

Herald 731

Chapter 731 The Ten Thousand Reinforcements

Lady Felicia was finished packing soon and before the morning sun could reveal her whereabouts, she and her daughter had already escaped the city via a secret passage, riding on a horse rapidly that was headed towards Alexander's camp.

The woman was surprisingly without even a single escort, being accompanied only by two of her handmaidens who rode on two separate horses, them in charge of their mistress's belongings.

Lapitus of course had insisted on giving his wife a few guards, but Lady Felicia vehemently declined them all, saying that the fewer people there were, the better.

And though in reality this was a reason, the much bigger reason was that having them would make her planned tryst with Alexander a lot harder.

Thus Lady Felicia made the short journey with just her trusted two maids, and once out of the city, it took her only a few minutes to reach the camp, her thick dark cloak fluttering in the wind as her mare galloped across the open field.

And upon approaching the camp, she would display her seal and be quickly let in, where she would be given a temporary guest room and around mid-afternoon of that very day, even get a meeting with Alexander.

While Lapitus stayed behind in the city, carefully gathering his men and setting his pieces for the coup, while at the same time keeping his ears perked up for any information regarding the promised reinforcements.

But it would have been better for him to renege on that distant hope, for unfortunately those would not be coming.

And that was because Lord Theony met the incoming party first!

After his leave from Thesalie, Lord Theony and his entourage soon chartered some boats from a nearby town and rowed them down the huge River Diannu, attempting to return to the capital through the sprawling waterways as soon as possible.

Lord Theony traveled on his craft following the traditions of the time, moving during the day and resting during the night.

And although he would have very much liked to have the boats be on the waterways at all times, he knew that was not possible.

The practice of resting at night had a myriad of reasons.

A primary one was the limited visibility during the dark hours, when sometimes the weather would turn ugly, such as producing thick, rolling fog, which would increase the chances of crashes, either with other vessels or simply the shore.

Then there was the simple need for the sailors to rest and sleep.

And lastly, the boats needed to be moored for the sailors to cook food and resupply.

These boats did not have large enough kitchens to feed everyone aboard, and neither could they carry all the produce and firewood.

So Lord Theony covered half the theoretical distance a day.

As did Philips, the crown prince.

And since they were using the same waterways, it was only inevitable that the two men would cross paths.

It was around midday of one particular day that a scout Lord Theony had stationed on the bow of his boat to keep a lookout suddenly came to his chambers, letting him know that a huge flotilla was spotted ahead, which the nobleman knew could be really mean one thing.

"Go! Take my seal and row over to them. Say that I want to talk to the His Highness!" Lord Theony hurriedly handed him his family's seal and soon after the two sides made contact.

"Lord Theony! It really is you!" And as the nobleman was escorted into the flagship of the flotilla, Philips was there to personally greet him.

But the greeting was not one of jovial reunion, but of shock and surprise at the unexpected and even unpleasant meeting.

A sentiment that was quickly reinforced as Lord Theony informed the royal of the latest happenings at Thesalie and the reason he was here.

"Our forty thousand strong are scattered. Lord Ponticus is missing, likely dead. The enemy has already taken the first walls and it's only a matter of time he takes the second!"

"The city is lost!"

"I saw no point in staying there any longer! And there is also no point in you going, Your Highness!"

Lord Theony very succinctly summarized the recent events.

And hearing so, for a few minutes, Philips went completely mute, even feeling dizzy.

He could not believe it.

Even after all their efforts, they were still going to lose the city?

That legendary city!

Philips had the urge to downright shout at Lord Theony for delivering his false news.

'Dammit it! From the second we decided to attack that new pasha, it's been nothing but disaster after disaster...' He then cursed, feeling like Alexander was really their black star.

And if he were to be given the chance to turn back time, he would have certainly urged his father not to go pick a fight with that man.

But since there was no such magical artifact, he had no choice but to swallow the bitter pill of regret.

And then try and think of a way to rescue the city.

But naturally, if a military veteran like Ponticus and his staff could not come out with a deal with the siege, what chance did he have sitting inside his boat for a few hours?

Lord Theony had been very detailed in his recount, especially about the wall the enemy had erected and how they were using it to undermine their defenses.

And like the others, outside of coming out of the city and destroying the structures manually, Philips was unable to find another alternative.

So then he suddenly turned to Lord Theony to all of a sudden blame him!

"Lord Theony, going by your accounts you did not actually see the city fall, did you? Why are you so sure of its capture? And even then why did you leave it? Wasn't it lord father's command that you help defend the city!"

Philips clamied in a rightour tone.

'Defend the city! What defend the city! There is nothing left to defend! We lost'

Hearing the implicit threat of Philips tattling to his father, Lord Theony felt increased, and if not in the interest of maintaining decorum in front of his future boss, he would have shouted those words not only in his head but out aloud!

But instead, keeping a straight face, Lord Theony defended his actions as this, "I have taken action in defense of the city. I lead the main army against the enemy, Your Highness, remember!"

"And it was only after I deemed the city to be lost that I chose to leave."

There was a subtle but very certain tone of sarcasm to his reply, but then Lord Theony's tone very quickly changed to a soft, logical, one,

"Your Highness, I know that you very much want the city to hold. But think about it! If the city was still in our hands, surely we would have been inundated with messenger birds asking for help!"

"But have we reached any?"

"No."

"Is it not proof enough that the city has fallen and anyone and everyone of any worth there has been killed?"

Lord Theony very pointed posed, and then in a deep, confident voice turned to Philips to pronounce,

"Your Highness I am sure Thesalie has been taken. I have been there. I have seen it. I know it."

"So there is no point in you going there."

"In fact, you going there might even mean walking into a trap!" Lord Theony lastly ominously warned.

And it was this sentence that really struck Philips.

It had to be remembered that he was traveling in a huge ground with hundreds of large boats.

So if he were to waltz into Thesalie just like that and then find that the enemy was waiting for them on either of the banks, it would not be as simple as changing the gear to reverse and backing off.

If that happened, many, many boats would have to be abandoned, many lives would have to be sacrificed, and even then Philips might be captured before he could escape.

The crown prince was not willing to take such a huge risk.

Especially not when what Lord Theony said might very well be all true.

Because as Philips thought, he found that according to Lord Theony's recount, it had been four to five days since their army was defeated, and if the city still held, surely there would have been some cry for help.

And even if the messenger birds were not sent to him, even then a messenger from the capital would have been surely dispatched to let him know of the recent developments.

There was no way he would be learning of all of this like this.

But nothing like that happened.

So it was only reasonable to come to the worst possible conclusion.

Sigh, I understand," And so with the 'ironclad proof' in his hand, Philips finally chose to accept reality, as he turned to say in a regal tone,

"Lord Theony! I still think that you should have stayed in Thesalie. Or at least have my cousin Philips with you when you left."

"I will leave it to my father to judge you for that, as well as your failure to defend the city."

"As for now, I will order the flotilla to turn around. We need to return to the capital as soon as possible."

"The capital will be in total chaos once they know of Thesa ... the city's loss!" The crown prince seemed unable to even say the proper name, such was his disbelief.

Chapter 732 Tibias Court in Chaos

When Lord Theony informed his prince of Thesalie's demise and urged him to turn back, it was not done out of malice or as a way to in any way to deceive him.

Lord Theony genuinely believed the city was lost, and the only reason he was doing this was because he wanted to save the ten thousand men from certain destruction.

As to how he came to that conclusion, well aside from seeing everything firsthand, the main sign he used was the lack of messenger birds from the city.

And ultimately, his reputation and recount managed to win Philips over, who abandoned his course and chose to return to the capital to deliver this horrific news.

Now in reality, the city had not actually fallen.

So why were there no cries for help like Lord Theony predicted?

Well that had happened mainly because Philips and the others were simply negligent in their jobs.

They had thought that since the ten thousand men were promised to them, they would be here regardless.

They saw no reason to doubt that.

Hence they did not bother telling the capital about their recent fiasco.

Furthermore, a few of the smarter ones even intentionally chose to hide it because they feared they might be abandoned if the royal court came to know about their true state.

But that had the opposite intended consequence as seen now.

The men they might have gotten got turned around and Lapitus would be left none the wiser, waiting for them for five days, when suddenly he would be provided with a golden opportunity to take advantage of the situation and off Petrino and his crowd once and for all.

While in the meantime, upon Philips and Lord Theony's return to the capital, the news they brought naturally caused widespread panic in the court.

"What!"

"How can that be?"

"Fallacy!"

"Did you see it? Did you see the city get taken!"

"No! I don't believe it!"

At first many of the nobles simply refused to believe it, some of the older and hotter heads even going as far as to accuse Lord Theony of lying.

While a few of the ladies in the court even directly fainted.

As for Perseus himself, the king appeared visibly shriveled.

'Ah! Will my dynasty end with me? Leosydas, are you disappointed in me?'

The once brave king who had even withstood the god king Amenheraft in his full fury now appeared to be faltering.

