalances.

But his tactlessness had rewarded him with this.

And seeing the current state, Alexander too turned around away from Cambyses and decided to go to sleep, leaving the girl to calm down on her own by morning.

Or so he thought.

As in the middle of the night, Alexander was woken up by the piercing shriek of 'Ah! My water broke!' and he found Cambyses's side of the bed completely drenched with an odorless liquid.

She had just entered her first stage of going into labor.

Seeing this Alexander then instantly jumped out of bed to get the two midwives he had hired, and then even sent a messenger to Jupetus, the one in charge of his clinic to come and oversee everything.

And as the older lady quickly came with a small team of doctors and started to prepare Cambyes and her room, a few hours later, the girl's womb finally started its contractions, initiating the delivery.

Alexander had wanted to stay beside Cambyes all throughout this event.

But because of an Adhanian tradition which said it was unlucky to have men present during birth, Alexander was not allowed to.

And given how superstitious people of this time were, Alexander obeyed so as to not cause a ruckus.

Hence he waited outside, impatiently walking back and forth along the narrow corridor, while from time to time Cambyes's extremely pained groans pierced through his ears.

It seemed her labor was not being an easy one.

So every time he heard that wounded cry, his heart bled and his knees felt weak and wobbly, fearing that scream was her last and that this might be the last time he saw his love.

"Calm down, master. It's been only a few hours. I have seen deliveries at the temple last half a day,"

And it was only Ophenia staying with him and comforting him as such every other instance did it prevented him from barging open the door and rushing to Cambyes.

Cambyes's painful cries rose and fell periodically, and finally at close to midday, they died down completely, which was either a good or bad thing,

And Alexander very much feared it was the latter.

"Congratulations my lord, you are a father!"

But it seemed he was wrong this time.

Chapter 677 Two Children

"Congratulations my lord, you are a father!"

Opening the door with a great, big smile, Jupetus's greeting sounded as sweet as honey to Alexander.

Though she really did not need to spell it out, as the piercing cry of the infant shooting out of the door gave Alexander more than confirmation of that.

"Waaah! Waaah! Waah!"

The normally irritating blasting cry now felt like the most calming sound to Alexander.

"Great! That's great!" He cheered, his heart immediately filling with glee as his face broke out into a huge smile.

And as the older woman opened the door further to signal him to go in, he found a slightly flushed, tired looking Cambyses swaddling a child wrapped in a warm towel in her arms, gently rocking them, as she tried to calm the crying baby down.

And as Alexander as he approached the bed,

"My lord, it's a healthy girl!" One of the midwives beamed, a statement that made his heart slightly skip a beat.

Not because he was disappointed with having a daughter, no, in fact, he was over the moon at having his princess.

But because he knew Cambyses would slightly be.

And as he looked at her face, although Cambyses tried to hide it, he certainly noticed a hint of bitterness in her eyes when she looked at the child, and for a moment Alexander did not know what to say.

'*Sigh*', it seems her fears came true,' Alexander was worried how it would affect her going forward.

"Here, hold your daughter," But such pessimistic thoughts seemed to only last for a while, as the moment Alexander got next to Cambyses, she passed the tiny body to him, a gentle, caring smile flashing across her face.

And as Alexander received it, he could not remember if he had ever held something so gently in his life.

The little thing was tiny, weighing barely two kilograms, which was on the side of being underweight.

The skin was flushed red, her head being much larger than the rest of the body, and as Alexander placed his palm underneath it, he could feel it slightly pulsating, as the skull was yet to fully form.

Sensing she was being moved, the girl quickly opened her large limpid blue eyes, using them to scan her surroundings, until they finally made contact with a similar pair.

The father and daughter possessed the exact same pair, and as one gazed upon the other, a slight smile seemed to creep along the tiny one's lips as if she recognized them.

Or so Alexander thought as an instant later the room was blasted with an ear -piercing scream.

'Who is this scary, unknown man?' Seemed to be the message, as the girl tightly squeezed her eyes shut and started crying her lungs out, her entire body shivering in the process, with the volume being even louder than the first time.

She definitely did not like being moved away from her mother.

"Ohhh! Ohhh!" And even though Alexander tried to calm her down by gently rocking her, it not only worked but also exasperated her condition, causing her to cry even louder.

For such a tiny thing, her lungs sure packed some punch.

"Haha, miss certainly has a good voice," And hearing her energetic cries, one of the midwives kindly commented this.

