

Herald 81

Chapter 81 Deadline For The Departure

The messenger pronounced in an impeccable regal tone, "I, Arazadm, hereby represent the ruler of the worlds, the summoner of thunder and fury, the conqueror of the wildlands, the bringer of life and provider of subsistence, the divine son of Ramuh, the god on earth, His Royal Eminence Amenheraft."

'These royals sure have long titles behind them. How long does it take to write their names? Do they sign using their full name or do they use seals?' Alexander had lost himself in thought after hearing just the first two titles of the king, mocking him in his head.

In reality, the use of such long names was a type of psychological trick meant to intimidate the opposition by informing them of the various accomplishments and thus the very dangerous foe they were facing.

And it mostly worked, especially against commoners who held reverence against all kings, even opposing ones.

But too bad this time they met Alexander, who simply placidly waited for the messenger to get to the meat of the issue.

The messenger, thankfully, did not know, of Alexander's disdain and continued, "My liege wishes to employ each of you for five hundred ropals a month for the next six months. The details are military secrets and can be discussed once you accept the commission."

Hearing the order, Alexander was internally surprised and then became very weary.

He saw it as an Adhanian plot to get them to lower their guard and lure them out of their defensive position, to massacre them.

But he did not let a thread of such thoughts surface.

"Five hundred ropals! Really! For six months?" Alexander's eyes almost started glowing green, as a flattering smile formed on his face.

Then he immediately got up and pulled a chair towards the messenger, "Hehe, so it was you esteemed sir! Please, sit down sir here, please. And please forgive this fool for having eyes but failing to see Mount Tai," he said while rubbing his hands together in an oily manner.

The ingratiating attitude and the toady smile plastered on Alexander's face only drew even more scorn and disgust from Arazadm, as his idea that these commoners only cared for money and knew nothing of honor was reinforced.

While for Camius, after initially thinking, 'Where's Mount Tai,' eagerly looked forward to the performance because whenever Alexander played the role of a clown, somebody was going to get scammed.

"Hmph, so do you accept it or not," Arazadm asked impatiently without bothering to sit down.

"Hehe, well we are mercenaries. And the Cantagenans don't have the coin to pay us. So, if it was upto me I would accept it now."

Then Alexander told him about some difficulties, "But, I will need some time to discuss it with the other leaders. How about esteemed sir comes back a week later."

"A week? Seems a bit long." Arazadm scrunched up his eyebrows in apparent displeasure.

"Esteemed sir, please understand. A week is not a lot of time for us," Alexander implored, "We will need this to regroup from our recent loss, choose replacement officers, pack our supplies, and most importantly convince the soldiers to accept the commission. After all, many had their loved ones sacrificed in the ritual."

"You heathen infidels were the ones to attack us. You got what you deserved." Arazadm was completely unapologetic and even proud of the act.

"Yes, yes, sir is right," Alexander answered sycophantly. "But these stupid soldiers will not understand that. But worry not, sire, give them three-four days to mourn and they will soon remember their one and only friend, gold."

"Hmmm, okay, I will bring the contract then." Arazadm agreed.

Truthfully one week time was not a big deal for him as it would take much more than that for even the Adhanians to plan everything for the attack.

Then he asked, "How many are you?"

This was to know how much he would have to bring the next time he visited as mercenaries were usually paid their coin in advance for the first month to cover various preparation expenses.

"Hehe, actually we still haven't taken a proper man count. Why don't I give sir the number next time you come." Alexander honestly offered.

"Hmm, can you give an estimate?" Arazadm pressed.

"Fifteen to twenty thousand, I would guess." Alexander gave an exaggerated number.

"Okay," Arazadm didn't contest the numbers and then wordlessly strode out as if speaking to

Alexander for a second longer than necessary was torturous for him.

Once the tent became empty, Alexander snapped an order to Camius.

"Get me the leaders. Now!"

And soon Alexander informed them of the encounter.

"Is it a trap?" Melodias came to the same conclusion as Alexander.

"Why do they want to hire us?" Menicus prudently asked.

'Right, why did they want to hire us?' Alexander asked himself as he just remembered he had forgotten to ask Arazadm why exactly did he want to hire them when they had a perfectly good functioning army themselves.