Particularly after Leosydas's death, Perseus suddenly found himself very listless and lacking the will to do anything, which was why he was more than happy to let his son take over much of the day-to-day.

And in that vein, Perseus did not seem to respond to the news with the same energy and gusto as he once might have.

He did not question Lord Theony's rhetoric, for he did not think the man would be foolish enough to lie.

Nor did he believe he would be negligent enough to be misinformed about such an important thing.

But instead he felt like being a dream-like stupor, as if the loss of Thesalie was all an illusion, and instead of panic, Perseus surprisingly felt hollow in his heart.

As if the gravity of the whole thing was yet to dawn on him.

While the king was in a dazed state of delirium, the rest of the court was in total chaos.

Shouts, curses, and surprisingly even a few fistfights broke out at one point, as small instances of infighting occurred between a handful of agitated nobles.

These mostly included men who had gone red-eyed at the loss of the city and attempted to rush at Lord Theony to smack him for lying, while others tried to stop them, resulting in the scuffling.

Thus soon the floors of the court that day were graced with men rolling over them, each trying to strangle the other.

And it took the combined effort of Mithriditus, the crown prince, and even the royal guards to forcefully end this madness.

That day was certainly a 'memorable' one for the Tibian court, if not for all the wrong reasons.

Though fortunately there were no major injuries that day, only some reddened faces and bright stretch marks where the nobles had pressed their fingers against.

But this act did cause the crown prince Philips to blow his head, something few had ever seen the usually level-headed man do, as he shouted at the top of his lungs,

"What are you doing my lords! Have you all gone mad! The enemy is at our doorsteps and here you are squabbling among ourselves?"

"Is this how the nobility of our great nation acts?"

"Get it together! We have our arch-enemy to fight!"

Philips's speech that day would calm the men down, though not for very long, as the court would be in a state of jittering flux for quite some while.

During that time Lord Theony and his entourage would be repeatedly grilled on their account of how the city was lost and their part in it, even though by then they had already said it a million times over.

But still they would be questioned in court, in informal gatherings and even among friends, each time being asked to describe in every tiny detail about everything that happened there and the things they saw, as the people tried to find any faults in their duties.

At the same time the nobles would try to use their own connections to try and verify the news, sending messengers out to see the city for themselves.

And lastly, under Mithriditus, the ten thousand men (10,000) originally recruited as reinforcements were proposed to be augmented with another twenty thousand (20,000) consisting of newly raised levies as well as many of the nobles' own men, who then were intended to be made to march towards Thesalie.

Their goal- either to relieve the city defenders if Thesalie still stood, retake it if conquered and if those were not possible, at least stop Alexander from invading further into their country.

But raising this army had several penalties, as Mithriditus would let the panicking court know.

"My lords, as you know, we have already exhausted a lot of our manpower when we first recruited those initial 20,000 men to reinforce Thesalie."

"We also must not forget the 20,000 we lost during our attack on Zanzan two years ago, or the ten thousand (10,000) additional men we had sent to bolster Thesalie's garrison after that."

"We no longer have those men."

After saying this Mithriditus paused a bit, as he articulated his thoughts while letting others guess what he was about to say.

And a while later, he predictably declared,

"As many of you guessed, the reason why I'm saying this is because this new 20,000 is our limit!"

"Once we get them into the army that's it. We will have used up all our available young men. And there will be no more for almost the next two decades!"

"So if they is not enough to stop the enemy.... well cannot raise any more."

Mithriditus repeated that last line, not willing to utter what an Alexandrian victory would mean for all of them.

But everyone there would easily understand the underlying tone, as many of the nobles were seen visibly shaken at the thought.

"Peac ... what about a peace deal?" And hence one noble could be heard squeaking this idea, which quickly gained quite a bit of traction.

Even a high-ranking noble like Lord Theony expressed his interest.

After all, given their current predicament, a peace treaty, even a humiliating one would be likely better than what was possibly in store.

For if Alexander chose to annex their country, all of them would be displaced and their lands be divided up among the Adhanians.

That would be the end of them.

But although a peace treaty sounded very lucrative to them, Philips, the crown prince only gave a hollow chuckle hearing so, saying,

"Hehe, even if we want peace, why are we so sure that Zanzan will accept it? Once they have taken Thesalie, they will surely push south, taking all the defenseless land. That is what any army with the slightest brain will do."

"So, I ask you, my lords, how much are you willing to sacrifice to get that peace? How many are you willing to sacrifice to get that peace? Because even if we do get peace, I can tell you one thing, it will certainly not be cheap!"

Here Philips was of course telling the nobles that if they wanted to placate Alexander, they would likely have to give up large swatches of their northern territory, which of course would mean many nobles losing their peerage.

After all, a landless noble was like a wingless bird- dead meat.

"....." And at this, he was met by mostly a wall of silence.

None answered.

But in that same vein, none protested.

It seemed many were willing to make that trade.

They were just not shameless enough to say it out aloud and through their once fellow peers under the bus so openly.

But seeing this, the crown prince knew which direction the winds were blowing.

So he ended by saying this, "Okay, we will send envoys to Zanzna. Let's see what happens next."

Chapter 733 Meeting Lady Felicia (Part-1)

Alexander was informed about Lady Felicia's arrival as he had just finished having breakfast.

'Well that was fast,' And upon receiving it, the very initial thought was this.

He only had the talks with Lapitus just last night, not even twelve hours from now.

So although Lapitus had promised he would send his family as soon as possible, the speed appeared certainly very impressive to Alexander.

And this to him seemed to say that Lapitus was ready to launch his attack at any time, hence the urgency.

Alexander asked the herald to help make the lady as comfortable as possible in her new dwelling while he spent the morning in meetings with his generals, informing them of the defector's visit and the subsequent changes to the plan.

And it was only mid-afternoon that he invited the lady to come to his tent for lunch.

"Greetings, esteemed Lord of Zanzan, conqueror of Thesalie. We are humbled to be in your presence."

As Lady Felicia entered, she gave a very grand bow, along with some heavily embellished flowery words.

"We thank you for letting us dine with you, my lord,"

And immediately following that, a little girl that was next to her pronounced so, her pure, immature voice sounding like the sweet chirping of a flirting canary, who too bowed imitating Lady Felicia.

"Ah! Welcome, my ladies," Hearing the greeting, Alexander turned his focus to the two, inviting them in with a smile, as he scanned the pair at the same time.

He found the mature woman to have a very beautiful face, causing him to agree with Lapitus's statement about his wife's beauty.

And to accentuate that beauty, she was garbed in an equally exquisite jet black half-sleeved gown, heavily gilded with fine intricate stickwork and laced with numerous strings of small stone and pearls along her bountiful curves, all of which glowed under the perforating sunlight, lighting up the dress and causing it to sparkle.

Her neck and ears had lavish jeweled gold ornaments, while her arms possessed patterned gold and silver bangles.

The leather shoes she wore had a floral pattern on them, decorated with a yellow topaz and there was a hint of sweet lilac emanating from her body.

While the girl next to her was almost equally immaculately dressed and dolled up, wearing very expensive dresses, jewelry, and makeup of her own, her gorgeously fashioned head reaching up to her counterpart's hips, the fresh innocent face appearing to be around eight or nine years old.

Looking at the duo, Alexander was actually more surprised to see them dressed so ornately under the current circumstances rather than their actual beauty.

Especially Lady Felicia, Alexander thought that judging by her choice of garments as well as the countenance on her face, it did not at all seem like she had just escaped from her home in fear for her life while leaving her husband behind.

Instead, her body language appeared to convey the feeling of as if she was attending a lavish party or a family get-together.

To Alexander it appeared that this lady was not that much concerned about her current circumstances and instead seemed much more interested in maintaining her image and presenting herself at the peak of her beauty.

This caused Alexander to judge her to be very materialistic, likely always wanting to enjoy all the good things in life.

Which then drifted his mind to subconsciously ask, 'How the hell did Lapitus manage to afford all of this for her?'

Because just the dress the two of them wore should have cost Lapitus his yearly salary or even more, forget about the extravagant ornaments and accessories.

And Alexander would know a bit about such expenses, as after his house burnt down, he had to buy all his girls as well as the twins, and Lady Nanazin and her daughters quite a few such expensive dresses in order to compensate them for the things they lost in the fire so that they could keep up appearances.

To him those bills, which were nothing.

But he doubted Lapitus had such deep pockets.

Although being the city lord's right-hand man was no insignificant post, and the pay was no doubt well enough to match that title, but even still, Alexander doubted it was 'that' good.

It had to be also remembered that Lapitus was no noble and likely had no other significant sources of income, like from lands he owned.

Meaning his earned income was all he could have to spend.

And earned income can only get you so far.

So Alexander judged that to afford his wife's expensive lifestyle, either Lapitus would have had to borrow from others, be a crook and steal from the military, or be heavily favored by his father-in-law, who certainly had the capital to give his daughter all this.

