

## **Herald 771**

### Chapter 771 Addressing The Tibians

After Alexander was given a tour of the impressive library and shown the magnificent scenery it overlooked, Alexander was then taken out of the front building to explore the other parts.

As for the third floor of the building that remained yet unexplored, Lapitus off handedly informed him that place was mostly abandoned.

It contained another set of bedrooms but was only opened when a lot of guests visited, like the king and his many entourage.

So Lapitus then Alexander took to visit perhaps the most lavish of the rooms- the grand ballroom.

The huge hall was placed behind the main building, in an almost separate house of its own, which was one of the reasons Lapitus was able to kill everyone without alerting others.

Upon entering this huge room, Alexander's foot found itself stepping on a floor covered in a huge luxurious red and white fur carpet with intricate golden stickwork, which Lapitus informed being sewn out of real gold threads.

The walls were draped with ornate tapestry and intricate mosaics, while the high ceilings featured intricate moldings and gilding made using gold leaf, with numerous massive chandeliers

hanging down from them like gigantic, metallic fruits.

And lately, to fill the room, there were luxurious tables, candelas, and beautiful potted plants, though Alexander noticed the room to be emptier than he would have expected.

And the reason was because many of the furniture broke when Lapitus had initiated his attack, as many people tumbled or knocked them over, breaking them.

But still, it was a very luxurious room, fit to entertain any king, with the only sore spot that Alexander could spot was the carpet.

It was a very beautiful carpet no doubt, but along many points there were deep, reddish, almost matt black stains on it.

And even before Lapitus could explain, Alexander knew where they came from.

It seemed no amount of scrubbing could get all the blood out.

'Pity... looks like I will have to throw it out.' And seeing so Alexander lampooned a bit, observing the spots being too big and numerous to hide with tables or over coverings.

Which was a true shame since Alexander guessed the thing should have cost close to a hundred thousand ropals.

And worse, it was not like he could even sell the darn thing.

Who would buy a bloodstained carpet, no matter how great its stickwork was?

So the best Alexander would be able to do was tear it down for the fur.

But such regretful musings lasted only a second, as he was then taken out on tour of the rest of the mansions.

He was shown the two pools along with how they were supplied with underground channels, the various beautifully lawned gardens, furnished with swings, decorative arches and one even containing a small maze, the stables housing many of Lord Ponticus's prized steeds and lastly the temple, which even had its own crypt.

The temple even had an old priest who was still there even though almost every one of the servants who could run had fled.

The old man even had some spine in him as upon seeing Alexander, not only did he cower, but clenched his teeth and growled, "This is a place of rest for the ancestral spirits. Only those related can enter."

Tibian did not believe in gods per se but worshiped their dead ancestors.

Facing the old man, Lapitus and his group appeared more than ready to cut him down, and if looks could kill the old man too would have killed Lapitus given what he had done.

But disinterested in shedding any blood, Alexander only pleasantly smiled,

"Reverent, I mean no disrespect. I have only come to pay my respects to the ancestral spirits. Since this is my home now, I only felt this was basic courtesy. Please."

This gentle, polite answer surprised the old man, and though he had a lot to say about how this was not Alexander's home, he reluctantly stepped aside to let Alexander enter.

It really helped to have good manners.

The entire tour of the mansion took Alexander hours, and by the end, it was nearing midday.

So at this point Lapitus very eagerly let him know that they had prepared a great feast for him.

Something which caused Alexander to frown a bit.

Not at the feast of course, but at the timing, for he had a speech to give around that time.

And feasts tended to last to last hours and sometimes even days.

So Alexander decided to postpone the meal to after it.

Thus only having a small snack to fill themselves, Alexander and his entourage exited the mansion and headed to the market square where Melodias had already finished setting up the makeshift stage.

And it was truly a makeshift stage- made of just a huge high table, possibly one of those that were used to host a banquet, with a wooden plank slated against it to climb up.

Circling all around it were rows and rows of armed legionnaires in blue, numbering close to a thousand, all wielding shields and swords, ready to defend their lord from any attacks.

While around them were an ocean of people, all looking at those men with fear in their eyes, their faces dirty, exhausted, and sunken.

The countenances of the crowd clearly reflected the kind of ordeal they were made to suffer for the last three days or even the last five months.

'Melodias did a good job gathering so many so quickly,' And getting on stage to see the vast masses, Alexander was pleased by the numbers.

"My friends and subjects!" He began his address from atop his horse, making him appear grand and powerful,

"I know that many of you are fearful of the future. You fear what will happen to you. But let me reassure you that we are not the monsters your lords have proclaimed. They are liars!"

"I swear things will only be better from now on. Even better than before!"

Alexander pumped his fist saying so,

"For my first promise, I, Alexander, Pasha of Zanzan hereby swear that citizens of all ages who have managed to escape detection are free to leave their hiding places throughout the city and come out into the open. They shall be free to return to their houses and no harm will come to them, nor will any questions be asked."

The reason why Alexander said this was because once a city was captured, many of its inhabitants were turned into slaves.

And many times this did not have to be ordered by the higher ups, like when the Romans intentionally sold every single Carthaginian after the Third Punic War.

Something it was something the soldiers did themselves, selling them to nearby slave traders.

That was also why slave traders tended to follow armies.

So as of right now, after Alexander's declarations, forcefully turning anyone into slaves became illegal in Thesalie.

This first promise was nothing unusual, being the standard rule or more like the custom of the time.

So there was not much reaction, except perhaps a sigh of relief from the masses at being reassured that they were not going to be outright slaughtered or sold as their lords and ancestors had warned.

But though Alexander's first promise received a lukewarm response, his next one produced quite a commotion,

"As for my second promise, I Pasha Alexander swear to bear the cost of rebuilding and restoration of all houses and property destroyed in this war! Those who have had their houses will get a brand new one and those those who have abandoned the city before the siege can return to their without fear. They will be treated according to their rank as if nothing had changed."

Alexander's promise was quite unusual for the time, and the latter half was not something he had offered before, either when taking Adhan or Zanzan.

And the reason for that was simple.

That part mainly affected the nobles and rich merchants and back then, Alexander was busily carving those benefits for himself and his retainers.

But now that there was no such pressing need, he was willing to share.

But though Alexander's latter part was the noteworthy one, it was the former part that drew many incredulous gasps.

"What! Did I hear right?"

"My home! I can get back my home?"

"Oh, finally a roof!"

Most of the gathered were common folks who only cared that Alexander was going to give them a home.

Allowing a bit of time for the disturbance to subside, Alexander then continued,

"For lastly for my third promise, I promise to compensate all citizens for their hardships.

All will be provided two free meals a day until the end of this month, as well as receive three hundred libra in gold!"

Tibias's most common currency was libra, which was roughly half the value of a ropal, so Alexander basically promised a month's wage along with meals.

This was Alexander's standard tactic after taking a city, but like before, it was seen as such a generous move that it produced a far greater cheer than the previous one.

"Wooo! Hoooo! Ahhhhh!" As soon as he finished saying this, a thunderous cheer erupted, a din so large that the soldiers guarding the stage were shocked to the point of almost drawing swords, with some of the men thinking that the crowd was getting ready to charge.

But soon cheers like this began to drift out of the crowd,

"Long live Lord Alexander"

"Glory to him, ruler of Zanzan."

"Praise to the benevolent Pasha!"

Chapter 772 Lapitus and the People (Part-1)

The nucleus of the cheers that originated in the crowd, if one looked, could have been traced to a handful few, all planted by Melodias.

This was not something Alexander had instructed the man to do but he did after learning from seeing Alexander.

And Alexander appreciated it, for infected by these men, the crowd too began to chant similar words soon, albeit in a much lower octave.

Most were not as enthusiastic to cheer for the man who had made them go through what they did.

At least not yet.

But still Alexander's promise of food and money did work to alleviate some of the grievances they had.

They could rest easy about not having to worry about starving or becoming destitute.

That 300 libra might not be able to change their life, or even compensate for how much they were robbed, but if every single one of the family were to get it, including the four to six children each family had, well it could certainly help them get back on their feet, and who knows, perhaps even start anew.

So given Alexander had shown himself to be a generous lord, many of them felt hopeful that their future might not be so hellish under Zanzan rule as their ancestors had forewarned.

As for the more clever ones in the crowd, especially those who could do the math, they were much more surprised by the display of Alexander's wealth.

They calculated that with the city having a hundred thousand, the meals and money would cost him at least 20 million ropals.

And though this was a large sum even to Alexander, to Tibians it was astronomical.

So these sharp minded individuals even began to look forward to being under such a wealthy patron.

Of course, such shrewd and visionary fellows could be counted on one hand, and most were only looking forward to Alexander's cash prize, and even though after the battle the city certainly did not have its pre-war numbers, but still, this along with the house restoration would not be chump change for Alexander.