As he was contemplating on what lies to sell, Petricuno came to his rescue, "Hah, obviously they think us nothing more than amoral brutes who can't see nothing but gold. Those bastards think they can just throw some coins in front of us, and we will come wagging our tails like some dog. Fuck!"

Clearly, Petricuno had his own experience of discrimination and prejudice.

"Maybe they ..." Heliptos piped up to offer an explanation.

But his words were suppressed by Alexander, who quickly jumped in, "Petricuno has excellently said my thoughts. You should have seen the way that man looked at me. You don't look at even stray dogs like that."

He was afraid that if they kept on discussing this topic, the greedy mercenaries would actually choose to accept the offer.

Five hundred ropals was a lot of money, almost equal to five thousand tustas, which was twice the amount the Cantagenans were willing to give them and certainly enough to entice some of them to take it to recuperate their recent losses.

This would be disastrous for Alexander who would not be able to escape Adhania on his own and thus be forced to accept the commission.

"Hmm, it seems the Adhanians truly take us for fools to use such a cheap trick." Melodias sneered.

"Hmph, those rich assholes think only they have brains and all of us are lesser beings with dung for heads." Petricuno vented.

The mercenaries began to think that Adhania, inflated by its recent successes, simply was underestimating them and so laying such an obvious trap.

After all, would they need to hire mercenaries when Adhania had its huge one hundred thousand army to take on any challenge?

Alexander was very pleased by how the conversation was being directed and decided to remind the mercenaries, "We will have a lot of gold from the Cantagenans. There's really no need for us to gamble here."

"Yes, I believe the gold from the Cantagenans will more than makeup for all the loss I have taken here." Menicus, being the eldest was most adverse to taking risks, preferring to end his life on a bed rather than a field.

With the reminder that a free gold pile was directly under their nose, these mercenaries finally cooled down on the offer and though the Regias and Alcmene mercenaries wanted to accept it, Alexander decided to quickly end the conversation, without giving them any chance for input, "I have decided to stall for time and agreed to meet the messenger in a week's time. So we will leave six days from today, sooner if possible."

"I have no problem," Menicus's gruff voice echoed and other leaders' consented.

And so, with the date of departure set, Alexander saw off the mercenary leaders and could finally catch up on some actual work.

He first started by inspecting Nestoras's books for accounting irregularities, calculating their disposable income, and making a rough estimation of how much money he would have to give the dead mercenaries' families.

He then planned the shuffling of the officers and captains in his group, particularly demoting Pallidus and the squad captains (men in charge of ten men) and platoon captains (men in charge of fifty men) favoring him and promoting men loyal to him, like Remus, Camius, and Bartholomew.

And at last, he drew up training plans for the verdant Cantagenans, to maximize their output within the short time.

He sent these written orders to Menes, telling him, in addition to ironing out the cowardice of the Canagenans and instilling in them an eagerness to fight, he was specifically to focus on teaching them how to charge, throw javelins and dig ditches quickly.

Alexander handed Menes the power to choose platoon captains for the Cantagenans and told him to choose seven promising men as potential candidates for the phalanx captain, from which Alexander would choose four or five.

And, at last, Alexander finished the address by saying that he will inspect the soldiers' improvement three days later, and their performance would directly reflect Alexander's own evaluation of Menes's capabilities.

And while doing all this heavy paperwork, the evening slowly crept up on Alexander, the candles were lit, and after tidying up the last bit of work, he decided to turn in for the day.

Chapter 82 Ophenia

After a long day's hard work, Alexander slowly returned to his tent, eager to see his lover's face again, when upon just entering it, he was immediately hugged by an over-enthusiastic Cambyses.

"Alex!" Cambyses squealed in joy as she rocketed towards him, wrapping her arms around Alexander's neck and her legs around his back and turning herself into a koala that was hanging off Alexander.

"Mwah," She then laid a heavy kiss on her man, sucking his lips and mixing her tongue inside his mouth, recoating her lover's insides with her scent.

Alexander too was parched for this nectar, and responded in kind, pulling on Cambyses's tongue and lifting her by her butt to embrace her more tightly.

It was a while later that the out-of-breath couple finally unlocked their lips, at last allowing them to offer their greetings.

