

Herald 721

Chapter 721 Attack On the First Wall (Part-3)

Lapitus's sneak attack from atop the second wall quickly died down under the effort of Zanzan's crossbowmen, soon enabling those on the walls to come out of their cover and occupy it.

On paper, the man's plan had not been a bad one.

Lapitus seemingly devised a kind of elastic defense where under Alexander's attack, he would give up his position and retreat to his next stronghold, baiting Alexander to take the vacant place, and then, once Alexander had used up his energy getting there, Lapitus would launch a counterattack to push him back and try and retake it.

That was the theory anyway.

However it failed to materialize in practice mainly due to a lack of adequate mass.

Lapitus simply did not the number, for if he had wanted to make taking the wall as hard as possible for Alexander, he should have deployed infantry on the walls, along with those archers from the top.

That way if the attackers stayed on the walls they would be peppered by arrow fire from above.

But if they wanted to take cover, they would have had to do so while fighting in a brutal hand to hand melee with the defenders.

If Lapitus had done that, it would have certainly added a lot more punch to his attack.

Of course, even if Lapitus had managed to do so would not have meant they would have certainly won, but it would have meant that he would have been able to make Alexander bleed much more.

However given the current circumstances, due to the huge losses they had suffered just a few hours ago, as well as Alexander denying them any sort of time to shore up those deficiencies, the man was forced to choose one or the other type of unit- infantry or archers.

And sensibly he chose the latter since those could still effectively use the second set of fortifications to hound the enemy, whereas the infantry would be simply annihilated by the legionnaires.

But that also meant Lapitus's attacks lacked the proper punch behind them, hence after surviving the initial barrage, Alexander's men on the front walls quickly started to spread out, making them a much more difficult target.

Once they had done so, the men then began to work to secure the various points along the sprawling structure, gathering around key defensive points, and then signaling to their allies on the ground that it was safe to climb up through ladders.

In this way, they rapidly reinforced their hold on the walls as the numbers there began to swell from the initial hundreds to the thousands very quickly.

And the ones conducting all of this did everything on their own, without needing any command from Alexander or his officers.

Seeing which Alexander whispered in his heart,

'As expected. Good mercenaries are really worth their gold. If I had used those recently trained peasants, I'm afraid they would have all panicked and ran headlessly in every direction the moment those arrows hit.'

'While these guys did the opposite and instead all ran towards the arrows, taking cover under the crenelations. And no one needed to tell them that.'

The quality of the training and more than that experience really showed itself in that one instance, and Alexander was reassured that his money had not been wasted.

It was also because of that he had made the mercenaries assault the walls, and kept his own men for the second wave.

The sellswords were very much expendable compared to the much more precious men in the first legion but equally as trained.

So Alexander thought if anything went wrong, which given it was night had much more likelihood of doing, and he was unable to respond to all of them on time, these trained men could make the decisions on the spot.

Which they seemed to have made.

The complete capture of the first walls took a few hours, which was not surprising given the sheer size of the whole thing.

The structure did encompass the entire city after all.

And as the summer sun slowly rose over the horizon, signaling the start of another day, the entire structure was indeed confirmed to be under Zanzan's control.

The bright sunlight also worked to reveal the true state of the carnage that resulted in trying to take this wall and frankly, it was even more ghastly than most would have imagined.

The huge field was littered with bodies in all sorts of mangled shapes and sizes and in various states of ruin.

Very few corpses were found intact, a favor bestowed only upon the lucky few who got to die from a single deadly wound to the vitals like the heart, the throat, or the head.

These bodies were rare gems, found mostly only around the site where Lord Ponticus fought, and the injuries were caused mainly by Alexander's lances during all those cavalry charges.

A far more common type of corpse was those with multiple lacerations on them, with some even having their limbs missing, done by cuts and slashes coming from all different angles.

Kind of like how Lord Ponticus had died.

This type of injury was the most common in any battlefield, caused when men tried to run but were chased and cut down.

But these types of injuries were not what had made the sight so gruesome.

All of them were common.

No, it was the corpses that had been trampled to death, either by the elephants or the stamped that the most eye catching,

These bodies had black and blue marks all over, and many of the joints were bent in strange but painful ways.

Some even did not have a face to recognize them, it was all just a red mush like paste.

This was in fact Alexander's first time seeing such huge swathes of men so badly deformed litter the field like sown seeds.

And when his eyes saw what happened when an elephant stepped on a human being, even his stomach churned a bit.

The civil way he would describe the sight would be like it was a bun that had been squeezed and all the red filling had come out.

Alexander had never seen a human being so... 'flat'.

As for the culprits who wrought this destruction, well they were the most eye catching sight on the battlefield.

For there were seventeen such huge beasts lying scattered all around there. either dead or very nearly so, the latter letting out low, pained cries, as the beasts slowly but painfully bleed to death.

And this was not really surprising given the grievous wounds that could be seen etched into their bodies.

Every one of them had tens of painful spears, javelins, and other projectiles sticking into and out of each of them, as their once shiny, jet-black skin seemed to have become covered with a black crust of dried blood.

For these huge creatures had not only been attacked by Alexander's legionaries, but during their rampage, the Tibians too had not shown them any mercy, throwing and stabbing them with everything they had.

Thus the beasts were really put to death by a thousand cuts, a very painful way to go indeed.

And perhaps the dead ones were the lucky ones since their pain had already ended.

As for those that were still alive, they were too hurt to be rescued, but putting them out of their misery was also difficult.

Even if Alexander was to order such a thing, the soldiers would not really know how to go about doing it.

They could not slaughter it, as forget the bones, even their hide was too tough to cut cleanly with a single swing.

So they would likely end up poking the poor thing to death.

As Alexander gazed at those tragic beasts, he felt that would be too cruel to the animals and ultimately decided to leave them alone, letting nature take its course, even if it meant a slow painful death.

At the same time he felt a bit regretful that he was unable to get his hands on even one of these majestic animals, for he would have very much liked one as a pet.

'Oh, Alexandria would have loved seeing it!' Alexander hence sighed a bit bitterly.

And even if he could not keep it, he would have at least liked to show it off during his victory parade as his prize.

But since all the war elephants were already claimed by the grim reaper, Alexander had to give up on that and turned his head to look at something much cheerier.

And as he gazed toward Thesalie's formidable walls, his heart filled up with glee seeing what was once manned by men in blood red armor had now switched to a bustling, vibrant color of blue, confirming the fact that it was indeed his men that patrolled the walls now.

Furthermore, along the entire length of the walkway, hundreds of huge pavises could be seen being set up, there to be used as makeshift cover.

Because it was not uncommon for the archers on the second wall to take sudden, sneaky potshots on the men below.

For although the crossbowmen remained ever vigilant, it was not hard to slip a few shots past them.

But such a thing was more a nuisance than a problem, and soon Alexander was given the official confirmation that the first walls were indeed fully his control.

And with that, the hardest part of the siege was over.

Tibias had no way of keeping Thesalie, not anymore!

Chapter 722 Alexander's Plans for Thesalie

"Hahaha, my lord! We did it! Hahaha, we did it."

With the confirmation that the walls were fully under their control and the capture of it stamped in gold, it naturally caused a huge cheer of joy to break down in the Alexander's camp, going from the lowest soldiers to even the highest officers

Adhania in its hundreds of years of effort, had never gone so far, so this achievement was especially monumental for the natives.

Thus came this euphoric cry and all the previous doubts and anger that some of the officers and soldiers had held towards Alexander evaporated like the midday dew, with some even having to resist the urge to hug the man who had planned this.

Some like Jamider (Earl) Tikba who had been one of the most vocal critics of Alexander, but now felt like kissing the man in joy.

The man had never been so happy to be proven wrong.

And if it was only the fact that many of these men were tired as dogs and simply lacked the energy to celebrate too boisterously, these cheers would have shaken the very sky itself.

While Alexander being surrounded by this good news only lightly smiled and nodded, "It's good that the walls are secure."

They still had not taken the city so he was not eager to start celebrating so soon.

Furthermore, the tiredness inflicting everyone was felt by Alexander too, who after staying awake for twenty-four hours finally had all that exhaustion clutch him in its grasp.

And it was a deadly grip indeed, for having fought a full-fledged battle and then conducted a wall assault, Alexander barely had the energy to give an acknowledging nod to the happy news.

Then he quickly issued the following command before he forgot.

"Good, now that we have the walls we have to make sure we hold it."

"Have the first and second legions retire to their camps. They are too tired."

"Then wake the seventh legion up and have them take over of the defense. Make sure they remain alert and ensure the enemy cannot launch any counterattack and retake it. That would be truly disastrous."

"As for the third and sixth legions...have them round up the stragglers. We will relieve them later."

It seemed that though the third and sixth had gotten an easy job, they also were required to do the longest.

"At once," And contrary to Alexander's exhausted face, Melodias surprisingly looked fresh.

