

Herald 711

Chapter 711 Alexander VS Lord Ponticus (Part-2)

Alexander had originally planned to attack Lord Ponticus's flanking force in a head on charge, like he had done during the battle with Faziz.

But then thought better of it.

Because he figured the amount of time it would take for all the cavalry units to slowly do a 180 in this confined space would be too long.

So he came up with something better.

The grounds east of them were open and free, one where it was easy to turn one's horses.

So why not use all that empty space?

And Alexander decided to do just that.

But instead of relaying this order to all the units through word of mouth via heralds, for he knew it would take too long, Alexander simply decided to carry out the order by leading by example, using the horn and his standard to direct all the men's attention and have them follow him.

Hence, with Alexander dashing out towards the open planes in mere minutes, most of the rear of his army was gone with him, leaving only a few, slower in the head, cavalrymen behind, who were unable to react quickly enough and so found themselves facing Lord Ponticus's phalanx all alone!

While Lord Ponticus himself, seeing the enemy's rear disintegrate in his opinion, both cheered and felt a bit sour, because he saw it as his prey escaping.

He had really wanted to capture Alexander, for being able to parade a pasha throughout the capital, perhaps even across the country would have been glory enough to last generations.

But there was little he could he could do about that now.

So losing focus of the cavalrymen he thought were running away, he now only urged his men to march faster and crash into the remaining enemy, cutting off the snake now that the head had run away.

As Lord Ponticus was doing so, and as Alexander was in the midst of reforming his cavalry lines for an attack on the unsuspecting man's weak flanks, the other forces were facing their own tribulations.

First was Remus's legion.

The boy had left pretty scant orders to his adjutant- Piseus on what to do, and so it was quite hard for the second in commander to convince the other captains of all the six battalions to obey him.

In fact, it was hard for him to even meet them as he did not even properly know them, and just finding them in this darkness proved challenging.

All of that ate up a lot of very precious minutes.

And even when he found them and relayed the order, the group was split on what to do.

"Our orders are to stand and defend these siege towers." One claimed adamantly.

"Mmmm, we cannot just leave. The wall also needs men to see it. And we have crossbowmen on, They also need our protection." A second voice chimed more reasonably.

"Yes! Our command to protect this place came from Lord Alexander himself! Who does he think your commander is! We are not leaving" The third voice was very gruff in his retort, making Piseus shrink a bit.

Many of these men did not like the fact that they had been skipped over by a young brat like Remus for the position of the legion commander hence this harsh rejection.

Lastly, a more amicable officer pointed out,

"Boy, listen to them. Without these siege towers, our win here will mean nothing. And even if we wanted to leave, look, the main bulk of the enemy still threatens us!"

The man said as he placed his fingers towards Lord Theony's forces who all seemed ready and poised to strike.

Many officers feared that if they moved to attack the flank of Lord Ponticus's forces, their own rear would get decimated by Lord Theony's men.

And the latter would not need to even send a large force to do so.

Just a thousand men might be enough.

Due to all these reasons, the officers seemed reluctant to follow Remus's order.

And facing all these much more senior men and their well thought out logic, Piseus found it hard to retaliate.

He was not the most oratorily gifted and was unable to make a good case for himself.

If he had just said that if they did not attack now, their entire army was going to be destroyed and none of the things they were worrying about would matter, then this entire discussion could have been avoided.

But he was unable to think of saying that.

And as for why the officers were unable to see this simple truth, and why even upon seeing the flanking force they did not take the initiative to go attack them and try and stop the inevitable disaster, well it was actually not due to malicious infighting, or even just plain old incompetence.

It was more because doing things out of one's own urgency was simply not the military culture of the time.

Soldiers were always instructed to wait for the order from the higher up before doing anything and so they never moved unless expressly told.

In that way, the armies of this time were more like the Soviet armies, who too placed a great deal of importance on hierarchical orders.

But though that culture came into being due to political reasons, mostly because Stalin was deathly afraid of any competent soldier gaining any sort of influence in the military, the cultural norm here was fostered primarily due to the type of society of the time.

Because this was a feudal system, where nobles controlled everything.

And when one group controlled everything, it meant the other groups obeyed.

And the best way to keep that status quo and keep them obedient was to suppress any free thought.

Hence most of the people at the time were always told not to think too much and simply do what their lords told them to do, and never do anything they forbade.

And this tactic mostly worked just as the policymakers intended, both in civilian and even in military cases.

For instance, in the latter case, when levies were called and conscripted, the peasants responded without complaining, even dying most of the time without rebelling.

Because it was ingrained into their bones that they should follow orders and never do anything on their own.

This mentality was certainly useful for the army, where the commanders, who were almost always nobles, very much preferred blind, stupid loyalty, and abhorred almost all critical thinking, for that risked posing a threat of their own jobs.

Hence, due to such a culture, the officers in Remus's legion felt it was far safer to stand their ground and do what they were told to do, rather than make decisions on their own.

Because in their mind the risk of doing the latter was far too great.

In their mind, the scenario played like this,

'Say we do disobey orders and leave our posts, going off to attack the enemy. And then we actually manage to do it, thus saving the Lord Alexander's life. That's great! We will surely be rewarded'

'But what if we are wrong! What if we are accused of disobeying command and were found of leaving our posts?'

'Then what?'

'No, it is far safer to stay here and do as we are told. That way no one can blame us.'

'After all, we can just say that we received no order to attack that enemy.'

This was the type of thinking the officers were having in their heads and their fear of the punishment outweighed the potential rewards.

A mindset that was in fact totally normal.

And it could be argued that it was Remus who was the abnormal one, one who was free spirited enough and knew Alexander intimately enough to understand that Alexander would never punish something like that.

But Remus was not here.

And even if he were, he might have lacked the necessary pedagogy.

After all, Remus was made the commander of this legion by Alexander in a very hasty, ad-hoc manner.

Many of these officers had not even heard of Remus before, and so it was little wonder they were reluctant to act

Most people would be.

Thus facing this situation, Piseus for a moment did not know what to say.

Hence after a moment of silence, he simply went red faced and then blew his top, bellowing at the top of his voice.

"Fine! If you do not want to obey the captain's orders, then don't!"

"I will attack with only my own men!"

"And if I manage to live through this, I will surely have the captain tell the lord all about it."

"About how you refused to help even when the lord was about to be attacked."

And then saying so, without waiting for the response, immediately turned his horse around and was off with a sprint.

No amount of shouts was enough to make him look back.

In that way, Remus's adjutant was really like his captain.

And then within minutes, the 300 cavalymen that were directly under Remus, and now under Piseus were off galloping out into the night.

'If the others did not join then fine, we will attack the enemy with only ourselves!'

This was the general consensus among the riders.

And they were even confident about their victory because they knew they were about to hit the enemy in his soft belly without him being nary aware.

So they charged fearlessly.

And it was the dust cloud from this charge that Alexander had initially noticed.

Chapter 712 Alexander VS Lord Ponticus (Part-3)

Following Piseus's mad dash towards Lord Ponticus's flanks with just 300 riders, the other officers to their credit did not simply stand back and watch the show.

No, instead, perhaps inspired by the young boy's agency, they too came around to see the danger they would be in if they did not save their lord and so hurriedly began to gather their troops and form up to initiate a march.

"All infantry form and get ready to march. Crossbowmen stay and guard the walls."

Then came the order for the men.

This way the officers felt that both the task of attacking the flanking force and defending the siege works could be achieved.

But planning all this out, as well as the initial bickering had wasted a lot of time for them

Trumpet

So by the time they got finally ready to march downward, Lord Ponticus had already blown the trumpet and was half way along his attack.

So if the legion wanted to make any contribution, they would better hurry up, as they had 3 kilometers to complete, whereas Lord Ponticus needed to cover only one.

Now, as this detached legion tried their darndest to try and make the few kilometers of ground, the enemy adjacent to them, led by Lord Theony began to mobilize too.

They had gotten the signal to attack from the blaring trumpet and charging down the hill, they headed straight for Alexander's frontlines.

"Hold! Hold! Let them come" While the legionnaires facing the imminent start of the battle was actually firm and resolute, showing no signs of breaking.

Some were even happy that the battle had finally begun, as they had been getting bored with all the waiting.

This sort of carefree feeling came of course because the men had no idea that Lord Ponticus was right behind them, ready to smash into their open backs.

'Heh! Ignorant sheep!' Thus Lord Theony would describe the legionaries as such, very much looking forward to those tight lines being blasted open upon their pincher attack.

"Menicus! Menicus!" And even the general of the army, Menicus was not aware of this trap until Remus finally clued him in.

And to say that it caused a slight shock would be a gross understatement.

Remus was instantly bombarded by tons of questions, the most concerning of them being,

"Where is Alexander? Why hasn't he escaped? Why is running towards there?"

But Remus knew almost as much as Menicus, and as time was of the essence, he only replied.

"You have your orders. Follow them."