And Alexander wondered which of these were.

And it was all these things that were running across his mind as he invited the duo to a small dining table that had been placed there specifically for them, beneath a large tent flap that let in much of the bright afternoon summer sun and illuminated the entire room with a decadent golden hue.

"My lady, please have a seat. I hope you had no trouble coming here. And I apologize for the bare accommodations. Sadly we are unable to provide you with better, haha,"

Alexander gregariously posed as they were being seated, while some of his staff worked hastily to serve the food onto the table.

"My lord is too humble. We are honored to be just in your presence. And our accommodations have been nothing but of the utmost luxury. We dare not complain about the slightest of imbroglio."

At Alexander's niceties, Lady Felicia too gave some flowery replies, while her hands were seen quickly grabbing the expensive food being presented to her.

Because Alexander knew he would be entertaining guests, he had asked the kitchen to be a bit lavish in their menu, and they did not disappoint.

There were huge loaves of freshly baked white bread, honey-roasted chicken, barbequed beef, salted mutton, cured trouts, salmons, butter-fired vegetables, and various aged wines which made up the mains.

This was a rare treat for Lady Felicia despite her husband's relatively high position, as she only got to feast so lavishly perhaps only once or twice a year when her father held large parties.

'To think he can get such food in a warzone! I was not wrong! I must have him!' And as Lady Felicia used her pearly whites to break down the foods, instead of relishing in the flavors, her mind was much more preoccupied with coming up with schemes on how to get into Alexander's bed.

As for feeling even the slightest amount of guilt for her husband over this planned infidelity, well that was long thrown out of the window.

For perhaps it never existed.

For she justified her actions by only saying this,

'This is the least I deserve. This is my birthright. I'm a princess!'

For the lady, being born of a father who belonged to the royal family, she had always thought she would be married to someone of similar status, i.e.- a high-ranking noble or even one of her step-cousins who would be a prince.

But when her father decided to marry her to someone like Lapitus, someone who was not even a noble, the amount of rage and frustration she had felt then was enough to burn a thousand cities.

So now that there was such a juicy target in front of her, there was no way Lady Felicia was going to let any morality or consciousness tie her back.

As Lady Felicia was swimming in her thoughts, Alexander here was in the midst of making some polite conversation.

As they had their meal, Alexander brought up many miscellaneous questions which he used to get to know Lady Felicia and her husband better, and in that midst, he at last moved to questions about the mistress he was supposed to take in.

So he posed this,

"My lady, I was wondering where is your daughter? I was hoping to meet her since I promised Sir Lapitus I would take her as my mistress. Is she not feeling well after her journey? Should I send a doctor?"

Alexander was informed by his messenger that the lady of the house had come here accompanied by two teenage girls and a child.

And Alexander presumed one of those girls to be the daughter he would take.

But instead of answering his question, Lady Felicia only let out a small gasp of "Ah!" as if she had forgotten something important and then quickly turning to the girl next to her instantly asked,

"Fabiyana! Go introduce yourself! Quick!"

And hearing her mother's sudden order, the little girl whose tiny mouth was still full of bread and meat initially only turned to face her with a blank look.

It was too abrupt for her to instantly follow it.

But the clever girl quickly woke up to what was being asked of her, so she swallowed the large portions down as fast as she could, before lightly bowing to Alexander and saying in that same cute, immature voice,

"Lord Husband, it is an honor to be in your grace. My name is Fabiyana!"

'I'm not a lolicon!!!!' Alexander maddeningly howled this in his mind.

Chapter 734 Alexander and Fabiyana

"Lord Husband, it is an honor to be in your grace. My name is Fabiyana!"

The moment Alexander heard these sweet words like they were the chirpings of an innocent lark, he felt his jaws lose power and become slack, and even the food he was chewing threatened to spill out of his mouth.

But Alexander could care less about those things.

Instead, he had to try very hard to only swerve his head towards the origin of this sound, as his neck felt it had lusted and turned into wood.

He could not believe what he was hearing, and he really hoped up until now his senses had been playing a trick on him.

And it was with those overly optimistic thoughts that with much difficulty he finally turned his head to spot the origin of this sound.

But of course, the sight was what he had expected.

Fabiyana, as the girl introduced herself, appeared to be like a cute angel, with a fair innocent face, tiny hands and feet, small pearly baby teeth, and a small stature.

She was looking with an angelic smile, though her limpid green eyes seemed to be a bit wary of him, and she looked at him with both intense curiosity as well as measured caution, like she was afraid of his unknown man.

To Alexander, she was a child no more than eight or nine years old no matter how one looked at it.

And thus seeing his future 'concubine', Alexander's lips had the urge to twitch uncontrollably like he had the electrocuted by a million volts of electricity.

'This was not what I had in mind,' He shouted in his mind, and it took a considerable amount of effort to not shout out this in incredulation at the revelation.

Because that would have been too rude.

But though he was able to somehow keep a calm facade on the exterior, the raging waves in his heart were difficult to calm down, as he desperately tried to make sense of the situation.

So for a while, from the viewpoint of an onlooker, Alexander seemed to be looking at his new 'bride' with stunned silence, eyes wide and mouth agape, like he was lovestruck.

'Oh, no! Is he that kind of man?' But misunderstanding his reaction, Lady Felicia was actually worried about Alexander's preferences.

Not over the fact that he liked young girls.

No, that was not anything unheard of and was even socially accepted at the time.

She really did not care about that from a moral point of view.

But Lady Felicia was worried that if his body preference was that kind, well, she was literally the opposite, voluptuous to the point where sometimes her curves would be spilling out.

So if Alexander were not to find her attractive, but too old and aged, well her plan to climb into his bed would be very hard, if not possible.

'Dammit! Maybe I should not have bought Fabiyana! Urgh!' The mother even regretted bringing her daughter to the meeting, though for all the wrong reasons.

"Haha, it seems Lord Alexander is quite fond of his little concubine. We are relieved. It seems husband was right in his choice, hehe,"

Externally though, Lady Felicia seemed ecstatic about Alexander's reaction, producing a large smile and even patting her daughter on the back for a job well done

And being encouraged by her mother, the little girl too produced a similar chuckle as she appeared to be relieved.

Fabiyana had been understandably wary when she was told that she would be marrying an unknown man she had never even heard of.

But now upon seeing him, and being served such good food, the innocent mind seemed to have judged Alexander as a 'good' man.

While for Alexander, hearing Lady Felicia's comment and seeing that sweet smile emanate from the girl, it felt like a painful arrow had pierced his heart.

And it was this pain that jolted the man out of his dazed state, as then, at the very mention of Lapitus, it somehow incensed Alexander,

'Fuck Lapitus! I will hang that bastard when I next see him!' as he cursed him and his twelve generations for tricking him like this.

But he knew this was not the time to go off on a tirade, and so quickly calming himself, he then turned to look at the mother to pose,

"My...my lady, how old is sh...Lady Fabiyana? Isn't she a little too young?"

Alexander's words sounded a bit wooden and stiff, as his mind was still trying to wrap its head around the whole thing.

Or more specifically, it was trying to think of a way to untangle itself from the whole thing.

"Fabiyana is not a child. She is already ten years old! She is old enough to be married!"

But before the mother would answer, as if offended by the insinuation, the child girl larked these words, while at the same time holding up all her ten, nubile fingers to emphasize her point, as she looked at Alexander with a mixture of scowl for calling her a child and pride at being an actual adult.

Something that Alexander would have found very cute and endearing if not for the given circumstances.

Twitch, *twitch*

So at the answer, Alexander's lips again twitched involuntarily as he struggled to reply back.

While Lady Felicia, in support of her daughter let out a soft chuckle, saying,

"Hehe, Lord Alexander rest assured. Our Fabiyana might look to be a bit on the small side, but she already had her first bleeding two months ago. She is an adult and there will be no problem. Rest assured."

Lady Felicia seemed very confident in her daughter's abilities.

'Bullshit!' While Alexander only gowled hysterically in his mind at the frankly stupid comment.

He knew what Lady Felicia meant by 'there will be no problem'.

But he also knew that with his size down there, there would be a problem.

Even if Alexander were not to forget about the age, there very, very definitely would be a problem if he tried to stick it in.

'Dammit! I can't believe I forgot to ask Lapitus about his daughter's age. My head must have been kicked by a donkey and turned to shit!'

Faced with this predicament, Alexander knew he was to blame almost as much as Lapitus who 'tricked' him into this.

Though calling the latter might be a stretch.

Because though it was not common, it was also not uncommon for girls to be married just as they had their first periods.

And though the average age for menstruation to start was 12, it could start as early as eight years old.

So what Lapitus had done was really not anything scrupulous.

Such marriages were common in this time period, and in fact, though illegal, even in Alexander's previous life, there were records of such unions in many developing countries even in the 21st century.

It was really Alexander's fault for not checking it.

'Dammit! Even the possibility of this happening totally skipped my mind. When the talk about marriage came up, I subconsciously equated it to an adult girl due to my previous world's standards.'