The man was built like a bull.

So the general of the army went off to put the finishing touches on securing the newly captured 'territory'.

While Alexander, feeling as if an elephant was standing on his eyelids pulling them down, quickly handed command to Menes and for the rest of the day his best friend was the bed, with the man only waking up at night to finally relieve these tired officers.

And as Alexander oversaw the men, a strange but predictable sight could be seen.

He saw all the camp followers running all about around the battlefield.

Those slavers that came with him were having a field day, as even now, in the dead of night, these men showed no signs of stopping as they chased around the Tibian stragglers, trying to catch them from their horseback.

It had to be remembered that they had been going at it since morning, truly showing that if you love your work, you won't have to work a day.

While many of the other followers, who did not have the strength to take part in that delicious feast, instead turned their focus on the corpses.

All the dead bodies were stripped of their weapons and armor, as well as any valuables they had on them, and then buried.

That last act was the condition that Alexander had set for them in exchange for letting the men and women do this.

And so under Alexander's nonchalant gaze, this continued.

Alexander would meet up with everyone the next morning, now rested and refreshed, as he got down to understanding the new state of siege.

And Melodias was there to let him know,

"My lord, we are unable to go to the second wall through the passages. They are completely blocked,"

"In the meantime, the enemy continues to keep shooting from the second wall. It seems we will need to take the second walls as well."

Though he had expected it, hearing so still made Alexander pull a sour face.

He really did not want to do things the hard way.

"Has anyone responded to our surrender calls" Alexander placidly posed, but got a shake of the head, "They shot at the messenger even before he could finish!"

It seemed that the situation was really going to force him to take the second wall just like the first one, through brute force.

".....Okay. Then proceed just like we planned." And after a poignant pause, Alexander defaulted to the original strategy, ordering Melodias,

"Gather the camp followers and have them dig up the foundations of the first walls."

"We will set fire to them, collapsing them, and then our siege towers can roll up to the second towers just like the first wall."

Hearing which Melodias let out a bitter sigh at all the extra work that he would need to do, cussing, "Fucking Tibians. They have clearly lost. Why wouldn't they just give up? What's the point of fighting anymore?"

Clearly, the man was not looking forward to the prolongation of the siege.

But he knew since the enemy wanted to dance, he would have to humor them.

So asking to be excused, the general quickly went off to start on his task, though the way he shook his head while leaving clearly indicated his mood.

And Alexander had similar feelings.

He was not looking forward to another month of this.

Because that was how long it was going to take at minimum to collapse the walls.

But then an idea popped into his head.

A frankly very cruel idea.

An idea he frankly did not want to do but decided it might be needed.

So once the war council was dismissed, Alexander called his herald, to his room, where he gave him a few instructions.

"Finish it as quickly as you can,"

Then after handing him a small piece of paper with the set of instructions written on it, dismissed the man to carry out the tasks.

"Yes, my lord," The man bowed before leaving.

Afterward, coming out of Alexander's tent, the man first went to the administrative, where he ordered a few hundred notes be made with Alexander's message written on them.

And over the next few days, these small notes would be tied to arrows and shot over the walls for the defenders to read.

At the same time, messengers from atop the walls would shout out what was already written there:

"Surrender! You have lost! We have defeated your army and taken your walls. There is no more hope for you. Open the gates and we swear by the gods that no one will be harmed- men, women, or children."

"Our lord promises a safe passage of three days for every soul in the city, as well as all their possessions."

"Surrender and everyone, be it nobles, commoners, and slaves all will be spared"

"There will be no need for further bloodshed."

"But if you do not surrender, if you continue to fight, know that once the city walls are breached, every living being will be put to the sword! None shall be spared!"

"Pray that your leaders choose wisely!"

It was a deadly threat.

Not that this kind of warning had never been issued before, in fact it was regularly given.

But still, to slaughter a city of 100,000 or now 70,000 was no laughing matter.

And given how close Alexander was taking the city, those on the walls all felt their hearts waiver.

The conditions were very generous, while their real chances of defending the city were almost nil.

Thus quickly whispers of surrender began to surround them.

While Alexander, to put even more pressure, as well as to show he was truly serious, over the following days, he made sure to spread the same message to every surrounding village, until even the housewives were gossiping,

"I heard the city is going to be burned to the town if they do not surrender soon. Oh just open the gates and then they can escape."

Even to these uneducated peasants, the offer Alexander presented was a no brainer.

"My lord....are we truly going to do so if they do not surrender?" While Alexander was asked if he was really serious about it.

Many of the officers felt squeamish about such a huge massacre, and a few pragmatic ones even saw it as a waste of good labor.

'Perhaps we can make them slaves,' They hopefully thought.

"Yes!" While at the inquiry, Alexander very clearly confirmed, and gave his reasoning as to why they all had to die, dashing the slave plan.

"Because this will send a message."

"Once we take the fortress of fortress, Thesalie, every other enemy we will ever come across will know that they can either surrender and live or resist and face total annihilation."

"After all if we can take Thesalie, what chances do they stand?"

"This will make all of our future campaigns a hundred times faster."

"So for that benefit, I am willing to sacrifice one hundred thousand men to the gods!"

"I even hope they don't surrender!"

Alexander very ominously ended.

Chapter 723 Laptus and His Men

Alexander's ominous wish for the city to be destroyed left his retainers a bit speechless.

This was not what most had in mind when they thought of conquering it.

They wanted to obtain it as was.

Like the gem it appeared in the dreams of every Adhanian.

Not a burnt-out husk.

So many were reluctant to see this useless destruction and the horrible bloodshed.

But ultimately none of the men there argued.

Not because they were scared of Alexander.

But because the reason he gave showed the act was not useless.

What he said made total sense.

"Lord Pasha said it well. If this works, we won't have to fight a siege for the next ten years! I support it."

Menes was the first one to utter this out aloud.

And this almost acted as a catalyst for others, with each of the other men quickly nodding and revealing their approval.

Thus the general consensus among the group was cemented.

With this strategy reached, the soldiers were instructed to mentally prepare themselves, as well as being tasked to shout very clearly every day to the Tibian defenders that they had one week to surrender and open the gates.

Or else when the legionaries broke through, the entire city would be razed to the ground and everyone massacred!

The spread of this threat naturally caused unending murmurs in the city, where the large majority of the populace were in favor of accepting the deal.

After all, the enemy had broken through the hardest part of their defenses, and the army of 40,000 sent to resist these invaders had disappeared into the air.

So what point was there in fighting to the bitter end?

Especially when the other side was willing to be so generous.

They had fought the good fight but lost.

So the vast majority of the people were of the mind to accept the results.

Except for one of course- PP.

And unfortunately for the populace, he was supported by a small but powerful group of armed men who made up the higher echelons of the city.

These men mostly consisted of a handful of hardened loyalists who served Lord Ponnticus's household and were the type of people who would rather die than surrender.

Joining them were also a few small nobles who had fiefs around the city and feared what Alexander's annexation would mean for their lands.

Though these men were not as inflexible as the former ideologically driven men and as long as Alexander gave them certain concessions, they would be amenable to a deal.

As for whether Alexander would do so, well that depended.

For being the victor, Alexander would never be the one to send any peace feelers first.

But instead he waited for these nobles to come to him first, after which he would decide their treatment depending on who bowed first and how quickly.

So for now, he was content to wait and let the sapping of the first wall's foundation continue, while half hoping the city would resist till the end, whereupon he could use the total slaughter to send a message to every one of his rivals in the vicinity.

As for what was happening inside the city, well there people were forced to struggle between surrender or martyrdom.

The few of those who could flee had already fled like Lord Theony had.

People like some of the nobles who saw no point in resisting.

As well as many affluent people like wealthy merchants and traders, who could afford the expensive journey.

After all, given the state the city was in, the price of hiring things like a cart or chartering a boat had gone through the roof.

As for the rest of the citizenry, i.e.- the peasantry and others of low social status, their lives were left to the will of their lords.

Now there was a small group of nobles who had dared to openly suggest surrendering,

"Traitor! Execute them right here and now!"

And that was their fate.

PP actually killed them right on the very floor they stood, dying the carpet there rusty.

And after that, there was no one who dared to suggest such a thing again.

But that of course did not mean no one was discussing it.

"Lapitus! What should we do? Lord Ponticus is dead. And PP and the others wish for all of us to end up like him! With our heads on the wall!"

"That's right. He wants to slaughter us all! We must do something!"

It was in one very inconspicuous guardroom in one of the many keeps that this very question was discussed, led by a small number of mid-level officers, all of whom had very excited, yet also worried faces.

It was as if these men were rearing to fight but were also holding themselves back in fear and trepidation.

Also yes, it was finally confirmed that Lord Ponticus was indeed dead.

And the way they confirmed it was indeed sad.

For after the soldier who killed him got the bounty, Alexander made sure to put the man's head on a spike on the first wall, for the entire populace to see.