Thus soon both the fourth and fifth legion, as opposed to only the fifth legion as Alexander's ordered, were told to turn around to stop the enemy.

But that was easier said than done.

Though Menicus gave that order as soon as he could, it took time for such military orders to make their way along the chain of command.

And by the time the commanders of the two legions understood the order and attempted to execute it, the enemy was literally only a hundred meters away.

And to perform such a huge formation change within such a short time, well. to say that it was difficult would be putting it mildly.

So instead of the whole formation taking their time and slowly doing a giant turn in an arch, the legion commanders took a far more pragmatic approach.

They quickly summoned the sergeants (in charge of 100 men or 80 soldiers) of the very last few rows and told them to immediately turn their lines on their heels and face the phalangites.

"You must stand against the enemy no matter what! Do not give an inch of ground! Buy enough time for us!"

The legion commanders gave this general command.

The idea was to have these men fight and hold off Lord Ponticus until the vast majority of the formation could slowly turn around battalion by battalion and join the fight.

At least that was the thought in principle.

In reality though, the chances of this actually succeeding were actually almost nonexistent.

Because such a temporary stopgap measure, with the lines being only a few echelons deep, would never be able to hold against a well-organized attack.

The shallow depth of the ranks made the lines too thin to be able to provide any effective resistance.

And that was why when Lord Ponticus saw the legionaries turn to face him, he was not at all fazed, instead only sniggered,

'Heh! They always do this. Even when they have already been caught in the net, they still try to struggle.'

'Fool! It's over. Run and save yourself, hahaha.'

This was not the first time he had pulled off something like this and the old veteran knew the sequence of events that were to follow by heart.

When facing a two-pronged attack, the defending soldiers would first panic, then some would turn around to try and resist, and finally, after a brief while this token of resistance would be overcome by the much more organized attacker, thus snapping the whole formation and initiating a breakthrough..

This was always how it happened, and it was also natural, as it was inevitable for a much heavier, prepared force to defeat a much weaker force that was in so disarray.

Hence Lord Ponticus very much looked forward to this scenario unfolding.

And the following events did reinforce that belief in him.

The soldiers under him quickly made contact with both the legions, but whereas previously they would have been greeted by a shower of pilla during their initial charge, this time the phalangites were allowed to move up unimpeded!

This was because the hurriedly arranged legionaries, many still in the midst of their rotation did not even get the time to throw their pilla, thus letting the formidable phalanx formation crash into them with their shields intact, making the legionaries face a foe in their best condition, while they were at their weakest.

And the result from this as one would expect, with almost every spear of the phalangites managing to score a target and making the lines be in danger of shattering with just this initial strike.

"Ahghhh!"

"Urghhhh!"

"Nooooo!"

All such terrifying screams resounded across the lines as the sharp metal points pierced and stabbed through flesh, the sounds made all the more scarier by the quietness of the night and the uncertainty of darkness.

For the legionaries on the front lines who were unable to clearly see like during the day, the ambient darkness worked to amplify these death throes screams, until they felt it was hundreds of times more terrifying, and the death of only a handful sounded like the entire legion being put under the sword.

And as such morale plummeted like a falling rock!

Which was really pretty normal.

Flanking attacks would not be used to such effectiveness if they were not.

Thus with just the first few thrusts, the commanders of the legions quickly woke up to the fact that their lines were beginning to buckle and that there was no way these were going to hold long enough for them they reorient their forces.

'I knew it! This battle is lost!' And this was the type of mood among many of the officers and soldiers fighting nearing the front lines, with that particular thought being said by Talukder (Viscount) Prantik to himself, who was in the thick of it, being in charge of the 4th legion.

Facing this flanking attack, the noble's every cell screamed at him, wanting him to turn and tail, a feeling especially reinforced when he found himself gazing at the glint of spears of the enemy reflecting the moonlight.

They were that close!

The nobleman, being brought up in the lap of luxury had never felt death be so close, not even when he was defeated by Alexander.

'Dammit Alexander! Putting me so close to the enemy,' Thus he even cursed Alexander for placing him where the commander would go.

Now, according to Alexander's doctrine, the commanders were always placed at the back, which was supposed to be the most secure part of the army.

And usually, it was.

But this time, facing a flanking attack, it had suddenly become the most exposed.

So up until now, TP had to fight against his instinct to stay and fight.

Though how long he would be able to continue that resistance was up in the air.

And in that vein, most of the soldiers fighting there too wanted to do the same.

These soldiers that were facing Lord Ponticus were no veterans to begin with, but only green peasants.

While they were facing ten thousand of Lord Ponticus's best of the best, hand picked by the man himself to go on this fateful flanking attack.

Even under regular circumstances, the two legions might have been badly mauled facing these phalanx formations who had superior range with their spears and were fighting on flat ground.

Never mind the current situation.

It would not be even wrong to say that Lord Ponticus was like a wolf in a sheep's pen.

And it was only a matter of time before these sheep understood who the prey was and started braying, running in all directions, and collapsing.

Alexander's rear seemed to be under the threat of imminent collapse.

Chapter 713 Alexander VS Lord Ponticus (Part-4)

As the Tibian flanking force bulldozed into the hastily made paper-thin rear lines, Alexander's fourth and fifth legion appeared on the edge of collapse.

The casualties they took just in the first few minutes were staggering.

There were huge disorganizations within the formation caused by the surprise attack as they tried to turn around to face the enemy.

And lastly, the inherent darkness of the night caused enormous panic and confusion within the ranks.

All of which contributed to this lightning-fast fall of morale and an imminent defeat.

A defeat whose inevitability was apparent to both sides.

So if Alexander was gonna do anything to change this nearly sealed outcome, he was gonna need to do it fast.

At the current moment, Lord Ponticus could almost taste the victory, feeling it almost caress the inside of his palms.

He knew with even his eyes closed that once this thin screen of men was routed, the entire formation of soldiers that was blocking them would break and run, thus letting Lord Ponticus move on to attack the enemy's main line.

And no matter how well disciplined those forces in the front might be, when facing both his and Lord Theony's combined attack from two opposite directions, only one fate lay in store for them—encirclement and complete and utter destruction.

'Ahhh! Finally! Revenge! Sweet revenge!' Lord Ponticus almost felt drunk with pleasure at his impending, and in his mind, even fully assured victory,

The destruction of this army would finally allow him to have face when facing his king, letting him proudly show that the trust his lord had placed in him was not misjudged.

It would also let him have personal revenge for the stress and pain he was made to go through during the brutal siege which had been going on for the past four months.

And lastly, this victory over Zanzan would help soothe the heart of the common people of Tibias, many of whom had lost much of their kin in the war two years prior, when Perseus lost 15,000 men after failing to hold the manor hill.

All such great rewards greatly energized the man's heart to try and achieve victory.

With the only fly in the ointment for him being,

'Too bad I let that Alexander escape. *Sigh*, what a loss. I should sent a few riders later to chase him. Maybe they will get lucky.'

Lord Ponticus said such to himself, his thoughts already skipping past the battle he presumed was already won, and now hoped to get that 'all objectives completed' trophy.

But Lord Ponticus really should not have been so downcast over the fact that he could not meet Alexander.

Because Alexander was coming to meet him!

Trumpet! *Trumpet*!

At around the time Lord Ponticus was closing in to make contact with Alexander's rear unit, the sound of one among many such trumpets in the battlefield drifted through the air, something few people even paid much attention to.

But they should have.

Because this trumpet was something special.

This meant that after almost a two kilometer turning circle, Alexander had finally managed to turn his cavalymen around, now making them face Lord Ponticus's exposed flanks.

And it was only then that Alexander's strategy became apparent to many of the riders,

'So that's why we turned turned!'

'Hmmm, it seems the Lord wanted to avoid a frontal attack due to the spears and instead hit the softer flanks. Nice!'

'Great! We will make the enemy taste his own medicine.'

Many such understanding and zealous thoughts ran through the riders.

As for Alexander, once this turning maneuver was completed, he blew the trumpet again, this time signaling to the men to form up into proper battle lines.

He even blew the trumpet in a specific way that dictated to the men the kind of formation he wanted them to take.

The 2,700 men were told to arrange themselves in three rows, with the 900 men in each of the rows ordered to line up shoulder to shoulder, 10 men deep and 90 men wide.

This was one of the most simple arrangements, as it just asked the 9 standard cavalry battalions in each row, each numbering 100 men. to stand side by side and charge.

The rider quickly understood this order and knowing the peril their army was in, followed it in as short time as possible.

And once they were ready, a third trumpet rang, one which signaled the start of the actual charge.

Now, given Lord Ponticus was about two kilometers away, the cavalrymen did not certainly gallop in full speed all the way.

That would tire the horses too much.

So instead, at first the horses only advanced in a trot, being careful to maintain the order of the formation as well as paying attention to the grounds in front of them to the best of their ability.