'And then blinded by the prospect of taking the city quickly, the mind drifted there! Dammit!'

Alexander knew why he had made that mistake but that did not mean it stung any less.

But ultimately it was partly his own fault that this had happened.

And upon hearing the confirmation that Fabiyana could indeed marry Alexander 'legally' as per the customs of the time, Alexander knew it would be hard to back out of it carelessly.

He had given his word and a nobleman's word and reputation was good as gold.

Reneging on a promise would be too damaging and Alexander would not do it unless absolutely forced.

And he certainly would not put his entire realm at risk for his own values and moral standards.

So he did not immediately attempt to challenge the deal.

Also, now was not the time or place given Lapitus had not yet given him the city.

So Alexander simply decided to wait for now, given he had plenty of time to figure things out once Thesalie was under him.

Then he could either renegotiate a new deal or if Lapitus really did not want to do it, who said Alexander would have to consummate with the girl right now?

If the other side was really adamant, Alexander made up his mind to simply wait till Fabiyana reached eighteen before taking her to bed.

And fortunately Lady Felicia seemed to be of the same mind as Alexander on that point, as upon praising her daughter's virtues, she breezily added,

"Of course, if my lord thinks Fabiyana might need a few more years, we can wait. I understand she has matured a bit quicker than regular girls, so perhaps it would be safer to have a child a couple of years later."

Lady Felicia appeared very sincere.

And on the surface, it appeared as if the lady was simply worried about her daughter.

Whereas in reality, she was more worried that if her daughter took Alexander's side in bed, there might be none left for over.

But unaware of such schemes, to Alexander this sounded like the gospel from the gods, as he immediately let out a large grin,

"Yes, yes. It will indeed be prudent to wait. Yes indeed."

Such was his relief that in a very uncharacteristic manner, he was even seen bobbing his head like a chicken.

And thus Alexander managed to dodge that landmine.

Chapter 735 Meeting Lady Felicia (Part-2)

Alexander was very happy at the surprising ease with which he managed to navigate around this mistake, something that was frankly his.

He was especially glad at the fact that it was Lady Felicia herself who bought up the idea, as it saved Alexander all the trouble and further any misunderstanding.

For if he had been the one to ask it himself, the other party might have misinterpreted the request as Alexander not liking Fabiyana and thus the excuse.

Whereas now, with Lady Felicia's blessing, Alexander could push this 'few years' agreement as far as he liked.

After all eight to ten years was still technically 'few years'.

'In the meantime, she can be an elder sister for Alexandria and the others,' Alexander then off-handedly thought about what the girl could do during this time.

While Alexander and Lady Felicia discussed these details, the one who was at the center of all this, Fabiyana, did not seem such concerned.

In fact, given her age, Fabiyana did not even much understand what her mother and this strange man were talking about.

And frankly, she did not seem to care either, as currently she was much more interested in the food being presented to her.

Because finally the most fun of the feast had begun- the desserts.

These included a plum pudding, a type of fruit custard made with peaches, grapes, and sliced mangoes, and lastly ice creams flavored with lemon or watermelon juices, the last one being something that both the mother and daughter found especially delectable.

This was their first time eating food made of white sugar, and the sweetness was unlike anything they had ever tasted before.

'Compared to this, honey tastes bitter,' Lady Felicia even exaggeratedly thought, as the cool, refreshing dessert proved much of her liking, especially given the sweltering weather, and the large spoonfuls she took were a testament to how much she enjoyed it.

"My lord, this has been truly a feast fit for the king. Praise the gods."

"Yes! Praise the gods."

And as the luncheon finally came to an end, it was like this that the pair expressed their gratitude, with the little girl even clasping her tiny hands together in prayer, her voice though immature, very sincere.

Following this, the tables were cleaned, while Alexander made some small talk with the two women until finally he decided to end the gathering.

But not before Lady Felicia made a future appointment,

"Lord Pasha, I have something to tell you about my husband and the city. Things I would rather not say aloud. Would it be possible for me to visit you tonight?"

Lady Felicia was very hushed in her statement, so much as that it was as if she was afraid even the walls of the tent might tattle on her.

And this sudden request made Alexander intrigued.

What was it that could not be said out loud here?

And if it was so important, why did she not say it all this time?

"My lady, you can rest assured whatever you say will never leave here if I do not want to," He confidently claimed, both to reassure the lady and because he wanted to know the information immediately since he did not know how important it might be.

But Lady Felicia of course would not divulge it here.

She needed to come here at night if she wanted to get what she desired.

"*Yawn*" Hence putting on a fake yawn, the mature lady pronounced in a languid voice, "I'm sorry my lord. I seem to be feeling a bit tired. It must be because I did not get enough sleep yesterday."

"Oh! If I had known I would become so tired, I would have made time for it during the meal." She sounded rueful.

While her daughter, who was standing next to her appeared to be genuinely sleepy, as seen by how she was dozing off and had difficulty even standing straight.

It seemed that after the heavy meal, her tiny body could not wait for a much-needed shut-eye.

Seeing this, Alexander knew he had no chance of keeping them here.

So with a reluctant nod, he agreed, "Then my lady, I shall humbly invite you to share dinner with me tonight. Please kindly attend it."

If possible, Alexander would have personally preferred not to see the married woman at night, due to the bad connotations this action had.

He did not want any sort of gossip circulating around the camp regarding him.

But since circumstances had developed to this point and he was really curious about what Lady Felicia had to say about her husband and his prized city, he decided to make an exception. I think you should take a look at

"Thank you, my lord. I believe you will not be disappointed," At Alexander relenting, Lady Felicia was naturally elated, but her tone did not betray her real expectation, as she appeared happy but collected..

Though her last phrase did have a very clear double meaning, but Alexander was far too distracted with what she had to say to even consider that.

Hence without much taking much else to heart, Alexander bid the pair goodbye for the time, parting with them after giving a kiss on both of their right hand as per Tibias's custom, something which seemed to make the little girl very happy as she broke off into pearly giggles.

The girl liked being treated as an adult.

Following their departure, Alexander himself decided to get a short nap, waking up a couple of hours later after which he took a walk around the camp.

While both Lady Felicia and her daughter upon their return to the luxurious tent, true to their words both took a long nap, the exhaustion of the night catching up to them, as they only woke up four to five hours later, feeling very refreshed.

Lady Felicia then quickly asked her maid to prepare a bath for her and being careful not to be late, the lady was present inside Alexander's tent before the designated time.

This time however, Lady Felicia was not actually dressed as lavishly, wearing just a simple gown with very few embroidery, the only notable aspect of the dress being that it was made of expensive fine linen.

She also wore very light jewelry, only a pair of ordinary earrings and bangles, her neck bare save a small, nondescript gold chain with a locket attached at the end.

Her hair was tied into a bun by two very ordinary-looking silver pins and Alexander could only detect a very mild touch of sweet fragrance coming off her.

And lastly, to cover herself up, the woman had put on a fine navy blue overcoat, which was needed to fight of the cold, as given the approaching fall season, the nights tended to become a bit chilly, especially given the heights they were at.

All this made the lady appear very modest, so much so that if the lady Alexander met at noon was to be described as the extreme example of unrestrained and flashy, well this time, he could only describe her as chaste and demure.

The difference was much so that in fact looking at her, Alexander even began to doubt his initial assessment of Lady Felicia, which he described as being materialistic.

While the real reason why Lady Felicia dressed like this was because she knew it was easier to bed men using such simple looks

Which might seem as counterintuitive, but in her experience, the lady had found that being too flashy made one appear too haughty and most men of this time did not prefer such a woman.

Thus Lady Felicia had very calculatingly shown off her physical beauty at noon and now proceeded to work her mature charms on Alexander.

And it was with those thoughts that she proceeded to begin the conversation, where she intended to steer it towards her real goal of entering the camp.

Alexander would have never needed to worry about calling her to bed, she would call him.

"I'm sorry I could not bring Fabiyana, my lord. She is feeling a bit under the weather and I also did not think it would be appropriate for her to hear what I have to say," As the man and woman sat under candlelight, after the obligatory pleasantries, Lady Felicia began like this.

"Oh?" Taking a small bite of the bread, Alexander could not help but pronounce so.

His eyes appeared very curious as to what could be so secretive.

"Yes." And seeing this sign, Lady Felicia nodded her head heavily, before appearing a bit hesitant, as if she was she was having last-minute thoughts on whether she should reveal it or not.

Until after a few seconds of deliberation, finally she clenched her teeth and revealed in a low, murmuring whisper,

"You see my lord... my husband ...Lapitus was not being exactly truthful to you when he came to you promising the city."

"He is not going to start the rebel!"

"He is actually waiting for about 10,000 men coming from the capital to bolster the city as we speak."

"I do not know exactly when they will come, they are supposed to be here in a week through the river."

"If they manage to come in time, my husb... no ...Lapitus will not open the gates for you."