But in his defense this was not as much a cruel, barbaric move, as much as another way to put pressure on the defenders, to show that even their general was dead and that they would be better off if they surrendered.

Many of the legionaries even urged the defenders this.

From all this it could be seen that though Alexander's logic told him that massacring the entire city would help him in the grand scheme of things, his human heart still wanted to give the innocent populace a way out.

Now it was up to them whether to accept or not.

Which was the very thing that was being discussed in that dark room in the middle of the night.

The background of all the gathered men was mostly low, without much power or influence.

And none of them had any grand aspirations such as dying for glory.

They all had their friends and family and would very much like to be alive and with them.

But given their status, they were also obviously afraid to outright oppose the authorities.

Which is where Lapitus came in.

Not only was the man Lord Ponticus's right-hand man, possessing immense influence, he personally was a quasi noble too, with his grandfather having been the steward of Lord Ponticus's family, as was his father.

Meaning if there was anyone the soldiers were going to rally towards, it could only be him.

As for the man himself, facing the soldiers' faces eagerly looking at him to take charge, the broad man with a slightly curved nose and wide forehead furrowed his thick brows and tapped his thick fingers at the small table in front.

He would rather not be here.

He very much would rather not be here.

Lapitus was a loyal soldier.

Or at least he liked to believe he was a loyal soldier.

After all he did serve as the former lord's right-hand man.

So the implicit nature of the question left him uneasy.

Because although the soldiers would describe this little get-together as simply them 'trying to figure things out', if things could have been resolved by talking, they mostly would have been already.

There would have been no reason for small fries like them to scuttle about in dark rooms letting out hushed whispers.

But since they were here, it really meant one thing.

A conspiracy.

A conspiracy to launch a coup de dat!

One that did not necessarily mean storming the lord's mansion and taking control.

But more like taking control of the second gate and opening it.

'I do not want to break my oath!' And facing this pressure, Lapitus's instinctually said this to himself.

But instantly a small voice whispered next to him,

'But your oath was to Lord Ponticus. He is dead! You owe nothing to your son!'

The voice sounded exactly like his wife,

And it subconsciously caused the image of her holding their daughter in her arms to flash before him.

He did not want to lose them.

And that was the battle he had been fighting the entire time, from the moment some of his men came to him revealing about the existence of this meeting yesterday to now.

And what a mighty battle it was, there his loyalty and love sought dominion of his heart.

"The gates are under Kalidus's control! Taking it from him will not be easy!"

And ultimately love won!

Because clearly by saying so Lapitus showed which camp he stood on.

"Haha, great! Captain is with us!" And this naturally caused a cheer to break out among the men.

As long as Lapitus was with them, the other details could be worked it.

Their biggest fear had been alleviated.

But not eradicated.

For Lapitus's loyalty had not been decisively vanquished.

Hence he quickly added, "But I will not act right away. The ten thousand men promised to us are still due within the week. If they come we will fight to the end."

"And I would also like to visit the Zanzan camp is secret to know the exact details of the proposal!"

"I want to know if they will really keep their word!"

Chapter 724 Lapitus and Alexander (Part-1)

"My lord, there is a man here saying he is a Tibian officer who wants to defects. But before that he seems to want to talk to you."

It was after dusk, around supper time that a messenger came to Alexander with this report.

"Hmmm?" And this was enough to make Alexander even hum a bit in surprise.

Although not completely unexpected, it was still a nice surprise.

"Who is he? A noble?" Alexander inquired hopefully.

If it was some random deserter, Alexander would not be interested.

"He did not say. But he did inform us that he used to be the city lord's right hand man. And that his name started with La." The messenger had a bit of difficulty hiding the weird look on his face as he said this, for he was unable to understand the reasons behind this usual behavior.

And Alexander too, though was able to hazard a guess, was unable to quite understand what the play was.

'Hmmm, did he reveal this guessing we were aware of his name? Is it a test? But what's the point?' He asked himself.

Alexander had of course inquired and collected the names of all the high ranking officers stationed in Thesalie courtesy of Camius.

So names like Ponticus, Lapitus, and Kalidus were familiar to him, at least on paper.

Thus he was immediately able to confirm it was indeed the real deal that came to meet him.

But if so, then what was the point of hiding it?

Alexander however was unable to find the answer, and figuring there was no point raking one's brain in trying to guess the man's intention, he simply decided he would ask when he met the man.

"Is he alone?" He then asked, getting a swift nod from the messenger who added,

"He came alone on a horse. Guess he felt the fewer people he had with him, the less chances of him getting spotted was."

It was apparent to even this man that Lapitus was certainly not here in any official capacity.

Lapitus would not have been so sneaky if he was.

'The man's got balls!' And understanding the reason, Alexander could not help but comment as such.

They were still technically at war, and if the deal fell through, killing him would be easy.

After all, the man was no envoy and so Alexander would not need to show any courtesy as per tradition.

Hence it seemed the man was either foolishly brave or extremely desperate, not being able to entrust the matter to any of his subordinates.

"Okay, let him in."

And Alexander would soon find out which.

It was quite a few minutes later that the tall broad man slowly stepped, and Alexander found the man dressed in plain white clothes, walking into his tent with strong steady steps, flanked by two armed guards.

The man's face was chiseled but looked somewhat withered like a storm had ravaged it and sucked out the luster of it, which to be frank was understandable.

Not only had he lost the battle recently and was about to lose the city, he was here basically committing treason.

But though his body seemed weary, Lapitus's eyes were still sharp, refusing to yield to Alexander when their gaze met for a brief second.

But such a confrontational look only lasted for a second, as Lapitus quickly bowed to Alexander gracefully and greeted,

"Lord Pasha, it is an honor to meet you finally. I'm Lapitus, a humble Tibian. I profusely thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I was there during the battle against you and your tactics have been awe inspiring."

His voice was deferential and very crisp, but not at all oily, showing he was not trying to grovel at Alexander's feet.

'A man of high pride,' Alexander hence judged, feeling his comment about the war was more flowery greeting than genuine praise.

"Welcome. Though I would have preferred if you had come a few days earlier."

As opposed to Lapitus's cordial greeting, Alexander as the victor saw no reason to be modest, so he smiled this aggressive speech.

And what he meant by that was he would have liked it if Lapitus had come to him the day he had made that threat.

In that way, he would not have had to put in all the work until now.

To which Lapitus gave a smart chuckle, "Hehe, well your guards held me up for a long time. So I ran a bit late."

That was clearly not what Alexander but Lapitus made it sound like it took him some time to get here after Alexander's invitation was because it took a while for Alexander's bodyguards to inspect and search his body for potential weapons.

'Heh! Smart man,' And through this little interaction, Alexander was able to get a rough gauge of his opponent.

Lapitus was no pushover.

So finished with the introduction, Alexander then gestured for the man to take a seat and afterward finally got to the real conversation.

"So why don't you tell me why you are here...like this..?" Alexander asked the obvious question, pointing to Lapitus coming all alone, a light tone hanging in his voice.

"Does my lord really wish to kill one hundred thousand innocent people?" Whereas Lapitus got straight to the main point, sounding much more somber and with a deep voice in his query, his eyes piercing Alexander's pair.

"..." And Alexander for his part met this gaze fearlessly, giving a light smile and producing a strategic pause, letting the heaviness of the premised act settle in without flinching a muscle.

Like he was playing a game of chicken seeing who would blink first.

After a while of which he only breezily said, "That entirely depends on you. I already said my piece."

Alexander even slouched back when claiming this, clearly showing he was unbothered by the planned act.

"...." And his nonchalant attitude produced another sink of heavy air to descend into the room, as Lapitus churned his head on how to proceed.

Should he try to convince his other part or concentrate on what he was here for?

Lapitus thought about it for a second then quickly made up his mind.

It would be the latter.

Because clearly he had no way of asking for the former outside of begging Alexander for it.

And given Alexander's current callous body language, well if he was gonna waste his breath, it might as well to save his hide first, and worry about others later.

Hence with a sigh Lapitus began, "I see. It is indeed hard to ask men to show restraint when they have been sieging a city for months. I understand," he nodded and then turned to Alexander firmly claiming.

"And that is why I'm here. To surrender the city to you, my lord!"

"....."

Lapitus did not know what he had expected, but Alexander did not seem to even flinch his eyebrows at the 'grand' offer, only silently gazing at him.

And it was some time later that the lord in an almost placid tone inquired all the things he was really interested in,

"How are things there? Who is your leader now? Clearly, you are not here representing them. Why did you come?"

Here Lapitus quickly begins his long recount, saying,

"Things in the city were surprisingly quiet. We thought the people might protest or even riot given my lord's ultimatum, but there have been no such incidences. It seems many have simply accepted what fate has in store for them and have chosen to savor the brief piece they have left, *sigh*."