They did this so that no rider tripped their horse and fell, as in such a tight formation, this would certainly lead to a cascading effect, as the size of the obstacle in the form of fallen horse and rider only larger and larger with each subsequent accident.

Though it was easier said than done, as it was difficult to do it in the best of times, never mind at night, no matter how clear and moonlit the sky might be.

So they could only advance slowly, the speed leaving much to be desired even through their perseverance.

Which was a problem given the name of the game, which was speed, speed, and more speed.

If Alexander was unable to catch up to Lord Ponticus quickly enough, his forces risked snapping under the weight of Lord Ponticus far before Alexander could come to the rescue.

And if his rear units broke, seeing this, his front units were sure to break too, meaning his army would vanish into the air, and become prime picking for Lord Theony.

Meaning by that point, even if his flanking attack did manage to neutralize Lord Ponticus, it would simply count as playing for points, not for victory on the battlefield.

For Lord Theony would be able to clean up the rest all by himself.

And no matter how talented Alexander was, he could not win a battle in the open against an enemy that outnumbered him more than ten times.

Thus Alexander knew he had to hurry.

He did not want to simply go through all that trouble just to kill some nameless peasants.

He wanted to win

He wanted to continue his siege.

He wanted to take Thesalie.

But this was also where his want hit against his reality,

Because try as he might, the current trot was the fastest he could get without breaking formation or making his horse too tired.

For remember, he had already galloped 2 kilometers with it, and any more would tire the beast to the point that it was no longer to charge when called upon.

So he tried to do his best within his limits.

Now all was not doom and gloom for Alexander.

Because even if he was unable to intercept Lord Ponticus before the man attacked his rear lines, there was a small group of riders who nearly could.

And that was Piseus and his 300.

They had started much earlier than Alexander and by this point, had already covered most of the 3-kilometer distance from their initial position and were just lining up for the last 100 meter dash.

That was where the real cavalry charge began as the horses would accelerate to their full speed and hit the enemy with their maximum punch.

And this was exactly what was about to happen, as lining up the 300 men in a 30 man wide, 10 men deep formation,

Trumpet!

Piseus personally led the charge after blowing his own horn.

And this relief for Alexander's troops could not have come any sooner as by this point Lord Ponticus had already made contact with the two rear legions, and even seemed to be on the verge of breaking them.

If Piseus was not there, and Alexander was all alone, it was very much possible that the Zanzan army would have routed before help could arrive.

But none of that happened.

Piseus was there and help did arrive in the nick of time.

So there came the charge of the 300 men, one that shook the ground under the thundering footsteps of the heavy beasts, and made the air churn with the neighing of the war horse, accompanied by the crazed shouts of their riders.

Arghhhh

They all cheered together, the great weight of their shouts making the air shudder.

"Bang!*

Until finally a dull, but very loud thud rang around the entire battlefield, immediately followed by panicked and horse screams.

"Wha...what happened!"

"Who...how!"

"Where...where!"

First came the surprised and dazed shouts as most people simply tried to figure out what the hell just happened.

But those inquiries were an instant later drowned out by the much larger panicked shouts from all around the back of Lord Ponticus's force,

"Enemy attack! Enemy attack!"

"From the sides! From the sides!"

"Help! Help!:"

"Run! Run!:"

The soldiers here felt as if a sledgehammer had been smashed against the side of their faces and now were bloody and seeing stars.

While the officers tried to figure out just how the hell did they manage to completely miss such a large cavalry attacking force.

Piseus's attack was so successful that it nearly brought the entire ten thousand force to almost a grinding halt.

Chapter 714 Alexander VS Lord Ponticus (Part-5)

The reason why Piseus was so successful in his flanking attack was because all of Lord Ponticus's forces had been so focused on the battle that was going right in front that they simply missed the forest for the trees.

This was aided by the fact that it was night and the helmets the Tibian soldiers wore blocked off much of their peripheral vision, furthermore limiting their visibility,

And as for the huge noise of the approaching horsemen, well, the battlefield was a noisy place, so, many of the officers simply filtered that sound out as being just inconsequential clamor and din.

With only a few sharp ones able to take notice, but by then it was too little, too late.

Piseus was already at their doorsteps by that point.

It had to be also remembered that Lord Ponticus never even knew of Remus's legion position, and thus had never even anticipated an attack from that direction.

He had only seen Alexander run in that direction and then forgot about it.

While the dust cloud Alexander had kicked up involuntarily obscured a lot of visibility for Lord Ponticus, thus making it even easier for Piseus to conceal his attack.

It was due to all these reasons that Lord Ponticus had simply failed to notice the cavalry charge until it finally hit him.

And what a cavalry charge it was!

The thundering hooves of the horse had managed to smash through the defenseless soldiers like a hammer through rotten wood, shattering their formations, and sending a few literally flying from the impact.

Furthermore, Lord Ponticus had been forced to launch his flanking attack before he could get this rear echelons in proper order, and so Piseus was able to easily drive a deep wedge into that oose, unsuspecting formation with his charge, inflicting devastating casualties.

It was also because of this that the sound that came from the initial hit was not a metallic clang of lances hitting the shields or armor, but a dull thud of steel sinking into flesh.

Because the enemy did not even get the chance to form a proper defensive line such as locking their shields together as they would have at other times.

Thus making the charge prove especially devastating.

And once Piseus had finally spent all his momentum and stopped, he was already several echelons deep into the formation, and the carnage left behind in the aftermath of such a blow could be easily imagined.

Though the true extent of the casualties was not easily visible due to the darkness of the night, those close were still able to recognize the strewn corpses of their former comrades, many with huge gaping wounds on them and spewing copious amounts of blood, as they spasmed and twitched in the last few seconds of death throes, many begging to save them.

"Arghhh!"

"Help!"

"Please, someone urghhh!"

Such mournful cries drifted out of these wounded men, with some even grabbing the legs of their friends next to them as if they were trying to use that as an anchor to prevent death from dragging them through the gate beyond.

It was a morale-shattering sight.

And seeing this, as well as facing these imposing riders on tall horses, many of the remaining soldiers wanted to turn tail and run then and there.

This perhaps was Piseus's greatest accomplishment, making the enemy lose the will to fight, which had a far more profound impact than even the killing of a large number of soldiers.

For the panic and fear spread like wildfire among the ranks, as the suddenness and ferocity of the attack in the darkness made it difficult for the officers to even start to understand what had happened.

All this combined meant that if not for the fact that many of these ten thousand men were Lord Ponticus's veteran men, they might have broken then and there,

And it was only their sense of duty and the shame they would face if they ran that kept them in the fight.

"*Trumpet!*

Once Piseus's attack came to a stop, instead of switching to his spear and starting to cut through the now-tattered ranks, he blew his trumpet, signaling his men to turn around and disengage with the enemy.

He did this because no matter how powerful the strength of his charge had been, he was still only a force of 300 men.

And against ten thousand men that was just a drop in the bucket.

So no matter how much damage he had been able to inflict, in the grand scheme of things it was still minute.

And if the enemy were to wise up to that fact, and decided to their numerical superiority, Piseus very much risked being encircled and destroyed.

Furthermore, there was also the fact that he had noticed Alexander advancing for his own attack.

So if he did not want to get caught up in the crosshairs, it was best that he made way for the much larger force.

Thus the riders quickly turned their horse and before the dazed phalangites could launch a counterattack, disengaged and rode away from them.

A sight which many of the Tibian soldiers silently cheered in their hearts upon seeing.

Though they really should have been careful with assuming things, as no sooner had they finished releasing that sigh of relief that a second wall of riders replaced the first one.

And this time it was much larger!

Neigh! Neigh! Neigh!

The 900 horses in Alexander's first group, led by the man himself, let out loud braying sounds as they formed up upon reaching the 200-meter mark, and then slowly started to make towards the enemy's flanks, their speed increasing with each step, until around the 50-meter mark, they started to gallop at full speed, ready to smash into whatever was left of the formation.

The noise and rumbling vibrations traveling through the ground this time were far greater than during Piseus's, as was the dust cloud kicked up, clearing showing the hit this time was going to even more painful.

And being already hit once, this time the Tibian soldiers perfectly knew what was about to happen, and deep panic and fear started to set in.

"What! How! Where did they come from!" While amidst all this confusion, Lord Ponticus found himself lost.

Things had happened so quickly that he was unable to even get the information he needed to form a comprehensive picture of the battlefield on time.

So he was just as clueless about what was happening around his flanks as any of the grunts.

Thus he was unable to give coherent command.

Not that it would have mattered anyway, given the darkness and how close Alexander already was.

Oh, how the tables had turned, as this was very close to how he had managed to catch Alexander.

While the commanders of two rear legions, upon seeing the enemy's flanks get hit, immediately cheered and urged the buckling men,

"Look! Reinforcements! Reinforcements are here! Fight men! Do not let them steal our glory, arghhhh!"

To be fair, these commanders too had no idea who was attacking Lord Ponticus, as it had too dark to see so far properly, but at this point, they really did not care.