"He will instead lead them in defense of the city!"

Chapter 736 Meeting Lady Felicia (Part-3)

Hearing what Lady Felicia just said, Alexander was shocked to say the least.

His eyes could be seen dilating and almost in a repeat of his reaction to finding out about Fabiyana, he momentarily stopped chewing his food.

"What?" He felt he must have missed something as he muttered.

To him, all this did not make any sense.

Why go through all that trouble?

"Indeed I'm afraid so," But Lady Felicia worked to ensure that he did not hear it wrong as she clearly revealed in a hushed, bitter tone,

"I was told that if the city gates are not opened within ten days, it will mean the 10,000 men Lord Ponticus requested from the capital has arrived and Lapitus has no intention to surrender."

"He would then start to organize the defenses of the city or escape depending on the circumstances, while I would leave the camp with the excuse of wanting to visit my husband and rejoin him."

"But if for some reason the 10,000 does not come, after knowing of our defeat or something as such, well then Lapitus will indeed launch the rebellion and open the city for you my lord."

"Afterwards he will act like nothing had ever happened."

"This is why I was told to come here. So that no matter what happens, his family will be safe."

"This way he intends to have feet on both boats, my lord!"

Lady Felicia's voice was sharp and pitched, her face very pitiful, like she was a helpless pawn under her cruel husband.

But contrary to her plaintive countenance, her misty eyes still remained sharp, keenly observing Alexander's face as it slowly transformed to become ugly.

The man obviously did not like being played like this.

No one would.

And it was something she was very pleased to see, for Lady Felicia very much wanted to pit the two men against one another, and if possible have Alexander kill the other.

While Alexander's mind was much more occupied with the message than the messenger.

On the surface of it, he found everything he was told not possible to outright deny.

For although he had no proof Lapitus would do so, there was also nothing to indicate Lapitus he would not.

In fact as Alexander thought about it, the balance of scale in his heart began to drift towards what Lady Felicia said.

One reason was of course due to Lapitus's own wife providing testimony against him, which Alexander could not just brush away.

Another reason was that thinking back on Lapitus's original request, his original asking for three weeks did seem awfully long.

Back then Alexander did not think much of it, only chalking it up as Lapitus just haggling, shooting for the moon, and then negotiating to a more reasonable time frame.

But if this was what Lapitus was aiming for, it made far more sense.

Of course being the naturally cautious man he was Alexander did not immediately swallow Lady Felicia's information and take it as gospel.

He instead ruminated,

'Hmmm, she said she was instructed\ to leave the camp in ten days. Meaning if the reinforcements come, they will within ten days.'

'Looks like I will have to send my scouts around the river and keep an eye out. 10,000 men entering the city on boats will not be hard to spot.'

As Alexander internally decided this, he turned to the lady opposite of this and posed the obvious question,

"Why reveal to me this? Isn't Lapitus your husband?"

And hearing so Lady Felicia was actually more surprised that Alexander did not press her for more information about the 10,000 men.

That was 10,000 men you know.

This would not be an insignificant number of men anywhere.

Nevermind all of them were meant to bolster a city's defense, a stronghold such as Thesalie.

You would think as the attackers, Alexander would be more concerned about that.

But in reality, Alexander knew those ten thousand men could not stop him from taking the second wall, just as they had not been able to stop him from taking the first one.

And once the walls were taken, there really was no way to defend the city.

So Alexander was not angry over the fact that Lapitus intended to wait for these men.

That would not matter.

In fact he could even empathize with that feeling, with a patriot wanting to fight for his land.

But what he was mad about was that if what Lady Felicia was true, then the man would have had blatantly lied to him.

Alexander was of course not fond of liars. I think you should take a look at

But Alexander ultimately kept his emotions in check.

He knew harping on this to a woman who frankly would only know what her husband told her did not really matter.

And instead, Alexander seemed rather more interested in knowing why one's wife was betraying her betrothed.

Because as much as Alexander disliked liking, he disliked traitors perhaps even more.

"Husband?" However at Alexander's mention of the word, Lady Felicia suddenly curved her lip in a weak, mocking smile, like she had heard a bad joke.

"Surely Lord Pasha has noticed I have stopped calling Lapis husband. Do you want to know why? Let me show you..." Saying this the lady then suddenly started to unhook the simple locket she was wearing.

And once that small ornament was in her hand, she slowly opened the latch, causing a tiny puff of white powder to escape in the process, as she then pushed it towards Alexander to let him see the insides for himself.

"Look at this, my lord! This white powder is called the Lady's Favorite. Called so because a Tibian noble lady once used it to kill six of her husbands!"

"It's tasteless, odorless, and dissolving perfectly in water or ...wine." The melodious pause with which Lady Felicia said this made the innuendo very clear, before finishing,

"Just mixing this much into a drink will make death all but guaranteed"

"I was told that if I got the chance, I was to use this ...by my so-called honorable husband," Lady Felicia sneered the last two words, as she then dumped the powder onto the carpet and repeatedly stomped on it, scattering the tiny amount harmlessly into the wind.

Sweat!

And seeing the action, though Alexander did not show it, a few large beads of sweat had already formed at the back of his neck, for it suddenly felt so much chillier for him.

He could not believe there had been such a huge oversight in his security, so big in fact that someone was allowed to enter his tent with such a deadly amount of poison.

Now of course Lady Felicia could not just waltz into Alexander's tent whenever she liked because she was a guest.

It was not that easy.

Alexander, being the conscious man he was had of course set up proper protocol to guard against such a thing.

Thus before she was allowed to enter his tent, like most others, Lady Felicia had to go through a security check.

And because Lady Felicia was a woman and Alexander's bodyguards were men, he had even specifically asked for two female slaves from the medical clinic to conduct it.

This pair had diligently patted the lady's body any small weapons or pouches that could carry any contraband and naturally found nothing of the sort.

But they had missed that simple gold locket she was wearing for it was seen just as an accessory.

And to make it even harder, Lady Felicia had cleverly hidden most of the ornament underneath her cloth, with the actual locket actually strategically placed deep into her cleavage.

There was no way two slave girls were going to insert their hands there, not if they wanted to keep their hands, if not their necks.

It was something even Alexander might not have suspected.

Which made the oversight even more damning.

Hence he made a solemn note of himself

'Darm. from next time, I will ask the guards to make all guests take off all their ornaments and accessories. Even their shoes! Ugh! What a blunder!' As Alexander rebuked himself.

But the good thing about this was that there was no real harm done.

The would-be culprit had revealed her trick a long way before implementing it and Alexander could let a breath of relief at that.

Hence, recovering himself from the small shock after a while, Alexander then posed,

"That position....how would you have done it? How would you have slipped it into my drink? That's not easy to do."

Since the thief had revealed one of her tricks, Alexander intended to learn them all to better guard against them

And once again, the poor lady revealed a helpless smile, "I was told to seduce you and get into bed with you my lord. Then try and slip it into your wine at an opportune point while you were distracted,"

"Or if that did not work *ruffle*," At this point, with an utterly forlorn look, suddenly the proper lady pulled the upper part of her gown down, revealing her large, bare bunnies to Alexander, "Smear it here and let you lick it off!"

If Alexander really knew how this lady was spinning her webs around him, and playing around him, he certainly would not have had the time of mind to be distracted by the sight of the juggling melons.

Thankfully, the lady had no plans to harm Alexander...yet!

Chapter 737 Meeting Lady Felicia (Part-4)

Alexander had already noticed it before during the afternoon even through her corset, but now that they were bare, he once again could reassure himself that the twin peaks possessed by Lady Felicia were indeed magnificent.

Milky white and voluminous, almost as big as Gelene's, they were firm yet perky.

And Alexander found it mesmerizing to watch them jiggle ever so slightly as the bashful lady found her breathing suddenly becoming accelerated, while her quite large and protruding cherries woke up from their slumber as the cold air made them turgid.

Lady Felicia's areola and buds seemed quite large proportionally, covering a decent portion of her glands, but that did make seem to make her beautiful breasts any less attractive.

In fact, Alexander thought it reinforced her motherly qualities.

And if Lady Felicia had indeed presented these melons along with those swollen, ripe brown cherries to him, Alexander was not certain he would have been able to stop himself from latching onto them and rewarding himself with a nibble.

They looked too delectable.

'Man! That Lapitus deserves to be called the world's greatest assassin for this. Who could thought he would send his wife equipped with these deadly things? They are too fantastic!'

Alexander had a hard time moving his eyes from the twin globes as he said so to himself, thinking what a brilliant way this was to be delivering poison.

It had to be known that poisoning Alexander was naturally not easy.

Just because someone managed to get some poison into Alexander's tent did not automatically mean the job was done.

That was just the first hurdle as there still remained arguably the bigger problem of getting the target to ingest it.

Something that would have been frankly quite challenging with the security checks in place even in normal times.

Never mind the fact that since they were at war these oversights were even tighter.