"But there is also an uncomfortable, thickness to the air there because of that. Like everyone's fear has condensed and solidified into lumps that get stuck in the throat when one's breathing. The Thesalie of today was not the one it was born in."

Lapitus appeared quite eloquent with his descriptions, and the remainder of the dreary atmosphere around the city even seemed to give the man a bit of pause, his eyes turning glassy.

But he quickly recovered and quickly restarted,

"Most of the people in the city are actually in favor of surrendering and accepting your favor my lord. But the current rulers of the city, led by the city lord's son- Petrino seem to believe they can still win."

"Delusional fools!" As Lapitus said this, he seemed genuinely exasperated even at the mention, as he then continued,

"But the problem you see lord Pasha is that they have summarily executed anyone who even suggests any peace."

"These include even nobles!"

"And that is what prompted me to come see you. For to even execute nobles so openly clearly demonstrates the rulers of the city have lost their minds."

"We cannot follow them!"

"And that is why my men and I have decided to try and stop it."

"There are a lot of us. As I said, most of the people do not want to see our beloved hometown massacred."

"And we plan to attack soon."

"But we need a bit more time to plan everything."

"That's why I'm here. To ask my lord for some more time."

Lapitus had very strategically made his case and by asking Alexander for more time, he wanted to keep both his options open.

If Alexander said yes, Lapitus would be able to wait till the ten thousand reinforcement came and decide what to do then.

Or if they did not come, he could start the coup and simply say the planning took a while.

It was a very good plan.

Chapter 725 Lapitus and Alexander (Part-2)

Lapitus's request for more time made Alexander ruminate.

If he did so, it could mean getting the city without burning it down.

On the other hand, he had already spread the exact deadline for surrender.

So deviating from it would damage his image.

So before he made any decision, Alexander wanted details.

".....how many are you? And what will you do with the time?" He thus posed.

"There are a few hundred of us! Much more than the fifty or so men under Petrino! We just need a bit more time to get all of them together and capture them!"

Lapitus very quickly and loudly claimed.

Though he very cleverly skipped the fact that the few hundred men he claimed to have also officially belonged to these fifty men.

How many would choose to rebel and join him when the time truly came remained yet to be seen.

"....." While Alexander, both unaware and unconcerned about this, paused again to think.

Agreeing to this extension would be a bit problematic, but a far greater shame would be if Alexander were to deny them this coup.

So he then changed the topic to get to know Lapitus.

"What can you tell me about yourself? Why did the soldiers choose you? Weren't you the former city lord's trusted man? Why do this? What about your oath?"

He wanted to know the type of person he was dealing with.

"My family has served Lord Ponticus for generations. And I would have gladly died by my oath for the former lord." Lapitus was very loud and defensive when claiming this, but then his voice turned bitter and even hatred filled,

"But the current lord...his son....hmmp, ...I owe him nothing! I have not sworn fealty to him, neither do I intend to!"

It was very apparent that the two men had some significant beef with each other.

Though Lapitus seemed reluctant to elaborate, which was understandable given Alexander was just a stranger he had only met and no one would want to reveal such intimate details so soon.

Thus instead, after clenching his teeth during a slight pause, Lapitus quickly changed his tone to a firm, strong one and declared,

"Nevermind even if I was bound by my oath, I still might not have followed those fools. They refuse to see reason even when pushed this far."

"Forty thousand! We lost forty thousand men and still they refuse to surrender!"

"If Lord Ponticus was here, he certainly would have done so and saved the lives in the city."

"So, I am not breaking my oath. I'm following it!"

Lapitus sounded very confident in this claim to even Alexander, though here he was actually lying through his teeth.

For if Lord Ponticus was here, not only would he have surrendered, he would have fought on till the last man, woman, and child in the city laid their lives in defense of it, and that would have even extended to

his own family, where perhaps even the threat of complete massacre of them right in front of him might not have been enough to coax him to the negotiating tables.

The proud man was that much devoted to his task.

Furthermore, if he was alive, no soldier would have dared to rebel and do what Lapitus was doing.

The man was too prestigious and cast too dark a shadow on the man's heart for that to ever have the slightest chance of happening.

Lapitus even literally felt his knees shake just thinking about doing this kind of thing behind his former boss's back.

While on the contrary, hearing Lapitus's claim, Alexander usually commented with a twinge of regret, "Hmm, perhaps it was a mistake to kill him, " though it was doubtful how much of it he actually meant.

As for Lapitus, he forcefully suppressed the fear of that deadly possibility and instead finished his piece by saying,

"That is why I gathered the men under me to try and save the city because my lord would have wished so. Because my lord would have wanted us to be alive without family."

Lapitus presented his case as him carrying out the will of his deceased lord and thus fulfilling his vow.

And not as a coup to grab power.

Whereas the reality was almost as almost as different as black was to white.

First of all, it was the regular soldiers who had come to him, begging him to lead them.

He never took charge.

In fact when he was initially asked, he was even reluctant to commit this act treasonous act.

As a matter of fact, the soldiers did not even come to him per se.

The chain of events was far more roundabout.

What actually happened was that a few of the wives of the officers under him had actually come to see his wife.

These ladies were close friends of each other due to their husbands being colleagues, and it was them who had first asked Lady Felicia, Lapitus's wife to pass on the message to her husband.

And it was really her who had managed to convince Lapitus to accept this, and this was after quite some back and forth and even a bit of a row.

At one point, the lady had even taken their daughter on her lap and shrieked,

"Here! Look at your daughter and say that you want to see us dead! Say that you want to see us with our throats slit. Say that you want to have us raped and violated!"

"You already failed to protect me once, now you want to fail even your daughter?"

It was especially those last words uttered by the lady of the house that had bitten Lapitus particularly hard, more so when he was reminded of that unpleasant event from some time ago.

And it was that scene of the mother daughter duo holding each other and looking at him expectably that finally forced Lapitus off the edge of indecision and commit to this conspiracy.

So in reality he was nowhere as eager to rebel as he was painting himself to be in front of Alexander.

Furthermore, his painting of Lord Ponticus as a man of the people, someone who really cared about the lives of his subjects was a complete lie.

The truth was largely the opposite.

In that man's eyes, the people existed to basically serve him and the city- Thesalie, little more than that.

So Lapitus was largely doing this to save his family, and nothing so grand as defending his oath.

And though there was nothing wrong with the former, the latter sounded much cooler.

Hence his reasons for saying so.

As for Alexander, well it was very difficult for him to verify whether Lapitus was lying or not, especially in the short term.

And even if he was, it was of little concern to him.

Because his main calculus would not change.

The digging of the first wall was still ongoing, and whether or not Lapitus successfully managed to hand over the city or not, would continue at its current pace regardless.

As a matter of fact, if Alexander wanted he could extend his deadline for the surrender till the day he launched his attack on the second wall.

Hence he generously proposed, "Okay. I will give you some time. How about I make it two weeks instead of the one?"

Alexander tone's was magnanimous.

"That..." But instead of Lapitus quickly accepting it, his lips curved and twitched a bit.

Clearly, he wanted more.

"That....three weeks would be better my lord. Getting all of them together in a single hall will take a bit of time," Lapitus explained his need, adding,

"But once we do that, I can officially declare the surrender of the city without contention. That will spill less blood on both sides,"

It seemed Lapitus wanted to neutralize all the higher-ups at once so then there would be no possibility of anyone ordering any of the garrisons to go fight him or Alexander's invading forces when they broke through.

The coup would be much easier to conduct that way, without the soldiers receiving conflicting orders.

That would also make the takeover of the city much less chaotic.

And this was certainly one of the reasons for Lapitus wanting more time.

Though another major reason for requiring this long period of time was because Lapitus wanted to see if the ten thousand reinforcements promised to him would really come.

That additional troop had the chance of changing the whole equation and though he would not outright admit it, he still held out hope for the city's salvation.

He hence put his foot on both boats.

Of course, he hid this latter and only presented the former.

However, although Lapitus hoped the first reason would convince the man in front of him, Alexander did not really pay much heed to it.

Because given the long and arduous siege, his men had endured, the possibility of taking the city without shedding blood had long gone out the window.

A siege was sometimes even more exacting on the attacker than a defender, especially when it was as complex as the one Alexander had implemented.

And after fighting for so long, the physical exhaustion had already begun to take its toll on the psyche of the men, who wanted to vent.

Nevermind Alexander had also promised all the men certain liberties for three days after they helped him take the city when he first recruited them.

So for all these reasons, Alexander saw little reason who acquire so much to Lapitus.

Chapter 726 Lapitus And Alexander (Part-3)

Lapitus had proposed to Alexander that he could get him the city with few casualties if he was just given the time.

But Alexander knew that would not be possible.

For even Alexander, who was mostly at the back in the relative safety of the camp had to sometimes fight the urge to find a woman just to take the edge off.

He even thought about asking some of his girls to come from Zanzan just to relieve him.