A newborn crying so loudly was a good thing, as it showed she was healthy

"Yes, yes. And she seems to prefer her mother to me," Alexander happily chuckled.

While approaching from behind, Jupetus let Alexander know of the small details,

"We were worried at first thinking it would be a difficult delivery. But everything went smoothly. "Both Lady Cambyes and Little Lady are both healthy and well."

"Praise the goddess."

At this point, Alexander then turned to look at the sleepy Cambyes and holding his daughter by her entire body, he proclaimed in a serious tone,

"Alexandria! I will name her after me. Alexandria!"

He said this while very intently looking at Cambyes.

And this got a bit of a shocked look from her at first, and then her eyes turned soft, her face melting into a light smile.

She of course understood the hint Alexander was giving her, by naming her so close to his own name.

"Give her to her. She must be hungry," So the tone she spoke with this time was so much softer, as she then placed her daughter against her chest, letting the infant eagerly suckle on her milk.

Although there were wet nurses for this, Cambyses wanted her child's first taste to be of her own.

A few weeks after this, once Cambyses recovered, Alexander held a huge feast to celebrate the birth, with all the nobles coming bearing gifts, and conveying their congratulations.

Even his allies, Ptolomy, Lady Inayah, and Pasha Farzah sent their respective greetings and promised to send appropriate gifts, while a messenger was sent to Galiosos to let Lady Miranda know.

While back in Zanzan, the nobles were invited into Alexander's house where they toasted to the young girl's health.

"Hahaha, being born at the same time of such a bumper harvest, Lord Alexander's daughter's birth is truly auspicious.? May she grow up to be healthy, chaste, and virtuous."

Their proclamations were done using phrases as per their traditions, and it showed the qualities society valued in their women.

Some nobles were also not content just wishing Alexander's daughter well.

They even wished to tie the knot with one of their sons then and there, with even Jamider Tikba throwing his lot into the hat.

"My lord, one of my sons is three years old! Very strong and courageous! I believe he will be a good match for Lady Alexandria!" He spoke with a large beaming face, seemingly very proud of the little guy.

But this probably made Alexander roll his eyes more than he ever had in his life.

'My daughter is....forget being weaned off, she has just started weaning' He cried incredulously in his mind at the absurd offer.

What could someone who barely had the ability to recognize her own mother understand about marriage?

So he gently then but very clearly let everyone know that he would not discuss his daughter's future for the foreseeable time period, at least definitely not for the next decade.

As for later, that could be discussed then.

And so he advised everyone to save their breath.

This declaration made some nobles with suitable sons a bit sad, while others who had none hopeful that they could have one by the time came.

But those were for future considerations, as following Alexandria's birth, the seasons turned from fall to winter in the blink of an eye, but the temperature did not change too much.

It seemed this year's winter was going to be especially mild.

Which was a good thing for the little girl, as garbed in heavy clothing, she was allowed to go out around the garden a few times on her mother's lap with little fear of catching a cold.

And following winter, it then turned to spring, then to summer, then it again started to approach fall, turning the little girl almost a year old.

By this time she had learned to crawl on her feet, even showing signs of walking a bit on her own, as well as calling Cambyses mom, and Alexander dad, albeit with much stutter.

During this time she had also turned from being initially underweight to a small chubby, fluffball of joy, having gained quite a bit of weight.

This was because little Alexandria was not only fed her mother's milk but also had two other wet nurses taking care of her twenty four -seven, ever present to tend to all her needs, from making sure she was always kept fed, to changing her clothes to cleaning up all her mess to even playing with her with others were busy.

Another good news for the little princess was that it seemed she was about to become a big sister soon, as Cambyses was once again pregnant.

And interestingly it seemed her new pregnancy was also around the same date she had even conceived with Alexandria, early January.

Meaning now that it was mid- August, being eight months into her conception, her baby bump had become quite prominent.

And this time, Alexander remembered the regret he had felt last time seeing her like this and did not miss his chance.

"Ahhh, so good, so hard,"

So as if to make up for that, Cambyses was currently on top of Alexander, swinging her huge, swollen belly lewdly, while her perky breasts went up and down cutely, leaking milk.

Cambyses had feared she might become loose after her conception, but it seemed the legummum combined with her young age prevented that, thus letting Alexander experience the same, tight sensation.