But still, it was a necessary expense no matter how Alexander saw it.

Alexander kept his own speech very succinct, knowing after the ordeal no one was eager to hear Alexander's ramblings.

That was why he did not make grand promises like improving the living conditions or creating more jobs.

Instead, he kept his words limited to those three promises and after the crowd had time to calm down a bit, Alexander then gestured for Lapitus to get up on stage with him, for a move that they had discussed already.

The man had been initially surprised when Alexander asked him to accompany him to the square, much preferring to stay at the mansion and organize the documents Alexander wanted as quickly as possible to make time to visit his wife afterward.

But when Alexander insisted, he knew he was in no position to decline.

And along the way, he was also informed why the man wanted him.

It was to reward him, to elevate his position among the people, and to make him announce some things that Alexander felt embarrassed to announce.

Lapitus climbed up the stage to stand next to Alexander, his head reaching Alexander's chest.

And once he revealed himself, at once he sensed a sea of gazes fall on him.

Almost all were negative, with eyes of scorn, hate, and even fury, for the people seemed to know who was to blame for their misfortune.

They knew it was Lapitus who killed the lords and opened the gates, and though they did not say it out aloud, they blamed him for all that happened afterward.

In fact, judging by their stares, the disgust they felt for Lapitus might have been larger than even Alexander and his men.

After all, Alexander was the enemy and an outsider.

It was only natural that he would be hostile towards them.

But Lapitus, he was a Tibian, born and raised in this very city.

So the people were appalled to learn of his treachery, and how he broke his oath.

To them, the very act appeared to be blasphemous to their ancestor.

Thus for the man himself, feeling these stares, Lapitus felt a bit ashamed, and he wanted to even shrink his body.

While Alexander seeing this only sneered at the crowd,

'Heh! Just a few days ago you were begging him to open the gates. And now that he has done exactly that, now that he has saved you from certain slaughter you suddenly turn to hating him? For something he even had no part in? Heh! Truly 'people' are despicable.'

The reaction of the crowd brought much disdain in Alexander, for if he really had carried out the massacre as promised, he was cocksure that almost all the people standing in front of him would prefer what happened to them now but the alternative.

But were they grateful?

No, they only saw Lapitus for the pain they brought him, not the salvation.

But this type of ungratefulness should be solely attributed to the Tibians.

That's why Alexander did not say 'you people'.

But he said 'people' as in the general concept of a group of persons.

Even if you do a hundred good things for them, many times they will only remember that one bad thing that happened.

And it was because of this that Alexander had brought Lapitus up to the stage to remind the crowd.

Once Lapitus, in his fiery, red armor placed himself behind Alexander, he introduced,

"Fellow citizens, I believe this man is known to you all, Ser Lapitus. He was the first one to see the error of those arrogant lords and took up the great burden of opening the gates."

"He knew it would be a great sin to break his oath, but he did so anyway, willing to bear the guilt if meant he could save the city and its citizens."

"Many of you might see him as a traitor. And an oathbreaker. But remember! He is your savior. And if not for his brave actions on that day, a fate much worse than now might have awaited your city."

"On that day the Goddess Gaia took pity on you, and convinced your ancestral spirits, letting Lapitus be their champions, thus sparing the city."

"Hence, for his valiant effort of saving Thesalie, I declare Lapitus to be a noble, a Shordar (Baron) of Adhania!"

Alexander's loud proclamation sent a whirlpool of murmur across the gathered crowd, as almost everyone seemed to have an opinion about this.

There were those who swallowed everything Alexander told whole, as turning to their adjacent men they nodded,

"Right, right. What happened was not Lapitus's fault. He really did save us."

"So that it was the ancestors. No wonder."

To others did not buy Alexander's bullshit wholesale, murmuring to themselves,

'Heh, so this is how he rewards a traitor. Isn't he afraid he is going to get backstabbed himself?'

This type of think of course only belonged to the smart ones in the public, while the majority were a lot more confused, asking each other,

"Huh? Is that really what happened?"

"Did our ancestors really say so?"

Alexander was fine letting the crowd talk among themselves about their skepticism.

As long as they talked, he could make them swallow the things he came up with.

But he did not want them to be doing so right now.

So drowning out these hushed murmurs, he proclaimed,

"And because of his great contribution, he has asked me for gifts for you. And I have granted them. Hear them if you so wish."

Saying these mysterious words, Alexander then let Lapitus take the stage,

"\*Ahem\*," Facing such a large crowd? Lapitus first felt like clearing his throat, hiding the nervousness with it.

The man might have led armies to war, but surprisingly found addressing such a huge crowd intimidating.

But still trying his best to recall what Alexander asked him to talk about he began, starting with a friendly address,

"Friends and brothers and sisters of Thesalie, I'm here to inform you that Lord Alexander has agreed to let us worship our ancestors without any persecution. In return for my loyalty, he has promised the sanctity of all our temple, its priests, and all the valuables inside."

"He is truly a magnanimous ruler"

Lapitus's voice sounded very sincere at this point, though the reason for it was not exactly the freedom of religion he was preaching.

It was because of the nobility he was granted.

When Alexander had told him about it along the way, doing so in a casual off handed manner, like it was of no real significance, Lapitus had initially felt Alexander was joking.

And it was only now, after Alexander had made the declaration public did the fact truly start to sink in.

And Lapitus was certainly overwhelmed by it.

For if there was in his life that he truly desired, it was the title of nobility.

The want was almost innate like it existed in every man, but it was also because, one- after his grandfather and father's contributions of Lord Ponticus's family, it was generally accepted he was going to be made one.

But more importantly, it was because he wished to be worthy of his wife.

And now he had.

Chapter 773 Lapitus and the People (Part-2)

Even since Lapitus became aware his wife was a princess, he always felt a bit inferior to her, knowing she was nobility and he was not.

But now, finally, they could be said to belong to the same social strata.

A shordar (baron) of a superpower like Adhania and an illegitimate princess of a small country like Tibias was actually not a bad match.

'I knew siding with him was the right choice,' Lapitus hence happily hummed.

While the crowd hearing they were free to practice their faith let out another sigh of relief.

Given that Adhania was largely a theocracy, they had assumed that they would either be given the option to convert or be burnt at the stake.

That was how Adhania had expanded to its current size after all.

And this was also the main reason Tibian tended to hate Adhania and resist them so much.

They saw themselves as the last bastion of their culture.

But given Alexander was not an Adhanaian, he saw no reason to dump the religion on them.

In fact, he would actively prevent from worshipping Ramuh, for that would only benefit Ptolomy.

As for his own religion of Gaia, well Alexander had plans to make people accept it without resorting to violence.

"Benevolent Pasha!"

"May the ancestral spirits bless you."

"Long live Captain Lapitus."

Hearing the promise of safeguards of their culture, many such cheers resounded out of the crowd, adding much of Lapitus's confidence in continuing in his speech.

Originally Lapitus felt afraid and ashamed to come in front of them, especially so soon after the atrocities.

But given his current reception, with a great nod, he began again,

"The Great Pasha furthermore has agreed to take my one and only daughter Fabiyana as his concubine."

"And as a gesture of favor to her has asked her to choose any gift she would like."

"My daughter chose nothing for herself, but asked only of him to favor you- the people of Thesalie!"

"The benevolent lord has gifted the city three years of tax exemption!"

Lapitus's last words were shouted out, and

"Woohhooooooooo!"

No sooner had they left his mouth, the crowd erupted into a joyous chorus, jumping on their feet, clapping and whistling.

Their cheer was much larger than even when Alexander promised to give them cash, for nothing got the people going like tax exemptions.

And soon many chants began to waft out, glorifying both Alexander and Lapitus.

And this time, both the volume and sincerity appeared to reach its peak.

Seeing and hearing the crowd praise his names like so, Lapitus felt a sense of elation he had yet to experience.

It was truly magnificent and swept up by the crowd, he began to pump his hands and make other gestures to stimulate the crowd.

While Alexander kept a light smile externally but half sneered in his heart.

There was a reason why Alexander did not declare this particular promise himself, even though he could have taken all the credit himself.

One was because he wanted to show that he rewarded those that sided with him.

So the peerage he presented Lapitus with was his way to reward the man materialistically.

While allowing him to make those two announcements let him earn favor with the populace who was likely very dissatisfied with him.

Alexander hoped that by seeing this, other potential defectors would not be burdened between choosing Alexander and the people.

He wanted to show by following him they could have both.

Of course, in reality, only a few defector would get as favorable treatment as Lapitus.

After all, Lapitus was the first one to come to him and Alexander planned to show him as an example, as a role model.

He could never be the norm.