Cambyes was the first, "Alex, congratulations on becoming the commander. I could hear the soldiers' chanting your name all the way from here!"

She had a huge, beaming smile on her face as she gazed at Alexander with infinite love and pride in her eyes.

"I would not be here today without you, Cam," Alexander grinned in reply.

This led to another round of kissing.

Finally, after both were satisfied, Cambyes decided to free her legs and stood up on her own, allowing Alexander to notice the three other people in the tent with them for the first time.

"So, mistress has finally left Mean, uwuu," The short girl cried in an exaggerated fake manner as she felt Alexander's gaze land on her.

Beside her, a saccharine voice wafted through the air into Alexander's ears, " That's only natural! Master is a god and only someone like him deserves an angel-like mistress,"

The voice belonged to a raven-haired beauty, curvy, mature, and graceful, she had a diamond-shaped face and appeared to be in her late twenties.

This was Gelene, a slave originally gifted to Octavius by his father to celebrate him stepping into adulthood and now Cambyes's property.

But Alexander's attention skipped both these people and was instead drawn to the third person, a woman that in his eyes was quite the abnormality because she had blonde hair, a hair color he was seeing for the first time in ten years.

Sensing a curious gaze fall upon her, the tall, fair woman immediately kneeled and prostrated, "Slave greets Master, the divine son of Gaia."

Alexander's mouth imperceptively twitched at such a formal greeting and especially at the address she made and he sent an inquisitive look towards Cambyses, wanting to know why a stranger was calling herself his slave and claiming his to be divine.

"Ophenia, please get up and explain your situation to your master," Cambyses said with a light smile.

"Yes, mistress," The ivory-skinned blonde got up and introduced herself, "My name is Ophenia, master. I was born in Cantagena, to the wife of General Agapios nineteen years ago. As you know, Cantagena was going through its most tumultuous times during that time, and because of my noble birth, illegitimacy, and mostly my golden hair, I was seen as a curse from the gods that brought down ruin upon my city-state."

"Illegitimacy? What do you mean?" Alexander found it hard to keep up.

"Apologies, it seems master is not quite familiar with Cantagena. My story is known to every man, woman, and child there. You see, though my mother was General Agapios's wife, my father is not him. Twenty years ago....." Here Ophenia retold the story of how her mother was raped and actually got pregnant with her that night, and then how later she died during childbirth.

Alexander was quite surprised by the story, not by its contents but by how easily the young girl was able to recount such painful memories

It seemed the girl was either immune to such pains, or much more likely, she had completely closed her heart to the outside world.

,m Ophenia continued her story in a bland, monotone voice, "...I never got to know my real father and I never got to spend any time with my mother. But General Agapios..my adoptive father, loved me more than any real parents ever could. Even when the Cantagenan senate was pushing to burn me at the stake as a witch to appease the gods, it was my father that bore all the pressure and refused to budge."

Here Ophenia's voice finally changed from its robotic flat tone to being slightly pitched and agitated, "Although I did nothing but bring him pain upon pain, he never ever blamed me. He only blamed himself, saying it was because of his mistake that my mother died and that I was the greatest gift from the gods to him because I reminded him of his beloved."

By the end, the girl's voice was choking into sobs.

Alexander's mind drifted a bit hearing the last sentence as he asked himself, "Could I do the same if Cambyses suffered such a fate and her daughter was in front of me?"

'Probably not,' Was the answer that formed inside Alexander's mind.

But then Alexander pulled his mind to the present and finding it hard to connect the admittedly tragic story to him becoming her slave master, said, "I very much empathize with you, but what does it have to it with me?"

"Oh yes, I got sidetracked." Ophenia snapped out of her melancholic trance and started again, "The Senate was unable to kill me, but after my first bleeding, they did manage to force father to send me to the Temple of Shiva in Peirinion for three months a year, where I apprenticed under a Cleansing priestess."

Ophenia correctly guessed that Alexander might be unfamiliar with the term, 'Cleansing priestess' and decided to elaborate, "Oh, a cleansing priestess is a woman who gives sexual gratifications to men on behalf of the temple for money. They are called such because they help release the male body of its white, wicked desires and purify their sins by taking it inside her body, thus cleansing them of all evil.