In fact, the sensation was a lot better, for it was aided by the visual sensation of Cambyses's breast milk dripping down her snowy boobs, ultimately tempting Alexander to latch his mouth onto the engrossed buds and suck on them like a child.

An act that got a soul-stirring moan of approval from the girl.

Her pregnancy this time was much smoother, as she did not break into panic attacks like the previous time.

This was because over the past year, Cambyses had seen how lovingly Alexander treasured his daughter.

Meaning the biggest fear she held deep down, which was that if she had a daughter, the child could be abandoned by Alexander as her own father had done to her was alleviated.

Instead, Cambyses now felt reassured even if she had a second daughter, the child would grow up in a loving family.

Though all those fears were actually unnecessary, as this time, she managed to give Alexander a boy!

Chapter 678 A Year into the Passing (Part-1)

Alexander named his son Philip, which got a strange look from Cambyses when she heard it the first time.

This was because being the head of the city guards, as well as getting to sit during some of Camius's reports, she got to know the crown prince of Tibias, who was effectively ruling over the country currently, was also called a very similar Philips, and wondered if there was a connection.

Now, Philips or Philip was not an uncommon name, nor was it uncommon to have two powerful people have the same name.

Just look at history, it's full of repeating names.

Trying to count how many Edwards, Henrys, and Georges the English had will easily make one's head spin.

But even then the name did sound a bit strange to Cambyses, though she did not fight it, as the power to name a child belonged solely to the father.

As for Alexander, the reason he chose the name had nothing to do with Tibias, but with his own name.

Since he had taken the name Alexander after Alexander the Great, he felt it would be funny to name his son Philip in a kind of reverse twist.

He had actually oscillated between this or Macedon since Alexander the Great's father was called Philip II of Macedon.

But ultimately chose the former because he felt the people of these lands might struggle to pronounce the latter.

"Perhaps if Cam has another son," He then mused to himself, thinking it would be funny to have two boys named Philips and Macedon.

Alexander of course could never tell Cambyses this as she would not even understand the context, so instead he made a random excuse relating to the meaning of the word.

The celebrations Alexander held for his son were of course a lot grander and flashier than his daughter's, with almost all his retainers cheering ecstatically over the fact that they now had a clear heir, bringing much stability to Alexander's rule.

"Hahaha, the birth of Lord Alexander's son is an auspicious sign. This means our campaign against Tibias next year will be a successful one,"

One of the noblemen loudly toasted.

And no, he had not made a slip of the tongue in his drunken state when he said this.

The campaign that was scheduled for this winter did get pushed back to next fall or at the earliest next spring.

In fact, this was exactly what Alexander and Camius were busy discussing when Cambyses had first heard the name Philips.

As to why Alexander decided to push his campaign back about six to twelve months, well to know that, one had to go to see what Alexander did in the past year.

These past three hundred and sixty-five days had been a relatively quiet one for Alexander, one where he was content to let the wheels of time turn almost eventlessly.

He took few major policies and instead mostly let the already ongoing projects catch up, only occasionally stepping out to check each of the ones' progress.

Hence during this time, more and more roads were roads both in and around Zanzan, more of the apartment buildings were opened, a few of the major aqueducts neared their completion, and lastly the endeavor of bringing the port to life carried on.

On the trade side of things, as summer came, Lady Inayah and Pasha Farzah's ships had already finished making two trips, netting Alexander a large amount of gold, grain, draft animals, and a seemingly innocent item, linen fabric, but in alarming volumes.

Alexander had plans for that.

Along with that, the 8,000 to 10,000 free men that Pasha Farzah had promised him also arrived, who were put to good use opening new farmlands.

And in combination with that, Lady Miranda's ships also arrived carrying his promised payment laden with both goods and men.

Much of the former, depending on what it was either stored or sold on the open market, while the latter was paid much more closer attention by Alexander.

Because the first batch of men was very important to him.

So the various experienced miners that were sent here were instructed to go look for new mines in the Cisran hill.

While the new blacksmiths were at first asked to make numerous iron cast molds of alphabets, numbers, and signs for his printing press that he was in the midst of designing.

Originally they should have been employed at Alexander's new, gigantic casting workshop, but he seemed to have run into unforeseen difficulties, resulting him in being forced to delay its initiation.

This was because he found it hard to recruit the necessary skilled manpower.

Especially, finding a couple of hundred twelve to fourteen-year-olds eager to be a blacksmith's apprentice proved much more difficult than he had anticipated since most such youths were currently already engaged in other professions.