So if even he was like that, what about the normal grunts fighting in the front lines?

Hence, no matter what he said, it was almost predestined that Thesalie would be sacked.

So the only thing there was to discuss was whether the populace would live or return to the soil after that.

Thus in response to Lapitus's request for a three-week extension, Alexander slouched his back, and waving his hand declared,

"Three weeks is too much. I will give you fifteen days. So today is the 5th, you have till the 20th. If you can't open the city gates before that, then don't bother."

Hearing this Lapitus of course wanted to interject and haggle. but Alexander gave him no such chance, simply flashing his palms and saying,

"Don't bother asking for more. Because by then I will have already put in a lot of the work into my siege works and be ready to take the city regardless."

"So do it by then or don't bother."

Alexander once again repeated, his tone final.

And Lapitus could tell there was no more negotiating to be had of this.

Fifteen days, that's all he had,

Whatever he planned to do, had to happen within this time.

"I understand," Thus the man finally gave a low nod after a seemingly internal bit of struggle.

"Good. I also want all the men you capture executed before I come. I have no patience to deal with them."

And then Alexander quickly dumped another task on the man, figuring since he was going this far, why not make him go the whole distance?

It would not only take care of the mess, but it would also make Alexander look better since he would not be the one to kill all those nobles.

Shudder

However the request made Lapitus involuntary shake.

He did not think he had it in him to do that.

He was a loyal soldier, at least he liked to think himself so.

But he did not reject him.

Instead, as he thought and thought of it, his eyes began to get sharper and sharper.

Until he muttered to himself, 'Since I have decided to go this far, what's one more step? I have drunk the poison, might as drink the whole cup.'

Nod

Alexander was pleased to see the direction the head moved.

Whereas Lapitus felt his throat too dry to actually say the precise words.

But Alexander was not bothered by this, as then suddenly, he seemed to deviate and ask something very unrelated. "Does Ponticus have any unmarried daughter in the city?"

There was only a brief flash of surprise in Lapitus hearing so, as thinking about it for just a second, it was very apparent why he was asking so.

Not only would taking the children of the city lord and obtaining their approval add legitimacy to Alexander's rule over the people of Thesalie, who were generally hostile to Adhanians, but it also had to be remembered that Lord Ponticus was part of the Tibian royalty.

Meaning the old man's children had the titles of prince and princess.

Clearly, Alexander planned to ask Lapitus to spare these daughters from death so that he could marry them.

That was if they existed, for Lapitus seemed unable to grant Alexander that wish, answering with a shake of his head,

"No, I'm afraid not. The lord has five children. All three of his daughters are married. They all live with their husbands in their own fiefs far away."

"His younger son died a few years back from an illness, leaving two sons, They and their mother live in the city."

"As for his eldest son, the current ruler of the city- Lord Petrino, he is childless."

Lapitus gave a very brief summary of all of Lord Ponticus's progeny.

"..."

Hearing this Alexander pursed his lips a bit.

He did somewhat expect this kind of result given Lord Ponticus was no spring chicken, having quite a few years behind his belt.

So it was understandable that all his children would be married.

But Alexander still wanted to fish, perhaps if not for a daughter, then maybe for even a granddaughter.

But it seemed that there were only grandsons on hands.

Alexander was not interested in them.

As a matter of fact, he instead wanted to very much kill them given they had a legitimate claim to the city.

Whereas if it was the girl he could have married them and gained legitimacy for himself.

Alexander might have even considered having that widow to try and gain that legitimacy if she was childless or if only she had daughters.

But given that Alexander was determined to kill her sons, marrying her and not expecting to be poisoned would be pretty hard.

Then, after thinking for a bit, Alexander felt he missed something.

He missed Petrino's wife.

So he asked,

"Is Petrino not married? How does he want no children being the eldest sibling?"

That was certainly unnatural.

"Ummm, no. He is married. It's just that the madam has a weak body and...." Lapitus trailed off without much elaboration.

But Alexander got what he was saying.

It was readily apparent the lady was physically too weak to be considered one of the candidates for marriage.

Even if Alexander overlooked the slight detail of him killing her husband.

'Looks like I will have to quell the people the hard way,'

So given that an easy way of placating the public was out of the way, it seemed Alexander only had the option of using brute force to suppress any dissent.

Or that was until Lapitus stepped in sensing Alexander's thoughts and offered,

"Lord Alexander, if you want to easily rule Thesalie, then I have a suggestion. What about marrying my daughter?"

"My wife is one of my lord's illegitimate daughters. And she is even famous all across the city for her beauty."

"So if the people were to know you were taking her daughter.... everything would be much smoother!"

Lapitus revealed with a smile, the mention of his wife's beauty being clearly a way for him to show Alexander that his daughter was no slouch in the looks department.

"...???"

While for Alexander, Lapitus being related to Lord Ponticus, and by extension the royal family was a piece of much more notable news.

He did not think the former city lord treated his right-hand man so well that he would make him family.

So given the background of the girl he was being proposed to marry, for a brief few seconds, Alexander was ready to accept the deal then and there.

But then he cooled down.

Lapitus said his wife was 'one' of Lord Ponticus's illegitimate children.

Meaning there were more.

So who was to say there was not a daughter there somewhere?

Marrying her would be much more impactful than an unknown, illegitimate granddaughter.

Now Alexander did not know whether such a person even existed.

Neither did he pose Lapitus any query regarding this, knowing the man had every reason to lie.

Instead, Alexander made up his mind to search for the girl himself.

And speaking of marriages, Alexander felt taking a wife was too high a price to pay.

Remember, he was just taking one city, not the whole country.

So why would he want to take anyone as a wife for something this small?

If he did so every time, by the time he was done with Tibias, he would have added more than ten wives.

Because there were at least ten cities in Tibias comparable in size to Thesalie, i.e.- with a population of around fifty to hundred thousand.

That might not have been a problem for someone like Genghis Khan whose exploits in the reproductive area were almost as legendary as his prowess as a conqueror.

But Alexander was certainly not so lavish.

So he replied, "Me taking your daughter is certainly possible. But not as my wife. I can at best take her as one of my concubines. Perhaps even one of my favored concubines."

Alexander promised the last sentence with some sincerity.

"Ah!"

But this predictably got a wounded gasp from the other side.

No father wanted to hear their daughter was lacking, especially when it came to marriage.

But Lapitus did not argue.

He knew his own and thus by extension his daughter's status was too low to be able to realistically become a pasha's legitimate partner.

Not when he was bringing so little to the table.

So with an understanding nod, he agreed,

"Thank you, my lord. Then if I'm able to take the city within the next two weeks, I hope Lord Alexander will take my daughter as a concubine."

And Alexander readily nodded,

"Sure! If you can open the gates to the city and the nobles there are all dead, I swear it by the gods."

And thus with this, the pact was sealed.

Chapter 727 Lady Felicia (Part-1)

Alexander and Lapitus finally came to the agreement of extending the surrender deadline by two weeks in exchange for the latter attempting to open the city gates before that.

Furthermore, to make the subsequent takeover of the city easier, as well as to reward Lapitus, Alexander promised to take Lapitus's daughter as one of his mistresses if the operation was successful, thus making the man a distant kin of his.

That was the gist of what happened in the meeting.

But that was not where the conversation ended.

For after agreeing to this, Lapitus asked Alexander,

"Esteemed Pasha, in the meantime I organize my forces and carry this out, I wish also for my wife and daughter to stay here in the camp with you. Otherwise, I fear they might be targeted once I begin my....."

Lapitus suddenly trailed off, still seemingly reluctant to say the word coup or rebellion.

But he was able to fully understand what the things he was about to do entailed and the risks associated.

If he was caught, a clean death for him, or even his family would become too precious a luxury.

He knew what happened to traitors very well, even having carried a few of those gruesome executions himself.

While on the opposite end of the table, Alexander hearing the request was at first a bit surprised.

Sending his wife and daughter here basically meant giving them as hostages to him.

Any man would think twice about handing them over to anyone, much less a complete stranger.

But it seemed Lapius here believed his family would be safer with a man he just met rather than in the city with him.

So either he was supremely trusting of Alexander's ability or grossly lacking in his own.

But whatever that case was, it was really of no concern to Alexander who very frankly agreed to the request, seeing no problem in accommodating two extra people.

"Sure, they are welcome to. I can even use the time to get to know my new woman,"

He half-jokingly added, further saying,

"And rest assured that even if you fail, I will keep them safe, They can come with me to Zanzan where they can get a monthly stipend of 200 ropals for the next ten years. I swear it by the gods!"

Alexander thought that would be a good way to incentivize the man to go all out.

After all, spending 2,400 ropals a year for him was not even worth calling chump change.

Not when he was spending tens of thousands of ropals a day maintaining his army.

So if this could help him the city faster, it would be totally worth it.