"The temple is a brothel?" Alexander asked incredulously. To him, a sacred place of worship such as the temple seemed the furthest thing from a sinful place like the brothel.

"Yes, it is," It was Gelene's mature voice that answered. "The goddess Shiva is the god of love, lust, and pleasure, and the Temple of Shiva was originally built by a few working girls to pray and worship the goddess on the outskirts of a small village. Legends say that the goddess blessed the women there such that men and women from all over Thesos came to the temple to have a taste of the divine skills. And once they experienced the divine pleasure, they were said to be so enamored that many chose to stay, and thus the city of Peirinion was founded, or so the story goes." Gelene finished.

"Sister here is quite knowledgeable." Ophenia nodded with slight amazement. It was very impressive for a slave, an illiterate to know this story with such accuracy.

Then she added a bit of detail, "Though some say the temple was originally built by both men and women, thus we have both cleansing priests and priestesses."

She then continued, "The Cantagenan senate argued that because I was born by the mixture of essence of many men, it was a sign from the gods that I was destined to serve many men and be dyed white in their releases. My golden hair was seen as further proof that my destiny lay with the Temple of Shiva as their Sacred High priestess."

Blonde hair was mostly associated with prostitutes, as many would dye their hair blonde using plant extracts to appear different and it was also the main reason Alexander was so surprised to see her first.

"Sacred High priestess!" Gelene made a little yelp of terror at this mention.

"Yes, they saw me as the divine manifestation of goddess Shiva and wanted me to be their leader, and serve the highest echelons of Thesos as their comfort pot." Ophenia almost nonchalantly added though the anger in her voice was hard to miss.

"But my father did not agree. He detested the perverse actions of the Temple and used his martial influence to make the priests swear to the gods that I would only be taught the scripture and theoretical knowledge and never be made to entertain any guest or participate in their rituals. And so for the last eight years, I was rigorously taught all the pleasure techniques from the sacred scripture and the procedure on how to conduct all their rituals."

"But with time, my father grew weary at how the Temple was relentless in their pursuit to have me. Even when he arranged a marriage for me, the Temple seemed adamant. He feared that his deterrence might not last enough and it might be only a matter of time before the Temple made me initiate as a Cleansing priestess. So when this opportunity came to destroy Adhania, he made a deal with the Cantagenan senate for my release from the temple in exchange for his service." Ophenia revealed.

"But though the senate agreed, father was afraid they might go back on their word, or simply do something while he was gone. And so with the excuse to see his daughter before setting off, he cleverly switched me with a doppelganger and bought me secretly as his slave with me."

"But with your father dead and Cantagena defeated you came to me to hide." Alexander finished her sentence for her.

Chapter 83 Talayin

Alexander was honestly emphatic to the girl's plight.

She was orphaned and stranded all alone in a foreign land, penniless and with no place to call home.

This was a cruel fate for a girl of this time period as almost all women needed a guardian to survive, whether it be their kin, husband, children, or even their superiors.

Even Cambyses had a guardian- Alexander.

If Alexander turned Ophenia away, her only fate would be death, slavery, or to be used by countless men like some living fleshlight.

Even if the last ten years had hardened Alexander's heart, he had not yet turned into such a beast that he would turn away such a person in need, especially when the risks were so low.

But Alexander was in a position where he not only controlled his life but also the lives of many other people.

And this made him a bit apprehensive about how this potential time bomb might implicate the others.

"How powerful is the temple in Thesos? How many soldiers do they have?" Alexander attempted to gauge the strength and thus danger of the temple.

"They have no military of their own, their borders being mainly protected by mercenaries and armed devotees," Ophenia informed. "But they do hold considerable sway over other city-states. As the spiritual nucleus of a large number of city-states, they can influence others to mobilize troops on their behalf to punish heretics. But that's only within their neighboring vicinity."

"Hmmm, so how hard will they look for you? Aren't you their god in human flesh?" Alexander asked stroking his chin.

"Under normal circumstances, their chase would be relentless. But I'm in Adhania, a country where their faith does not exist. And with my father's death, they will mostly assume that I am dead too. The chances of them actually finding me is close to zero." Ophenia assured.

"Except for your hair." Alexander pointed out.