And they had to be within that age group because the blacksmiths were insistent on it, with all flatly refusing to take anyone below or above that, even when Alexander pressured them.

They knew their status of being from Sybarsis gave them some leverage.

And with some being unhappy that they had been forced to move here against their will, this was their subtle way of protesting.

They claimed "Any younger or older, and they will be too stupid. We need apprentices around that age."

Now, there was some truth of this, as young people had the ability to learn things much quicker than adults.

But they also could not be so young as to be unable to understand his master's instructions.

That would be too dangerous given they worked with fire and sharp tools, and posed a danger to both themselves and the people around them.

Also, they needed to be mature enough to have some muscle on them.

After all, smithing required some serious power to operate the bellows or beat the iron into shape, or even just move around the heavy tools

So if they could not properly all those, they would not be really of much use.

Alexander knew all this to be the case, which was also why he did not push the blacksmiths to teach older men.

Another reason why Alexander did not force them too hard was because Alexander wanted to maximize the lifetime of his blacksmiths.

By which he meant he wanted to get the largest number of years of service possible from each of them.

And of course, to get this, it was best that they started as young as possible.

Now, the average lifespan of an artisan was fifty, and given a twelve or fourteen year took anywhere from 5 to 10 years to become even decent at his craft, that left him with 25 to 30 years of workable years.

Which sounded like a lot, but in reality, this was actually 10 years less than that, because past the age of 40, many men would start developing problems with their sight.

Now, in modern times a simple pair of glasses could have fixed this innocuous problem.

But given prescription spectacles were a long, long way off from existing in this world, most aged artisans in their twilight years found themselves mostly delegating their work to their apprentices and being content with only overseeing the creation, rather than actually making them themselves.

Their eyes simply could not keep focus long enough for such intense work.

And this especially referred to complex works, which was even more of a shame as the works that people would want experienced experts to make would be these kinds of sophisticated pieces.

All of which meant that if Alexander made a 20 or 25 year become an apprentice, he might just get a decade or even in the worst case just half a decade of value from him.

So Alexander decided to wait.

Especially because he knew he would likely be getting some of such people when the 50,000 people promised by Lady Miranda arrived.

Surely some of the men coming here had to have eligible young children eager to work in smithing.

And Alexander's prayers were indeed answered eventually, as there were a few thousand young men of that age among the 20,000 Lady Miranda had sent this year.

So Alexander planned to start the construction of his workshop as soon as this fall harvest was over.

With some of the men arriving from Galiosos engaged in this workshop, Alexander transferred the rest to work in the recently opened new mines or employed them in many of his already established workshops, all of which were in dire need of expansion.

Alexander knew he had told Lady Miranda that these men would be employed as farmers, but now, these men were more urgently here.

While in exchange, he also transferred the 2,000 future shipwrights to the Margrave family, and going by the letter he received, it seemed he would be getting his first ships soon.

Those letters seemed to be full of praise for Alexander's idea, and they even then went on to say how great of a help the men he sent there were.

However Alexander seriously doubted the authenticity of these words and felt it was mostly written to placate him over Lady Miranda's sudden marriage.

And he would not lie, when he first read about it, he was a bit peeved.

Chapter 679 A Year Into The Passing (Part-2)

Upon knowing about Lady Miranda's marriage, Alexander was indeed at first a bit offended that he was sidelined like that.

A marriage with Lady Miranda would have been really useful.

But it seems that the lady had other plans.

And since she had made her choice, Alexander felt there was no reason to harp about it anymore.

So he instead chose to concentrate on other matters.

And frankly, there were a lot of matters that required his attention.

For instance, expanding his workshops.

Given his products had two years to exist and expand, Alexander's unique delicacies had exploded in popularity with his customers, their hunger for every one of those turning ravenous by now.

But unfortunately, his supply had been unable to keep up with even a tenth of the demand, with outputs for some even falling following Tibias's attack.

All of which ultimately resulted in a huge price increase.

For instance, the demand for paper over the last year has gone up multiple times, with the market price for it going up from the initial price of 1 ropal for 5 sheets of A2 paper, to that same ropal getting just one sheet of A2 paper- i.e.- an increase of 5 times.

And similar huge spikes were experienced in all the goods, from the various kinds of soaps to the many types of glassware which even experienced a drop in quality following Gajopk's death, to the largest increase experienced by brown and more especially white sugar, which was not really a surprise.