Hence the generosity he showed to Lapitus was largely out of propaganda purposes, to make the people spread Lapitus's story of success, of the correctness of his move, and the adoration of the people that brought it.

There was also another reason behind it.

And that had got to do with what Lady Felicia wanted.

She wanted Alexander to kill Lapitus and hand the city over to her to rule.

But aside from the inherent distrust he had for the woman, the biggest problem was that the people would not buy it.

Anyone would be able to guess how Lady Felicia got that job.

Which is why Alexander made Lapitus bring up his daughter and attribute the whole tax exemption to Fabiyana, his concubine.

This relationship would make any subsequent story he could to tell a far easier sell.

Alexander even considered that no matter if he eliminated Lapitus or Lady Felicia since Fabiyana would be always with him, he could put whoever he liked in the place.

Hence the half sneer in his heart.

Alexander was pretty proud of this move if he said so himself, having come up with it after a few days of thinking.

Unaware of such deadly machinations going on inside the head of the man who just made him a noble, Lapitus then moved on to his topic of the speech.

And it was the grimest.

He was even worried that all the favors he managed to earn would wash away after saying this.

But he knew he had to recite it anyway, as talking about such stuff was not suitable for a pasha like Alexander.

"And for my last favor to the people of the city, all prisoners captured in the war will be available to be ransomed."

"Lord Pasha wanted to initially place the ransom at the standard rate of 10,000 libras per soldier, and 30,000 to 50,000 libras for officers."

"But in his benevolence he has decided to half them, so you can free your relatives for only 5,000 libras."

Lapitus claimed so with as much alacrity as possible, but this happy news did get the roaring cheer one would expect.

Because for most these people be it 10,000 or 5,000 libras, they were both equally unattainable.

Now, Alexander's decreased price was really generous.

Given that 1 ropal equaled 2 libra, Alexander was offering these good, strong men for only 2,500 ropals, which was half their market value- 5,000 ropals.

But the fact was most common citizens did not have even that much money, even if they had not been robbed blinded just now.

Perhaps those wealthy individuals who stored their money in the temple could afford it, as the soldiers were strictly forbidden to sack those.

But those were only a small fraction, and even many among them might not have enough.

And in that case, Alexander really had no way to help.

These men waged war against him and he would not just let them go.

That discounted price was already the limit of his benevolence.

And even to get that, Alexander had to engage in several rounds of negotiations with the slave traders.

The two of them in total had captured 15,000 to 20,000 men and it was estimated that after the sacking perhaps at best 5,000 men would be liberated while others would be taken as prisoners of war.

As for these prisoners of war, Alexander planned to buy them from the slave traders at market price, letting those merchants profit, and then use the labor in his industries.

As for how long, this was revealed by Lapitus's subsequent declaration,

"But even if you cannot buy them, worry not. For they will be still working here or in Zanzan.

They will not be sold to any other places."

"You can even go visit them once a month."

"And such is my lord's benevolence that he has even promised to free them after five years of service if they show good behavior."

"Glory to him!"

Lapitus really was a quick learner when it came to boot licking and his declaration did bring much needed glow back to the crowd, with many joining their new lord in his cheer.

Alexander spotted many smiles blooming too, for when one was captured and made into a slave, he usually lost any and all contact with his family, being sold to any master who lived god knew where.

And this was perhaps a bigger heartbreak for them than the loss of freedom.

Thus Alexander's promise was truly a godsend for all those gathered.

After all, everyone here had lost someone in his war, and so who knows, perhaps they were still alive.

With this declaration, Lapitus's speech reached its final point and this was the thing he was most dreading.

Lapitus even suspected Alexander passed this pot to him because he did not want to dirty himself.

But he knew he had do it.

"And lastly, those who have been taken slaves by the soldiers will be put up for auction one week from now."

"Please try to gather your funds by then."

"That is all."

Lapitus was very short and quick in saying these words finishing in a single breath and getting off the stage immediately, for he knew the people would be averse to this news.

Though this was standard practice for the time.

When an army sacked the city, they would usually forcibly take a lot of citizens as slaves, and then sell them in auctions for a profit.

#### Chapter 774 The Slave Market of Thesalie (Part-1)

The practice of taking slaves when sacking a city was almost like an unwritten rule.

That did not happen when Alexander took Adhan or Zanzan because those cities had their own unique circumstances.

One was the capital and given Amenheraft was about to attack, turning the citizens into slaves was a moot point.

As for the other, well that was Alexander's capital, and turning the citizens into slaves was also a moot point.

But Thesalie was different and upon taking it, many citizens were captured to be slaves by the slaves.

In fact Alexander was sure that if he were to return to his camp right now, he would not only find every tent overflowing with gold, jewelry, fabric, etc. but also many beautiful girls and even boys.

The soldiers would enjoy them for a few days and then sell them off to slave traders for a profit.

And though Alexander hated this practice to his core, this was such a basic, fundamental practice of the time that he knew would be burned to cinders even if he just attempted to touch it.

This was both a reward for the soldiers and a crucial source of their income.

Because remember, each of them only got 50 to 100 ropals a month in cash after having all sorts of expenses such as food and equipment deducted from them.

This amount of money might be enough for a single soldier, but for those with a family, it would be really living on a shoestring, even with the rations Alexander provided.

So the soldiers had to supplement their income in other ways, like by acquiring loot and booty.

Thus if Alexander tried to stop the auction, he would be trying to stop these soldiers from putting food on their children's plates.

That would lead to only one thing, a disaster.

The soldiers would either start stealing military supplies, take up a side business, or directly rebel.

Now, the remedy to this would be Alexander simply paying them more, but he simply did not have the capability.

And even if he did, it might not be a good thing for him.

Because if he gave them everything, the soldiers would be just content to sit in their camp and only defend their land.

Whereas Alexander wanted his soldiers to always be hungry for loot, to be eager to fight, to go out and conquer new pastures.

And for these pragmatic reasons, Alexander perpetuated this practice even if he did not like it.

The gathering ended in quite an anticlimactic way, with Lapius almost scampering off the stage after making the announcement about the auction, not at all a dignified way one would expect a nobleman to leave.

But the crowd was not in the mood to judge.

For far more of their attention was taken up by the worry about collecting the money to free their kin.

Although had Alexander promised them a lot of free things, so much so that they would not have to worry about survival, but now came another issue.

And facing this predicament they began to scramble their heads how to collect the money.

The usual avenues of borrowing from friends and family were not available given they themselves had people to save.

So many turned to that one group of people -dreaded loan sharks, who facing this huge surge of customers felt like it was Christmas meeting 4th of July.

They jacked up their interests to values seen only a few times before, asking for returns not in terms of percentages but in terms of 'times', meaning they wanted their principals doubled or even tripled.

But even then people were willing to pay these, so their desperation as such.

And among them perhaps the most desperate ones were the men who both had their sons taken as prisoner of war and their wives and daughters as slaves to be sold in auction.

Who would they choose to save?

They certainly did not have enough money to buy everyone back.

Would it be their son who could be another breadwinner alongside them?

Or their wife with whom they swore to spend the rest of their life?

Or perhaps the daughter who was the frailest and hence would otherwise suffer the most if turned into a slave?

Few men were tested in life with such a cruel dilemma.

And as the crowd dispersed such thoughts haunted many minds.

The ransom for the prisoners and slave auction would take place over the next few weeks, held outside the walls to accommodate the huge numbers.

A breathtakingly huge new market would seemingly spring out of nowhere to host it, and there the captured would be displayed in batches of twenty to thirty spread across various open-air stalls.

The captured prisoners of war would not be bound as one would assume but just kept in enclosed fences where they could freely move around.

Potential buyers would walk around these fences and look for any slave that might catch their fancy,

And to aid in that endeavor, the men were kept bare with only perhaps a loincloth, thus showing off their well-built physique.

That way the buyers would be able to easily spot the strong ones as well as ones with physical defects.

Furthermore, these slaves would be prevented from sitting or resting by their overseeing slavers or guards nearby, who would bark or beat them if they did so.

Instead, they were told to always keep walking or at least standing, to better show off their body. And though this sounded easy, it was not as easy as it seemed.

Not to mention the sheer exhaustion that came with standing on one's legs from dawn to dusk with little rest, but also given the entire market was set up right under the open sky, with no shade, the scorching August sun would soon begin to toast these men.

And combined with the dust and general crowd of the market, by the end of the day most of these men would be able to barely stand.

And that was if they remained in their enclosure until the end of the day.

For if any of the passersby liked what he saw, he could ask the nearby slaver who doubled as a salesman to bring that man closer so that he could get a closer look.

And if the subsequent inspection went well and a favorable price could be reached, a sale would be made and the slave would follow his master to his home, his past being left in the trash can of history.

