

## Herald 781

### Chapter 781 Ancestral Temple of Thesalie (Part-2)

One of the most popular ways people accepted death was to simply accept it like one accepts natural disasters like hurricanes, volcanos, earthquakes, and tsunamis- as tragedies that one can do nothing about but endure and accept.

And seeing Lapitus be a victim of this, Alexander was both saddened and a bit alarmed.

Because being from modern times, he of course had a very different mind state, and he wondered about the kind of backlash he would get if he tried to make any changes to this practice.

Because the obvious reason- 'It will stop diseases and save lives' might not work on this seeming zealot.

A feeling further strengthened when he heard Lapitus say,

"But rest assured my lord, the priests of our city are really good."

"Whenever these diseases flare up, they will all come out from the temples to try and heal the sick. Even the high priests from the main temple will participate."

"And they will treat everyone for free, no matter his background! Even if it means becoming possessed by the evil spirits themselves."

"They are truly deserving of being blessed by the ancestors."

Listening to Lapitus speak, it was very apparent to Alexander what were the man's thoughts regarding the priests.

A characteristic that unbeknownst to him, made his favorability with Alexander take a nose dive.

As Alexander heard the man sing the praises of the priests, he also sneered a bit in his heart,

"Heh! Of course, all the priests were gonna have to come out. Most of the people to die during a plague are the poor, given the filth they live in."

'If you only had the few regular ones to attend them, those old farts would die from overwork within days.'

How could Alexander have respect for a bunch who had made burial into a yearly subscription?

They were even more cut-throat than many of the shameless modern business.

But these priests did have one redeeming quality.

Alexander would give them credit where credit was due.

As Lapitus said, many of the priests got inflected in the process of tending to the sick who came to them for blessing or when they were performing the last rites, succumbing to the illness in the process.

Or as Lapitus put it- evil spirits, which Alexander was disinclined to correct the man on.

Now, the incident of many priests dying during a plague was something that happened in Alexander's previous life too,

When the black death hit Europe in the 14th century, it wiped away a third of the population.

But for the priests, their numbers decreased by ninety percent (90%).

It was also then the decline of the church's reputation began.

Because before then, the criteria to be chosen as a priest were quite strict.

He was typically the smartest man in the town, he could read and write and his moral values were quite good for the time.

But after the black death, the clergy were so dire in need of people to fill their ranks, that anyone who had a set of teeth and did not look like was going to fall over any moment was taken.

And it was these bad seeds that produced generations after generations of putrid harvests, finally resulting in the popular reputation the church has been given in regular pop culture.

It was with these thoughts that Alexander slowly made towards the largest temple there, which was called the Main Temple.

Its surrounding decorations were far bigger and more extravagant than the others, with a great number of decorative statues and obelisks placed along it, and as Alexander approached the steps leading to the main hall, he was greeted a group of priests.

The group numbered only seven, all wearing crisp, snow white robes without a single spot, barefooted, their ages ranged from middle aged to old, being led by a single withered and wizened man who stood at the very front, which spine still straight as a steel rod.

By the deferential the others were giving, it was very apparent that he was the highest authority here.

"High Priest!" And it was a guess that was quickly confirmed by Lapitus's loud greeting as he bowed to the old man.

"Ah, Lapitus, child. It's good that you are safe. And I can see you brought guests." The High Priest's reply was gentle as such, and he did not at all sound raspy or old as his age might suggest.

Instead, it was soft yet strong, able to carry the words he wanted said clearly.

And as he looked at Lapitus, there was no anger or hatred over what he had done, but only a tranquil acceptance.

Something that could not be said for the other six behind him, who glared at Lapitus like they wanted to toast him alive.

The mere fact that Lapitus dared to address the High Priest with such familiarity after how he betrayed the ancestors incensed them and if not for their superior's strict orders to restraint themselves, a few of the more impulsive ones might have done something rash.

These priests were part of Petrino's hardcore faction so advocated fighting to the last man, but had escaped that grim fate because their numbers were so few, because they chose not to participate in that debauchorous party, and most importantly because they were priests.

But Lapitus did send them a message after cleaning the mansion, clearly stating that if they valued their life, they should accept the results obediently and stay inside the temple.

Or else, neither he nor the soldiers sacking the city would spare them.

Thus given the sacking had only finished today, it was their first day tasting fresh air in days.

Seeing the receiving group that came out to greet him, Alexander lightly skipped past Lapitus and placing his right hand across his chest, he gently chimed,

"Greetings, esteemed High Priest, I'm Alexander. I hope you do not mind me coming unannounced."

The greeting was neither too aggressive nor too respectful, as he sought to show himself as his superior.

This obvious lack of respect predictably produced a few furrowed eyebrows, but no one said anything, letting the one this was addressed to speak.

"Haha, I heard the conqueror of Thesalie was a young man. But I would have never guessed him to be of such nascent years. This old man feels his eyes opened."

To Alexander's greeting, the High Priest replied seemingly in a very polite way, though reading between the lines, Alexander could tell he was being slighted for his age.

Truly, anyone who managed to reach such a high position possessed a sharp tongue.

But instead of engaging in a verbal word with Alexander, the High Priest then quickly followed his greeting with a gentle wave of his arm, gesturing towards the temple and inviting Alexander in,

"Come my lord. Let me show you the insides of our temple. You must have come a long way and are surely eager."

The man was much more flexible to the situation than the other old man in the mansion, letting Alexander readily access the place that should have belonged to only those of the faith.

Alexander readily accepted the offer and found the insides to be truly gorgeous, lit up with huge chandeliers and candelas, and filled with even more gigantic statues.

But this time they were even studded in various places with precious metal and stones, as the High Priest introduced them as various warriors and spiritual leaders of Tibias.

There were also beautiful paintings on the walls and ceiling, depicting the country's many legends, myths, and folktales, as well as triumphant victories over Adhania.

The pillars had similar intricate carvings, and as the High Priest showed in the back, there was even a huge artificial lake, used to perform various rituals and rites.

Alexander was very satisfied by the great expansive structure, as he then turned to the priest to say, "I want to offer a prayer here. And I will let you run the temple."

"But in exchange, I want all the gold you have here. And more importantly, you must let our Goddess Gaia statue be placed in there."

Alexander said pointing to a large altar, whereupon was a huge statue of a bull and two children, a boy and a girl, suckling on what appeared to be its udders.

According to legends, Tibias was founded by these twins who were left abandoned in an open field up but lived due to the milk from a bull.

Now how did a bull produce milk, or at least the kind that was fit for human consumption?

Well, that was the miracle.

Normal bulls can't but it was a divine bull, and so it did, possessing the udders of a cow.

Simplest explanation ever.

And growing up healthy consuming its nourishments, the two children, possibly brothers and sisters got married and proliferated the lands with their offspring, and thus were considered to be the ancestors of all Tibians.

Yes, the origin not only included an impossible bull, but also incest.

But hey at least it did not have fratricide like the Roman one.

"What! No, absolutely not!" At Alexander's request, immediately a huge bellow followed from the back, as one of the priests stepped out.

And then taking a dagger out from his sleeves, he charged!

Chapter 782 A Hit

Alexander was informed of the legend of Tibias's origin as he was given the tour of the temple.

And listening to it, the biggest thing that he wondered was why they did not make the bull simply a cow.

Though he had his guesses.

The first ones to come up with the idea might have felt that giving credit to females would be demeaning.

Or it could be that a divine bull sounded much better than an ordinary cow.

Whatever the reasons were, it was with such distracting thoughts that Alexander had made that proposal to switch the bull statue with his own goddess statue, something which caused a zealous priest to make an attempt on his life.

And it was a very good attempt at that, because given the distance the man was at, the way Alexander was standing very close to the high priest, and most of all, the unexpectedness of it all, managed to catch everyone off guard, including Hemicus and even Alexander.

So as Alexander saw the large dagger descend down from the skies, like a heavenly arrow fired by gods, aimed right at his chest, he sensed a mortifying scent of death he had not in years.

If that strike connected as it was, he knew it would be enough to pierce his bronze cuirass, his chainmail, and his gambeson- to finally bury deep into his flesh, possibly even breaking his ribs to stab right through to his heart.

And even if that worst scenario did not happen, even if the strike missed the critical organ and he did not die immediately, simply the grievous injury he would undoubtedly suffer would almost certainly mean death in the following days.

Alexander had not faced such a mortal challenge in a very long time.

And faced with this predicament, Alexander's first instinct was to dodge, to try and use his footwork to pivot and make the man miss his aim.

Or at the very least try to make it a glancing blow.

But that option was quickly ruled out.

The attacker was too close and gaining ground rapidly, there was simply not enough time to make adequate maneuvers

So given flight was out, Alexander then thought about trying to fight, to block it with his arms, or like before, at least shove had arm away, thus deflecting it to a lesser important area.

But this time, Alexander found himself wanting for room.

He was so close to the high priest that he found that if he were to raise his hand, it would hit the old man and get obstructed.

And by the time he came to these conclusions, precious seconds had already mercilessly ticked by.