Most of the time, Alexander would be given the same food as everyone else in the army,

And though individual squads made their own food, nobles like Alexander and other high-ranking officials had a large kitchen dedicated to them to do the cooking for them.

Alexander had actually wanted everyone to be like the regular soldiers, but many nobles objected, as they did not like to do the laborious work of grinding one's own grain, chopping the vegetables, and everything else.

And Alexander even half doubted they could do it.

So he came up with this compromise

But still, the menu was the same as the common infantry, but it was just that all the bread, stew, and other items were cooked in that same large kitchen.

And given the importance of the people who were going to eat that food, everything was overseen with the utmost oversight and handled by only the most trustworthy people.

So slipping anything was hard to say the least.

Never mind, given the huge portions of ingredients used, to poison the whole pot, one would have to pour buckets of it, or the poison would become too diluted and end up at best giving everyone bad diarrhea.

Something that was certainly unpleasant, but infinitely better than dying.

And lastly, even if one did slip something in, there was no way of knowing where this food was going and who was going to eat it.

In this kitchen, batches of food would be produced, and placed in buffet-style rows, from where the officers could take what they liked, or have their subordinates bring their portions to their tents.

So if the officer dined in the mess hall, it was quite impossible to kill him and only him.

Hence unless the goal was mass poisoning, the only realistic way to deliver any poison would be if the officer asked it to be delivered to his tent, and somehow that got intercepted along the way and then meddled with.

But of course the men carrying these foods were handed this job due to their loyalty.

So to slip anything in without the other side noticing was very challenging.

And this was how Alexander made sure his food was safe.

In that same vein, Alexander's water was also taken from a few nearby springs, which was the entire camp's water supply, and was collected by trusted men.

So good luck trying to poison the entire hill.

And lastly, the wine he drank was usually cheap diluted wine that was drunk by every common soldier, and there were literally hundreds of such barrels in stock.

Even if one forgot the sentries, it would be quite impossible to predict who would drink from which barrel, and that was assuming one could find enough poison to contaminate the entire darn thing.

In this way, by sharing all the facilities with a significant number of others, Alexander had surprisingly managed to decrease the chances of his poisoning exponentially.

It made targetting just him next to impossible as if an attempt was made, the balance of probability of him being the unlucky one in a thousand was minuscule. I think you should take a look at

And if his luck was indeed that bad that he it was somehow him that got that piece of the pie, well, then Alexander could actually go to the grave peacefully, knowing he would have probably died anyway, if not from this poison, then from perhaps something as mundane as slipping down a case of stairs and skewing one's throat on the pointy butt of an umbrella.

But if he was not that unlucky, well then someone suddenly falling ill sick could very easily give rise to the suspicion of the usage of poison, which could then alert the entire camp.

This was also why Alexander did not build any dedicated facilities for him.

Not only would maintaining such a facility during campaigns put a strain on the logistics, but also. no matter how good a system Alexander devised, it had to be known that they would be always supervised by humans.

And humans were fallible.

They would either be coerced into betraying Alexander, by things such as greed or even kidnapping family members.

Or they would be unwittingly tricked into making a mistake.

So instead of relying on a handful of humans, Alexander found this open method much better.

Now, there was one other thing that Alexander had that was not part of the common items- expensive wines.

He would sometimes drink this, either to calm his nerves or to entertain guests such as when other nobles would come to him regarding various war-related matters.

These were treated with extreme care, as each of them had their tops sealed with paper.

So if anyone were to open them and pour something in, they would have to break the seal.

Something that would be very easy to spot.

And as the piece de resistance, to make it that bit harder for any would-be assassin, Alexander had eight men stationed outside his tent, guarding all four sides of it, while inside, the premises would never be left empty,

If Alexander was not there, then Hemicus or his adjutant Quinnolin, or someone else would be, guarding all the open wine bottles, leftover food, and the other miscellaneous things, as well as the many secret documents and plans in Alexander's possession.

So due to all this, there was no way someone would just sneak in and slip anything in.

And with all these checks and obstacles in place, Alexander was internally very confident that he had managed to close any avenue of assassination for him.

Until Lady Felicia revealed her method.

And hearing that it was Lapitus's idea, in a weird way, Alexander even praised the man who supposedly tried to murder him, somewhat admiring his dedication to the defense of his city in that he was even willing to sell his wife's body, as well as put her and her daughter's life at risk to simply target him.

If it had succeeded, though it would not mean the instant destruction of Zanzan as he had a clear successor, but it certainly meant the potential of the lands would be almost cut at the roots.

Without him, Cambyses alone would find it hard to gain legitimacy, as she neither had the strong support of the military nor did she have any staunch allies.

And all alone in this foreign land with two infant children, even Alexander's once allies might pressure the girl into concessions.

That could mean either giving up more of their secrets or even forcing her to marry a local noble.

All of which would likely mean Zanzan would become too weak to pose any threat to Tibias.

From that point of view, Alexander thought that Lapitus's intention to kill him certainly made sense.

A thought Lady Felicia was more than happy to nurture and grow in Alexander as she further added with clenched, gnashing teeth,

"Not only did he ask me to do such a shameful thing, he even told me that if I was unable to, I should powder Fabiyana's face with the poison."

"That way if my lord kissed her on the cheek, you would unknowingly be poisoned."

"And he said even though he knew how harmful that was."

"If it touched the soft skin of a child like Fabiyana's for too long, her face would surely become scarred."

"The bastard actually wanted to sacrifice his own wife and daughter just for this!"

"What a monster!"

Lady Felicia by this point appeared to be choking, like she was a defenseless lamb under the cruel woldish claws of her husband.

And seeing this, Alexander actually found empathizing with her.

Chapter 738 Meeting Lady Felicia (Part-5)

The way Lady Felicia presented her case, with truths and lies so seamlessly woven together that it made it very hard for Alexander to discern which of the things she said were truths and which were lies, although most of the things were the latter.

Lady Felicia had cleverly positioned herself so well that it was she who held all the cards and Alexander being an outsider had little way of verifying most of the things.

The only thing that was easily verifiable were the 10,000 reinforcements and she would be very happy to let Alexander do that.

And even if Alexander could not verify that, even if the 10,000 men did not come, Lady Felicia had already covered her bases for that by alluding to the fact that their arrival was not guaranteed.

While the poison and the schemes were all he said, she said.

After all, it was not like he could simply go ask if LL really wanted to poison or whether it was all a plot by Lady Felicia.

But when Alexander thought about it, LL had every reason to try and poison him, while Lady Felicia and he were strangers with little personal conflict of interest.

So as Alexander considered everything that was revealed to him and looked at it through Lady Felicia's lens, her side of the story did seem to make more sense.

LL had sent his wife here to take sanctuary as well as try and use this opportunity to kill Alexander if the opportunity presented itself.

However, Lady Felicia understood her and her daughter's fate if she were to do that, regardless if she succeeded or not, had decided to change sides.

After all, if Alexander really died and either of the two women was found to be in his tent, suspicion would immediately fall on them.

And Hemicus, Menes, and even Cambyses would not be kind to them just because they were of the fairer sex or even a child.

So realizing this, the lady was here now, trying to seek asylum from her 'dreadful' husband.

This was at least how Alexander pieced together the together.

Thus, although Alexander did not buy everything the lady said, he did buy pretty much all of it.

And unless LL could come up with some massive smoking gun, it seemed he really had no way out.

"Thank you for telling me this, my lady..... Ummm you can pull your dress up!" As Alexander came to this conclusion, suddenly he felt he had been gawking at the still bare, beautiful, milky glands, for too long.

Lady Felicia had not yet covered them.

Hence in a slightly embarrassed tone, he quickly asked her to become decent.

"Ah!" And as if the weight of what she had revealed was so overwhelming that she had forgotten about it all, Lady Felicia at this reminder too pulled a shocked yelp and a rapidly blushed flush, before quickly attempting to tuck them in.

Though in reality, she had very intentionally kept her assets displayed while she had retold her story, a tactic that very much helped in gaining a favorable impression from Alexander.

And working in that same vein, while Lady Felicia was 'trying' to put her bountiful breasts in, she very serendipitously gave one of them a gentle squeeze, causing a tiny jet of milk to squirt out of them, and making the fluid dye the black table cloth a sinful white.

"Mmmnn!" And she immediately followed this up with a soul stirring moan.

"You are pregnant?" Seeing this of course made Alexander's loins very hot, but for now, he was more worried by what it signified, as evidenced by the alarm in his voice.

"Ah, no my lord, rest assured it's nothing. It's just that after Fabiyana, I never stopped milking, *blush*. Apologises!"

The way Lady Felicia blushed at this 'blunder' to the point even her ears went red would have made any actor in the world blush with shame at the skill in display, for the lady appeared as if she wanted to dig into the earth and disappear.

And it was the way Lady Felicia very craftily let this slip that made the entire thing so much more amorous.