The entire place was designed much like an animal farm, where one could simply come and buy another human like any farm animal.

And the slaves were undoubtedly treated as such.

When buying a slave, like one would touch a horse to feel its pelt to ensure it had no fleas or other skin conditions, or look at its legs to see its muscles, or its stomach to see its fat before buying it, the buyer would too touch and feel the man's various places, such as his arms, shoulders, and thighs and for those who had the taste, even his butt, and lower parts with no shame or consideration for the other party.

Furthermore like how animals would relieve themselves in the open, the slaves too only had a bucket, where they would do their thing in view of everyone.

It was humiliating and degrading, but that was the only option.

And taking advantage of that there were even some perverts that ogled and enjoyed it.

But what were the prisoners going to do?

Find a private toilet?

Even the free slavers did not have that luxury.

They did their small acts at any roadside curb and the big act behind bushes.

And given this practice, as well as the number of people present here, who all needed to perform normal bodily functions, the stench created by all this open disposal of waste could be imagined.

And if they were to be combined with the sweat and spit of all the men as well as the huge amount of dust kicked up by the dry summer sun, it made sure that the slave market was no picnic.

But it was a place that Alexander decided to tour, where he came into view of those very scenes, but more than being disgusted by it, upon seeing it, he vividly recalled his own past.

He remembered how shocked he was to see such practice for the first time.

He had read about it in books, but experiencing it for himself was whole another thing.

Especially when he was the product being sold, penned inside an enclosure like an animal.

He still remembered looking at all the passersby who passed him with great envy and disbelief, wishing he could switch places with even the lowest beggar.

At least that person was free.

And he remembered the long hours he would be made to stand or be beaten otherwise.

How he was fed food that was barely distinguished from animal feed, and how scared he was by some of the looks men used to give him.

Alexander knew what happened to young boys.

And he had felt that same fear when he was bought by Nestoras.

But look at him now, how fate had changed.

Chapter 775 The Slave Market of Thesalie (Part-2)

Visiting the slave market did make Alexander a bit emotional, bringing up many lost memories.

Once he too was inside those fences.

And there was once a time he would have given almost anything to be just a freeman.

Not even a citizen, but a freeman.

But by the machinations of fate, somehow he had become someone who these people coming to buy the slaves could only look up in awe and reverence.

Far from a weak slave, now he was perhaps one of the most powerful men in not just Adhanaia, but in the whole region, and the realization of so made Alexander a bit wistful.

Oh, how the table had turned.

Alexander thought about such as he walked along the narrow lanes flanked by penned enclosures on both sides, where the men were being bought and sold.

These men had mostly listless faces and the reason for it was not only because they were about to be made slaves.

It was perhaps more so because many still had relatives who came to see them every day, but most of the time this meeting only ended up in tears, for they were unable to raise the ransom to free them.

Or sometimes they would only afford one, perhaps one among many brothers or the husband or the son.

Such choices should have been agonizing for anyone.

And even if they were freed, the celebratory hugs and happiness were many times short lived, for the price paid was many times too much.

Using up all their saving, selling off their house and property, or worse borrowing from loan sharks.

All those were dreadful costs.

Especially the last one, as it was very common for people to be not able to pay back their loans and that would mean switching one slave master for another for the ransomed.

But people still did it, to avoid becoming slaves.

While others tried to find a far more creative method.

Given Alexander's reduced price, the family members would get some wealthy individual to sponsor them, promising to either pay them back or have the ransomed man serve them for a designated time period, the exact details varying case by case, though generally, the conditions would not be too harsh for this kind of deal given Alexander promised them freedom after five years.

And this way the family members could rest assured, knowing where their loved one lived and what kind of master they were under.

After all, these people had no idea what kind of a master Alexander was or what he was going to make these prisoners do.

And it was also something these rich folks would be happy to do given they would be able to get a good slave at a cheap price.

So this way, the man would be officially ransomed but in reality he would be a slave for that wealthy patron for a few years.

It was a good strategy, with the only hard part being knowing a wealthy family.

And lastly, there was another strategy.

That was a wealthy family or patron approaching these captured men, offering to buy them for a period of indenture.

But this last tactic was easier said than done.

Alexander strictly forbade such profiteering so it was not like you could simply pay the 2,500 ropas and ransom someone.

If that was possible, it would be easy for a rich noble to buy up huge quantities of his 'relatives' in one shot, while turning them into slaves surreptitiously.

That would defeat the point of giving the people a chance to buy their relatives.

Hence all such sale records were meticulously documented, including the name and address of the purchaser, and when paying the ransom the buyer even had to show proof of knowing the slave.

Most of the time it only involved knowing the name of the slave prior, but other times it might require showing a unique item like a ring.

And besides, the slavers around there were no green men, they had been doing this job for decades and the vast amount of human interaction let them develop a sixth sense where they knew when a man genuinely recognized someone or was just faking it.

So at best, these rich families were only able to swindle one or two slaves away, hardly worth the risk for most.

Hence mostly the ones who did this were rich, widowed women or widower men with a particular taste, who wanted good strong men, like one fit to be soldiers.

For what you ask- well aside from doing all the hard work, and keeping watch over the house, what else?

And since as mentioned before a slave market like this was not suitable for a woman to visit, they would send their servants to try and find some suitable toys for themselves.

Alexander got all such reports from various sources and let them happen as long as the amount of purchase was not too outrageous.

The effort that would take to stop each and every one of these attempts was too much.

So instead he had decreed that the first week the men could not be bought, but only ransomed and freed.

This would not only stymie such practices but also give the captured's relatives enough time to raise the required money and even locate their man among all others.

After all, finding that one man among 15,000 to 20,000 was no easy feat, especially since many did not even know if their loved one was alive or slain in battle.

As for the current timeline when Alexander was touring the market, well as of now the sale of the slaves was going on for two weeks.

And though Alexander promised to buy all unsold slaves, he was forced to backtrack a bit on that.

And the reason for this was the unexpectedly low ransomed numbers.

Alexander had 15,000 to 20,000 in his captivity, the reason for this being a range and not an exact number due to the fact that the prisoners were being held by a lot of individuals, many of whom had incentives to underreport to Alexander, in order to sell the remaining secretly at a much greater profit.

So when Alexander read the official number to be 16,000, he took it to mean that in reality, it was really 20,000.

And based on that, he had expected at least 5,000 would be freed.

But after the week, only around 2,000 were able to raise the money.

This came as a shock to Alexander, as learning of this he even commented, 'Tibians are poorer than expected.'

Though perhaps he forgot how his army had robbed them blind.

Anyway, this was bad news for him.

For although he would have loved to buy those 13,000 to 18,000 for himself, not only the price tag of around 70 to 90 million ropals be huge, even straining his coffers, but as some of his retainers pointed out, this would leave the lands around Thesalie too vacant.

The city had already lost a lot of men in the battle, and if Alexander were to take so many off top of that, then there might not simply be enough men to even work the fields here.

And without enough food, Alexander would simply be waiting for a disaster to happen.

So he decided to sell around 5,000 men in the open market.

However that solution came with its own set of problems.

It mainly had to do with fulfilling his promise of giving the prisoners their freedom after five years.

If anyone could buy them, there was a great chance some would be taken to distant lands, perhaps to even different countries.

After all, Alexander's slave sale was very big, and knowing of his accomplishments, not only wealthy individuals from the areas surrounding Thesalie, but even many neutral nobles who lived near the border of the two countries came to see him, both to offer their congratulations, as well as to peruse the wares.

If these people were to purchase them, tracking them would be impossible.

In fact, Alexander knew such clandestine deals that already happened to a limited existed.

And it was not even among nobles and the traders but among Tibians themselves.

Alexander knew that after his victory against Lord Ponticus, many of the people from nearby villages, who had come to him to seek refuge, too aid in the capture of some of the escaping soldiers.

And many times the slave traders would gift one or two of those captured men as reward for their services.

Really capturing one's fellow countrymen who fought for your freedom as a slave, Alexander did not know if he should be happy for these people's help or sneer at disdain at their behavior.

But anyway, this was another reason Alexander assumed the number captured in a range.

Due to all this, after thinking about it for a while. Alexander decided to only out those men that came with the reinforcements Lord Theony brought up for sale.

That way the people of Thesalie would be least affected, and after five years there would be no widow or orphan coming to him begging him to release their kin.

It might have been a cruel fate for those unlucky few, but such was life.

#### Chapter 776 The Slave Market of Thesalie (Part-3)

Alexander on his tour of the huge slave market even met and talked to some of the more well-known merchants engaged in this kind of trade, many of whom invited him to their personal tent and offering food and drinks.

Alexander accepted some of these, asking about the business in the process and by the time he finished his inspection, a few hours had already passed.