Even if it was later proven that those riders were actually Tibians who were supposed to attack the rear legions but in the darkness had gotten their target mixed up, it would still not matter.

Because for the legion commanders, the sight of this attack had more to do with raising their men's morale than any actual damage the enemy forces might have suffered.

And as they pointed this out, it worked just as intended.

The sight of the attack worked to bolster the faltering morale of the men, as they rallied under their officers with a loud cheer and planted their feet firmly on the ground, steeling themselves to not let the enemy break through.

While at the same time on the other side, due to all the confusion, and the visual confirmation of a cavalry force on their defenseless flank, most of Lord Ponticus's men forgot everything about attacking the enemy in front of them but instead wanted to go on the defense to protect themselves from the impending cavalry charge.

Hence most men tried to hastily turn above to point their shields and spears toward Alexander, thus resulting in a decrease of pressure on the thin rear lines of the fourth and fifth legion.

But they might have not bothered at all.

For just like how the phalangites were able to nearly destroy the formation sent to counter their own flanking attack, Alexander too was able to smash through the hastily formed lines with just the first strike, causing even more widespread damage on top of those already done by Piseus.

Alexander's own legions had been able to resist the flanking for a while, but these phalangites never really stood any such chance.

Because facing such a heavy lance attack without a proper spear and shield wall, Alexander was able to bulldoze through the ranks without taking even a single injury to his unit.

So then even though the veteran soldiers tried to put up a fight this time, the aftermath was the same as during Piseus's charge, just on a much larger scale.

And after Alexander's second and third rows launched their own calvary charges, the result of that section of the battlefield was sealed- A complete rout of Lord Ponticus's force.

It seemed Alexander had managed to save his army in the nick of time.

Chapter 715 Lord Ponticus's Demise

Lord Ponticus's force really lived up to its elite status given that it took three consecutive cavalry charges delivered to their flanks to finally snap them.

Any lesser force would have shattered far, far ago.

But regardless of their pedigree, and whether they would have run before or were running now, the fact was that the 3,000 cavalry managed to decisively destroy the formation there, forcing the 10,000 strong unit to break and rout.

"Stand! Stand! Keep still!"

"Hold! Hold! The enemy is about to collapse!"

"Do not run! Think of your family!:"

And even such urging from the officers and even from Lord Ponticus himself failed to restore order, for the wound inflicted on their flanks was too grievous, going many, many echelons in.

There was literally no sort of coherent formation left there, and when after completing their charges the cavalymen started to engage in melee with their spears, even the hardened men lost heart facing these huge losses and ran.

While the 4th and 5th legions seeing this easy prey all up for the taking started to give chase, eager to hunt them down and exact revenge.

"Stop! Don't run! Maintain formation! You will get lost in his darkness."

Which was actually against the express wish of their commanders, who urged them not to do so.

Because chasing a fleeing enemy exposed oneself to a possible counterattack.

But the soldiers were of no mind to listen.

The two legions were mostly composed of recently trained farmers and when presented with such a delicious meal, these men were unable to maintain discipline, and disregarding all orders from the higher ups, they initiated this needless chase.

For in the minds of these men, they had come so close to being killed, and now that they were given such a good opportunity for revenge, they would be a fool not to take one.

So quite similar to how Lord Ponticus's men ran like headless chickens, the legionaries blindly chased them too, almost like mad dogs chasing their own tails.

Hence soon that part of the battlefield devolved into a kind of deadly game of tag, one where the 'it' tried to stab the other with spears, swords, and halberts.

And this macabre game was being played by nearly twenty thousand men right in the middle of the night!

What a sight that was!

"*Tsk!*"

And looking at this very mess from a distance, Alexander furrowed his brows and clicked his tongue in anger.

That part could no longer be called a battlefield.

The darkness and the general chaos of the battlefield had it turned into a quagmire of unruly mobs where one side tried to mindlessly massacre the other, and though Alexander did not really care about his men killing the enemy, he did dread the number of friendly kills this was going to result in.

Because everyone was running in every direction, and though at least during the day the soldiers would be able to distinguish their own from the enemy, but now, the soft moonlight made it very difficult to separate the red uniform of the Tibians from the blue of the Zanzan.

So unless one got really close, it was impossible to separate friends from foes, thus inevitably causing a lot of needless deaths.

But even though Alexander very much wished to restore order, he lacked the resources.

The breakdown had been too severe despite the best efforts of the officers and would have needed a massive effort using a large number of troops to bring these unruly men under control in a short time.

Alexander both lacked the numbers and after the cavalry charges, his horses were too tired to conduct such a large operation.

Never mind there was also the fact that even many among his own ranks had left their ranks to run amock on the battlefield trying to score some kills.

So Alexander simply stood by on the side and laid witness to how his two legions voluntarily disintegrated.

It was a weird sight to behold and Alexander felt an unfamiliar bitter feeling in him.

Clearly he had won, yet somehow he had also 'lost' two of his legions as an effective fighting force.

So the happiness and relief Alexander had felt upon saving his army was somewhat buried by the sight of this completely avoidable loss.

It seemed that even in defeat, Lord Ponticus was able to accomplish at least half his objective, removing ten thousand soldiers enemy soldiers from the active battlefield and somehow even making them inflict injury on them from friendly kills.

And speaking of Lord Ponticus, the man himself had unfortunately died!

Killed in battle!

It had happened not so long after the rout began, as at that moment, the military general had found himself facing attacks from numerous legionaries from all sides.

Normally he would have never faced such a situation as the general of the army would always be at the back, quite safe from enemy attacks even if his own army was routed.

But this time, due to his eagerness, the older man had placed himself near the very front, wanting to see the destruction of the enemy army with his own two eyes and personally lead the charge.

And to give credit where credit is due, this position did help him out at times.

For instance, if he had not placed himself near the frontlines, he would have never spotted Remus through the woods, and if he had taken his sweet time fully preparing his lines, that would have given Alexander plenty of time to slowly turn around and counter attack even before his own flanking attack could begin.

That would have been a disaster for the man.

So that position back then had really paid its dividends.

But just as with the pros, Lord Ponticus had to also bear the cons.

And that was the fact that now that his forces had been routed, he had become a magnet for everyone's attack.

Lord Ponticus atop his horse right on the frontlines was very conspicuous, especially where the main fighting force was the infantry, making him stick out like a sore thumb.

And his case was not helped by the fact that he wore very eye catching armor which loudly announced his status, taunting every soldier in the vicinity to take a shot at him.

"There! He must be an officer! Big fish!"

"Kill him! 100 ropals! Kill him!"

"*Shoo* ahh! Missed!"

Although the legionaries did not know of Lord Ponticus's exact identity, they certainly understood that he was someone much higher up the chain and so the animosity directed towards him was overwhelming.

Spear thrusts, sword swipes, and even a few pilla throws were all sent toward him.

While Lord Ponticus and his small number of bodyguards tried their best to either defect or in the worst case absorb these blows using their very bodies, while at the same time attempting to cut their way through this mess and escape.

An endeavor that quickly proved futile.

For Lord Ponticus had put himself right in the thick of the formation, so clearing a way with all the men running in every direction and getting in the way proved too challenging.

Especially when there was an avalanche of legionaries trying to kill them with little regard for themselves.

Lord Ponticus was just too juicy a target, and no matter how good the bodyguards, the men could only do so much.

So over time, each of these warriors could be seen falling steadily one by one, and the protective circle around Lord Ponticus shrunk more and more, as at one point along the line, the men were forced to do only one thing, defend and pray for some sort of miracle.

While on the side of Zanzan, this visual confirmation of weakness of course worked to encourage the legionaries to continue their assault, and with each successful hit, Lord Ponticus was driven closer and closer to disappear.

'Should I surrender?' Facing this hopeless situation, a thought that should have never entered this proud man suddenly bloomed itself.

As the enemy commander and a noble, if he were to surrender, the enemy was bound to spare his life.

This was after all the convention of warfare of the current times.

But the humiliation that such a thing would cause forced Lord Ponticus to pause, and the words seemed struck in his throat like a fishbone.

He was one of Tibias's most accomplished generals and moreover the king's uncle.

So for him to shout out surrender and be at the enemy's mercy, even the thought was too mortifying.

He had been fantasizing about what he was going to do to Alexander when he fell on his hand, but now that the situation was reversed, now that it seemed he might be the one to end up in Alexander's hand, Lord Ponticus faltered.

He found he did not have the guts to go through it.

The realization that things he planned to do to Alexander might fall on him too was too much for the noble.

For the proud man, death was far more preferable to such humiliation.

And as the city lord mired himself in such thought and took too long to make a decision, finally at one point his luck ran out.

Chapter 716 Melodias VS Lord Theony (Part-1)

Facing the relentless attacks of the legionaries, Lord Ponticus's circle grew smaller and smaller with every passing second, until finally,

Slash

A lucky sword slash managed to at last penetrate the circle and grievously wound the leg of the horse Lord Ponticus was on, causing it to buckle and fall down, taking its rider with it.