And though such huge price increases sound good, it was not really of any benefit for Alexander because he was selling them to his distributors at the agreed upon initial price.

Instead, it was ultimately Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah who were the true beneficiaries.

And though this might sound like a win-win for both parties, with both parties being able to earn billions even with the transportation and distribution cost, Alexander viewed such wins to be applicable only for the short term,

Because Alexander felt if he did not rein in the prices, people would either try and find substitutes, even if they were only cheap knockoffs, or his market size would soon cap.

For he knew at the prices some of his products were selling, even many nobles, particularly not so well off ones, found it frightening to enjoy these luxuries.

Thus over the last year, Alexander worked hard to expand all his workshops.

The grounds were stretched far beyond their usual wooded perimeters, even taking over the areas originally belonging to the manor, as Alexander worked to transform that huge 2 square kilometers into his personal industrial estate.

Alexander at one point did want to restore his manor to its former self and even had plans to build it bigger and better, such as with an indoor swimming pool.

But given this was also the birthplace of his unique industry and all these workshops here could use the space, he decided to prioritize that.

After all, all the infrastructure for all the various shops was already here and it made no sense to move and rebuild all of them.

As for his manor, he could build his manor anywhere he wished after all.

Alexander even had plans to build multiple ones, with a summer home along the southern coast being his priority.

He really wanted to see his girls in a swimsuit.

But all these ideas were simply plans for now, as right now, he focused on getting all the workshops doubled and tripled and then doubled again in size, while also adding new ones, like the gigantic casting shop he was contemplating setting up.

So Alexander gave the orders for the expansion, which was so huge in fact that it looked like he had taken over a part of the Cisan Hills all for himself.

And with the new walls cordoning off the western side of the city too, this district was also safe from any outside attacks, letting the workers there labor away in peace.

Alexander had of course visited the site throughout its construction, with much of it still yet to be completed as a single year was not even enough to finish all his planned development.

It had to be remembered that Alexander's huge estate had small rivers, dense forests, and even many animals living in it, where Pasha Muazz would even hold hunting parties.

So clearing and reforming such a huge, wooded place was not an easy task, especially in only one year.

But still, even the current semi-completed project was a beauty to behold, with many, many new wooden sheds already built, all arranged in neat rows next to each other.

From above, they looked like huge blocks of Lego, or like train carriages. I think you should take a look at

Each row represented one particular product, and hence their insides looked nothing like the one opposite to it.

For example in the glass workshops, each of the wooden shed had lots of new furnaces, with many more on the way, as large numbers of new apprentices were recruited to start their careers as a glassmaker.

Now, given the skilled based nature of glassmaking, Alexander of course could not expect to increase production by simply increasing labour and capital.

For instance, a lot of the products coming out from these shops right now were pretty crap, especially the new ones, as the boys there were just starting to learn how to make these items.

But it was a start and Alexander was happy to dump his coin and resources into them, knowing even a few good pieces from them would make up for all the investment.

And it was even not as if Alexander was making much loss on them even now.

Because many of the failed junks they made still found customers, with them proving to be quite a hit with the general populace.

As to how these sub-standard products made their way to the market, well it was all done above and aboard with Alexander's full permission.

This had happened when the new in charge of the glass shops, Malikin had come to Alexander with the request to open a shop selling these failed products at comparatively very, very low prices, like 2 to 3 ropals a piece, being just barely above its material, and labor cost.

Alexander had at first laughed at the proposition, thinking it was a stupid idea, but since it did not hurt him in any way, he let the man do his thing, pretty sure it would amount to nothing.

But once Alexander got the sales report for the following month, it turned out he was the stupid one, as the number written on the paper was a staggering 10,000 ropals.

Out of context, this raw number meant little to Alexander, which in his eyes, was chump change.

But when taken in context, when it was understood that it came from, from a tiny shop selling basically junk, Alexander felt his eyes being opened.

Malikin would inform Alexander that everything they stocked there, regardless of quality, all sold like hotcakes, especially among the poorer populace, who up until now could not even dream of owning such a large piece of glass.

To these people, it did not matter the crooked shape or chipped edges of the glass products, as they simply were content with obtaining the large body of clear glass, finding it mesmerizing.

In fact, it was not uncommon for them to serve their most honored guests wine in such glasses, as a way to show off, and the recipient would even be honored to be given these.