And Alexander felt his eyes bulge even more with lust when he saw what was happening, and instead of quickly covering the entire globules and acting like nothing happened, Lady Felicia actually took the time to take a nearby napkin and carefully rubbed the leaking nipple dry, meticulously wiping off the tiny rivulets of white milk that were flowing down the smooth areola.

She used one of her hands to hold the glans and keep it steady, while the other hand rubbed the cloth over her engrossed nipple and the brown colored, large saucer like areola which covered her milky titties.

Seeing this famous act, Alexander very much wanted to be that cloth.

He could see why LL was so confident in poisoning him using those.

'Ah! Those breasts ... Tayin and Mean had just started lactating when I came here, so I did not get a chance to taste them. But now... to think she's lactating for ten years! Oh I really want to have a taste,'

Alexander had recently developed such a preference and his throats felt perched, very much wanting even just one suckle.

A small, irrational part of him even wanted to do it even if it was poisonous.

That was how much beautiful the view was.

Thus Alexander stayed silent as he watched the lady clean herself up, very clearly enjoying the show.

As for Lady Felicia, it was only after she had wiped her breasts multiple times with the cloth that she 'apparently' woke up to the fact what she had been doing, which then made her instantly lower her head in shame,

"Ummm.... The clothes ... it would become stained otherwise ...so ... " Lady Felicia's voice sounded like the murmurs of a shy mosquito like she could not believe she had done such a raunchy thing in front of another man.

But this only added to her charm.

'Darm lady, are you not afraid I will take you forcefully?' And seeing this Alexander suddenly felt his hardness trying to tear out of his pants and his body wanting to do nothing more than to jump on this defenseless woman and have his way with her, even if it was against her will.

Now, under normal circumstances, even if Alexander was shown such a beautiful sight, he would not have had those thoughts.

He might be lustful, but he was not that type of guy.

But these were not normal circumstances

Due to the war, he had been starved of physical intimacy for almost six months, whereas back home we would get to do it multiple times almost every day as the four girls worked to keep him company.

So to say Alexander was pent up would be an understatement.

And coupled with the fact that Lady Felicia's last deadly reveal, the leaking breasts, Alexander had to practice great restraint on his part to keep himself in check.

But finally, after what to him seemed like an eternity, Lady Felicia at last managed to make herself decent, though her face was still tinged red from the previous imbroglio, which in turn made it so much harder for Alexander to concentrate, for just looking her made the recent spring scenery again flash in front of him

And it took a huge effort for Alexander to drown those images out as clearing his throat and shifting his legs around to better accommodate his still eager little brother, he seriously asked,

"So my lady, what do you think we should do with your husband regarding this? How should we treat him if he does open the gates for us?"

There would be no reason to deliberate on what would happen to LL if he resisted.

Alexander had made that clear long before.

But if LL followed through with his words, then Alexander would have to decide on what the 'reward' would be in light of the recent revelations.

And before he made that decision, he invited his wife to put in her two cents.

"*Shake*, that is up to you, my lord," But Lady Felicia was more than clever enough not to step into that minefield, as she solemnly shook her head.

If she asked Alexander to spare her husband and he did, that would make her goal of latching onto Alexander and sleeping with him that much harder.

And if she were to ask him to kill LL, well then she would appear heartless and poisonous.

Worse, it might even alert Alexander to her real intention.

So for now she was more than happy to let Alexander decide.

And if things did not develop as she would have liked, Lady Felicia was confident that she had the tools to try and subtly influence Alexander toward her desired outcome.

'The way he looked at my breasts will those puppy eyes ...hehehe,' The mature lady gleefully hummed in her heart remembering Alexander's reaction when she had shown her leaking breasts.

It was much better than she had originally intended.

Alexander's gaze had been so scalding that Lady Felicia even had the fleeting naughty thought of inviting him to come have a suck.

Chapter 739 Meeting Lady Felicia (Part-6)

"Lord Alexander, the reason why I revealed everything to you is simply because I only want to live a quiet life with my daughter."

"I really do not care for much else."

As Lady Felicia finished Alexander's query about the hypothetical fate of her husband, she afterward added this, before turning to face Alexander and saying in a pleading voice,

"Living with him is no longer possible for us. If he finds out I talkedI ...I will be killed! No ...both of us!"

"That's why I wish for you to give us asylum, my lord!"

At this point, Lady Felicia's voice quickly turned sharp pitched, as she rapidly shook her head,

"We don't need much!"

"I heard that you said that you were willing to give us 200 ropals a month stipend if Lapitus died."

"I just hope that you will consider giving us that and a house in your city."

"I know that this was the original agreement, but please, I'm desperate,"

Saying so the heartbroken lady quickly bowed her head in solemn pleading, her teeth clenched with determination.

And the gesture was so sincere that it made it quite impossible for Alexander to deny the request.

".... Don't worry. Given your contributions, you will not struggle in life," Hence Alexander very seriously made that promise.

After all, taking care of just one woman and a child was of little burden to him.

"Thank you! Thank you, Lord Pasha. Your mercy is truly boundless, We will be eternally grateful to you,"

And this naturally got a torrent of profuse gratitude from the other end, as externally Lady Felicia's face bloomed with a joyous sunflower, glowing with happiness, as she then further expressed her happiness by adding,

"When I came with Fabiyana today, my mind was so preoccupied with all these thoughts, that I even forgot to introduce her to you my lord." she then reminded Alexander of that faux pas that he had long forgotten, before continuing,

"But now with everything revealed...ahhh... my body feels so relaxed,"

Saying so the woman slouched back on her chair, a gentle, motherly smile gracing her face.

Something that Alexander found very charming, while the large breaths she took in relief slowly made his eyes wander towards those rising and falling twin peaks.

'Hehe...' A look that did not escape Lady Felicia as she let out a proud giggle in her heart.

However, although outwardly she appeared very happy at having secured her financials, in her heart, she sneered with the utmost disdain at the paltry sum being offered to her.

'200 ropals a month! I use almost as much in a day!' She said to herself, knowing just how expensive her tastes were and the high standard of living she wanted to live in.

Alexander's 'help' would be of no help to her.

But the present steps were only baby steps, Lady Felicia planned to slowly gain more and more.

As for Alexander, having mostly dealt with Lady Felicia in his mind, he then turned to pose some targeted questions.

"So much influence does your husband have in the city? Do the nobles respect him?"

At hearing this query, Lady Felicia was naturally over the moon.

The implicit reason behind it was very explicit.

So in a flat, neutral tone, Lady Felicia quickly described,

"... umm ...he does not have that much my lord, no. At least not as much as one would think the right-hand man of a city's lord would have."

"In practice, he was only my father's arms and legs, just carrying out what my father said."

"And as he is not a noble, he was never able to gain the respect of any of the houses or even his noble peers."

Lady Felicia intentionally downplayed Lapitus's role in Tibias, though it was to some extent true.

Then to cover her bases, she also cleverly added,

"Of course, that is not to say he is without allies."

"He does have some influence among the lower soldiers who are commoners like him. And some even high-level officers would come to visit our house regularly, to dine, drink and chat with him."

"So he is not totally nameless. Otherwise, the soldiers would not have chosen him to lead them."

"But they mostly follow him more out of camaraderie than loyalty."

"So if one day he wanted to proclaim to be their leader and started issuing orders to them that went against the authorities....I'm not sure they would obey."

Lady Felicia was light in her opinion, not putting emphasis on either option.

But the way she said it of course made everyone think that Lapitus was quite weak.

And so in line with that thought Alexander then posed,

"How many men does he have under him?"

If the previous inquiry was not clear enough, now it was transparent to anybody that Alexander was indeed thinking of taking the man out if given the opportunity. I think you should take a look at

Something that made her heart jump with glee.

So suppressing her urge to curve her lips into a wide grin, Lady Felicia only lightly furrowed her brows, as if ruminating, before giving her answer a while later.

"That is hard for me to say actually. I'm not very intimate with military affairs naturally."

"However I do remember one of the officers once loudly claiming that Lapitus had tens of thousands of men under him."

Saying so, Lady Felicia quickly stressed the following,

"But that was before. Now ... when I asked him about our losses just before coming here, Lapitus said that he had less than a thousand men under him."

"That's why he could not even spare an escort for us."

Lady Felicia very cleverly mixed truths with lies to give a reasonable answer.

It was indeed true that Lapitus had revealed those numbers to her, but he never wanted to let Lady Felicia come here alone.

"Hmmm, " And hearing so Alexander hummed, thinking.

And as Alexander put on his thinking hat, sensing an opportunity, it was here that Lady Felicia decided to take a leap and show off a bit of her skills.

So with a placid smile, she mellifluously interrupted Alexander's train of thought,

"Is my lord thinking that a man who has only one thousand men will not be hard to deal with? Especially if that group's loyalty is questionable."

"Or that even if you were to keep Lapitus alive, with such little influence, he would be of no use to you in placating the citizens of the city?"

Alexander's eyes widened for the third time during this meeting.

But this time it was not because he had seen but what he had heard.