But this seemingly tiny favor in Alexander's eyes appeared to have a much more disproportionate effect on Lapitus, far more than he could have expected, for the latter almost jumped out of his chair, his eyes bludging hearing the offer.

"Ah!" And as he took the time to confirm what he heard, he let out a shocked gasp.

It was said just a tiny act could reveal a person's true nature.

And through this act, Alexander seemed to have inadvertently made a very favorable impression on the man, for the offer was too generous in the latter's eyes.

Nobles were never even a tenth such ominous.

Lapitus knew that very well.

So it took some time for him to even make sure he had heard it right.

Upon confirming which, he broke into an immense grin.

"Th...thank you! Thank you Lord Alexander! As expected of a man as great as you! Thank you!"

The man thus appeared ecstatic as he repeated this, so much so that if he had been a bit closer to Alexander and the act did not break too many etiquettes, Lapitus might have actually lunged to hug Alexander.

He had been originally very skeptical about sending his family here, only doing so because his wife had asked him to try and arrange it, who felt it would be much safer to be there than inside the city when everything went down.

But now, after getting to know Alexander, and with him promising such a generous offer without even Lapitus asking the slightest of such a thing, it really put the man's heart at ease.

"Mmm, no problem. You concentrate on getting the city"

While Alexander was much more placid in his reply, not thinking much of it.

After this, the duo held a few more talks, where, as a side note, during one of those discussions, Alexander did remember to ask Lapitus why he only revealed his name as La to the messenger.

To which Lapitus had frankly chuckled,

"Haha, well that was because I was afraid there might be spies in the camp. And if any of them somehow heard my name....that would be trouble."

Alexander was quite impressed by how methodical the man was about his security.

Especially because the chances of there being spies among the few men who would hear this name were minuscule.

So it showed Lapitus was a cautious man.

The two then spent some working out some of the more tedious details of the agreement, and after a while the clandestine meeting finally ended.

The result of which was that the question regarding Thesalie turned from whether or not it could defend itself, to how it could end up once taken.

Whether it would be a wounded but still vibrant city.

Or whether it would be a burning smoldering wreck.

In the following days after the talks, Alexander would go on to give his generals a short, summarized version of the events.

It was very much a truncated version of the events, where even Lapitus's name was left out, as well as the deal involving the daughter.

Instead, Alexander only told them that a defector had come to him, and if things went well, the city might be able to be taken bloodlessly soon.

And that was enough for the news to be received with great enthusiasm,

"That's great! Then we can keep the front walls intact! I always said it would be a great shame to tear them down " Menes loudly claimed, his eyes sparkling at the thought.

Thesalie's walls were one of the best not only here, but even in the whole world.

So getting them 'as is' was very lucrative to the general from a defense point of view.

"Good! The quicker this is over, the better. Fall will be here soon and I'm really tired of this siege,"

Another much different opinion was expressed by a second man, who released a sigh of relief thinking they might still be able to return to their lands before the fall harvest ended.

While Jamider (Earl) Tikba hearing this started boisterously laughing, "Hahaha, to think conquering Thesalie would happen during my lifetime. Haha, and to think I was a part of the campaigning force. Haha, no regret, I have no regrets!"

The man was laughing so hysterically that Alexander even feared the man might be drunk.

Also, Thesalie was still not under their control.

So Alexander crossed his fingers and really prayed that the man did not just jinx the whole thing.

But in general, the news that victory might be close put the higher-ups in a jovial mood, while the grassroots infantry were instructed to hold off on killing the citizenry upon breaching the city until they were told otherwise.

Lapitus on the other hand returned to the city via a small passageway once his 'illicit night tryst' with Alexander ended, riding quickly but softly through the dead of night, being careful not to create any loud noise while trotting across the stone-paved road, so as to not draw any unnecessary attention from the guards.

Until finally he made it home, to the eager, safe embrace of his eager wife.

"So how was it? What did he say?" And no sooner were they alone in their bedroom that Lady Felicia keenly posed so to her husband, her eyes sharp, and her ear perked up.

She seemed very interested to know the outcome.

Which was natural given it was really her who had pushed her husband on this road.

And Lapitus, upon hearing the melodious tune of his wife brush past his ears, felt his heartstrings being plucked uncontrollably and he quickly turned his face to gaze at the love of his life.

She was a very beautiful woman, no one could deny that, and even though Lapitus had seen that face thousands of times, he still felt like he was falling in love for the first time each and every time he saw her.

The married lady seemed to be in her early to mid-twenties, her face a beautiful heart-shaped with cute dimples brushed with a tinge of makeup to look flushed and rosy red.

She had sharp, slanted eyes, the edges painted with dark, prominent eyeliner, a strong, aquiline nose, and full, luscious lips painted deep red.

The inner locks of her wavy raven hair were loosely bound with an expensive, gold band studded with tiny diamonds, a type of hairstyle that let her silky hair flow like the night from the top of her head, down her slender shoulders, all the way to her fair back.

Lapitus was not lying when he said his wife's beauty was renowned throughout the city.

Chapter 728 Lady Felicia (Part-2)

Lapitus lovingly gazed at his wife's face that was lightly powdered with the most popular makeup the noble ladies used and his nose twitched at the sweet smell emanating from her.

It was from the expensive, lilac perfume he had bought for her just the other day.

Even now, Lapitus sometimes had trouble believing he was married to this bombshell of a woman, one who was also his childhood sweetheart

And Lapitus would thank the gods every time he looked at her for this privilege.

But he knew he could not just keep gawking at her the entire time.

So breaking out of his love struck stupor after while, Lapitus collected himself and replied to her inquiry about the meeting.

He began, "Hmm, it went well. I managed to get almost everything you wanted. I met with the Zanzan pasha and..."

It took a while for the whole thing to be retold, and in that, Lapitus made sure to not leave out anything with even the minutest relevance.

He started right from how he left the city and who helped him, to how he got into the camp, what he saw there, how Alexander greeted him, his impression of the man, the back and forth of their discussion, the agreements they reached and all the additional fuff.

Lapitus did not even leave out the kind of wine he was served.

And he finished by saying,

"I had my reservation before meeting the pasha. But now having talked to him, I believe him to be a man of principle. I'm sure he will fulfill his end of the bargain as long as I fulfill mine, That's also why I feel safe leaving you and Fabiyana with him. With you two safe, I can do my own thing without worry."

As Lapitus said this, his body suddenly felt a lot lighter, like the one thing that had been weighing him down was seemingly lifted.

"That's good, that's good." Hearing this, the lady of the house let out a pleased smile, showing her pearly whites. before launching herself into her husband's embrace, the soft feeling of the flesh digging into him and making him feel like it was the most exquisite reward.

And that sensation, coupled with the feminine smell quickly worked to soothe Lapitus, and he thought that all the risks he had taken till now and all the dangers that lay ahead, were all more than worth it in exchange for this simple hug.

So a pink, armors atmosphere quickly developed, especially because they knew they were going to be separated for some time soon, perhaps even for eternity, who knows.

With that knowledge, the couple found themselves suddenly longing for one another, as each tightened the other's embrace.

Chuu, *Chuu*,

Then the atmosphere began to get even sweeter, as the duo instinctively moved from simply touching to starting to savoring each other, and at one point Lapitus's lips began to trace along his wife's pristine nape, while his hands stealthily moved to her towering peaks.

But suddenly, that was where the lovely atmosphere abruptly shattered, for the lady in Lapitus's arms out of nowhere asked,

"But husband, won't me and Fabiyana be all alone in the enemy camp? Filled with men? Who will protect us? What if something happens like that time?"

The thing Lady Felicia was indicating was apparent to anyone with half a brain.

Two defenseless women among a horde of men could really mean one thing.

And in most men's eyes, such defenseless prey was too delectable to pass up in any situation.

".....*shake*..." And being reminded of that one unpleasant incident, Lapitus trembled like he had been just electrocuted.

That particular danger seemed to have not even crossed his mind until now.

And understanding he had committed this oversight, though he did not see it yet, he was sure his wife was sending a clear look of derision at him for that.

Like she was taunting him, 'Even after what happened to me back then, you still are so callous. What a waste.'

No, in fact it was not 'like' Lady Felicia was taunting him.

She was actually loudly taunting him as she suddenly detached herself from her partner, putting a slight distance that for all intents and purposes seemed like the chasm to Lapitus.

The way Lady Felicia flipped her switch from being a pleasant, amorous lady ready to please her man to a barbed tongued shrew was something that needed to be seen to be believed.

And surprisingly, facing this biting remark from his wife, Lapitus actually showed no sign of any resistance.

It was apparent this was not the first time this had happened.

Lapitus could only stammer, "Tha... that, he did not seem like that person. Lord Alexander... umm sounded very upright and he swore... that..."