Or to display cracked or partially broken pieces prominently in their houses as a magnificent showpiece.

As Malikin informed Alexander of such practices, Alexander felt like he was a human finding out the habits of birds, like those ones that collected shiny trinkets.

To a person, those things might seem useless, but to those birds, they were precious relics indeed.

And as Alexander came to know this, it made him see that selling glass to the masses in volume indeed had more potential for earning money than simply catering to the tastes of the rich.

Hence he went ahead with increasing his glass production with even more confidence and started to even sell waste scraps of glass that fell off during cutting, recasting them into colorful marbles and letting children play with them.

As a side note, when Alexander had created the marbles, Mean had somehow seen the colorful ball and then thought it would make a nice present for Alexandria.

And then as anyone could guess, this resulted in the little kid promptly putting it into her mouth during one of her playtimes, and then almost choking on it.

She only lived because through sheer luck Alexander was near and had immediately noticed his daughter gagging, causing him to leap out of his chair with lightning speed and give a mighty big slap on her daughter's back, forcing the small bead to dislodge and shoot out of the tiny mouth.

Alexander in his panic had held nothing back with his slap, which caused the little girl to start crying at the sudden pain, as her fair back even had a clear handprint of Alexander's palm.

While Alexander ignored his crying daughter and even seemed to join her in this loud chorus, fiercely sending a loud scold towards the nearby Mean, greatly admonishing her for her carelessness.

Chapter 680 A Year Into The Passing (Part-3)

Alexander's other workshops too received similar love as the glass workshops.

The soap workshops got themselves quite a few upgrades, with all the preparation areas getting bigger and better with even more people employed, along with many additional vats used to cook the soap or its initial ingredient in.

Among them, three vats particularly stood out, due to their sheer size.

These were made of cement, built using this instead of metal to ensure the ingredients did not react in any way, and each of these huge cooking pots was almost two stories high, with an enormous, roaring fire going on beneath them, all of them possessing a capacity of close to fifty tons.

These were so large in fact that a special wooden paddle mechanism operated by two mules had to be designed just to stir the viscous mixture.

These vats would never be taken off the fire and were constantly added with ingredients that were either sourced through various trades or mined back home, thus making these huge pots constantly keep manufacturing the product.

They also had many openable portholes along the walls, allowing the mixture to be periodically tapped off into huge barrels.

These barrels would then be spread on a gigantic flat cement floor to cool, cut into appropriate sizes once solidified, stamped with Alexander's logo, and lastly individually wrapped in colorful paper before being shipped out.

Following the soap workshops, came the paper manufacturing one.

The man formerly in charge of it was Azizak, but since he had sadly died, a replacement was chosen.

And under him, paper production had quadrupled, and was expected to even reach ten times by the end of next year.

This massive increase was of course initiated by a massive expansion, with all parts of the operation being enlarged by multiple folds, and even having a new branch added, called the printing branch.

By this point, this shop employed probably the most workers out of all the workshops, with an amazingly ninety percent of them being women.

This was because paper making was a unique process requiring much labor but needing very little strength, with more emphasis being placed on dexterity, making it a perfect job for women.

But where did Alexander get so many women when he was still short of labor?

Well, that was where the 20,000 people Lady Miranda had sent him this year came in.

Among them were around 8,000 females of all ages, with 6,000 eligible to work.

And Alexander made it mandatory for a significant part of them to work in his paper shop.

While many of the men, who were these women's brothers, fathers, and sons all worked in the other workshops, as well as being employed in the sugar 'factory'.

And it was not wrong to call it a factory, as given the insatiable hunger people had expressed at this nectar from heaven, Alexander indeed was building something like a factory.

It was not complete yet, but the major pieces had already been set.

This sugar making workshop occupied the most area out of all the workshops, in fact once completed, it would cover almost a third of the total space.

And the reason for requiring such huge space was the few massive 'machinery' Alexander had designed and commissioned to be built.

The most prominent of them were the two huge waterwheels that drove a special millstone designed to crush beetroots instead of grain, thus quickly and efficiently squeezing out the juice, while at the same time separating the solid leftovers, which would be either used as animal feed or even bought in bulk by some of the more poor people to be used in cooking.

Thus once built, these two waterwheels would completely remove the tedious and very expensive process of individually cutting and boiling the vegetables in hot water to extract the juice, thus greatly reducing cost and increasing efficiency.