Although Alexander's mind was working in hyperdrive, he seemed to draw a blank, as the bells of the grim reaper toiled next to his ears.

When suddenly Alexander's eyes flashed a chilly light.

Instead of fighting or fleeing, he chose a third option.

Abruptly grabbing the old by his shoulder, Alexander summoned every ounce of his strength to pull the man towards him, intending to use him as a human shield.

And thankfully, the wizened man was quite light, thus letting him accomplish this quite fast.

While the attacking priest, seeing the high priest suddenly appear at the corner of his eye and understanding who he was about to hit, instinctively tried to correct his aim,

"Argghhh!"

Thus he missed Alexander's heart, for the last minute hesitation caused the blade to glance off the thick bronze cuirass and instead bury itself into Alexander's fleshy arm, the strong strike cutting into his flesh and even cracking his bone, hence the pained groan.

"Alexander! \*Clang\*!" Hemicus had been watching the entire thing unfold like it was a horror movie, his body seemingly frozen, his face white with despair.

And by the time he was able to act, blood had been already drawn.

It was Alexander's pained growl and the clear pitter patter of blood that broke the man from his frozen stupor, and upon seeing it, felt a surge of anger like he had felt only a few times before.

"\*Slash\*"

Stepping forward with feathered steps, he drew his blade at a lightning pace and delivered a very powerful diagonal slash across the attacking priest's chest, instantly drawing a literal fountain of blood, and sending him stumbling backward, as he then fell to the floor on his back, his eyes quickly losing focus.

The man was dead from that one strike.

But for Hemicus, he would not care less what happened to that man.

He was far more concerned about the person he was meant to protect, who by now on one knee, clutching the wound that was bursting forth with blood, the huge weapon still stuck.

Neither he nor Hemicus took it out haphazardly, knowing the very thing that caused the wound was now acting as a stopper.

Things would only get much worse if it was carelessly removed.

\*Clang\*, \*Clang\*, Clang\*,

As Hemicus rushed to Alexander's aid, the other nearby bodyguards also got the chance to finally react, as drawing their own swords, they formed a defensive ring around their lord, many men deep, while at the same time, they seemed just ready to jump on the six remaining priests, eager to tear them to shreds, first the six and then the rest of the people here.

"Wait!" And it was only Alexander's pained cry that stopped this massacre, as he then commanded, "Capture and detain everyone. And get me somewhere quiet."

Even though Alexander was hurt, he was not incapacitated and still had the state of mind to know that

slaughtering the priests in rage would be a bad idea.

While Lapitus, who similar to Hemicus too had gone pale by the attack, upon hearing Alexander's order, acted the quickest, fiercely grabbing the high priest, and shouting,

"Yes! Quickly get down. Capture them. Don't kill."

Lapitus's first sentence was addressed to the priest, while the second was to the soldier, as it was pretty clear why he was willing to follow Alexander's order with such alacrity-?he wanted to save the priests.

And to do that he personally grabbed the high priest, expertly putting his hands behind the back, while the old man too understood his situation, so he surrendered without the slightest resistance, Seeing which so did the other five.

They got on their knees and lowered their head, while some of the armed men worked to pat them for any weapons and then moved them away from Alexander.

While Alexander was quickly escorted towards the pool since there was clean water there.

And as he was being moved, the man actually thanked his luck.

For only he was aware just how lucky he had been.

Firstly the attacker was grossly inexperienced.

Because if this priest was also a martial artist, he would have noticed that the human shield Alexander was trying to bring in front of him would not be able to get there on time.

Alexander barely managed to get the old high priest to cover his right hand side, while the attack was coming from the left

So if the man had continued his attack as he had been, he would have been able to deliver the fatal blow without any danger to the old man.

But then again, being a clergyman, it would have been weird for the man to be an expert assassin too.

But what would have been not weird was for the man to coat his blade in poison.

Became the murder had been clearly premeditated- one did not simply carry a giant dagger underneath one's sleeve after all.

But for some reason that was not done.

Perhaps the man had no access to it or simply did not think it would have been necessary.

But whatever the case, Alexander certainly dodged a deadly bullet there.

For if it was sufficiently poisoned, he would have surely joined that man.

And even if it was not, Alexander might have been turned a cripple, having to cut his left arm off.

That would have been disastrous

So as he was sat down near the bank of the pool, and the sounds of clothes being ripped to make makeshift bandages could be heard, he once again thanked his lucky stars.

"The wound is very deep. We will need to stitch it first." While one of his bodyguards, who was also a qualified doctor approached Alexander to inspect the gap stab and commented such.

"I will go get a doctor." And immediately another voice chimed hearing this, getting ready to head out to get the necessary instruments like needles and stitches.

Something that caused Alexander to rage internally,

'Dammit! How did I forget to mandate something as simple as to always carry a first aid box?' 'Fuckubg donkey!'

His foul mood originated not only from the wound but also from the fact that he was quite mad at himself for failing to take even the most basic security precautions, one which almost led to his death.

How else would he describe being almost stabbed to death by a regular priest?

Alexander would admit that after his recent victory, he had let his guard down.

He should have never gotten so close to the priests and vowed to always keep a good distance during any interaction.

Chapter 783 The Spoils of Thesalie (Part-1)

The pain emanating from his wound finally caused the man to forget for the moment the mistakes that led to the current circumstances.

And he decided to put off trying to think of ways to prevent something similar from happening again for later.

Instead, upon hearing the bodyguard's recommendations, Alexander chimed up to say,

"Forget about getting those things. By the time you get it, I will have bled to death already."

"Get some strong wine to clean the wound instead. And then cauterize and bandage it."

Alexander sounded both irritated and a bit tired.

The loss of blood was beginning to make him feel weak.

And knowing he might very well be right, that doctor bodyguard solemnly nodded, accepting.

So some of the wine the priests used was quickly acquired and poured over the cut, cleaning it, the sharp point of a dagger was heated over a candle flame till it became red hot, and then yanking out the stuck dagger in one swift motion, the wound was quickly cauterized and sealed by sticking that hot piece against it, much to Alexander's loud, agonized screams.

The man might be tough, but he was no robot.

Burning hot steel against the skin still hurt like hell.

Afterward, the wound was quickly patched up using thick rolls of bandage and soon Alexander was back.

"Alexander, you lost a lot of blood. We should get back and rest." Hemicus then recommended this.

Something that Alexander chose to heed, as curtly nodding his head, he replied, "Yes let's. But before that I have one last thing to do."

And then ignoring all the surprised and even disapproving looks, he went to look for the high priest, who was surprisingly easy to find.

The old man was at the foot of the altar, sitting down, a trace of concern still masking his otherwise tranquil face.

Alexander was actually impressed the old man was as calm as he appeared to be.

Seeing Alexander, the man quickly got up, softly crying in elation,

"Great lord! I'm so glad to see you are safe. We swear we had no idea about this. It was all..."

"Shut up!" Alexander was in no mood to hear these long winded excuses, as he then clenched teeth his teeth and snapped,

"If I wanted you dead, this entire place would have been drowned in blood already!"

"Now, I will ask again, do you accept my proposal or do you want your assholes stretched till it breaks!"

The rage in his voice was palpable.

"Accept! Accept! We will move the statue to any place that pleases my lord," And the high priest was almost scrambling to form the words, immediately acceding to all Alexander's requests.

There was no way he would dare so no.

"Hmmp!" And Alexander exited the temple with only that imperious snort.

"Get a doctor. We still need to stitch the wounds." As the group came out of the temple, Hemicus then ordered one of his subordinates as such, for a cauterized wound was not a fully sealed one, it was only held in place by burnt skin that had fused together.

Any large movement or vibration would tear it.

"Alexander. can you ride a horse?" Hence such a question.

"Yea." Alexander shortly nodded, noticing that whenever Hemicus got worried about him, he switched to calling him by name.

And then turning to Lapitus who had gone very pale, like he was still recovering from the shock, said,

"Lapitus! Make sure the people know what happened. Tell them that it was the priests, wanting to save their lives, who decided to replace the bull with the statue of the Goddess."

"Say that exactly!"

Alexander emphasized.

And from the wording, it was very apparent why Alexander wanted it to be said this way.

To dump all the blame and dissatisfaction of the people onto those six.

It was one of the reasons he did not slaughter them all.

"Yes, my lord." And contrary to assuming Lapitus would appear reluctant, he appeared actually quite enthusiastic.

As long as Alexander did not kill the priests, he was willing to follow most things.

Though that line was soon crossed by Alexander's next command,

"And find people who might harbor rebel ideas like that priests. Who did he regularly meet? Who were his friends? Who were the co- conspirators? Bring them before me within the week."

\*Tremble\*

Lapitus's body visibly shook at this, knowing what the likely outcome would be.

But nodded nevertheless.

He understood that the current Alexander was in a very bad mood, and made up his mind to softly approach the topic at a later date to reason with him.

After all, not everyone that met with that priest were his ally and given the abruptness of the attempt, it could even be reasoned it was committed in a moment of overzealous passion, spurred by Alexander's wish to attack their most sacred symbol.