'Ahhh! I should have surrendered' And as Lord Ponticus fell from his horse, time seemed to slow for him, as he could feel his life flash before him.

It was as if the veteran military leader could hear death knocking on his door.

And it was right on the cusp of the journey to the other side that the man came to the conclusion that perhaps life was more important than pride.

But that enlightenment came too late.

And besides, even if he had cried out surrender, it was unknown whether it might have actually worked.

Remember, it was dark, the ones facing him were peasants who knew of no such convention and lastly, Lord Ponticus spoke a different language.

Perhaps if he had begged and gotten on his knees as a universal sign of surrender then they would taken him prisoner.

But the man had been unwilling to debase himself like that.

And so, as soon as Lord Ponticus hit the ground, immediately within the blink of an eye, he was jumped on by several legionaries like hungry jackals and within seconds was hacked to bits.

It was in fact so fast that it was impossible to tell where the first wounds were inflicted or gave any of the bodyguards even the slightest time to try and mount a defense.

Instead, they too soon joined their lord, dying in the service.

And it was as such that a glorious hero of Tibias, one that had brought much glory to his country but was also responsible for sending so many to their deaths, finally met the scythe wielder himself.

But his demise did not cause any additional ripple in the battlefield,

Though perhaps it was more because this side of the battle was already experiencing a figurative tsunami.

But regardless, the men who killed Lord Ponticus showed not a shred of concern following the act and instead seemed more eager to divide up the spoils.

Some even seemed to want to start another fight with themselves over these, particularly as they struggled to take possession of the head.

Because it was the person possessing that who would get that 100 ropal bounty.

Oh, if Lord Ponticus knew his head was going to exchange for that mere amount, he would have certainly turned in his grave.

But for now, his story ended there and here.

And instead, a far more interesting and important event was about to start- The main clash between Lord Theony and Melodias.

Because remember, Lord Theony's forces were still intact.

And with Alexander losing two of his legions, Lord Theony actually held a slight numerical superiority, with his 28,000 squaring off against Melodias's 25,000.

So Tibias was not out of the fight yet.

Not by a long shot.

"Dammit! How could this happen? Where is Lord Ponticus!"

Of course, this did not mean Lord Theony was completely unaffected by the loss.

No, he was very much affected as Lord Ponticus's complete rout was surely not part of the plan.

With the only silver lining being that there was ten thousand fewer men to face.

And since things had already developed to such an extent and Lord Theony was by now only a few hundred meters from the enemy, about to make contact within minutes.

So even if he wanted to stop, it was too late.

Just the orders for an orderly retreat would take much longer.

As for the nuclear card of blowing his horn to sound a full-on retreat, well he feared such a thing would cause the enemy to give chase and result in much higher casualty on his side.

Especially given how chaotic it would be due to the current time of the day, or more specifically night.

So instead he bit the bullet and pressed on, saying to himself,

"Well, at least some of the enemy soldiers have run away. Now let's hope I can use these elephants to grab a victory."

Lord Theony really hoped all the stories his king told him were real and these beasts were as miraculous as he said.

And with those thoughts, the phalanx units closed the last few paces and finally made contact with the static legionaries.

"Attack! Half their men have run away! Now it's our turn to finish the other half!"

"Show no mercy! For Thesalie!"

"For the King!"

Such loud boisterous last-minute words of encouragement could be heard coming from the Tibian side as the men were about to begin their life or death struggle.

While on Alexander's side, words such as these drifted to the legionnaires' ears,

"Hold the line! Lord Alexander has defeated the enemy behind us. It is time we defeat the enemy in front of us."

"Stand and fight men! All sorts of riches and women await upon victory."

"Don't falter! We are so close!"

As the threat in the rear was death with, the legions in the front quickly steadied themselves, and soon the battle turned into one that was expected.

Just before the phalanx units were about to hit them, the legionaries charged towards them as trained, throwing their pallas and disabling many of the enemy's shields, before starting to engage in a brutal hand-to-hand melee, dying the ground illuminated by the pristine moonlit sky in blood.

"Dammit! If those idiots did not run, we would be having such an easier time!"

And after a while, Melodias cursed as such, for facing the phalanx units in flat ground, further with a slight numerical inferiority, the Zanzan lines quickly began to get pushed back.

This was usually what happened when legionaries tried to go toe to toe with phalanxes on even ground.

Furthermore, the forces under Lord Theony were actually much fresher than those under Melodias, because most of the men had been allowed to rest the entire day in preparation for this attack.

Whereas Alexander, unaware of such a move, made his men mostly work the whole time, with his only saving grace being that the men had been fed a very hearty meal.

But that was hardly enough to compensate for the lack of sleep and rest, and their performance on the battlefield showed.

So it was reasonable for Melodias to miss those extra ten thousand men.

However given the current state, he was forced to make do with what he had, and so the brutal slugging match continued.

"My lord, sorry we are late!"

And as the bloody battle unfolded in the center, these words were addressed to Alexander by the officers who were under Remus

It had taken them too long to organize their men so was of no use during the previous flanking attack.

Hence as they met Alexander on the field some distance away from the main fighting, their leader lowered his head and looked ashamed.

"Mmmm, it's good you are here." While Alexander, unaware of all the backroom drama simply nodded pensively and then commanded,

"The enemy here has been defeated. Stay here. I will give your next order in time."

An order that the man wordlessly obeyed with a salute, stationing his men just right of their lord's unit.

The reason for Alexander giving this order was because he wanted to keep this 3,000 infantry, as well as his 3,000 cavalries in the reserve, planning to inject these fresh troops once Melodias succeeded in tiring the enemy out.

And so for the next two hours, that was exactly what happened as the battlefield turned into a kind of stagnant but very brutal quagmire, one where phalangites and legionaries pushed and counter-pushed each other, with some individual units managing to shove their opponents sometimes as much as several hundred meters back.

All while the 4th and 5th legions ran around the battlefield aimlessly looking for any stragglers.

This was of course a complete waste of their time and usefulness in the battlefield and a sight that incensed Alexander.

He planned to heavily punish these unruly men later, as well as grill all the officers who had been responsible for their training.

And at a later inquiry, it would turn out that these men mostly received their training from the mercenaries Pasha Farzah had sent.

And though those men were fantastic fighters, they were prolific slackers as well as several recounts from the soldiers would attest, saying that most of the time, their trainers would leave after only one or two hours, or simply not show up at all.

Something Alexander would punish by simply removing all such mercenary trainers altogether, as well as docking a part of their pay.

But such detective findings would be for another time, as right now, finally after a few hours of brutal struggle, Melodias was at last beginning to show signs of breaking.

The phalanxes had inflicted a lot of casualties on him and the legionaries seemed unable to get the upper hand.

Thus Alexander was forced to release his reserves while seeing so, Lord Theony let out his elephants.

Now was the time to see if history would repeat itself, or if would Alexander triumph!

Chapter 717 Melodias Vs Lord Theony (Part-2)

The fight between the phalangites and legionaries raged for several hours until finally, one side seemed to be able to eke out an advantage.

And as it was expected, it was the phalanx formation, who had held both the advantage in range and terrain.

Melodias's legionnaires were finally exhausted after being pushed back on all fronts by several hundred meters by the wall of the bristling spears wielded by Lord Theony's men and being unable to counter them as well as facing mounting casualties, the legionaries seemed right on the very edge of their limit.

It was apparent they would not be able to hold on for long.

"Go! Reinforce them! Quick!"

And it was then that Alxx at last deployed his reserves, composed of the 3,000 infantry and 2,000 dismounted cavalry.

Dismounted cavalry meant that the cavalrymen got off their horses and fought on foot like regular infantry.

And the reason why Alxx did so as opposed to using them in the traditional way was because the threat of the elephants was still present and he feared the horses might break and smash into his own formation just like before.

So, leaving only 1,000 riders with him as an emergency reserve, Alxx ordered the other 2,000 to pick up their spears and go fight like infantry.

The arrival of the reserves naturally caused a cheer to break out in the Zanzan camps, and with this nutritious injection into the army, the battlefield was again restored to its former state, as the legionaries were able to push back and reclaim the grounds lost.

Something that caused Lord Theony to curse, "Dammit! After coming so far!"

He knew that his soldiers were getting tired and would not be able to fight for much longer.

And though the same could be said for Alxx's men too, but a draw here would mean defeat for Lord Theony and a win for Alxx.

For Alxx then would be able to launch his attack on the walls using the siege engines, and Lord Theony would be powerless to stop that.

And even if Lord Theony managed to attack once again before that could happen, Alxx surely would be able to reorganize his forces and add the two currently dissipated legions before that, whereas Lord Theony would be stuck with the men he had.

The nobleman saw little hope in being able to win against those odds.