Alexander also built those huge vats like he had done for the soap workshop here, with an identical mechanism, which would be used to boil the juices to extract the sugar.

But unlike just the three that Alexander needed back in the soap workshop, here Alexander needed them by the dozens, lining them up like a train of chimneys, all spewing white steam from daybreak to dusk.

Alexander was also in the midst of constructing a dedicated coke oven used to roast coal and turn it into coke, to be used in whitening the sugar.

Alexander additionally added separating sieves to his operation in order to separate the grains into more evenly sized groups, each selling at different prices,

And lastly, Alexander was building huge warehouses to properly store the literally ten thousand tonnes of beetroots he was producing each year.

All of that needed a lot of space. I think you should take a look at

And lastly there was Gelene's shop which too saw its fair share of expansion, where the fabric output of her shop tripled, though she did complain to Alexander about the lack of skilled tailors, which caused her bottlenecks in making her lingerie.

Gelene was also not simply content with making women's underwear by now and seemed to be dipping her toes in also making traditional dresses, though those efforts were still only baby steps.

And as of right now, she was busy fulfilling a part of Alexander's order, where he wanted to make enough winter clothes to supply to his soldiers.

That was the reason behind the huge order of linen and wool from Lady Inayah and Pasha Farzah.

One workshop that many might have noticed missing in the mention was the crossbow and armor shop, and the reason for that was Alexander simply chose to merge that with the official military weapons production plant, and relocated it to the eastern military district.

And replacing in its place was Alexander's huge civilian iron tools workshop, from where he wished to meet all the everyday demands of iron for his populace.

This was a huge market and Alexander had left it largely untapped.

For instance, Adhania had a demand of around 30,000 tons of iron annually, along with 120,000 tons of bronze and 150,000 tons of lead.

The former two were absolute necessities in making almost everything from cooking utensils such as pots and pans, to tools of all kinds like hammers, plows, knives, cleavers, etc., to construction materials such as nails, fasteners, joints, and shafts, to lastly, and the most glaring of all, as weapons and armors of every kind.

While lead was also used to make many of these, though its biggest use was in plumbing, i.e.- making water pipes out of them.

And Alexander felt he could substitute this entire 300,000 ton annual demand entirely with iron.

Because what those metals could do, iron could do better, with iron being better than bronze in every way and lead being toxic.

So even if Alexander wanted to take over only half of the market, he still could expand his business for the foreseeable future without worries, as his current annual production was only around 10,000 tons.

And this was not to even mention that the 300,000 tons demand was only domestic, and if the neighboring regions were to be taken into account, it would be multiple times that.

Hence, Alexander was really looking forward to setting up this gigantic workshop.

The last notable point regarding trade this year was the arrival of Lord Klysar, who was the envoy Cantagena had sent previously and this time he came much more prepared, prepared to huge quantities of Zanzan's local delicacies, exchanging them for both gold as well as goods such as expensive pottery, beautiful furniture, jewelry, food, and a few thousand slaves and animals.

Alexander this time did not personally negotiate with him, but instead let Heliptos oversee it, feeling the man should get some experience.

Following Alexander's experiences of trade over the last year, came the issue of politics.

And regarding this, it was totally quiet all around, with no attempt at changes to the status quo being made by either side.

Back in Adhan and Matrak, Ptolomy and Pasha Farzah worked hard to strengthen themselves both internally by boosting their economy and rebuilding their armed forces, as well as by trying to make new allies,

And Amenheraft's efforts exactly mirrored that.

This silent battle felt almost uncomfortable as if it was the lull before the storm.

As for Mikaya, Alexander heard bits and pieces of a suitable man being chosen for her, but it still seemed all hush hush and under wraps till now.

This was all news out of Zanzan.

As for the inside, well it was all the same too, the only major event being the opening of the council hall which he called the parliament building where Alexander and others could gather and discuss matters of the realm.

It was a huge, dome-shaped building, built right in the middle of the city, at the heart of the central district, rising out of the ground with its marbled stone structure, bound together by cement.

Alexander had modeled it after the Roman senate, with benches arranged in a tiered, semi-circular fashion, with there being two raised platforms at the front of the chamber, the one above designated for Alexander, while the one below for the presiding officials,

The entire building was still in the midst of being furnished properly, with all kinds of luxurious and expensive decorations being installed in it, so that it could reflect its honored status.

And though the building was just open, it had already held many discussions of serious note, particularly discussions regarding the army, the economy, and Tibias.