Lapitus approached the mansion with such thoughts, as then he posed,

"Lord Pasha, should we cancel the feast?" drawing his attention to that meal that was supposed to start at noon.

By now it was approaching dusk.

And as Lapitus said so, his eyes squarely landed on the bandaged left arm, which had already produced a dark patch on the center.

It was very possible that the wounded had opened.

He even lampooned, 'None of this would have happened if we just stayed here and ate the food.'

"No, let the men enjoy themselves. I will join after I'm stitched up."

While Alexander appeared to be still in the mood to party.

So with that Alexander was taken to an inside room and after he had the deep cut closed with almost twenty stitches, he joined the rest of the nobles and military officers already gathered there.

The men there remained oblivious to Alexander's injury, something that he had asked of his bodyguards as he did not want others riled up and do anything extreme in revenge for him.

So with that began the great feast as food, music, and wine flowed till almost midnight, by the end of which Alexander was blind drunk.

It had seemed to him that every nobleman and every officer worth his salt had toasted to the victory, praising Alexander for his accomplishments.

And in return, he was forced to drink, and even the small sips he had each time added up very quickly.

The only good thing that came out of this intoxication was that it helped to dull the stinging pain from his arm.

But this and the unexpected happenings of the day also meant that Alexander's initial plan to hold a meeting that night was swiftly swept aside, and as Alexander was being escorted to his room by Hemicus and the others, he struggled to even see where he was going.

And by the time he hit the bed, he lost almost all his senses.

Even the next morning greeted him with a splitting headache and a stinking pain from his arm, so deciding to treat himself a bit, the man skipped the morning in its entirety and only got ready to work at noon.

After a sumptuous lunch much of the headache was gone and though the pain from the arm still remained, he knew he could not off work only because of that.

So with that, he finally checked off some of the most important things he had to do- the first of which included getting to inspect the treasury.

Situated deep underground, the large, ornate heavy oak doors were opened to reveal its contents, with the most striking site being the huge stone statues located there, much like in the temple.

And according to Lapitus, these were the statues of Lord Ponticus's ancestors, meant to oversee and protect the contents held in the room.

These included large piles of gold and silver coins, many kinds of jewelry such as rings, bracelets, neckpieces, etc. belonging to both men and women, beautiful ornate ceremonial armor sets made of pure gold or silver, porcelain vases, precious plates and cups studded with rare gemstones, and many more.

Its contents were certainly quite bountiful, though to Alexander, this actually seemed to be a bit disappointing.

Given the opulence he had seen in the display, he had expected the treasures would be enough to recoup his cost of raising an army that came to around 60 to 70 million.

But by his experienced estimate, everything here combined would not exceed 15 million ropals max.

This amount of money was of course not nothing.

But certainly far shorter than what he wanted.

The value here was not even enough to cover the cost of the promise he made to the city and its reconstruction.

And this made him think, 'When the glamor and sparlings are taken out, Tibias is poorer than I expected.'

Though it had to be remembered that Thesalie was a city right on the border, and not the capital.

It was natural not to be overflowing with riches.

After securing the treasury, Alexander was then taken to a strange place- the ice room, where Lapitus claimed, "My lord, we have kept all the heads as you instructed. They are still fresh."

This weird statement referred to the instruction Alexander had given to that messenger who came to him to inform him of Lapitus's successful coup.

And the reason for this was because along with the women, gold, expensive fabric, and jewelry, he also wanted to send these heads to the capital.

His idea, 'To show everyone what happened when they resisted him.'

Chapter 784 Spoils of Thesalie (Part-2)

Alexander's strategy to display the heads of his enemies was a tried and tested technique, with many examples not only in this time period but also in Alexander's previous life.

With perhaps one of the most seasoned practitioners of this tactic being the Mongols, who had most famously built a literal pyramid of skulls of 80,000 men, women, and children when they slaughtered the entire Khwarazmian empire to the last man,

It was said that that pyramid lasted for nearly a century and the stink spread for miles.

And as horrifying as it might sound, Alexander's initial version of the message was indeed similar to that one, composed of trains of carts filled with heads of the entire city's population, intended to send a far bloodier message!

But since that grizzly fate had been thankfully averted, he settled for a far more 'softer' approach.

After making sure his prized propaganda piece was secured, Alexander then at last sat down to perhaps the thing he was most looking forward to, as Lapitus showed him all the maps and the various intelligence reports in his possession.

Lapitus had stayed up almost till morning yesterday, getting everything ready after the party, all so that they would be ready to be shown to Alexander by today.

Though for him the reason for his hard work was not because of his loyalty to Alexander, but felt that the faster he could show them to Alexander, the quicker he would be able to go see his wife.

The man was getting very restless knowing the love of his life was so close, yet so far.

And sensing such hastiness, Alexander decided to give the man a short leave for the day, feeling that since a day and a half had already passed, the shrewd woman surely had managed to erase almost all traces of their illicit act.

So as Lapitus went off to see his 'sick' wife back at the camp, Alexander and his military officers dove into the vast information presented to them.

And to go through all of it thoroughly, not only took hours but literally a few days, such was the sheer volume.

But over the following days, Alexander did manage to glean a lot of useful information.

Firstly regarding the maps, he found that the only large settlement nearby was this city, Thesalie.

Aside from this, there was nothing but a few scattered villages strewn about haphazardly

Normally it would be very weird.

Because alongside a city would always be several towns around supporting it, making up its suburbs.

For instance, there was Jabel who was kind of like a suburb of Zanzan.

But for Thesalie, this never happened.

And it was due to its geography.

Given the surroundings bordered Adhania, a country known to launch aggressive campaigns towards them, only the utterly desperate would choose to forego the safety of the huge walls and live in unprotected towns or villages, being subjected to frequent raids and robberies.

Hence the logical barrenness.

Reading the maps further, Alexander also found the resource distribution of the lands he conquered, and frankly, it was underwhelming.

Other than the presence of a few patches of land excellent for growing grapes, and plenty of fish to be found in the river, as a large amount of salmon tended to move upstream during winter, there was nothing of notable note.

Like Zanzan, the land was largely barren, possessing heavy clay soil that made it unsuitable for agriculture.

Expect that the soil quality was even worse here, so much so that even with Alexander's heavy plow and crop rotation, he guessed he would be able to get maybe half the yield.

As for ore or precious mines, only a scant few very small ones exist.

As a matter of fact, the reason Tibias wanted to conquer Zanzan was because of those resources, for the Cisran hills were full of such desirable products.

Alexander had not dived too deeply into those reserves due to labor shortages, but from records of previous excavations, there were huge deposits of iron, copper, gold, and silver as well as useful materials like coal, limestone and stones to be found there.

But though the Cisran hills ranged from Zanzan to past Thesalie all the way to the end of the peninsula, the Tibians got nothing, while Zanzan had it all.

They must have surely felt that Zanzan had gotten the stem of the sugarcane while they only got the root.

The maps also showed which nobles controlled which of the territories, its topography as well as the roads leading to them.

And it was the last two things that drew Alexander's attention, for given the hilly terrain, accessing each of these places was very difficult.

According to Lapitus, who was there to provide commentary as well as delineate on matters that Alexander found confusing, the roads to these close yet simultaneously distant nobles existed only on paper.

They were little better than the naturally flattened earthen roads, formed by the regular foot traffic of people and merchants, many times going through extremely stepped hills, torrential small rivers and forests which were so thick at some points that sometimes it seemed to be night even during midday.

And as Alexander heard, he found that though Zanzan too was hilly in itself, it was nowhere as extreme as this.

Attacking these nobles via such a route would be a nightmare, as sneak attacks and ambushes from these wooded areas would be almost impossible to counter.

So due to this strong field advantage, these nobles lived in relative seclusion, in a kind of mini Thesalie of thier own.

And Alexander could only thank his stars that when asked about the kind of man-made fortifications the nobles had, Lapitus replied it was nothing too fancy- generally a wooden rampant or at best a meter or two high stone wall.

"Since there is Thesalie, the nobles never bothered to build up their defense beyond the bare minimum. So most of their own walls are really meant to keep off wild animals and small bandits." Lapitus informed.

And this was totally logical.

Not only was building and maintaining a good, strong stone wall very expensive, especially for these poor nobles who could earn very little from their barren lands, but even if they did, what was the point?

It was never going to be as grand as Thesalie's.

Instead it made far more sense to seek shelter there in times of need and return to their estates when the danger passed.

But unfortunately, now that simple equation had broken down.

Thus Alexander ordered-

"Send one company(100 men - 80 soldiers, 20 servants), to each of these nobles."

"Tell them that they were to come to Thesalie before this month is over."

"Those who want to free their lords in our captivity are to bring the ransom funds."

"And those whose lords have died are to come to me so that I may choose a new one."

"And if they refuse, they will end up like Petrino and his goons before fall is over."

Given that Alexander had taken the city, it was only natural for him to take control of the surrounding areas too.

Thus this was the message Alexander decided to send.