Lady Felicia had almost hit it on the nail word for word.

"Haha, it seems my lord is surprised." And seeing the reaction, Lady Felicia very politely but proudly chuckled, before gently waving her dainty hands and in a humble but confident voice saying,

"You forget who my father was. As his daughter...even if an illegitimate one, I was certainly given the proper education. They would have been useful if I were to have been wed to a noble."

By the end of this, she sounded bitter, and her eyes slightly glassed, like she was ruminating on what might have been.

And seeing so made Alexander curious.

"I seem to have neglected your own story, my lady. Would you mind sharing?" He hence politely asked.

"Haha, it is not much, " And Lady Felicia started with a self-deprecating smile, before revealing,

"My mother was a common tavern dancer. When I was young, she used to say to me that one day my father saw her performing and instantly fell in love with her beauty. And that was how I was born."

"Wherein in reality, he had simply gotten drunk during a party where my mother was hired to perform and Took her," Lady Felicia avoided using that other word, as she continued,

"At first, I lived with my mother in our home. But then suddenly one day, when I was six, some men came to your house. They simply broke through the door and snatched me away!"

"Away from my crying mother!"

"I was not told why they did it. Only that I should be good and do as I'm told or my mother would be hurt."

"So I obediently stayed in the tiny room given to me in that dreadful mansion and tried my best to learn everything being taught to me."

"I learned to read and write, paint and recite poetry, dance, and make small talk."

"I learned about history, about the various noble houses about noble etiquette, and even horse riding."

"Other than the last one, it was all very boring."

"But I still put up with it... for my mother."

And my only solace during those days was the visit I would get from her once every week...just for an hour."

"While my father ...umm ...well he was not uncaring, he did care. For example, he would bring me very expensive gifts almost every month."

"But the thing was he never seemed to be home. He was almost always away fighting some distant wars or putting down rebellions."

At this point of her recount, Lady Felicia sounded more apathetic towards her father than resentful

And then after a pause her tone of a sudden turned very, very bitter, "But one day all of that came crashing down!"

Chapter 740 Meeting Lady Felicia (Part-7)

"I spent the next six years of my life in that mansion, obeying everything that was expected of me."

"But then one day, all of that suddenly came crashing down!"

"Suddenly one day I woke up to find that all my lessons disappeared, all my teachers were dismissed, and everything that was expected of me no longer mattered."

"I was left all alone! Like I once wished I was."

As Lady Felicia said this, her voice sounded hollow and empty.

It was apparent that though she was initially reluctant, somewhere along those long six years, she had grown accustomed to her routine.

In fact, after her initial shock of being taken to this unknown place wore off, Lady Felicia quickly grew to love the cushy life afforded to her.

No longer did she have to eat the hard, almost rock like black bread that was mixed with inedible substances like sawdust.

Now she could eat pure white bread, a loaf of which would have cost her mother her entire day's wage.

No longer did she have to wait for the next year's fall harvest or new year to eat one thin slice of meat.

Now she could eat it three times a day, every day.

No longer did she have to wait one month to eat one single egg, now eggs were served almost with every meal.

And this same standard applied to everything, from her dresses to jewelry to her accommodations.

Everything she was given to eat, wear and live in was the best in the world.

Hence, though not particularly loved by the mansion, Lady Felicia certainly loved the mansion.

So when all that was suddenly taken away from her, the fear and helplessness she felt was like being sucked into an abyss.

Lady Felicia would never forget the way her heart had hurt that day.

And even she found it incredible just how fearful she was of being kicked out of there and being made to live with her mother.

Just a couple of years ago that was her dream.

Oh, how money and materials could change hearts!

But what was the reason why was this stopped?

Or why was she even given such luxury in the first place?

Sensing Alexander's curious gaze regarding these exact queries, after a short pause, Lady Felicia in a languid, dismissive tone replied,

"I would never be told why that happened by anyone."

"But over the years I have been able to piece it together myself."

"It seemed that once I was chosen by my father to marry a nobleman ...as a way for him to ally with the man."

"That's why I was taken from my mother."

"But before I could be properly groomed, he died of an illness. So the deal fell through."

"And I, who had now lost its value was left to the wayside, and*sigh*," Giving off a long, sad sigh, Lady Felicia in a placid, disinterested tone finished, "Well after two years of working in the mansion as a maid, I was married to Lapitus."

"..." Lady Felicia's story was not anything unique, in fact, such instances could be found a dime a dozen in most places and so hearing it, Alexander's heart did not have many waves.

Instead, he calculated that at the time of her marriage, Lady Felicia should be around 14 to 15 years old, which was very normal for the time, and which would make her 25 or 26 now, provided that what she said about her daughter being 10 was correct.

"Why did your father choose Lapitus?" And then Alexander turned his attention to the man, wanting to know more about him and what was so special about him that Lord Ponticus betrothed his daughter to him.

On the query, Lady Felicia was very frank, revealing,

"He saved my father's life during a battle ...took a spear to the stomach. And when he was given the choice of a reward for his bravery, he asked for my hand."

"And my father was very glad to let go of a freeloader like me." Up to this point, Lady Felicia's tone was very mechanical, like a very poor recitation of drab poetry, like the life she was retelling was not of her, but of an unknown stranger.

She did not at all appear bitter or sad at her fate being controlled like this.

Up until that point that was.

For then her tone suddenly turned melancholic and rueful.

"At this, I was very happy initially. Lapitus and I knew each other from almost the first day. He was the son of the mansion's steward and took care of the horses. We would regularly meet during my equestrian lessons."

"So I thought that I at last could have some love that was ever so absent in my life ...hahaha," Lady Felicia let out a very convincing hollow, self depreciating chuckle as if she was laughing at herself for having those naive thoughts.

Then shaking her head, with a mournful breath she claimed, "In truth, he only ever wanted me for my beauty. My life with him... *sigh*..."

Lady Felicia made it seem like she was reluctant to discuss the couple's very personal problems with an outsider, only finishing by saying, "The only good thing that came out of it was my Fabiyana."

Saying so Lady Felicia's eyes appeared glassed and teary.

"....." And as she finished the heavily embellished retelling of her life, Alexander did not know exactly how to comfort her.

Saying things like, 'You will be safe with me from now' or something along that line sounded overly familiar and would give the wrong impression.

So Alexander tried to veer the conversation by asking, "Your fatherdo you not like him? For what he did?"

And this was actually a trap question.

Because in this time and age, it was the norm for fathers to choose the man for their daughters.

No decent girl would ever put the blame for their family troubles on their father's choice of partners.

So by asking this, Alexander wanted to see Lady Felicia's character.

But being the shrewd woman she was, of course, Lady Felicia could see this 'childish' attempt from a mile away.

So putting on a facade of finality, she heavily shook her head,

"No, never! How could I? Although he was not perfect, he always tried his best to make it up to me and my mother."

"He tried to make time for me and always gave me the best clothes, the best food, and the best teachers."

"Even most of the dresses and jewelry I wear now were gifted to me by him."

Lady Felicia's answer seemed to resolve one of the great mysteries in Alexander's heart, while the woman Lady Felicia continued,

"And he was generous even towards my mother. He once contemplated taking her as his official mistress."

"But in the meantime, my mother seemed to have fallen in love with a traveling merchant.

"And when he found out, not only did he punish her, he even allowed her to follow the man to his city! He even gave them some money as a wedding gift!"

"As for my marriage with Lapitus, well it was done with the best of intentions. My father, like me, thought he was a man of straight morals."

"But who knew he would be such a wolf in sheep's clothing!"

Lady Felicia shook her head in melancholy for the umpteenth time, drawing quite a bit of sympathy from Alexander.

Of course, it had to be said that most of all what she said were lies.

The only truth here was how she and Lapitus got married.

Other than that everything was fabricated to suit her narrative.

Lapitus was no abusive husband, in fact, he was caring to almost a fault.

Her father Lord Ponticus rarely looked at her, never mind living and caring for her.

Her mother did not leave the city with his lover.

In fact, it was Lady Felicia who forced her to leave by handing her a bag of money and saying these biting words, 'It would be too shameful for a nobleman's wife to have a whore for a mother. Please disappear and never contact me again, Do not ruin your daughter's life again.'

It would be hard to imagine just how poisonous those words would have sounded to a mother.

And after all the pain and struggle she had endured for her.

But thinking about her daughter's future, Lady Felicia's mother did exactly so.

With a broken heart and weeping eyes, she left the city she had lived her whole life in, leaving everyone she knew and all the connections behind.

Just for her beloved daughter.

And since her daughter had asked, the two had no contact with each other for the previous ten years,

Lady Felicia did not know where she was or even if she was alive.

As for all of her expensive dresses, well she had gotten those using very dubious means.

But she everything had said to Alexander, she said it in such a way that would be very hard to verify.

After all, regardless of whether Lapitus opened the gates or Alexander's men stormed them, the fate of everyone in the mansion would be the same.

They would not be alive to counter Lady Felicia's claims.