And even then he only finished looking at half of the market.

For adjacent to the huge venue, was the site for the auctioned slaves.

Alexander entered that premises to find the place in much better conditions than its counterparts, largely because the slaves here were all valuable, and most would fetch high prices.

So naturally they were better taken care of.

The most notable improvement here was certainly the overhead paneling which shaded one from the heat of the sun, as well as the fact that servants were constantly sprinkling water on the nearby ground to prevent any dust cloud from swirling upward.

The roads here were much wider and the crowd significantly less.

Hence as Alexander entered the site, he breathed a cool sigh of relief, before dryly commenting, 'Should have brought an umbrella.'

Standing under the bare sun for so long in that heavy armor took a toll even on him.

Then afterward he started to look around.

The entire place was much smaller, accommodating a far smaller number of slaves.

Though this was normal as when the soldiers took the citizens as slaves, they knew there was an implicit limit to the number they could take.

So they only took the ones that would fetch the highest value- i.e.- beautiful women and strong men.

Though given the latter could fight back, most of them stuck to only capturing only the former.

Hence most of these stalls featured scantily clad girls of various ages or underaged boys, with only a few stalls selling men.

And this time, these strong, muscular beings were chained with manacles or ropes.

But the crowd around them was clearly much less than the stalls selling the pleasure slaves.

Those stalls were designed much like modern day window shops.

The few of the most beautiful girls or boys were put on display on raised platforms, designed to attract customers, who could then peruse the much bigger collection housed in the tents nearby.

Hence these showpieces were decorated to look their best, very clean, and with the appropriate make up, they even smelled of soap or sweet perfume, as from time to time they made various poses under the instruction of their slave masters,

Furthermore, the clothes they wore were intentionally designed to tingle the senses being very provocative.

For the girls, they wore translucent linens designed in various shapes such as lingerie or sashes, which covered their upper and lower halves in a way that both revealed but also hid their wares, displaying them without revealing everything.

Most onlookers were able to make out the shape of the breast, the flanks, the dark buds, and the thick patches, but not anything more, like the skin.

And a similar view was provided for the boys, where one could make out the shape and size of the lower parts without the details.

And seeing this, Alexander would have to give it to these traders, they knew marketing and knew it very well.

Because such a sight was even more tempting than if these people were fully bare, for it stimulated anyone's desire to go and have a closer look, to try and see if they could find something that was hidden yet discernible.

And if that happened, if anyone was interested in finding out more about what was hidden, then there was a high chance of there being a purchase.

As for the group that would be most willing to make such a purchase, it was predictably mostly men, though Alexander also spotted a few women in the crowd.

The environment here was better to the point that they felt comfortable coming here, albeit with all of them having a male escort or guard, for they too wanted to experience the good things in life.

But to be fair, the people here were not only because they wanted a bed warmer.

Some were trying to find their loved ones and buy them back, though given by now it was the second week since the auction started, they were a minority.

While another group was here to simply look for help- be it a cook, a maid, a gardener, etc.

And lastly, a few were looking to buy girls and boys for their red light institutions.

Though of course, in reality, a majority of them were looking to buy them for sex.

Even though Tibians were a monogamist society, relationships with slaves apparently did not count.

Hence to attract these buyers, the slavers peddled their wares with shouts and gestures, trying to get a wealthy patron to peruse his ware.

And if one was interested, they could go forward and 'inspect' the commodities for themselves, touching various parts of the body to look for any defects, with no regard for that person.

Hence Alexander could see both men and women touching the girls' chest and back to get a feel of their flesh, and some even traced their fingers along their crotches, mostly trying to find any warts or scabs which would indicate any venereal diseases.

The buyers of course knew what must have happened to these girls just after their capture, and so felt this was almost a necessary precaution.

Of course, it was not like the boys were spared either, but with them, the finger went mostly around their rear.

Such a practice did leave a very bad taste in Alexander's mouth, especially seeing the age of some of these kids, many of whom appeared to be on the verge of tears but did not dare to let out even a whimper.

They knew what could happen if they did.

And given Alexander was once in their position, he too knew firsthand what that entitled.

He had seen many die with ruptured intestinal walls after the slavers punished them in that brutal way.

And many times this was even done intentionally, to make an example for the other kids, so that they did not dare rebel or resist.

Alexander even remembered being very scared of such experiences occurring to him, so he had tried to always be as inconspicuous as possible, talking very little and appearing in front of his slaver as little as possible.

And this fear persisted many years after he was bought too, as Nestora's job as a mercenary leader perhaps fit perfectly into the typical type of man who did such things.

But out of all the misfortune Alexander was made to suffer, including starting off as a sweeper, he never had to experience that.

For that, he was eternally grateful to Lady Luck.

Now one might ask, if Alexander suffered so, why did he not try and stop these practices happening right in front of him?

And the reason was simply because this was such the norm of the times.

People simply did not think there was anything wrong with it.

So no matter how powerful he was, Alexander knew it would be impossible to enforce, like how the prohibitionist government of the United States failed to ban alcohol.

Hence Alexander knew to stop these, he first needed to change society as a whole.

After all, there is a reason the concept of slavery existed since human civilization began almost 10,000 years ago, and remained for more than 9,800 years, with it being abolished in large part due to the advent of the Industrial Revolution, when low-skilled, manual jobs could be performed faster and cheaper by machines.

So just because Alexander did not like something according to his own values, it did not mean he could decree it banned.

That would make him only a tyrant, and a hated one at that.

So Alexander let the practice continue for now, touring the place while receiving calls from every slaver, inviting him to come and inspect their slaves.

Though these people did not necessarily recognize Alexander, but the large ten men squad of bodyguards he came here with left no one in doubt of the weight of the purse the man carried.

Everyone was eager to make a sale to him.

Alexander of course ignored all such calls, as he continued on his way, until he at last came to a very large, conspicuous red colored tent located at the very end of the site.

"Welcome my lord, we have been eagerly anticipating you."

And even before Alexander could approach the tent, from 50 meters away, the owner of the place knowing of the approaching man rushed out to meet him, a largely flattering smile blooming on his fat, flabby face.

The man was surprisingly the very caricature of what you would think that a slave trader would look like, rotund with layers of fat forming layers on his cheeks, dressed in expensive, sparkling robes, with jeweled rings gracing all his thick digits.

His teeth were yellow and his laugh was almost sickly, and as Alexander saw him, it reminded him of his past, making Alexander feel a bit uncomfortable.

Chapter 777 Gift For Ptolomy (Part-1)

Looking at the slave trader, a sort of disgust formed in Alexander's heart like he had felt only a few times prior.

The man was reminded of his past, and though he was not traumatized by that experience, he certainly found it very unpleasant.

Even now, one of the few things that could make his heart skip a beat was the irrational fear of being once again transported back to that situation.

But pleasant or not, Alexander knew he had met the man named Cassim.

He had entrusted this man with the purchase of a very important good, and one of the primary reasons for his visit to the market was because he was told the man had finished gathering it.

So with a few pleasantries, Alexander was quickly shown into the tent with the utmost deference and flattery and as he entered the place, he found the place to have been meticulously transformed to be as accommodating to him as possible.

There were of course all the usual things- expensively carpeted floors, luxurious odorless candles, and ornate pieces of furniture.

All those were expected.

But the real surprise lay in store for Alexander when he was taken from the door to another separate inner room, separated by a very thick hanging rug.

This was where Cassim held talks with his most important clients and the man had a technique to wow his customers.

Something that Alexander found out as he entered.

For immediately upon entry he was suddenly blasted by a refreshing gust of cold air that brought back oh so many memories.

For a brief second Alexander thought the small room was air conditioned!

But then he found the real reason.

Though not air controlled in the literal sense, there were huge slabs of ice slabs placed in metal grates, over which he could see scantily clad girls pouring water, causing the ice to melt and absorb all the heat in the process, making the room indeed feel like it was climate controlled.

And as Alexander felt the refreshing air swirl around him, his body hot, weary body rejoicing, he was both impressed by this invention, as well as cursed himself for not coming up with such a thing sooner.

'Motherf\*\*cker, why didn't I think of it?' Alexander hence felt a bit defeated, being trumped by a merchant.

It just went to show, innovation had no favorites.

But such salty feelings only lasted a while as his eyes quickly focused on the four girls tending to these ice cubes.

As soon as Alexander entered they flashed a very professional and charming smile before greeting with an immaculate bow.

Though rather than the gesture. Alexander was far more preoccupied with their figure and clothing.

All of the girls were very different, ranging from tall, short, or medium, they were curvy and voluptuous, cute and petite, or balanced and well built.

They were curly brunettes or straight haired redheads or even flaxen dyed blondes, with faces that could be described as cute, sexy, alluring, or mature.