The language he used in the letter was very aggressive, lacking any tact, almost like he was ordering them to follow him.

And this was very intentional as he wanted to assert his dominance.

Hence around one to two weeks from the day that order came out, around thirty of the noble houses would get a visit from nearly 100 soldiers, along with the ransom sum notice for their lord's release if they were lucky enough.

It had to be mentioned that due to the war and subsequent massacre by Lapitus, a lot of these houses's adult male population was almost cleanly wiped out, leaving mostly the women, the old, and the infants.

None of these people had neither the spirit nor the spine to fight.

It was because of that Alexander sent only a hundred men, even though this limited force could never forcefully take any of the noble houses.

So upon the order from Alexander, each household hastily worked to gather the funds for the ransom, or if that was not necessary quickly packed their things to go to Thesalie.

Of course, in all these cases the familiar family in-fighting over who should go and meet with the ruler of Thesalie, messages to the capital asking for aid, as well as disagreements over who should be ransomed and for how much caused much chaos.

There were even assassination attempts and even successes.

But Alexander could care less for these petty squabbles among these tiny players.

Instead, following the deployment of around 3,000 men, he then took a large part of the rest of his army- around 30,000 and put them under Menes, asking him to march along the Diannu River downstream and capture all the cities by its banks.

Lapitus had mentioned almost all of Tibias's large cities were situated along this river's banks including the capital, and even those that were not were almost always accessible through its tributaries.

So given these cities were now lightly defended, Menes was told to capture them cities immediately, carrying with him the same letter that the other nobles were given.

#### Chapter 785 Spoils of Thesalie (Part-3)

Alexander's decision to send the bulk of his army down south was taken primarily based on reading the various missives Perseus sent Lord Ponticus.

Those had proved to be quite insightful for Alexander, as they detailed various internal secrets of the country.

For instance, he could indeed confirm that the 10,000 reinforcements so touted by Lady Felicia indeed exist.

He also learned of Tibias' dire financial strains, the various factional rivalries, the most prominent one being between Mithriditus and Lord Theony, the king's thoughts on his son, much interesting but not useful palace intrigue, and most importantly of all, the country's grievous manpower shortage.

And upon reading it, as well as Lapius informing that the most force the capital would be able to master was perhaps another further 10,000, alongside the already raised 10,000, Alexander saw no reason to dally and give the enemy any chance to breathe.

So sending the supplies on boats or even rafts due to a shortage of enough vessels, Alexander sent Menes marching towards all the nearby large cities, ordering him to capture them and then replace the garrison there, and then escort the rulers of all those cities to Thesalie in order to seek audience with him.

And Menes actually made remarkable process in quite a short time in following this order, for being able to transfer the bulk of their supplies onto the boats, he was able to advance at a lightning pace, covering as much as 30 kilometers a day even in these unpaved, hilly routes.

Truly there was nothing better than travel by water.

So by the middle of November, which was three months from the time Alexander had given the order, Menes would report having covered an astounding total of almost 3,000 kilometers, though that number was a bit misleading.

This distance was not covered in a straight line from Thesalie directly south, that would have been impossible since the entire length of Tibias was only 1,300 kilometers.

Instead, the number was creatively calculated by adding the miles of every single unit of the army he would send out.

This meant if Menes sent three small contingents to three nearby towns, the individual mileage each unit covered was added to the score, even though this was clearly double counting,

And he even counted the return journey of these units when they returned to the main army, thus inflating the numbers even more.

It was almost like- well each man in the army covered 1 meter, and there are 30,000 men in the army, so the total distance was 30 km.

But nevertheless Menes did still manage to produce results that were satisfactory to Alexander, for within three months, Alexander managed to gain control of around one third of the country, amounting to 100,000 to 120,000 sq km!

It was almost ten times of his current area of control of only 13,000 sq km and finally, with this much area under him, Alexander would not feel embarrassed to call himself a pasha.

Prior to this, it was really a hollow title.

Thus due to Menes's capture to the territories, Alexander's dominion extended from the Mad Sea located west of Tibias (The sea overlooking Zanzan city) to the Calm Sea, located on the easter side of the country, the two being separated by a distance of around 250 kilometers, the entirety of which was under Alexander's control.

While lengthwise, Alexander controlled about 450 kilometers straight south of Thesalie, being just 150 km from the capital- Parthenigh.

As he conducted this large campaign, Menes actually found himself overwhelmed, for as per Alexander's order, he was to take as much territory as possible before the enemy would react.

A feat that proved to be quite challenging for his limited 30,000 men.

So he concentrated the main bulk of his army on capturing the river cities first since they were bigger population centers and acted as key nodes through which a majority of the country's trade flowed.

Then, once these places were fortified with his men, he could turn them into secure supply dumps, points from which he could send out smaller battalions (600 men, 480 soldiers, 120 servants), or even company sized elements toward all the nearby towns. secure in the knowledge that these units would not get lost or starved due to supply complications.

After the fiasco with the supplies last time, Menes seemed to have grown cautious of such eventualities.

And it was using a technique that he increased Alexander's influence, like an ever expanding web.

And though most places the soldiers visited accepted Alexander's rule without question, of course, there were exceptions.

During such instances, if the forward units faced resistance, they would try to deal with it themselves, or if unable send word to Menes, who would send a legion or two to utterly crush them.

And that would usually do the job, for most Tibian nobles did not have enough men to withstand Menes by themselves, not after the losses they suffered.

And so these fights were quite boring and predictable, with Menes or the officer he would send using their huge army to crash into the enemy in a brutal, frontal attack and snapping the thin enemy lines in two like a small twig.

This was also how most ancient fights went.

The ones involving complicated maneuvers and formation changes were really the exception.

And after the fight, almost all the surrounding people, especially the nobles would be slaughtered, to set an example.

Menes even managed to claim himself quite a kill count like this, reaching almost as high as ten thousand.

And though the loss of those lives was tragic, its efficacy could not be denied, for in exchange for one such despicable act, the entire region would quickly bow down to Alexander.

After all, Alexander simply asked the lord to go meet with him, nothing too draconian, and only a few boorish few had the guts to fight knowing the impossible odds and the grim fate awaiting them upon failure.

And even if they did win, well more were sure to come.

So most either accepted their invite to Thesalie, or simply fled south towards the capital, or to strongholds even beyond that.

And for their fiefs, well since they were left unguarded, Menes sacked them, sending the gathered loot back to Thesalie, which contained- gold, furniture, expensive vases, slaves, and livestock, to name a few.

As for the rule of these lands, well since there was no one to administer, it was left in limbo.

If these nobles were to kneel to Alexander and do so quickly enough, they would get to keep the lands,

If they did not, well they would be carved up by Alexander as he saw fit.

In this way, these fleeing nobles were actually taking a gamble.

They chose to believe that Perseus would be able to push Alexander out from Thesalie or at least from the areas they owned, by defeating him in battle and forcing him to the negotiating table.

And if that happened, it was very much possible the king would reward their undying loyalty to him by taking the lands of those nobles who flipped so easily and gifting them to them.

While Alexander, he wished to totally obliterate Perseus and his family, and then take over Tibias in its entirety.

And though he wanted to do so before the year was over, Menes was forced to halt his advance by mid November, still quite a bit away from Persus's home.

The reason- extreme cold.

Winter had finally come and as if to make up for the two previous relatively mild seasons, this year, the frost king had seemingly come with a vengeance.

Blinding blizzards for days, constant hailstorms, and snow up to one's knees.

All this made it impossible to keep any army in the match.

And even if they could, Alexander would not be able to keep them supplied anyway.

For even the mighty Diannu, which spanned tens of kilometers in some places was frozen along many points, making boats useless.

Now, it would not have been too bad if the entire river was frozen.

When the river Volga was frozen during the Battle of Stalingrad, the Soviets used it to more easily bring supplies on convoys of trucks.

Alexander could have done something similar, sending his supplies along a flat, pristine road by simply changing out the wheeled carts for sleds.

But the problem was the river was not all the way frozen.

And it was those parts that were arguably even more dangerous.

The flowing currents would carry huge frozen ice sheets that would occasionally break apart from the main piece, or even simply form by themselves, which would then travel downstream with impressive speed, posing a devastating risk to any vessel traveling along it.

If Alexander were to send his supply boats in the midst of them, the tragedy of the Titanic would repeat itself almost every day of the week.

So upon sensing the terrible weather and knowing the possibility of worsening temperatures as the season only got deeper into its months, he ordered his general to stop all advances, take shelter in large cities, and use the grain harvested during the fall to sustain himself till spring.

#### Chapter 786 Spoils of Thesalie (Part-4)

While Menes was off securing the lands Alexander helped open up, the man himself was busy consolidating his power.

First of all, the various relief programs he promised were soon implemented, with the soup kitchens he opened having lines stretching for hundreds of meters nearly all day.

As for the cash money, funnily enough, the number of people coming to accept his stimulus package was more than the pre-war population of the city.

Which was particularly impressive given that Alexander had killed a lot of the original 100,000 inhabitants- be it during the siege, through fires caused by his catapults, and of course during the open fight.