Hence he no longer held back and released his trump card, turning to Lapitus to order,

"The elephants! Have the elephants attack their wings! Destroy them!"

Thus under his signal, the trainers above the beasts did exactly what they were told, urging the beasts to charge towards Alxx's wings, hoping to smash through them, or if they were lucky break them even before making contact.

But contrary to everyone's expectation in the Tibian camp, the latter did not happen, for the officers stationed with the legionaries in the wings followed the strategy taught to them by Alxx to the tee.

It was the method the city lord had come up with to deal with elephants, in the likely event that they came across these beasts.

Which it seemed they did.

"Hold your ground! Do not panic! Just do what you practiced!"

Hence the officers in a steady, reassured voice urged their men to not buckle, while the infantry quickly switched from their swords to their javelins, gripping them tightly in their hands, and got into their throwing posture.

"Wait! Do not throw them yet! Let them close in!"

The officers then strictly told the men, cautioning some of the ones with more twitchy hands from wasting their shots.

So then for a few brief but seemingly very long moments, they waited.

And it was a terrifying few seconds, as the charge of these heavy beasts made the men feel the earth literally tremble beneath their feet, *trumpet*, *trumpet*, *trumpet*, their enraged roars sending shivers to their hearts, and the rapidly approaching huge, black bodies seemed to swallow even the scant moonlight of the battlefield, making the men on the frontlines feel like they were not facing a mortal foe, but a storm, a force of nature!

The sight of this wall of beast caused many men to feel weak in their knees, and some even contemplated running.

The fear of being trampled to death or being speared through the torso was a very vivid thought.

But desertion in the army had only one outcome- death, and since the officers stood by them, enforcing strict discipline, the men too stood their ground and the lines ultimately held.

"Now! Shoot! Quick Shoot!"

And once the beasts were finally in range, the soldiers immediately released their projectiles, be it their javelins, pillas, and even crossbows, with all they had, the action being as much an attack as a way to release all their pent up stress and fear.

And once they were done with their first volley, they quickly reequipped for the second one, arching their bodies and using their strong arm muscles to shoot the weapons again with as much as force as possible.

And given the size of their target and the proximity, almost every one of these shots made contact, peppering the 17 beasts with almost a thousand of these sharp, deadly missiles, as many of them bore deep into their flesh.

Trumpet, *Trmupet*, *Trumpet*

This naturally caused the charging beasts to let out enraged cries, for the deadly spears drew huge amounts of blood from all over their bodies, even dying much of their black skin a crimson red.

Then, noticing where this hail of deadly projectiles was coming from, these intelligent beasts naturally attempted to get out of the way, though much to the chagrin of their trainers.

"Darm beasts! Where are you going? There! Go forward!"

"No! Stop! Don't turn there!"

These men cried out from atop the elephants, attempting to make the elephants either bear through the wall of missiles or at least make them stop and retreat in an orderly manner.

And they tried this by using a very sharp hook to dig into the animal as a way to make it comply.

But that tactic, which would have worked under normal times this time backfired.

These beasts were already grievously hurt by the numerous two to three meter spears sticking out of them, making them bleed profusely and making them very angry.

And now facing this wound from their riders too, finally proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back, pushing them over the edge and letting their rage completely take over.

Trumpet!!, *Trmupeeet!!!*, *Trumpeeeeet!!!!*

At first, it was only one elephant that let out his dreadful cry.

But elephants were social animals.

So hearing the hurtful cries of one of them, others too let out their own cries, rallying together, and suddenly, the trainers found they had even lost the small control they previously had.

At least until now, they had been able to stop the elephant from crushing into their own lines.

But then these beasts went completely unresponsive to their trainers no matter how much they poked them, and doing whatever they wished, the elephants started to veer wildly to the sides to avoid the deadly missiles.

Which of course led to many of these beasts on the wings crashing into Lord Theony's center, trampling countless men and completely shattering many of the formations there within the blink of an eye.

The men there never even saw this coming.

It was almost poetic how history seemed to be repeating itself, as Lord Theony suffered the exact kind of losses suffered by Menes against Perseus.

Except it was a lot worse for him given it was night and he had no strategic reserve of 1,000 crossbowmen like Menes did who could act as the rear guard while they retreated.

So when about 10 elephants bulldozed through his men, crying and trumpeting their hearts out for the pain from their wounds drove them mad, Lord Theony's tightly packed lines immediately broke down.

Though few could blame them.

Facing the threat of these beasts' wildly swinging trunks and their powerful swipes of the trunks, never mind the simple but brutal power behind their huge bodies, even the best-trained soldiers would have stood no chance,

So the phalangites abandoned everything and instead screamed and ran in terror, pushing and shoving others as hard as they could to try and get out of the way of these rampaging huge beasts, causing many to trip and fall.

All this of course caused even more casualties than it would have if only the elephants were left to riot on their own.

For with all the soldiers attempting to run away at the same time, it inevitably created a giant stampede, where far, far more men died simply being trampled to death by their fellow comrades than under the hooves of those 6 ton beasts.

And as a witness to all this, the two commanders inevitably had their own thoughts.

Lord Theony's face looked like a deflated balloon, with even his mustache somehow looking as if it had lost all its luster.

Or perhaps it was all the dust hitting it as the man had not worn his helmet fearing his visibility would be even more compromised.

While Alxx's face was more pensive than pleased, even as he laid witness to the complete destruction of his enemy's army right in front of him, only saying to himself,

"That's why I do not like elephants. They are too temperamental. And too hard to control."

Chapter 718 Alexander's Bold Plan

It would not be wrong to say that the battle between Lord Theony and Melodias came to quite an abrupt end.

What was supposed to be one's trump card was somehow turned on its heel by the other in a matter of seconds and the very elephants that were supposed to help Lord Theony win the fight had all of a sudden switched sides and was now actively destroying their own side.

No matter who it was, one had to feel even a tad bit sorry for the man.

And as the man himself sat on his horse, gazing at the rampaging animals, stomping on his own men, and the soldiers scattering themselves to the wind with no sense of direction, one of his retainers quickly approached him and shouted,

"My lord! We need to retreat! Now!"

Their army was gone and they had clearly lost, so what more could they do other than run back into the safety of the city?

They had nothing to do here.

"Yes! Before those beasts come here." Another noble from the side added fearfully, gazing at the elephants worryingly.

"Mmmmm," And knowing things were all lost here and that he had lost, Lord Theony only had the energy to make this almost mewl-like hum.

Now that things had gotten to this point, the only thing that was left to worry about was one's own life.

So soon that small group of nobles and whatever men that were still left in proper order quickly whirled their horses around and sped off toward the city, all their faces reflecting various shades of gloom and dread.

This was particularly true for Lord Theony, for this commander's face no longer had that boisterous, arrogant look he always carried himself with, and neither did his eyes sparkle with that ever present intrigue and mystery.

Instead, he appeared sunken and hollow, which would also be an apt description of his heart, for he knew that this defeat signified.

Thesalie- The city which stood for so many centuries was about to fall.

And if that was not enough, it would fall under his command, at least partially under his command.

This turn of events was devastating to both his country and his political career in the court.

'What now?' Thus the man found himself asking this but was unable to come up with any real answers.

While Alxx from the back laid witness to the same carnage and destruction, and his heart was filled with one very important conclusion.

And that was why he determined that he would never use war elephants himself.

These things were too difficult to control and were as much a danger to the side using it as the side using it.

Sure they were able to scare horses away, and in the right circumstances, just a handful of them could single handedly turn the tide of battle as they did for Perseus.

But in Alxx's eyes, they are too flawed and unreliable to be used consistently.

Countering them was not too hard as just demonstrated right now, they were not nearly as maneuverable as traditional cavalry and if something went wrong with them, which honestly was not that hard to do, it was mostly likely they would turn against their own user.

So rather than these high risk, high rewards units, Alxx much preferred the more controllable horses.

'But they are really magnificent creatures.' And as Alxx came to this conclusion, he also could not help but marvel while looking at these beasts going wild out there.

This was of course Alxx's first time seeing elephants like this, in such an open field, and being able to witness these majestic animals at night under a clear moonlit sky, running around and trumpeting, it was actually a very beautiful sight to behold.

If only it was not so dangerous.

In fact it was so dangerous that even when Lord Theony's men broke and ran, the legionaries did not choose to give chase like they normally would have.

Instead, they actually started to retreat bit by bit, drawing a distance between them and the fleeing phalangites.

All of which was done instinctually, the officers did not need to give any orders.

Because all these men at least had the common sense to understand that running toward those enraged animals was a bad idea.

Some of the men on the frontlines could be even seen holding their last pilla in their hands, ready to throw it if any of those war elephants made the mistake of dashing toward them.

Alxx largely left the disintegration of Lord Theony's forces to its own devices, letting the elephants, the madly dashing men, and the fear and panic finish them off.

While Alxx's exhausted men, too tired to give chase anyway, tried to catch their breath or better yet, get some much needed shut-eye.