It seemed as if Cassim was trying to cater to any and all tastes Alexander might have, with the only common theme here being the fact that all these girls were very beautiful in their own ways.

And to augment their looks, their manners too tickled a man's desire to possess them, for as they gazed at Alexander, their faces were rosy and glowing, and their eyes sparkled at Alexander like he was the light of their lives, urging him to take them.

And the last accessory they had as their weapon was the clothes they wore, for unlike traditional garbs, what they wore was not designed to hide or cover their privates but to flaunt their gifts in as provocative a manner as possible.

All four were dressed in sexy lingerie, their sheer tops barely covering anything as Alexander could see the nipples through them, while many intricate golden chains twisted around them to decorate their assets.

While down below- the girls all showed him their healthy, milky thighs, all of them wearing various golden belts and brackets to decorate those soft fleshly treats.

As for the garden itself, though they were covered, it was by such a thin, linen fabric attached to the stringy waistband that it barely hid anything, for the cloth dug so deep into the crack that Alexander could clearly make out their cameltoe, as well as one or more stray black tress springing out of the forest.

Some even had clear wet patches on them, revealing the entire shape of their lower lips.

If Cassim's goal was to make Alexander have a boner he surely succeeded.

"Here my lord, please have a seat." The man very strategically entered the room a few moments after Alexander had, thus letting him enjoy the eye candy for a while.

He had done this trick countless times to impress his clients and the initial reaction was almost always like what Alexander did.

"Melting the ice to cool the room. I never knew Mister Cassim you had such a great mind for invention. I am humbled,"

But unlike what he expected Alexander to say proceeding this, or simply settle down into an uncomfortable silence as he tried to settle himself, attempting to adjust his lower half in the process, as many did prior, Cassim was surprised to hear this.

Apart from a brief moment of shock, Alexander appeared totally unperturbed by the situation, as he settled comfortably into the leather armchair, a happy but tranquil facade gracing his face.

This surprised Cassim.

The slave trader was very proud of the unique arrangement of the room and had expected a bit more of a reaction.

Everyone else who entered did, as the combination of the cool air and graceful beauties worked to unsettle them.

And this had let Cassim seal many a lucrative deal by taking advantage of this distraction.

But how could he have known that Alexander used to regularly enjoy this luxury?

The trick hence failed to impress him too much, causing the slave trader to determine, 'He is not simple'

While externally at hearing Alexander's modest words, the man exaggeratedly waved his hands,

"I do not dare, I do not dare. Little me is very aware of all the things you have invented my lord. This little thing is not even worthy of touching your shoes,"

The man surely could flatter.

The next few exchanges only involved some more pleasantries, while two of the four girls moved next to Alexander to cool him using large fans made of palm leaves, while the other two served them sweet wine and fruits, intentionally bending down in a way to let Alexander have a clear view of their milky ravine as well as take in the sweet perfumes.

"If my lord fancies, please feel free to take all of them. I would be honored."

And as the four performed their seducing acts, taking a sip of his wine, Cassim eagerly invited Alexander not to be shy.

But the man only gave a dry chuckle to this, not even entertaining the idea for a second, as he got to the meat of the issue he was here for.

"Is the thing I asked for ready?"

"Yes, yes. Fifty beautiful women. I have gathered them all. I believe they will be to your liking my lord," And seeing Alexander was not interested Cassim was very quick in his reply, heavily nodding his head like a chicken.

He appeared so docile that even the girls were surprised.

Of course, they were aware that the face their master presented to his buyers was very different from the one he showed them in private, a domineering, almost cruel man who did not tolerate the slightest mistake.

But even then they were internally a bit shocked by how ingratiating he was appearing now.

Normally, the slave trader kept a much more dignified face.

So this attitude made them wonder who this young man was.

'Surely he has to be very powerful. Is he a prince? Oh if he would only take me with me!'

Given these girls' vast experience of dealing with very high level guests, Alexander's youthful face made them think of only one possibility of his identity- a member of the royal family.

Hence all four turned to look at Alexander with a fresh set of eyes, their gazes now much hotter, wishing to be noticed by this powerful master.

While Cassim was not finished denigrating himself, as following this, his tone then turned sweet and pliable, as he said, "All the girls are at the back. Perhaps my lord would like to cool himself a bit more before visiting?"

He sounded very concerned about Alexander's well being.

While given the heat outside, Alexander certainly preferred to be here, at least until the sweat soaked tunic that he wore underneath got a chance to dry itself.

So agreeing with a small nod, he then stated in a business like manner,

"The reason why I asked for you to gather the fifty beautiful women is because I wish to send them as gifts to His Majesty in Adhan."

"And to ensure they are not harassed in any way along the way by the accompanying soldiers I want you to transport them personally"

"So how much will it cost?"

Chapter 778 Gift For Ptolomy (Part-2)

Alexander's main purpose of coming here was indeed this- to inspect the women he would send to the capital as gifts.

This was one of those unwritten rules of Adhania, not explicitly stated but kind of like a common courtesy.

It was expected that if one conquered new lands, he would send the nobleman he served a small part of the loot,

And since at least on paper Ptolomy was Alexander's superior, in order to avoid any necessary conflict and ill will, he planned to send some beautiful women as well as some of the captured loot.

And that was why Alexander was here, to discuss the price of those women.

"So tell me, what will be the price- both the women and the transportation included?" Alexander posed in a desultory manner.

"My lord, normally such beautiful women such as the ones you requested go for 15,000 to 20,000 ropals each."

"Since you also want me to take them to the capital, I'm afraid I can do no better than 20,000."

To the question, Cassim wriggled his hands flashing a professional smile.

'50 women, 1 million ropals,' Hearing the asking price, Alexander did the math in his head and coming to the answer, snorted,

'Hmph! You had to do nothing to get these women. It was I who took the city. And you dare ask for such a price!'

Alexander's voice slightly boomed, expressing his dissatisfaction.

But facing this tactic of trying to lower prices, the slaver was unperturbed,

"Hehe, no, no, you misunderstand my lord. The price of these women is never determined by how hard it is to catch them."

"Catching them is easy."

"The hard thing is to just find them. I would be lucky to find a suitable one even in one in a thousand."

Cassim exaggerated the numbers, though it was true that finding a peasant girl whose face and figure fit a nobleman's preference was indeed hard, the harsh physical work and the rough conditions they lived in wiping away a lot of their beauty very quickly.

Saying the slave trader continued,

"And then there are the training and maintenance costs."

"Expert trainers cost a lot. These girls know nothing at first and it takes a lot of time and patience to teach them. Making a skilled slave able to please a master as esteemed as a noble without breaking her is very hard my lord."

Here the slaver referred to how a nobleman would buy such beautiful slaves for pleasure purposes so would expect the highest level of service from them.

And thus her training had to match that.

"And then there are all the everyday costs. These girls need food, clothes, and makeup of the highest quality."

"Over weeks and months, all these tend to add up very quickly my lord!"

"\*Sigh\*, I actually make very little profit on each sale, hehe."

Cassim by the end gave a forced smile as he shook his head ruefully, seemingly burdened by the huge expenses.

'Yet you have enough coin to eat yourself to this size and wear flashy clothes and jewelry such as these,'

And Alexander might have believed the man if he was not so fat and gaudily dressed.

Furthermore, Alexander also had an idea of the expenses for himself as it had to be remembered that he ran a brothel himself.

And those girls there were very much like the women Cassim had.

And he was certain he treated those women much better than this slave trader did, hiring good trainers, giving them meat or eggs every other day, gifting them expensive soaps and perfume and makeup kits to better present themselves in front of the guests, and many of the dresses they wore were custom made to order, requiring them to be sexy, durable and comfortable, hence costing a hell of a lot.

But then even the total cost of behind each girl was less than 2,000 ropals a year.

And this treatment of the girls was seemingly so good that according to Ophenia, many high ranking courtesans had come to the brothel manager Kalopi, expressing their wishes to switch places and come work for her.

This had even turned the establishment he had set up as a kind of personal vendetta into quite a popular destination among the regulars in the district.

So all this went to show that unless Cassim was babysitting those slaves for an entire decade, there was no way he was no way making only a little of their sales.

"Mister Cassim, you make so little profit and yet are able to dress better than me. I must praise your accounting abilities,"

Thus at the businessman's obvious exaggeration Alexander sarcastically commented as such, but knowing embellishing the truth was part of the business, then simply waved his hand and stated.

"Okay! 20,000 ropals it is. I will give you the price you want." as he felt disinclined to haggle.

Alexander was rich to the point that he felt that the amount of time he would spend haggling over the slight price difference of a few thousand ropals was not worth the headache.