And the explanation for his discrepancy was, one- there were second comers who tried to claim the aid twice or even thrice, and two- there were people from other parts of the country, such as the nearby villages.

Of course, there was the third one, which was that the soldiers and camp followers that followed him disguised themselves as Tibians trying to also claim the money.

And this proved quite hard for Alexander to combat since there was no way to identify anyone.

There were no official records of any of these people, and no way to keep track of who got paid and who did not without setting up a massive dedicated bureaucratic branch.

Alexander neither had the time nor the skilled manpower to do so, while the people had no such patience.

So in this endeavor, Alexander lost almost 25 million ropas, whereas it should have been at most 15 million.

And he would only find this after this amount had been spent, and would then immediately order the halt, his heart aching at the loss.

First Leosydas and only this, Tibias was really a financial jinx for him.

And Alexander would only console himself by saying that this money would eventually aid him, circling through the economy and boosting the economy.

At the same time, Alexander also promised that he would do things better next time, such as using some kind of water insoluble ink as a mark, or if that was not possible, even a small cut on the palm to identify those who got the stipend.

Such future promises to oneself aside, Alexander also had other matters to delve into.

"My lord, September is already here. What should we do with all the ripe grains ready to be harvested?" One of the nobles posed.

And the reason was because Alexander had taken a lot of their labor into the army as levies, who were currently now with Menes many miles away.

Now normally, the men would have vehemently protested this, as it was almost an unwritten rule to pause all campaigns during this period and put every available hand in getting the ripe crops out of the fields and into the storage silos as soon as possible before the winter rain could ruin them.

But these were not normal circumstances.

They had won a brilliant victory, conquering the impregnable Thesalie, and now the gates to southern Tibias laid open for them.

It would be foolish of them not to take advantage.

So none objected to Alexander sending his army to capture the territories.

But still, though they agreed to Alexander's move, the problem of lack of manpower still remained.

If a lot more hands were not quickly added to the fields, there was a high chance a lot of the precious crops would go to waste.

Hence the inquiry.

And this was not something Alexander had not thought about.

In fact, he had been frowning at this problem for a while now.

And after a bit of deliberation came to the following conclusion, declaring-

"The enslaved prisoners of war I have will for the moment help in the harvest around Thesalie."

"As for those of you noble lords who have fields in Zanzan and its vicinity, firstly ask the slave traders here to lend them their collection."

"Take both men and women. I will give an official decree, as well as a suitable compensation to them."

"Also, I will have many of the workers working in my workshops enter the fields too. The workshops can be shut down for a month or two without too big a problem."

"But my lords, you must pay my men a fair wage."

Alexander finished with a condition.

And a similar kind of order went out to Menes too, who was asked to make sure the local populace was put to work harvesting the ripe grain.

Those were not only money hanging off trees, ready to be collected, but without them, a winter famine would surely occur.

It was also because of that that anyone trying to set fire to the fields as a kind of scorched earth policy would be instantly executed along with their whole family.

The harvest for Zanzan proved as bountiful as ever, and with the previous year's stocks as well as the grains he got by trading, Alexander's long term storage silos were finally filled to an acceptable level.

Even by his extravagant calculations, he would be able to fuel his army's march south with no problem, as well as feed the captured populace enough grain so that they would not rebel out of starvation.

Along with Zanzan's staple crop- wheat, its second most popular crop- beetroot was produced in abundance too, for in Zanzan, over the last year or so, a significant interest had grown in cultivating the vegetable to extract its juice and make coarse, brown sugar.

But while Zanzan managed to far outproduce its historical average, for Tibias, their harvests were okay.

Those around Thesalie had quite a poor harvest, mostly because Alexander's siege had made any farming very difficult.

And even those who managed to get anything done, only got around 250 to 300 kg of wheat per hectare, as opposed to Zanzan's 800 kg, though that number for the Tibias here was actually par for the course given the poor soil.

But while the farmers in this part barely made enough to live hand to foot, those downstream and cultivating along the banks of the fertile banks of the Diannu averaged far better, almost reaching as much as Zanzan's number without any of the agricultural improvements, while some particularly fertile land actually managed to achieve as much as an astonishing 1 or even 1.5 tons per hectare of wheat, an astounding number for the time.

And it was this bumper harvest that the country had each year that was perhaps its greatest blessing.

And also its greatest curse.

For it was because of such fertile lands that Zanzan, with its historically poor soil wanted Tibias so badly.

And even Amenheraft's campaign three years ago was because he wanted to capture these lands and obtain enough grain for his people.

Regarding the harvest reports, Alexander was naturally quite happy and decided he would implement the agricultural reforms for his newly conquered areas next year since there was neither the time nor enough tools to do so right now.

And besides, currently, Alexander was busy entertaining the nobles that had come to his city, along with their entourage.

The huge influx to literally ten thousand people, many of which were armed proved quite challenging for his army of only 6,000 to 7,000, so much so that he forced each noble to restrict their entourage to 10 family members and 30 additional men, be they servants, cooks or bodyguards.

And the reason for the huge attendance was because it was not only the Tibian nobles that came but many Zanzan ones too, with perhaps the biggest one being Jamider (Earl) Yuusiq.

His territory was also literally adjacent to Thesalie and if one recalled this man was the only noble who had refused to submit out of the original 12 nobles.

But he was here now not to pick a fight.

Instead, he greeted Alexander as such,

"My lord, this fool had eyes but could not see the sky."

"Oh, conqueror of Thesalie, I beg you, please let me serve you- the destined dominator. And I swear my sword shall dye the battlefields with the blood of your enemy!"

Something caused Alexander to be at first a bit taken aback by such a grand greeting.

But after talking to Jamider (Earl) Tikba who was his neighbour and even friend, understood the reason behind his overly passionate calling as well as the change of heart.

Being right next to Thesalie, it had always been Lord Yuusiq's and his ancestor's dream to conquer the city, for they had suffered countless casualties given their proximity, and so now that Alexander had achieved their goal, the man was moved to the point of joining him.

And in tow of him was also another small group of nobles with similar thoughts.

It was something Alexander was happy to accept, the new allegiances increasing his control over Zanzan from 13,000 sq km to around 30,000 sq km, or a bit less than ten percent (10%) of the entire province.

And this happened in spite of the fact that the conditions they were got were nowhere as favorable as the original 11, for the discounted goods Alexander sold to new his retainers were far more expensive and the quota far less than the original nobles.

Chapter 787 New Residents of The Mansion (Part-1)

Alexander's much lower offer of the goods to the Adhanian nobles was of course to be expected.

Why would these nobles get the same privileges as the original?

That made no sense.

And thankfully all of the news ones understood this, accepting the conditions without raising any objections.

Many were even pleased that they got anything at all.

But though the Zanzan nobles were able to be handled with such ease, the Tibians one proved far more difficult.

Even just gathering them in time proved to be quite difficult as even though Alexander had set the deadline to before September, many of the nobles were unable to arrive in time- be it due to the poor roads, the problem of raising enough cash for the ransoms, the attention demanded of them for the spring harvest or just simply receiving the call from Alexander late.

So Alexander could do little but patiently wait for the nobles to gather.

So in the meantime, Alexander asked had a few more guests to come to his mansion to liven up the place.

Among them of were his wives, all four of them.

"Alex!" The moment Cambyses had gotten off her carriage, she called out to Alexander in that sweet tone of familiarity, giving him a hug, quickly followed by his two year old daughter and one year old son.

And it was also only then that he got to see his two newborns for the first time, both being swaddled by their mothers.

"I'm sorry, I could not be there for you. I know I had promised," Alexander sounded apologetic to Mean and Ophenia as he then turned to gaze lovingly at his two new children's faces.

They were bright red and all scrunched up, their eyes closed shut.

Both were less than three months old and appeared to be sleeping.

"No, master. We couldn't be happier that your campaign was successful. My daughter too certainly feels the same," At Alexander's apology, Ophenia gave only a light smile to say this instead, before lightly bowing.

And Mean added something similar.

Following greeting his family, Alexander then turned to the next group who too had been welcomed here.

"My lord, congratulations on capturing Thesalie. The books will surely record your accomplishment for eternity, the bard will sing songs of your deed in every inn and the people will praise your victory for centuries." Lady Nanazin greeted Alexander as such, along with a formal bow.

Following her were her three daughters who too followed their mother's action, and in response, Alexander too returned some flowery words.

After his house had burnt down, Alexander's interaction with the queen- at least in name, had decreased quite significantly, turning from an everyday occurrence to meeting once or twice a month during the small personal parties he would hold among his close retainers and friends.

So having not properly talked to her for some time, as he looked at Lady Nanazin, he was surprised to find how much she had changed.

He found her to have grown so much more beautiful than what she looked two years ago, her cheeks now much fuller and rosy, her complexion healthy and sunny.

It seemed that being free of the mental stress of having to deal with Ptolomy and his harassment had allowed her to enjoy her life truly.

And this was very much true.

Here in Zanzan, she could wake up whenever she wanted in the morning and no one would be there to tell her off.