Alxx even noticed many fatigued legionaries break military protocol and sit or even lay on the ground, but it was something that Alxx was willing to overlook given the circumstances.

"My lord! Congratulations! We won!"

And soon, Alxx's commanders and nobles began to converse around him, their faces filled with smiles, their tone light and jovial.

Many then even began to recount their own experiences, for no one person, not even Alxx was privy to everything that had happened,

"Hahaha, yes, yes. It is all due to the lord's charge that we won!" TP was especially animated while describing Alxx's charge that destroyed PO, as he had first row tickets to it.

While Alxx only smiled and nodded.

And once finally all the higher ups were gathered, Melodias turned to ask Alxx,

"Then my lord should I order the soldiers back to the back? The men are already very tired and chasing the enemy at night would be too dangerous."

"We can do that tomorrow morning."

The steady general was very sensible in his suggestion, and many even though Melodias's request more formalities than actually seeking permission.

After all, it was only natural that they were going to return to their camp.

What else were they going to do?

Not only the regular soldiers but even the commanders and officers such as themselves were dog tired with many's throats even hurting.

"No!" But unfortunately, their boss did not seem to think so.

And at the answer, the gathered men naturally pulled very surprised faces, as they whirled their heads as if shocked, giving him a look that seemed to implicitly ask, 'What gives?'

And Alxx had an answer ready for them,

"We will attack the walls now. Given the enemy's defeat, the walls should be pretty empty. So we should take this chance and capture it before they can reinforce!"

"That should be easy!"

Alxx here was being bold, even greedy.

And hearing their usually cautious lord pose this, for a few seconds, the others were stunned.

"Tha...that...the soldiers are pretty tired...its dark...we..." Melodias tried to stammer these seemingly incoherent words out to convince Alxx otherwise, but really could not think of saying anything that Alxx did not already know about.

The fact simply was that Alxx wanted to attack the walls knowing all the limitations.

And understanding this, all the commanders unanimously pulled various ugly and sullen faces.

They had just had a long day, fought a grueling several hour battles in the night, and were now being asked to do something similar again.

Given many of them could barely stand, they were certainly not receptive to this idea.

And sensing the universal resistance, Alxx did not actually acquiesce to their wants, but pushed back with his own explanations, reasoning,

"I know that many of the men are near the end of their ropes and want to rest."

"But if we wait till morning, this will give the enemy the time to bolster their walls."

"Many of the scattered men might even be able to return to the city and be put to manning them."

"We can't let that happen." Alxx shook his to emphasize, stating,

"But if we attack now, the enemy will have no way of expecting that."

"And given it is night, we will be able to use the general darkness to better conceal our avenues our attack!"

"So I say that if we can take the walls now, sure the soldiers will be a little bit exhausted, but we will lose fewer lives."

"And I think anyone would trade one for the other any day of the year."

"....." At his reasoning, the others did not immediately respond, neither with a yes or a no.

Perhaps they were still thinking, or perhaps they were too tired to think, or perhaps being with Alxx long enough they knew since the man had made up his mind, arguing with him would be an exercise in futility.

Or it could be all three.

Regardless, only a few smaller nobles raised a few concerns regarding the visibility and the challenges of conducting an attack at night, and though many were valid concerns but Alxx simply waved them off, saying,

"All these things are too overblown. We can take the walls regardless. Now let us attack!"

It seemed Alxx had made up his mind, and once the head honcho had spoken, the decision was in all but name made and the others had no choice but to obey.

Chapter 719 Attack On the First Wall (Part-1)

Regarding Alexander's decision to launch an attack on the walls at night, some of the more inexperienced officers who did not know how Alexander worked tried to talk him out of it by showing him the obstacles.

One of them pointed out, "My lord, given today is a full moon, the enemy might be able to see us coming. But the soft light won't be enough to help our crossbowmen spot the enemy so far in the distance."

And other stepped up to say,

"Yes, in the night, it is harder to see between friends and foes."

"This is not so much a problem on a battlefield with proper lines. But I'm afraid when scaling the walls, especially from multiple directions....we might not be able to see who is who."

"Even the crossbowmen on the wall might not know who is who."

But as it could be guessed Alexander did not pay much heed to these problems.

Since Alexander had decided the attack on the walls would occur, it would occur now.

The rest of the commanders knew they had little choice but to obey, for rebelling against him would be breaking their oath and Alexander had not pushed them that far.

Hence turning to Alexander, Melodias interjected between the two nobles and in a low, resigned voice, asked.

"So how shall we proceed with the attack my lord?"

And hearing the officially highest member of the army express his support for the offensive, all the lesser officers and commanders could only purse their lips and shut up, knowing the decision had been made.

Whereas Melodias himself with this question made it clear that the man might be willing to follow orders to attack, but he certainly was not going to use his own brain cells to plan it.

But fortunately for him, while Alexander was gazing at the elephants tearing the Tibian army to shreds, the man had also been formulating how to do exactly that.

So in a sure, confident way, Alexander ordered,

"Have the first and second legion regroup and start their march toward the siege towers."

"They will be the ones attacking the walls."

"Also make sure they bring enough ladders. They are in the camp."

"The third and sixth legion will stay here and act as our rear guard, just in case the Tibian army somehow manages to regroup itself and wants to hit us in the rear."

"And lastly have the seventh legion return to camp, and rest."

"We cannot have our entire army awake the entire night. Or else we will have no force to deploy come sunrise."

"Is that acceptable?"

Clearly, Alexander had given this a lot of thought.

And the meticulousness of his order worked to alleviate some of the bitterness the commander had felt, as they felt Alexander was not simply doing this on a whim.

So Melodias quickly saluted, and promised, "Yes, my lord. I will have all these in less than three hours."

That amount of time might seem like a lot, but it had to be remembered that an army was a huge machine, and as with anything with such inertia, it simply took time to get things going, from the order to go from Alexander to the lowest squads, to even the single task of getting the men in proper formation.

So this was quite a reasonable time frame.

"Quick! March! Orders from the general himself."

Thus a while later the soldiers found themselves hounded by their officers to get up and get ready for battle once again, which naturally caused many grumblings and irritated sighs to ring out.

It was so especially among the first and second legions who would be the ones required to fight, so some of the men even lightly cursed Alexander, such as,

"Darm that slave driver. What does he want us to do now!"

"We won him the battle. Now he wants us to win him the walls. Couldn't he wait till morning...fuck!"

"Darm my feet are killing me! Arghhh, I really want to hit him."

Such bad-mouthing of even a commander, never mind this time it was the lord himself was certainly a highly punishable offense, but most of the men saying this openly belonged to the first legion, which was mostly composed of men who had followed Alexander from back in the day, so they knew they had this leeway.

But the second legion, which was the temporarily given name to the hired mercenaries was far more low key but much more colorful in the description of Alexander.

It was even suspected that if they had not been allowed to drink large quantities of heavy alcohol to warm their body and feel energized, some of them might have even refused to follow the orders.

But they ultimately did, while the rest of the three legions' resistance was much more mild.

After all, those did not need to fight,

The third and sixth legions were far happier to follow Alexander's orders, for they needed to do little more than stand and keep watch.

And some of the men could even slack on that, as could be seen how many in the back were sitting while drinking water or wine.

As for the seventh legion, well they practically danced and skipped into the camp, eager to hit the bed right that instant.

It was with such preparations that the next three hours passed in the blink of an eye, and soon Alexander had his horses assembled, his men arranged in the proper rank and file, the siege towers

filled with the assaulting units, the men who would pull there are heavy wooden beasts forward in their proper positions.

Everything was set and all Alexander needed to do was give the order and the assault could begin.

While Alexander was doing this, in the between time, one might ask what was happening inside Thesalie.

Or specifically, how were the higher ups of the city reacting to their loss?

And the answer to that would be not well, for currently there was a heated argument, almost a spat between two parties.

"Lord Theony, where is my father? Why is he not with you!"

No sooner had that nobleman crossed the heavy wooden gates that Lord Ponticus's eldest son Petrino ran up to him with his question, his face angry and worried.

The man was just a bit younger than Lord Theony himself and had been left in charge of the city while his father was away.

"Your father headed the flanking attack while I headed the main force. So I do not know"

Contrary to the man's desperate tone, Lord Theony gave his answer in a hollow, deadpan voice.

The man was still in shock over just what had happened and so was still in the midst of processing all the things that had transpired.

But to this answer sounded too apathetic and uncaring to Petrino, who all of a sudden lost his temper and lambasted,

"What do you mean you do not know! That's my father you are talking about! Where is he? Why did you come back without him! Go back!"

This was certainly a very rude way to talk to any noble, never mind as high noble as Lord Theony, so one of his retainers quickly stepped to chide the man.

"Lord Petrino, please watch your tone. This is unbecoming of someone of royal blood."

And this cold reply was followed by several dagger-filled stares from the other men,

None of them were happy about their loss but they had not lost their temper like Petrino.