"Sounded upright!" All of a sudden, upon hearing Lapitus use that specific word, Lady Felicia involuntarily exclaimed with introduction, then turned to Lapitus to curse in a way few would believe even was possible,

"Are you saying the person who wants to massacre this entire city is upright? Are you drunk or drugged you donkey?"

"And why are calling him Lord Alexander? Who is he to you? Imbecile!"

There was probably no one who would have even imagined that the sweet, soft spoken, demure wife of Lapitus actually had a side this like.

That the high born, refined lady could even speak such crude words.

Or that the fearless right hand man of the city lord would be so cowed by his wife.

And they would have been even more surprised to know that this was actually Lady Felicia's real face, the differential, shy, feminine appearance being just a facade she put on to maintain her social persona.

In fact, in reality, the one in charge of Lapitus's family was actually Lady Felicia, which ran much contrary to the conventional patriarchal family structure of the time.

And like how a traditional man would usually discipline his woman, here the woman seemed to be disciplining the man!

Facing which Lapitus actually found himself lowering his head, and trying to mutter in his defense, "I... talked to the pasha... he ... I know he is a man!"

"Know the man! When could you do anything like knowing men?"

But that effort was swiftly snuffed out by Lady Felicia's shriek, as the fair lady swung her arm and shouted,

"If you knew men then how could Petrino r@pe me? That lecherous gaze in his eyes when he looked at me was apparent to even a blind monkey. Everyone could see it? I even told you about it. Yet you failed!"

"And now you are claiming to be an expert? Where were you when I needed you to be an expert?"

If it was not apparent, a couple of years ago, Lady Felicia had been forcefully taken by her elder half brother during a party they were attending as a couple.

And what made that incident even more tragic was that it might have been totally avoidable.

For even before attending it, Lady Felicia had specifically asked her husband to always be with her, saying to him, "I felt that rotten Petrino's gaze over me whenever I meet him these days. Don't leave me alone with him."

But Lapitus did not pay any heed to this, feeling his wife was simply blabbering.

So instead he got blind drunk at all the fine wines served at the party, being dazzled by the taste of them, knowing he could never afford them on his own salary.

And then to make the whole thing even more embarrassing for him, Lapitus was later found the next morning totally naked in a corner of the hallway lying with one of Lord Ponticus's chambermaids next to him, the proof of their deeds still visible on the lower half of the semi bare woman's body.

While in the meantime, Petrino managed to corner Lady Felicia in a deserted part of the garden and have her way with him.

Now, normally this would have at least created some kind of scandal for even the city lord's son, especially when it was his half sister that he assaulted.

For although high ranking nobles were exempted from a lot of things, incest was not one of them.

Nevermind she was also a married woman belonging to a high ranking officer of the military.

So in all cases, Petrino should have been chewed out once it was exposed.

But in reality, nothing happened!

And it was not because Lord Ponticus helped suppress this matter.

No, it was because Lapitus did!

Lapitus thought his own failures that night made making such a complaint too embarrassing for him,

He feared that Lord Ponticus, being the strict military man he was, would demote Lapitus after learning of his lack of discipline once the complaint was investigated.

So when given the choice between avenging his wife and keeping his current post, the man chose the latter.

Yes!

The man actually chose to swallow the attack on his wife and simply went on about his life with a muted facade of pretended ignorance.

This of course had incense Lady Felicia, who urged many times for her husband to seek justice for her.

But surprisingly, although Lapitus was willing to pamper his love to his utmost in all other areas, this was one area where he would not budge.

And from then on this became a frequent point of contention between the two, where Lady Felicia would constantly remind Lapitus of the event and every time Lapitus would cower away.

Like now!

Chapter 729 Lady Felicia (Part-3)

Facing his wife's scathing reminder, Lapitus hung his head low,

He had always regretted his actions of that day.

Worse still, he could not even remember what exactly had happened that day, every time drawing a complete blank when attempting to recall the events.

As for getting revenge for his wife,

'Hehe, how can that be so easy?' he would helplessly chuckle to himself every time his wife mentioned it.

Lapitus knew exactly how hard he and his family had to work to get where they were.

And if he tried to go against a noble, even one who was not much favored by his father, Lapitus risked losing it all.

After all, the laws of the land worked only against nobles when they were wielded by another noble.

And though Lord Ponticus might be utterly disappointed in his eldest son, but the proud man would still have done everything in his power to save the family's face.

And what would that mean for Lapitus?

What would that mean for Lapitus's family?

As the oldest son, Lapitus had a few younger brothers to look after. a sick mother who needed medicine, several sisters who were yet to be married, several nieces and nephews, and many peripheral members.

Most of whose jobs were directly or indirectly related to the army, and most of them managed to get it only through Lapitus's connections.

For instance, one of his brothers was a small time grain supplier for the military, another worked as a steward for a high ranking officer, and so on.

So even if Lapitus managed to successfully win his case against PP and got him declared guilty, he would at best get some paltry sum of money and see PP get a slap in the wrist sort of warning.

It would be really nothing compared to the crime he committed.

While Lapitus for all his trouble would soon see him facing the absolutely brutal retaliation from Lord Ponticus for embarrassing him and his family.

And this attack would be catastrophic for Lapitus.

Perhaps Lapitus would be able to keep some sort of employment as firing him outright would be too petty, but he would certainly lose his post.

As for the fate of the rest of his clan, theirs would be certainly much more tragic.

Undoubtedly they would be thrown out into the streets, penniless, within the day and perhaps even the local gangs would start harassing them under orders from the above.

It was even possible they would be convicted on trumped up charges and be sold into slavery.

That was a favorite tactic of Lord Ponticus.

It was because of all this that Lapitus could not go against PP.

If it was only him, Lapitus would not have batted an eye to even all those things.

And would have charged fearlessly at PP with his sword drawn.

And Lapitus did think about doing it many, many times, as he had laid awake man a night, his heart burning for revenge while sleep eluded him.

But ultimately he could not take the final step.

He could not bring all his clansmen down with him.

So what choice did he have other than to swallow the bitter incident down and pretend to forget all about it?

Of course people undoubtedly called him names behind his back for this, mocking him as being too cowardly to defend his wife's honor.

But none of them really understood from his view.

Cause if they had, no one would dare to do so.

If they were in his shoes, these same people would certainly have chosen the same way.

Sometimes it took far greater strength for a man to accept his circumstances and move on instead of lashing out and going off in a blaze of glory.

So after looking at his family, and his daughter, Lapitus chose the ultimate humiliation and played dumb.

And moreover, for all these years he never explained this to his wife, thinking all these excuses did not really matter.

Instead, he let her vent as much as she wanted regarding this event, feeling she had every right to do so.

That was how much Lapitus loved his woman.

But unfortunately, the man fell in love with the wrong woman, a woman who was blind to all of this pain and sacrifice and one who appreciated none of her husband's own difficulties.

She never tried to understand her partner nor did she look at it from her husband's side.

Instead, she would use that incident every time to sting Lapitus, like now, where having shut her husband up, she still continued on her tirade,

"You think just because that Pasha was not ogling at every girl he passed, he won't have any designs on me?"

"You think every man who wants to take advantage of me is like PP? Tongue wagging up to his feet? Even if they were PP, you could not spot them!"

"Never mind he is even willing to marry someone as young as Fabiyana! God Lapitus, how can you say he is upright? Have some common sense!"

Lady Felicia finished by massaging her forehead, by which point Lapitus's face was so shrunken that it looked as if all the water there had been sucked out of it.

And it took a long while for the man to squeeze out the following words in a weak voice, "Then... then what do you want me to do? Wasn't it your idea to seek shelter there? And try to get Fabiyana married to him? Why are you complaining now?"

Lapitus was very bitter, feeling like he was being chewed out doing what he was told to do.

"Of course, I'm not blaming you for that. You did a good job!"

And as if she could read the man like a book, Lady Felicia instantly noticed the man's emotions becoming frayed as she quickly and very smoothly cooed next to his ears, closing the distance between them and even softly caressing her husband's hands as she did so.

Either she was a very caring wife or an expert manipulator.

And the following words she would say would go no leave none in the dark about which one she was.

Bringing her lips right next to Lapitus's ears, Lady Felicia whispered, "What I'm saying is that seeing me all alone, the Lord of Zanzan might make moves on me."

"In fact, I even suspect the reason why he made that stipend offer was to lure you into sending me there,"

As she said this, a cunning light flashed through Lady Felicia's eyes, while in Lapitus, a look of surprise dawned.

'What! How can that be? Could it be true?' For the first few seconds, he could not believe it.

Alexander did not seem that type of man to him.

But then he remembered who said it.

His wife.

So after a while, his eyes changed to one that of realization,

'Yes! Now that I think about it, it must be true. Why else would he be so generous? Just look at how beautiful my Felicia is! Of course, he will be tempted.'

Lapitus somehow had managed to come to this outrageous conclusion.

Following which he abruptly turned to his wife, "Tha.. let me send some some men with you ... then ..."