A simple luxury that was impossible for her to have previously, for in much contrast to her current life, when living in the royal palace in Adhan, she was expected to be up and fully ready before her husband woke up, being presentable to him in her best and finest.

Or it would mean getting an awful earful from the Queen Mother.

So this usually meant getting up hours before Ptolomy to do her makeup and put on the elaborate dresses, all so that Ptolomy might once in a blue moon sweep a glance towards her.

Not only did Ptolomy never care to appreciate her efforts, but sometimes it also proved quite hard for Lady Nanazin to get up in time, for example, if she had been made to entertain guests deep into the night prior evening, something that Ptolomy had grown to increasingly prefer after his ascension to power.

But now, there was nothing like that.

Hassle free, she would wake up at any time of the day to still find a sumptuous breakfast already prepared for her.

Typically this included fresh bread of various types, cheese, olive oil, cured or cooked meat, fish, and fried fruits, all downed with various types of sweet, spicy, or sour wine.

And perhaps her favorite thing while eating breakfast was using the newly invented fork to cut and tear the bread or meat by herself.

Before Alexander made those, Lady Nanazin would have to wait for the servants to cut the portions for her, but now she found the practice of doing it by herself so much more enjoyable.

Then after breakfast, Lady Nanazin and her daughter would go to tend to her garden that she had made in the backyard.

There was a huge empty plot there, and Lady Nanazin tried to make use of as much of it as possible.

So she not only grew various potted plants and several beautiful flower beds but also various household vegetables such as well- gourds, pumpkins, cucumbers, eggplants, beetroots, and peas to name a few.

This for a noble lady, would have been of course scandalous at any other time.

If it came to be known in the capital that the queen was personally cultivating vegetables in her garden like a lowly peasant, Ptolomy might have divorced Lady Nanazin then and there out of embarrassment.

But here, where Lady Nanazin was all alone with no one to judge her, she could pursue her passion without worries,

She even found the practice to be very rewarding.

So she with her daughters would work in her huge garden till lunch, and after being served the large meal, usually take a short nap.

Then waking up around late afternoon, she had options.

Sometimes she would go to the temples to pray and meet up with the twin princesses and Ophenia.

Sometimes she would go to the market to buy this and that, various trinkets and such, or to simply just walk around the city and see all the new things that were being constantly constructed.

Other times she would go riding around the safe parts of the Cisran hills, enjoying the various small springs and streams running through the hilly areas.

She even had a small, very beautiful crossbow with gold workings etched into it gifted to her by Alexander, with which she would try and hunt small game like rabbits, squirrels, hedgehogs, various birds, etc.

Or if none of those things attracted her, she would occasionally hold small get-together parties with the noble ladies of the city- such as Cambyes and the wives of other recently made nobles.

Her typical daytime would pass like that, and after dark, she would quickly finish her dinner and then spend a bit of time with Azura and Azira who shared the bungalow with her, chatting or playing various board games invented by Alexander with them.

After that, she would perhaps read a few pages from a book, or directly hit the bed, ready to repeat it once again.

Her days passed like this, with nothing to worry about, no problems that could cause headaches, and certainly no social interactions she would be tedious or disgusting.

Everything was taken care of and paid for by Alexander- be it the servants, the food, the clothes, the jewelry, or the guards and all she would have to do was enjoy.

Alexander even gave her and her daughters each 1,000 ropals a month for miscellaneous expenses, and would even gift her new clothes and jewelry every three to four months.

So to Lady Nanazin, the previous two years almost felt like a dream.

It was so good in fact that sometimes she would even wake up in the middle of the night full of sweat, scared that all this had indeed been a dream and she had returned to her beastly husband and hellish life.

After tasting such comfort, now Lady Nanazin was even more afraid to return.

Thus upon confirmation that she had indeed managed to escape, she would heave a sigh of relief.

Though if there was one thing to complain about, it was that her nights were quite cold.

All alone in bed, many times she would find herself comforting her lonely kitty all by herself, but be it her fingers, no matter how many, her wooden toys, no matter how big, or even a vegetable, no matter how curved, it could not sate her lust.

She yearned for a man's touch, or more specifically that man's touch.

For even though many times she wished to have the many male servants and slaves or even the guards itch her scratch, that desire would instantly evaporate as Alexander's face would surface immediately following such thoughts.

And Lady Nanazin had vowed she would never sleep with another man in her life unless forced otherwise.

#### Chapter 788 New Residents of The Mansion (Part-2)

Lady Nanazin's face appeared to be almost glowing when greeting Alexander, like it was radiating pure rays of happiness.

The first time she had learned of Alexander's success, her reaction was perhaps even more extreme than Cambyses's, and the amount of pride she had felt was like nothing else.

She felt her love for the man deepen to almost maddening limits.

And though Alexander was not aware of Lady Nanazin's exact thoughts, how could he not figure out her ever increasing feelings towards him?

It was also because of that that over the last two years, he tended to keep as much a distance from her as possible.

And in return, as if to compensate her for that, Alexander made sure the living conditions befitted her status, hence the large house, the good food, the nice clothes, and all the servants.

Though it was also because if he did not do so, PP might have found faults to nitpick with.

Alexander was aware the king could not care less for his wife but he still acted as expected of him to avoid any unnecessary vexations.

In front of the carriage next to Lady Nanazin, stood the last pair to be invited to Alexander's mansion, and they were of course the twins- Azura and Azira.

Dressed in a simple, but comfortable white gown with golden stickwork along the sleeves, the chest, and hem, the two black ladies still looked as elegant as ever, even through the weary faces after five days of travel.

And they stood next to one another, even now, after three years, Alexander still struggled to distinguish which was which.

Until they spoke that is.

"Hmmp! To be able to capture Thesalie. Not bad," Azura, always the haughty one snorted as Alexander approached to greet them, though the twinkle in her eyes betrayed her real feelings.

Try as she might, in reality, she was very impressed, for she shared a deep desire to capture the city like many of her countrymen.

"Yes, bad man, you did well," And following her sister's lead, Azira in a sweet voice larked so.

The twins had given Alexander that name since the day he tricked them into giving up the treasury of the Grand Temple.

And since Alexander never once objected, the twins kept it.

While Alexander, receiving us a frank welcome, actually let out a chuckle, not minding the address at all.

He very much enjoyed the company of these two, finding the contrast between their immature, childlike innocence and their adult age very appealing.

He even wanted to pinch these two's cute cheeks which were so plump and rosy.

'Should I use my capture of Thesalie to get Farzah to marry them to me? Or should I wait till I get Tibias' Alexander even began to plan such in his mind as he said his pleasantries to the girls.

Alexander was determined to not any other men ever touch these beautiful flowers.

With the addition of these nine ladies and four kids, Alexander's mansion suddenly had a lot of life added to it.

And over the following days, he took the group on tours around his newly captured estate as well as the city itself.

While touring the estate, the girls let out various expletives, with Cambyses clearly blurting out,

"This house is even better than our previous one." when Alexander led them to the library which overlooked the River Diannu, so mesmerized was she by the scenery.

Now, Pasha Muazz's original estate was of course not shabby, being multiple times bigger than this, covering almost 2 sq km in its entirety.

And even the view there was very gorgeous- with green, rolling mountains of the Cisran Hills on one side, and the golden sandy beaches on the other.

So Cambyses's cry was more of a preference.

And upon showing the huge private pools and beautifully manicured gardens, Mean too let out her own preference, "This is so much better than our house. Will we be moving here? I love it."

Her sparkling eyes held much joy and anticipation.

But to this, Alexander could only cough, "Maybe."

Switching from Zanzan which already had three years to develop to here would be difficult.

While the twins had only this to nitpick about- The personal temple.

"Why have the statues there been allowed to remain? They should be demolished immediately! They are guardians of the house, placed by the previous lord. To us, they mean nothing but harm!"

They first exclaimed in horror, and then added with almost enraged looks,

"And the crypts have not been emptied out either! By Ramuh, Alexander! These spirits will bring bad luck to anyone who is not their kin. You have small children with you. Think of them!"

"You must throw those cursed bodies out at once! Burn them and scatter their ashes to the four winds."

The tone of the twin's voice was such that if they could, they would have done all this all by themselves.

Such was their zeal.

And hearing this, first and foremost, made Alexander realize that he had forgotten what kind of zealots the two were.

Beneath that childish demeanor with a fantastically pure heart, burned a spirit that housed some pretty scary ideas.

Ideas that would be undoubtedly classed as racist, xenophobic, bigoted, and such.

Alexander was sure these twins, who could cry even seeing a kitten hurt, on the other hand, could see a million 'heretics', i.e.- people who worship anyone but Ramuh or recently Gaia, be burned at the stake without batting an eye.

Even if those men, women, and children were to beg for the two's mercy, even if their screams of pain and agony were to fill the air, Alexander was pretty sure these two would not lose a single second of sleep at night over it.

Such pure faith was not only very impressive but also very scary.

And it reminded Alexander somewhat of the Spanish Inquisition.