If the man wanted 20,000, he would get 20,000.

But in exchange, Alexander expected premium service.

"Great! Great! My lord, you will not be disappointed!" At Alexander's quick agreement, the slave trade was overjoyed, flashing an enormous smile as his face lit up, turning almost rosy red.

He had been ready to accept the deal at 15,000 ropals or even a bit lower, but now he had made an extra 100,000 ropal profit just like that.

Of course, he would be happy, not to mention the sale totaled to a huge 1 million.

This was more than he made last year, and so earning an entire year's revenue in one afternoon certainly made him elated to the point he even forgot the comment that was made about his clothes, erasing it like it was thin air.

And many would too if they were in his position.

For to give a context of that sale in modern numbers, given Adhania's median earning was 150 ropals, and the US's was 70,000 dollars, that came to half a billion dollars in today's value.

Most people would not care if the buyer commented how ugly they looked in their dress if they were going to make that much money.

But Alexander did have one condition then accepting this price.

So putting a damper on the joyous man, he curtly cut off,

"But remember Cassim. These women will be sent to the capital. To the king himself."

"You should be aware of the high standards the people there have for such women."

"I do not want to hear anything untoward later."

"Train them well!"

Alexander knew the capital regularly held parties involving orgies using large numbers of such slave women.

And so he wanted to make sure the girls being sent were skilled enough to perform those jobs without creating a fuss or causing any problems.

"Please be assured my lord. The noble sirs will find these girls to their utmost liking. I swear on my name."

And Cassim quickly reassured as such.

The practice of the nobility was not really a secret even among the rich merchants, as even they would sometimes get an invitation.

Many also got their daughters and even wives to participate, as a way to curry favor with these powerful men.

And so Cassim being the big shot trader he was for so long in this business, certainly knew the quality that was expected of his product.

And he certainly had the means to guarantee that.

"Okay, then I want to see them now. Let's go."

Thus having reached the price and having cooled himself enough, Alexander was eager to see the product for himself.

And though usually the price was determined after seeing the product, Alexander was confident the man before him would not dare to swindle him.

Not if he wanted to ever do business here.

So after this brief rest, Alexander felt ready to tackle the heat again.

Though that was a decision he came to regret instantly as the moment he stepped out of the cool room, the heat felt like sharp needles stabbing into his skin.

For a second, he even regretted getting into that cool room in the first place.

The heat outside was really no joke.

But as his body slowly acclimatized to the new environment, the large slave trader slowly led Alexander to a large part of the tent at the back, where all the women were housed.

The large number was divided into groups of four or five, placed in small individual rooms, separated by only rugs.

These were hot and humid due to the weather outside, with only small vents along the sides to let in fresh air.

And as Alexander entered, he found the place to be dim and a bit dark, with the air thick with too many oils and perfumes, stinging his nose.

But such discomfort quickly flitted as his eyes focused on the jewels the rooms contained, for as soon as the two men entered, all of the girls dropped everything they were doing to stand up and greet them, bowing deferentially before showing off their faces and figures to Alexander.

### Chapter 779 Gift For Ptolomy (Part-3)

The girls being put forward to Alexander were all dressed in a very similar way to how those four girls before were- bras or sashes on the top, combined with thin, linen underwear and revealing pants below, thus showing or nearly showing everything that a man might want to see in a pleasure slave.

Their hair was done in all kinds of various ways- braided, ponytailed, free flowing, bunned, to name only a few and they wore various ornate jewelry, such as bangles, anklets, earrings, and neckpieces, as well as sexy chains around their breasts or lower hips.

Seeing this opulent display of ornaments, Alexander would have to admit, that he might have underestimated the costs of dressing and maintaining these girls.

Gold itself was expensive, and when it was worked on by skilled artisans like now, even just a little bit, it quickly tripled or even quadrupled.

It seemed that Cassim was willing to splash significant amounts of money to make Alexander's tributes appear as flashy as possible in front of the king.

Something which pleased the man.

As Alexander inspected these girls, he found some of the bolder ones even starting to show off their bare bodies to Alexander, as they parted his chest sashes, or lifted their bras, making their oiled voluptuous flesh glitter due to the shining gold pieces, with Alexander even spotting a few with piercings on them.

While a few of the other girls even pushed their underwear aside, showing their well combed tufts.

They then even spread their pink perfumed lips, letting a jeweled silver tiara hanging from the waistband they wore dangle in front it, making it look like a star shining against a dark lake.

The entire reveal was very sensual and Alexander could tell the entire thing was very well rehearsed, impressing him about the quality of training they surely had received.

In the process of the tour, he found that the types of women Cassim had chosen were as large in variety as their numbers.

The ages of these women varied anywhere from short, petite teens yet to fully bloom to mature voluptuous thirty-year-olds in their prime, sporting figures of every possible kind- curvy, slim, plump, and slender, with looks and complexions of similarly diverse nature- cute tanned ones, oval white ones, and squared ebony ones.

But like those four girls Alexander had seen before, the one thing that tied them together was their beautiful faces, as he felt these girls indeed were enough to catch those eyes in the capital.

Furthermore, as he moved from tent to tent, each and every one of the girls there acted as if they could not wait to submit to him, sultry walking up to him and caressing him, pushing their abundant chests against him, urging him to feel their ass or rubbing their creamy thighs, as all of them seemed to beg him to take them then and there.

Alexander was certainly impressed by how naturally they were able to present themselves, especially given that it had only been a fortnight since their capture.

'Cassim must have really good trainers,' Alexander felt reassured.

Hence feeling his 1 million ropals was not going to be wasted, he afterward urged Cassim again to make sure none of the girls to be sent had any physical defects or diseases, and then decided to exit the tent.

"My lord, it is already noon, And we have prepared a feast for you. Please, won't you attend?"

But then Cassim humbly posed such, framing the invitation as a choice.

Alexander was indeed feeling hungry by now.

He had been walking for hours and given the heat, he was tempted to get inside that cold room again, wishing to wait out it out there.

Thus Alexander happily accepted, following which he was then served all the regular delicacies.

Expensive white bread, very good cheese, various meat, fish, honey, and a kind of fermented sauce he never had, with the most unique item of the meal is definitely being the sheep's testicles, which had no taste of sheep but tasted more like pork sausage.

The two men dined in that cold room, the two eating and chatting, while making small talk about their past, about funny experiences they had, Alexander was being attended to by all four of those scantily clad ladies, every one of which tried to fill his belly almost as much as they tried to raise his lust meter, trying almost every trick in the book.

Alexander was of course no stranger to such endeavors, as it almost came with part and parcel with being a lord.

Everyone tried to get into your pants, either to earn a favor or like here, to show goodwill.

And since these girls meant no harm, Alexander was happy to oblige, copping a feel of the soft chest here, or groping the luscious butts there when the opportunity presented himself, and he did this right in front of Cassim.

The slaver of course did not even blink an eye, since this was not the first time the girls did this.

And as the man who had commanded them to do so, he was very much pleased to this reaction, as his smiles only grew wider every time he saw Alexander pinch one of his girls.

If Alexander even showed the slightest interest in any of them, he would be over the moon to gift all four of them together.

To be able to please a client as big and powerful as Alexander by giving away just four such girls was daylight robbery in his eyes.

Following the meal, as desserts, Alexander was served yogurt with honey in a small earthen pot, and as he took small scoops of the white and yellow stuff using an ornate spoon made of gold, feeling the coolness wash down himself, Cassim slowly spoke up in a gentle voice,

"My lord, it's too hot outside. Why don't you take a rest here? I'm sure anything you might have can wait!"

The practice of having a short nap was indeed common, but Alexander could tell that was not the slave trader's real intention.

Those thoughts were betrayed by the scalding looks he felt the four pairs surrounding him flashed him.

Cassim was trying to set up the conditions for him to enjoy these girls, and by the looks of it, these girls were also very much in favor to enjoying him too.

And Alexander would easily guess why.

The four might not hate their current master- Cassim, but they did not love him either.

The man was no saint, and many times even cruel, and the four only tolerated him because he was too powerful and also not an unconscionable tyrant.

Thus though they would not slit his throat at night if provided a chance, they would also not hesitate to abandon him at a moment's notice either.

And how could a better chance present itself than this, with this young, enigmatic young master to whom their master appeared to be so ingratiating?

It was simple maths really.

"Hmmp, I'm indeed feeling a bit sleepy. That was a great meal." And Alexander was surprisingly willing to accept Cassim's offer.

Seeing all those sexy, scantily clad women had worked up his lust, and since he was being offered such a free sample, he felt it would be too rude to decline.