Lapitus's voice suddenly sounded very agitated and he seemed to be even having difficulty forming proper sentences, as his whole body could be seen slightly twitching.

To say the man was shaken would be an understatement, for he was determined to never let that incident ever repeat itself.

"*Shoosh*, *shoosh*, calm down, calm down," And it was only Lady Felicia's warm whispers that managed to tame the raging waves in the man's heart.

And then she gently pointed out,

"How many men can you send with me? Because that person has an army! So giving a few guards would be pointless. Those men will be much more useful here... with you."

The lovely woman gently squeezed her man's hands as she said so, wanting to comfort her man.

But Lapitus was still restless given the root of the problem remained unsolved,

"Then ... what? Should I go again and ask the pasha to swear nothing will happen?"

"Or maybe you stay?"

Lapitus looked at his wife with particularly puppy dog eyes when he said the last part.

To be frank, he would much prefer if his wife stayed with him.

He did not want to lose her, not once again.

And he was only sending them to Alexander because Lady Felicia asked him to.

While Hearing Lapitus's request, the lady of the house gently shook her head, "You know very well we will be safer there. Here if we are caught"

She very lightly smiled as she said this, the way her lips moved seeming to convey comfort and peace.

But the image her words produced in Lapitus was anything but those.

The horrors that might befall them if captured were indeed nightmarish.

Lapitus found himself shaken by the mere thought of it.

It would indeed be better for them to be away from there.

And it was here that Lady Felicia sensing Lapitus was confused used the opportunity to let out the real reason why she brought up this topic, a manipulative glint shining in her eyes.

Chapter 730 Lady Felicia (Part-4)

Hearing the matron had an easy way to guarantee her safety, Lapitus was naturally very eager.

So his ears perked up in anticipation of hearing the idea.

And this was what Lady Felicia had managed to think of.

"That is what I wanted to talk to you about. While there I would like to swear fealty to him on behalf of both of us."

"We will propose to oversee the ruling of Thesalie and ensure all the nearby nobles follow the decree from Zanzan. And in exchange the pasha will help defend us ...from all kinds of threats."

This 'all kinds of threats' that Lady Felicia mentioned clearly included herself too, meaning she intended to use that promise to ensure her safety in the camps.

But then the obvious question was, as posed by Lapitus, "That...how will you get promise? Isn't it too far-fetched?"

Lapitus would of course love to become Thesalie's ruler.

But how could that happen?

Alexander had clearly spent a lot of time getting the city.

So why would he hand it over to an unknown couple?

Surely he had his own people who could rule over them.

But here Lady Felicia did not clearly answer her husband.

Only producing an enigmatic smile, she waved her dainty arms and chuckled, "Don't worry about that. Once I have had my talks with him and he gets to meet FB, he will."

Lady Felicia's tone was supremely confident, cock sure of her negotiating skills.

And observing this, Lapitus did not press further.

If she said she could do so, then indeed would be able to

He had no qualms about believing so.

Plus, given she had bought up their daughter, Lapitus had a pretty good hunch what that might entitle.

He just hoped his wife could present their daughter to be even more valuable than she actually was and make Alexander dote on her.

Now, if a smart person thought about it, he would find that there were several large holes in Lady Felicia's plan.

The biggest one being that there was still nothing that would really stop Alexander from coercing the lady into his bed if he really wanted to.

But Lapitus was a man who blindly believed his wife's promises, and since she said she could do it, in Lapitus's mind, she indeed could.

Thus invigorated by this offered solution, the man jumped to hug his wife in joy, and then snuggling his nose to her nape, in a husky voice, asked,

"Hey! We will not be seeing each other for a while. Why don't we...."

It was very clear what he wanted to do judging by how his hands were moving.

"No....not now!"

But much to his disappointment, his wife seemed to be not in the mood, as she strongly pushed him away, not letting him go any further.

As she then quickly stepped out of bed, saying, "Sorry, I need to get ready. We will have to leave before dawn today and I have a lot to pack."

It seemed the lady wanted to vacate the city as soon as possible, not wanting to give her enemies the time to react.

And this made sense to Lapitus, though that did mean he was not a bit disappointed at not being able to lay with his wife before his dangerous act.

'How long would it take anyway?' Lapitus muttered to himself a bit helplessly, very much wishing to do the act.

He even felt it might have been a good morale boost.

Hence the understanding nod he gave was reluctant and wooden.

This of course was instantly noticed by Lady Felicia being the observant lady she was, and quickly walked him to placate the man, saying to him in an amorous whisper,

"Dear, don't be sad. I would love to do it but now is not the time!"

"But once you have succeeded and we get back together, we will be rulers of the city. Then I will let you do all kinds of things to me. All of 'those' kinds hehe" Lady Felicia even playfully bit her man's earlobes as she sensually chuckled,

And to Lapitus, that tiny giggle sounded like the flirting laughter of a succubus.

He was very excited.

Especially because their joining in bed had always been the blandest of vanilla flavors, and though Lapitus wanted to occasionally try some new, adventurous thing, his wife would either feign shyness or scold him for trying to treat her like a cheap working girl.

So now that Lapitus was being promised such an expectant reward, he felt his flattering morale soar to the skies.

"Hehe, then I guess gotta try my best," He heartily chuckled, following which he quickly reached for his pocket and brought out a circular silver seal.

Then handing it over to his wife, he said, "Here, take this. Showing this to the guards will let you into the camp. The pasha promised it."

Lady Felicia found the small seal half the size of her palm, with just the word 'pass' engraved into it.

It looked very ordinary and this type of seal, though not easy to get, was not any golden heron either, being available to quite a few merchants who were allowed to peddle their wares inside designated parts of the camp.

Lady Felicia tucked the seal away with a silent nod while saying, "I will wait in the camp for twelve days. If you cannot open the gates within that time, I will take it that the ten thousand reinforcements have arrived."

"Then I will use the excuse of being homesick and wanting to visit you to leave the camp and re-enter the city."

"Is that okay?"

"Mmm, that was what he discussed," Lapitus had no addendums to the proposal.

This made Lady Felicia produce a light smile, as she then bid her goodbye,

"Then you go to sleep. It's already very late and you will have to start work early tomorrow. I will go pack my things and wake you up when I'm ready."

Saying this the lady gave a ritualistic bow which wives were expected to give their husbands before taking their leave, after which she quickly made her way toward her room.

And yes, Lapitus and Lady Felicia had separate rooms, even though they were husbands and wives.

And it was not just a small personal room to spend a bit of alone time.

No, they were full-fledged bedrooms with all the amenities included.

This was not because the two disliked sleeping with each other, but because such as the customs of Tibias.

Here husbands and wives did not usually sleep in the same room, much less the same bed, but in their separate quarters.

This was true even during the nights the couple would be innate.

They would make love and then after concluding the deed, would usually go sleep in their own rooms.

The exact reason for this tradition was long forgotten, but one, among many explanations, was that during a large-scale plague, it was found those households who practiced this custom had much fewer deaths.

Now, scientifically this was because the contagion had difficulty transmitting across the large distance.

But to the people of this time, who viewed life and death as gifts from the gods, they saw this as being the true way god intended for men and women to sleep.

Hence the proliferation of this practice.

Or so one said.

But whatever the reason for this was, Lady Felicia quickly made her way into her room, where the very first thing she did was rush to a nearby basin where she began to surprisingly wash her hands.

Now seeing this one might think the lady was simply just a neat frick and loved to be clean.

But the insanely aggressive way she washed, scrubbed, and wrung her hand seemed to convey something more.

It was as if she was tainted by something very dirty and was trying to get rid of them at all costs.

And to add to that scene was how menacing she looked, clenching her beautiful teeth, she could be heard muttering to herself in an inaudible tone,

"At last! At last, I can get out of this deadbeat marriage. That idiot how long I had been forced to play house with him."

"Stupid fool! Every time I touch him, it makes my skin crawl ... arghhh, disgusting" Lady Felicia even made a retching face at this point, recalling the 'unpleasant memories'.

And then as if suddenly the moon had become the sun, her menacing face turned ecstatic,

"Ah! A pasha. To think I would get to have a pasha ... hehehe. Finally! Finally, all my suffering is about to pay off."

"Look at my beauty! How can I belong to anything less than a pasha? The ruler of an entire province."

"As a royal princess, I deserve no less."

"From what that fool said, that pasha is very young. Hehe, this will be easy. Once he gets a taste of me, I will have wrapped up in my fingers, hehehe."

Yes!

This was the famed beauty of Thesalie's real face, a heart as black as her face was fair.

She never loved Lapitus.

In fact she detested her common husband.

She had always craved power and now that there was the slightest chance to sell her body to Alexander for even the tiniest power, she was more than willing to spread her legs for him.

In fact she intended to even offer herself to it.

So Lapitus never had anything to worry about from Alexander.

Instead, he should have been worried about his own scrupulous wife.