Facing the two enraged kittens, Alexander had no intention of fighting, so with a smile and nod he replied,

"Thank you for reminding me, Your Highness. I have just captured the mansion, so had not had the time to do it."

"But now that you have mentioned it, I will get to it as soon as possible."

And Alexander would really do so, for he wished to turn that temple into his own family's, one that worshipped Gaia."

But he would also not be so destructive as the twin wished.

He would simply ask the high priest from the main temple to move these statues and bodies there.

What he did with them then was his choice.

And the reason for such generosity was because Alexander hoped his example of such tolerance for the local customs and religions would play well with the public.

Alongside the mansion and its surroundings, Alexander also showed the group the personal vineyards he had 'inherited' from Lord Ponticus, where the rolling hills were adorned with rows and rows of meticulously cultivated grapevines.

The grapes were still unripe, due for spring or even summer, but the irrigation system consisting of various channels, dykes, and pipes meant to feed these plants was in full swing.

These waters came from both the nearby Diannu river, as well as the springs, and Alexander even showed the group a huge reservoir dug underground, from where stored water could be supplied in times of drought.

It was a very lavish vineyard, and Alexander had quite a hard time getting back the people who had been originally assigned to look after this vast site.

After all, many of these servants had died in the prior ordeal or if they could- fled.

So Alexander had to cajole the rest with significant promises of money and benefits.

His reason for going through all this trouble- because looking after a vineyard was a very technical and skilled job.

It was in fact so specialized that many times a vinedresse from one vineyard would find himself totally out of his depth in another one.

For each plantation was unique, with its unique soil, rainfall, and most particularly, the species of grapes used.

And as anyone who has tried their hand at winemaking would know just how moody the process is.

Even a negligible change in the raw material's quality could yield a subpar product.

Even the mere act of simply harvesting the grapes from its stem required skilled hands so as to do damage to the head of the fruit.

So if Alexander was to try his luck running this ornate vineyard with his own men, without the guidance of these experts, this huge, so painstakingly crafted, beautiful, money making machine would surely become a rotting heap of compost within a few years.

And then to show off his prized possession, on one magnificent September afternoon, Alexander even hosted an unusual, large, open air party there to commemorate the group's arrival.

There he introduced the various nobles to his wives, his four children as well as Lady Nanazin and the twins.

But most importantly of all, he also named his two new children there, for their mothers insisted that they would only be named after they met their father.

Mean's son was given an Adhanian name- Afshan, while Ophenia asked Alexander to let her daughter's name be- Ophenia.

'Master, although I very much love my new name- Tayin, I do not wish for the word my father gave me to disappear. Please let his memory live through her.'

She had sincerely asked of Alexander.

And Alexander was more than happy to oblige.

Chapter 789 Catching Up With the Four (Part-1)

As Alexander named his current youngest daughter, Ophenia, he also noticed that she had inherited her mother's natural blonde hair.

Though currently they were only thin, wisps whose color would seemingly change from blonde to brown to even black depending on the intensity of the light and viewing angle, Alexander knew they would become much more prominent as the little girl grew up.

And it was of course something that had not escaped her mother's notice, which she quickly brought up to Alexander.

"Master, should I dye her hair?" She had asked a bit fearfully, worried of all the possible consequences.

And Alexander did think about doing exactly that.

But then came to the conclusion that although there was indeed a bit of danger to it, the chances of anything happening were very, very small.

It would require someone with ridiculous luck and insight to be able to tie Alexander's daughter's hair to Amenheraft's former uncle Kafka, he being her grandfather.

Because only the Cantagenans knew that Agapios had taken his daughter to Adhania, and so only they would be able to deduce that Alexander could have possibly taken Ophenia.

No one in Adhania knew of this.

And would remain in the dark unless they were told specifically by that city state.

Hence the holy trinity of Cantagena, Adhan, and the mother daughter pair would have to all come together in the same place before there was even the slightest chance of any unforeseen events developing.

The likelihood of that was too low.

And besides, even if this was to occur, so what?

Alexander was no longer the weak, defenseless man from before.

He was confident that he would be able to handle situations that arose from the revelation that he had children related to the royal family.

So he replied firmly, "No. It would be too cruel for my daughter to grow up with dyed hair. She will show off the natural color she was born with."

And then turning to caress the beautiful woman's raven hair, he added,

"In a few years, I will even have you go back to your natural hair, I very much like that color."

This tender action drew a subsequent blush from Ophenia as she flushed, "Master, you...."

the curving up of her lips betraying her pleased heart.

But then with a forceful shake of her head, Ophenia claimed.

"There is no need, I quite like my new look. Besides, all the people know me like this. They will raise too many questions if I were to return to my original looks."

"Especially given the particular color of my hair."

Here she was referring to how blondes were usually equated to prostitution.

And so for a sacred priestess to have blonde hair, it would be too scandalous.

Many troublemakers might even spread that Ophenia had actually dyed her head blonde and use that to point her loose morals.

This was another small reason by she wanted to dye her daughter's hair too, as Ophenia was afraid that the little girl would get bullied like she had been.

"\*Snort\*, who would dare? Bring them to me and I will cut their tongues and feed it to them." And understanding her concern, Alexander contemptuously snorted, his eyes filled with rage.

This mere statement was enough to make Ophenia's heart be filled with satisfaction, as she gave a large grin, almost lighting up the room with her beauty.

At another point, Alexander had also asked,

"Tayin, do you wish that we call you Ophenia? There will be no problem now."

Frankly, Alexander could have restored her original name a long time ago, but since he really knew her as only Tayin, the name stuck and he did not bother to change it.

Until Ophenia expressed her desire for it.

But at Alexander's offer the girl simply shook her head, and giving a light smile, she said,

"No. Ophenia died on that battlefield. I'm Tayin."

It appeared she had wished to start her life anew with this new name.

And Alexander could understand that.

Over the course of their stay, Alexander of course told his wives of much of what had happened to him in the last six months.

About how he won the battles and got the city.

And this naturally included Lady Felicia and Fabiyana as well as the story of how Alexander got, in his words, tricked into taking her as his mistress.

Though it was something hard to sell to Cambyses who only sneered with derision.

"Heh! So... you got yourself a ahhh... childbride. I never knew you had ohhh... such taste. Wasn't Mean's body enough.. eh.. for you? She looks practically like ...mmmnn... a child too... Nnnn."

The reason for her speaking like this was because, among all his wives, the very first one Alexander told was Cambyses, and to make sure she was in her best mood, he said it after a particularly rough session in bed, while Cambyses's head was still swimming in pleasure.

Thus currently Cambyses was resting her head on her husband's broad shoulder, totally bare, sweat tickling her many parts of her body as her chest ebbed and flowed due to the recent fierce exercise.

Her milky chest was being pinched by Alexander's mischievous hand, making it leak small drops of motherly liquid which were quickly scooped up and cleaned, either by Alexander himself or by

Cambyses who would be offered to lick them off his fingers.

While down below, the other hand worked to put a few naughty thick digits in her warm, wet kitty that Alexander had pumped full of his spunk, nonchalantly squirming inside it and producing lewd squelching noises while Alexander retold his story.

And as he talked, these fingers continued to work their magic- as they would sometimes simply play with the small tuft of hair on the pubes, sometimes they would trace along her sensitive lips, sometimes they would pinch and pull them apart, sometimes they would crush the sensitive pink bud, and sometimes they would violently stir everything inside up, turning everything in Cambyses's mind to muss and causing her to see white stars.

In this way, all these different levels of sensation managed to keep Cambyses's fire of lusting growing and had her distracted with pleasure.

So with her mind half clouded by lust, as well as with Cambyses herself also stroking with one hand that turgid organ which was currently wet with her juices after their lovemaking, she failed to pay even a tenth of her attention to Alexander's story.

Though in reality that was mostly because she did not care if Alexander took a ten year or even a one year old as his mistress.

He could have as many toys of whatever ages he liked for all she cared.

Cambyses felt that as long as the mistresses he took was not of impossible statuses, like queens or crown princesses, Alexander's adventures in bed with other women had little to do with her, for her place in the harem, having produced both a daughter and more importantly a son, was basically unshakable.

But though Cambyses said that sneered line as a joke, Alexander decided to punish in a similar way too, as hearing so without any warning he dove this thickest middle finger into the still tight puckered hole below while chiding next to her ear,

"How dare you slander your pure husband like that? It seems you have gotten too cheeky."

This sudden intrusion, combined with a strong pinch on her clit caused the woman to howl and arch her back, lifting her large butt directly up into the air, as she let out a magnificent torrent of juice upon reaching her climax, wetting the sheets.

Interactions such as this with the girls were actually quite common for Alexander, especially in the early days of their arrival.

Being away from their husband for so long, these girls were like hungry cougars and appeared to be constantly in heat, as they would try to get it in with Alexander at every opportunity.

And Alexander too responded in kind as he had been starved of any female companionship for six months of absolute abstinence, except that one night stand with Lady Felicia.

And coupled with a new mansion with loads of novel places to have an exciting tussle, Alexander and his four companions had so much sex it was truly something else.