"....Argghh..." Sensing this Petricus could only grunt in frustration.

While Lord Theony seeing this had thought to himself, 'Hmmm, looks like the rumors that Ponticus has a waste of a son is far more than just true.'

'No wonder you hear so much about the general, yet his son has almost no presence in court.'

'This is the first time I have even really talked to him.'

'Ponticus must have intentionally hidden him.'

Lord Theony said this because he knew if Lord Ponticus was in his place, he would certainly not have shown such an unsightly sight and instead first and foremost inquired about the city's well-being.

But Petrino never had the martial prowess of a great fighter nor had he inherited the talented generalship of his father.

And being his only son and constantly compared to him growing up, the enormous expectations placed on him and his failure to do so had twisted him into the present state.

That was why it was Lapitus who was Lord Ponticus's adjutant and not Petrino.

That was why Lord Ponticus did not take his son to battle.

And that was why, Lord Ponticus being the proud man he was felt ashamed of his son, which was why he hid him, which caused him to turn even worse.

"Lord Petrino, were you not supposed to guard the walls? Who did you leave in charge?"

Seeing the tense atmosphere, it was Lapitus who quickly interjected and tried to turn the conversation around, as he had experience dealing with this man regularly.

"Wh...who cares about that! Lapitus where is my father you cheat?"

But in much contrast to being civil, Petrino venomously barked as such, his eyes suddenly filled with malicious hatred.

He had always seen Lapitus as someone who had stolen everything from him.

Like he was the son his father always wanted.

But that was not the important thing here.

For his answer clearly showed how he had left the wall undefended.

Alexander's gamble might pay off better than he could have ever expected.

Chapter 720 Attack On the First Wall (Part-2)

"Wha..." Hearing what Petrino had done, Lapitus immediately let out a shocked yelp.

The man had one job and he could not even do that!

"Go!" And so Lord Theony immediately barked this out towards Lapitus, who needed no such encouragement, as he whirled his horse around to gallop to the walls.

'Dammit! Let's hope nothing has happened,' And the man prayed such as he sped his beast down the stoned road.

As for Lord Theony himself, well he simply finished the conversation with Petrino by stating so in a cold, mechanical voice,

"Lord Petrino, it is unlikely the city can be held. I advise that you leave now. You are welcome to come with us."

Given the defeat and Alexander's imminent attack, the man could easily tell which way the wind was blowing and no way was he going to wait for the storm to hit him.

Lord Theony planned to flee the city as quickly as possible.

Having said this he then signaled his entourage to follow him towards his quarters, not bothering to even wait for Petrino's answer.

"..." And though the man this was addressed to was aware of what their losses meant, he still felt like it was all a bad dream, a nightmare.

This city was his everything.

These were his lands and all his power and influence belonged here.

And without them, he would become a pauper, a nobody.

So the explicit declaration that the city was going to be lost felt like a sledgehammer to his heart.

'No! The city can held! Father was wrong! This city can be held....That's right! Father is no longer here! Hahaha, this city is mine! I will hold it!'

Driven by this desperation, Petrino spookily cried this out as he tried to convince himself.

It was a conclusion that went against every available evidence, the most glaring being that if the city could have been held, all those competent officers and generals would not have taken the risky move to try and fight a pitched battle.

But desperation could do strange things to a man.

So instead of following Lord Theony's advice and obediently evacuating with him, Petrino ran to the walls, eager to take the helm of it personally.

While Lord Theony upon reaching the gates of his quarters, did not disband his entourage or eagerly hit the bed.

But he turned around to look at the gathered group of trusted men and stated,

"Pack everything you have as soon as possible. We leave before dawn!"

Yes, Lord Theony was not even going to wait till morning.

When he said they should leave now, he really meant 'right now'

Thus Lord Theony would be several kilometers away from the city come sunrise, and by the next day, he would be able to charter a large boat that would take him to the capital.

As for why he did not do so back in Thesalie, well it was because all the large boats had been sent back to the capital to bring in the rest of the 10,000 men and the supplies.

And that was where Lord Theony's involvement with Thesalie ended, for now.

Back in the city, Lapitus quickly made his way to the walks, and much to his relief saw nothing major had changed.

The patrol was still present, though most of them were lethargic. shuffling their feet with no strength behind them, while gazing across the walls, he saw there was no major presence of the enemy.

Lapitus's eyes were particularly drawn to the siege towers which had not a single man defending it.

And this prompted him to greedily think, 'Should I ride out to destroy those!'

But that brash thought was quickly snuffed out.

Never mind how that tactic went last time, even if he wanted to, he lacked the men.

Losing 35,000 to 38,000 men tended to do that.

Besides to say the siege towers were undefended was certainly erroneous.

Because though the infantry might have left, the archers on the walls were still in patrol.

And those men could be seen quickly being reinforced, as to his horror Lapitus quickly noticed a huge surge of men start to make their way toward him.

'It can't be! Are they planning to attack right now?' Lapitus was stunned.

He had at least thought he would till morning, or even the next day to prepare.

"Move back! Move to the second wall. Block all the passageways and move to the second wall!"

Thinking quickly on his feet, the man immediately gave up trying to hold the first wall and ordered the defenders to move to their next line of defense.

"Lapitus! What are you doing? Are you trying to give the city to the invaders!"

And while this command was being carried out, Petrino decided to stick his nose like that.

Something that irritated Lapitus very much.

He really did not have either the time or will to engage with this clown.

And if not for the fact that it was yet to be confirmed that Lord Ponticus had truly died, Lapitus might have even punched the man.

But holding back his temper for now, he instead curtly replied, "We cannot hold the first wall."

"So we are going to use our archers from the second wall to rail arrows on the men scaling the walls."

"We might be able to even set their siege towers on fire."

Lapitus was much more optimistic than his real thoughts.

And surprisingly, Petrino did not boorishly order him to hold the first walls at all costs.

Instead, in much contrast to his character only obediently nodded the words, "Okay!"

The man was at least smart enough to know Lapitus knew far more about warfare than him, and if he wanted to help his city, now was not to get in his way.

So this time, he declined to argue with Lapitus and let the man do his thing.

While in the meantime Alexander did his.

More and more legionaries could be seen forming in ranks right in front of the walls, many started to board the siege towers, and many of the soldiers got ready to push the huge things up to the walls.

And being witness to all this from atop the wall, Lapitus was left with no doubt that the enemy was going to attack imminently.

'That Alexander...' He really did not know whether to describe the man as a genius for not letting them have even a moment to breathe, or too hasity for pushing his men so far.

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"My lord, we are ready. You can give the order anytime." Melodias rode up to inform him, and then added with a large grin,

"Also our men report seeing many of the defenders running! It seems the walls are undefended! Haha, my lord is truly a genius tactician."

In Alexander's camp, they misinterpreted the withdrawal as being a rout, as Alexander chuckled the reply.

"Hahaha, well given their defeat, it is not difficult to see that they would do so. Better than needlessly dying."

"Go! Since we are ready, let's attack!"

He then very casually gave the permission,

Thus soon the huge, heavy towers were wheeled into position, each of their wheel revolution requiring the muscle and sweat of more than a hundred men, while both from the walls and the ground, huge volumes of arrows were fired to support the enemy.

Though the return fire were pitifully low, just a few scattered shots from the second wall.

And when the towers' drawbridges were opened and the men rushed onto the walls madly screaming and shouting, armed with shields, and halberts, much to their surprise they encountered literally no resistance.

The entire place was completely deserted.

And so for a while, these men, who were ready to dye the stoned floors with blood and guts found themselves a bit fluxed, unsure of what to do next.

They never encountered such a sight before.

Shoo, *Shoo*, *Shoo*,

But that calm and bloodless tranquillity lasted only a few moments, as just as the men were about to spread out, Lapitus opened his offensive, letting the around two thousand men hail arrows down on the clumped up men from the higher wall.

"Arghhh!"

"Arrows! Arrows from above!"

"Shields! Get behind your shields!"

At this attack, most of the men were initially caught off guard

Hence the first few volleys caused quite a bit of damage, killing nearly 30 men.

But that trick could only work once, as soon the men got their bearing.

Quickly crouching down, they put their shields in front of them and then ran towards the battlements that faced the enemy, seeking cover there.

While the Zanzan crossbowmen on the walls quickly woke to what was going on and at once returned fire, managing to suppress their counterpart and rapidly neutralizing this attack.

As for Alexander, upon seeing the attacks he was certainly a bit disheartened.

Not necessarily at the deaths, but more so at the attacks.

Because it meant the walls were not undefended.

There were actually active men up there and he would have fight through them.

'Dammit! Looks like I will have to do it the hard way,'

So Alexander was a bit peeved.

Although this was not something new nor anything Alexander had not anticipated, for he had the appropriate plans to take the second wall regardless of what the enemy did, he still pursed his lips at all the needless extra work he was going to have to put in.

Why needless and extra?

Because the city was basically his.