"Great! Great! Then please, I will leave you to rest." At Alexander's willingness the slave trader instantly jumped to his feet, as if he could not wait to leave Alexander and let him 'dine' alone, his heart overjoyed by the fact the man was willing to accept his offering,

So turning to the girls, he instructed,

"You four. That good care of the master. Make sure is he most comfortable."

And then with a hurried bow, he was gone.

Alexander might not have believed how fast such a large man could move if he had not seen it for himself.

With the room now all to themselves and having gotten Alexander's implicit permission, the girls got a lot bolder, as one of them tugged his arms, cooing,

"Here master, there is the bed, Let us rest there."

And Alexander was happy to be led, though the place he was brought was not really a bed, but more like a very large devan.

And as he was sat down, another girl who was following in toe quickly squatted down, giggling,

"My lord, it's too hot here. Let's get you more comfortable," as she then very expertly worked to free Alexander of his pants.

By the movements of her hands, it was apparent she was very experienced.

And in that similar vein, his upper body armor too was stripped by the other three, until he just had a plain tunic on him.

"Oh my god!" But suddenly his light gasp rang out from below him, as the girl there finally laid eyes on his little brother.

"What! Never saw anything like this before?" And seeing the genuine shock, Alexander was internally very pleased.

There was no doubt these girls had body counts in the tens if not hundreds, so for them to let out his involuntary cry, stoked his masculinity.

And then for the following hours, a torrent of lewd shouts and moans devastated the room, by the end of which Alexander was left a very pleased man.

Chapter 780 Ancestral Temple of Thesalie (Part-1)

Alexander's afternoon with the four girls proved to be quite an enjoyable one.

Once relieved from his pants, the four girls all looked incredulously at the exposed organ, with the most petite one of the bunch barely stopping herself from loudly blurting out, "Is this a human's or a horse's?"

Seeing even flaccid size like this, they did not dare to imagine what it would be like once fully awoke.

Following Alexander's de-clothing, the girls also moved to show their assets, taking off those parts of their dress that hid their most attractive organs.

They did not become fully bare, still letting the ornamental clothing drape over their shoulders and thighs, but the partial nudity seemed to make them that much more attractive, as the clothing contrasted with their soft, fleshy chest and fully shaved and perfumed pubes.

"Bring the chamber pot."

But before starting, Alexander, having much to drink, felt becoming more comfortable.

"Here, master. Ahhh!" But what was brought before him was not an earthen pot, but the open mouth of the most voluptuous girl among the four, as she kneeled down and pointed his organ towards her lilac tongue, her cute, black eyes twinkling with delight.

This was the most premium special service they provided and was available only to their most esteemed customers.

And though Alexander was a bit surprised at first by this since he was being offered such, why should he resist?

So soon the pressure in his lower half decreased while the girl's stomach felt warm and heavy, as she appeared to have been served the world's most delicious drink, her powered face almost turning a rosy tint.

Alexander had no way to distinguish if she was acting or genuinely liked it.

After that, the girls finally started to service Alexander, as they first and foremost teamed up to expertly blow his organ, praising him for the taste and quantity.

Then they were taken one by one, with Alexander choosing to explore either the pink canal or the chrysanthemum hole depending on his mood, experiencing the pleasures in various postures.

For the most petite one, he took her by making her sit on his lap, skewering her in one go and making her squeal with pleasure.

While for the most voluptuous one, he had her bent over, to fully enjoy her curvy butt.

And feeling their tunnels being expanded to limits experienced very few times before, the girls loudly moaned without restraint, even wondering, 'How long can he go for?'

Even for these experienced women, even when there were four of them, Alexander's rough pounding was not easy to bear through

Especially since Alexander saw these girls as being here to only provide a service, thus saw no reason to be soft towards them.

He only concentrated on his pleasure, and so by the end of the sessions, the girls were so sore and exhausted that they could barely stand, their bodies all sweaty and sticky.

Alexander left the tent a few hours later, thanking Cassim for the hospitality and being fully satisfied with the delicious taste of the four.

The slave trader hearing so had a huge smile on his face and even offered to send those four with Alexander, an endeavor that was unequivocally declined.

And putting that thought at the back of his mind, as Alexander got on his horse, he found it was already late noon.

Though it was still as hot as ever, his plan to wait out the heat seemingly failed.

But that did not dampen his mood as he hummed a happy tune while thinking back on what had happened in the last two weeks.

After Lapitus's speech ended, Alexander did not immediately return to the mansion.

Instead he asked to be led to the largest shrine in the city, something which greatly surprised Lapitus.

He thought Alexander was going to break it down or replace it with his own statues.

But he followed the order nevertheless.

The grand shrine was located right on the bank of the mighty Diannu river, and covered a huge 50 acre of prime real estate right inside the city.

The five football fields worth spanning structure was as magnificent as it was grand, and though not as big as The Grand Temple at Adhan, it was certainly comparable.

In front of the entrance to the vast complex stood two bronzed colored large bull statues, the spiritual animal of the country, and as Alexander entered, he found the pillars of the gate were actually

two huge obelisks, spiraling almost an impossible 50 meters in height, their black, granite surfaces carved with golden hieroglyphics and murals.

Inside, alongside the main temple were many smaller subsidiary temples, sanctuaries, and crypts, all interconnected by beautifully paved stone roads.

Around each of these temples, were further stone statues of various sizes, depicting both humans and animals, as well as many obelisks and beautiful gardens.

It was a very beautiful place- quiet, peaceful, and pristine, a place worthy of calling sacred.

As Alexander toured the complex, he spotted the numerous individual temples and shrines there, scattered all around, which was very different from the Adhanian style of having one gigantic temple.

And when asked about this, Lapitus stated the reason for there being so many different sized shrines and temples was because the size of the temple demonstrated one's good deeds and accomplishments in life.

And it did not take a genius to guess where the nobles, the rich merchants, and the poor peasants prayed.

The lower one's position in the social hierarchy, the smaller the temple he was allowed to visit, and upon death they would be placed in the adjacent crypts accordingly too.

Though that was a service only available to them if the people could afford to buy a spot.

"The poorer crypts keep the bodies for 10 years and cost 50 libra per year. While the richer ones, like the ones that keep the body for 50 or even 100 years can go up from a few thousand libra to even tens of thousands, like the ones stored in the main temple." Lapitus informed Alexander.

Something that caused his lips to involuntarily twitch a bit.

'25 free ropals a year just to keep some stinking skeleton in the closet. Man, why didn't I think of it,' He lampooned at the missed business opportunity, while also off handedly praising the business sense of these priests.

And then asked, "What happens to those who cannot afford it? 50 libras a year is no small sum?for the poorest."

And these should be the ones to die most frequently.

"Hehe, the same thing we do to the bodies after their time in the crypt is over... Dump them into the river." To this Lapitus lightly chuckled the answer in a free breezy tone.

"What?"

But the response he got from the other side was a sharp cry of surprise, as Alexander let out a short gasp, his eyes widening.

"Ah?" A reaction that made Lapitus freeze slightly, thinking he had inadvertently made some great error.

"Why don't you bury them? Why sink them in the river?" Alexander quickly posed so.

"Haha," Hearing the question, Lapitus first and foremost let out a chuckle of relief, reassured Alexander was not angry with him.

Then explained,

"My lord, that is what you Adhanians do. But us Tibians would never. Because the rivers contain all our ancestors' souls. They flow with the currents and upon death, we will be rejoined with them."

"The earth is a prison, heaven is in the water." The man ended poetically, quoting a line from their sacred scripture.

'Then why keep them in crypts in the first place?' While Alexander hearing so had the urge to pose this.

But religions were never built on logic and reason.

He was sure the answer would be something like- 'So that they be closer to us,' or 'To protect us.'

Thus he only curtly nodded, and then asked in a seemingly unrelated manner the real question,

"Does the city have any records of outbreaks of plagues? Or cholera? Or any other great diseases? Does anything like that happen regularly?"

This was Alexander's real sticking point with this culture.

He could not have cared any less if dumping these dead bodies, many of which naturally would have died to various diseases was not a recipe for starting a plague.

But given the health hazards, of course, he felt it was imperative for him to intervene.

At Alexander's inquiry, Lapitus firstly produced a bit of a surprised look, like was looking at a clairvoyant, and then lightly smiling, he nodded,

"Life and death are at the hands of the ancestors. If they wish to meet us, we are more than happy to oblige."

Lapitus sounded very light and frank.

And it was this very nonchalant way that Lapitus confirmed it that Alexander's found most eerie.

Huge volumes of deaths were occurring periodically around him but the man seemed unaffected.

Like he had simply accepted this tragedy as a part and parcel of life.

And perhaps what was even more tragic was that he was not alone in this.

Many people shared this mindset too.

Life was hard and death followed one around every corner.

And unable to rationalize the cause of it, the people took to comforting themselves in various ways.