They mated almost like rabbits for the first few weeks, trying all kinds of new things, in brand new positions, in exotic destinations, many times even to the clear knowledge of the servants who would pass by the door or even just a makeshift curtain from which strange moans and loud squeals of joy would drift out, along with wet, slapping sounds, leaving no one in doubt to what was occurring behind that screen.

The servants would then quickly pass that place with flushed faces, leaving their new masters and mistresses to enjoy, as well as muttering how lustful Adhanians were.

Because even though this mansion had seen much intimacy between couples, the act had always been done in relative secret.

For Tibias was a much more conservative society.

So for the servants, this was a very first, having never faced this before during Lord Ponticus or any of his ancestors' time.

But how was that any of Alexander's concern?

Chapter 790 Catching Up With the Four (Part-2) (R-18)

Alexander and his wives' open, or perhaps specifically 'much more open' frivolities did cause many servants to frown.

They wondered why their new master could not stick to inside his room when enjoying himself.

But what did such opinions have to do with Alexander?

He missed his wives and was enjoying them.

If anyone had a problem, that was their concern.

And besides, how could they understand the thrill of having sex in places where it was taboo, places where people usually gathered for social events and such?

Hence Alexander and his four companions had so much sex during the early new weeks that it was truly something else.

In the case of Cambyses, she seemed to have fallen in love with the library.

And her favorite way to be taken was to be bent over the window overlooking the river, as Alexander enjoyed her creamy, fleshy butt.

Or if she were allowed to take charge of the act, she would straddle Alexander in various cowgirl positions, preferring to mate in secluded parts of the gardens or lawn, typically in the open air, under the clear sky.

She could be quite the adventurous exhibitionist when the mood came.

While in the case of Mean, the masochistic, pain-loving girl, her favorite pose was to be laid over Alexander's wide lap and be spanked hard while being fingered in both her tight canals.

Other times she would ask to be tied up in various ways and be bullied- be it using leather crops to strike her, soft whips to leave long slashes on her fair skin, wax plays on sensitive places like her cheery buds, pubes, or soft armpits, blindfolds to increase the sensitivity or clips and clamps which directly turned pain to pleasure.

Ophenia on the other hand was really up for anything, be it any exotic position, any and all types of plays as well as the teasing of her beautiful piercings.

Though there was one main thing that she asked of Alexander- to sometimes let her drink his other, more yellowish liquid.

But even for the man who loved to spoil his wives, this request was perhaps denied more times than granted.

Alexander was really not up for these types of extreme water plays.

Instead, he concentrated more on tasting her lactating mammaries.

And the thin leaking streams of milk flowing down her breasts, combined with curves as beautifully proportioned as Ophenia's, as well as the large nipple and clit piercings dangling from her, really made Ophenia look like a sinful goddess.

Alexander would always lose control of himself upon seeing those large child-bearing hips, her golden pubes, or that snowy white butt with a ruby plug always stuck inside.

And like a good girl Ophenia too, unlike the former more indulgent two, would give her master some special service only she was capable of.

Specifically, squatting down with her legs wide open, letting Alexander see her drooling sex, she would give Alexander a very special tit fuck.

In that, instead of lubricating his shaft with her saliva, Ophenia would use another, more milky liquid.

Yes, she would squish her abundant breasts and spray the turgid organ with tiny jets of sweet, warm milk.

And the first time she did this, Alexander was so surprised and turned on that he had let off a load then and there, without any other stimulation.

"Hahahaha, hehehehe," And as Ophenia's face was plastered by the turbid liquid, she let out a proud grin that Alexander did not think he ever saw.

Seeing her triumphant face, he even felt a bit glad, though he quickly became much more embarrassed over how quickly he had lost control.

But he fared far better in subsequent sessions, where Ophenia got the chance to show off the full range of her service, coating the entire stiff thing in her milk and then squishing them between her pillow mountains before giving it a suck of a lifetime.

And the sweet scent of the milk mixed with the musky scent of the huge organ, the wet sounds she intentionally produced, as well as the way Ophenia turned to look up and kept giving naughty, lustful looks as her mouth was filled with his meat lollipop, all added immensely to the pleasure.

There was even one point when Alexander was sucking on her nipples that, in an uncharacteristic move she decided to bully him, teasing,

"Master, aren't you ashamed? This milk is for your daughter. Why are you stealing from her share?"

"Are you a baby too? Do you like suckling Mommy that much? Then next time I will feed you and Ophenia next to each other."

That last immoral statement really got Alexander turned on, as he then had 'severely punished' the girl for even daring to make such a suggestion, one which left the beautiful lady with a very red, sore bottom and fully clogged up pipes.

Finishing with Ophenia, there was only one woman who had yet to be mentioned by name- Gelene.

And she was also the one who caused the biggest headache for Alexander, as although she tried not to show it, it was pretty apparent that she was depressed over the fact that she was the only one without a child.

Even when Alexander made her a Shordar (Baron), fulfilling his promise since she had managed to raise a million ropals from her business, giving her land near the city, Thesalie, her reaction was quite lukewarm.

Something which even surprised the woman herself given up until now she had thought becoming a landed, hereditary noble was 'the' goal.

But now that the holy grail was in her hands, suddenly she felt empty.

'Who am I doing all this for?' She asked herself, as seeing all the other three's smiles carrying their children, produced a burning jealousy that was hard to douche.

At times she would even blame Alexander for his impotency, though she clearly knew the problem was with her.

The medicines and contraceptives she had taken in her early years had done a number on her reproduction system.

And though she did feel regret over consuming them back then, she also knew she had little other choice.

If she was to be given the chance to try again, Gelene would probably choose the same option.

Otherwise, if she were to haphazardly become pregnant, she would not survive long enough to have a child with Alexander.

But that did not lessen the pain of being presumably barren any less.

While Alexander for his part did try his best to help her conceive.

He took her whenever he could in the mansion, in all the various sitting rooms in various kinds of ways- be it laying her on the tables and pounding her as her large breast swayed, or on a chair as she straddled his lap, or being pressed against the walls and strongly taking her,

or putting her in a mating press on one of the many couches or simply bending ever over and enjoying her huge ebony butt with its pink flowers.

He even regularly gave her words of comfort, saying things like, "We still have a lot of time. It will be easy to have one by then."

And, "I have instructed the clinics to look into new fertility medicines."

Though the efficacy of these words was yet to be determined.

Among all the sessions with his wives, perhaps Alexander's favorite was the one he had at the private pool.

That place had proved to be a particularly favorite of them, and on one clear, moonlit night Alexander was invited to take all four simultaneously.

There, the four had gotten into the water and then lined themselves up along the bank of the pool, in perhaps one of the sexiest positions, with all their butts turned to him, going in ascending order from left to right.

Starting from the smallest ass- Mean's, then there was Cambyses's much larger hind, to Opehnia's fair voluminous bottom to lastly the absolutely huge black botty belonging to Gelene.

And since they all purposely bent over in such a way that everything was visible, Alexander was able to clearly appreciate the difference and variety of each genitalia.

Mean's flower was just like a thin, paper-cut slit, with a small, black dot for her butt.

It smelled strongly of flowers and as Alexander took her, he felt the vagina to be like a perfect handshake—the grip strong and solid. After giving birth, Mean's pussy no longer seemed to want to strangle Alexander every time.

Though being in the water also helped.

However that did not mean if she wanted to, Mean could not use her kegel muscles to choke Alexander's little brother into submission.

Next to her, Cambyses's genitals were beautifully arranged, smelling of fragrant cheese.

Cambyses was a relatively small-sized woman, and her lower half reflected, with all her parts being hidden behind her crack housed in that large bubble butt, only her cute butthole peaking shyly out of its cheeks.

And as Alexander took her, the taste was very familiar to him, tight and constantly wriggling.

Then came Ophenia's organs- young and well-formed, it smelled of milk.

Out of all four, she undoubtedly looked the most beautiful, with her magnificent, fair butt possessing a shapely flower with a golden clit piercing dangling sexily down, her red swollen bud proudly revealed to all.

While above, the netherhole was plugged by that ruby jewelry that glittered under the moonlight.

Alexander loved the exquisite sensation of the organ as he plunged himself in, finding himself easily swallowed and relentlessly squeezed.

And then lastly came Gelene, whose genitals were open with a lascivious bloom.

The pinkness nested with the chocolate earth was bloated and spread out, while her bulging clitoris was exposed through the foreskin, and her butthole above was wide open, seemingly free to penetration.

Her organs were certainly not as elegant as the other three, but Alexander would also describe her to be the one most fitting of this occasion, for she seemed to perfectly fit the current licentious acts they were committing in the wide open.

In that sense, she was indeed the finest "woman" here.

And as he took her, he found her smell to be surprisingly mild and gentle, just like her folds.

This provided a much-needed reprieve for his organ, as after tasting those three brutal pussies that knew only to squeeze and wring him dry, Gelene's tunnel appeared to tenderly love their master, gently massaging him after a hard day's work.