"Yes," Ophenia nodded in agreement, but then also countered, "But hiding my hair color is easy. Father bought me a wig and even a herbal extract that turns my hair pitch black for three months. And, worst comes to worst, I can simply cake it with mud to disguise myself."

"Huh? If you have such a hair dye, then why is your blonde? Didn't you disguise yourself till now?" Alexander asked puzzled and considerably more alarmed.

Sensing his agitated state, Ophenia reassured, "Rest assured master, I have always worn a wig outside my tent. The people in this tent are the only ones alive to see my blonde hair."

Then she explained, with a hint of sadness tinting her voice, "The reason for me not dying my hair black was because father planned to get me married to my fiancé after he took Adhan. And he wanted me in my natural hair during the ceremony."

"I see, my condolences." Alexander almost mechanically replied.

Then almost reflexively he inquired, "Who was your fiancé?"

"Samaras. He was the only one who did not look me with those eyes." Ophenia replied with a heavy air of loss and melancholy around her.

"I..see," Alexander awkwardly stammered. "By the way, what will happen if I do get caught hiding you?" Alexander attempted to change the topic.

"*Shake*, I don't exactly know." Ophenia rocked her head. "They could reward you for finding me, demand money from you for the services I provided, or simply kill you for hiding me."

"Hmmm," With all his inquiries answered, Alexander once again began stroking his chin as his brain tried to calculate the risk and benefit of this otherworldly beauty's offer.

And Ophenia was a city ruining beauty no doubt about it.

With thick, lush blonde hair up to her thighs, sparking glacial blue eyes, and a dimpled chin, all encrusted in a heart-shaped face. she could certainly tug at any man's heart, including Alexander's.

'Her reputation as a god in human form is not undeserved,' Alexander thought.

But although Alexander always had a thing for blondes, he did not let such physical attractions derail his judgment.

His mind instead thought of a way her presence could be made useful.

He felt down the line, maybe after a few years or even tens of years, he could use Ophenia to pick a fight with the temple and her allies.

He reasoned that if the temple's obsession with Ophenia was as strong as she said it was, then it would be likely that they would still want their lost 'Sacred Priestess,' years down the line, and even go to war to retake her.

Given Alexander could play his cards right, he could use their casus belli against them to win and conquer large swaths of their land while appearing righteous and just in the process.

Alexander would admit that his plan was a long shot among long shots, but the risk for harboring Ophenia was so low that even if nothing happened, he would not be really losing out on anything.

Also, Alexander planned to declare himself divine at some point and he predicted this might not go down well with everyone, especially with the various temples, who saw the gods as their exclusive 'property'.

'Since conflict with them is likely inevitable, then why should I turn this girl away? If she wants to survive, realistically her only option is to sell herself to slavery, so why not it be me?' Alexander finally made up his mind.

"Okay, you have convinced me. I will protect you." Alexander said with a thin smile.

"Thank you, master." Ophenia bowed and returned the thin smile.

"Congratulations, sister Ophenia." Mean, who had been unusually quiet till now yipped in joy.

"See, I told you hubby take you in," Cambyses puffed up her chest in pride.

"Hoho, only master deserves a beauty like her. Congratulations master!" Gelene smiled showing her pearly teeth.

"So, how much did you pay for her Cam?" Alexander was curious.

"Hehe, two thousand tustas," Cambyses spoke as if she got the deal of the century.

"Only two thousand tustas! That's too cheap!" Alexander exclaimed in surprise, feeling Cambyses had somehow scammed the sheltered girl.

An ordinary slave, like when Nestoras bought Alexander cost two thousand tustas. A slightly strong slave, to be used on the farms would cost five to six thousand tustas, while a literate slave may go for more than ten thousand tustas.

As for a beauty like Ophenia, even twenty thousand tustas may not be enough. If a sufficiently wealthy individual took a liking to her, Alexander did not doubt she could fetch two hundred thousand tustas.

So how could she be bought for the same price as a child slave?

"Master is overlooking something. With my golden hair, only someone blessed by the divine like you can own me. If I stayed with ordinary people, I would only bring them harm and misfortune." Ophenia, indoctrinated at a young age, truly believed her hair and thus her to be cursed and the harbinger of misfortune.

This made Alexander look at the girl with genuine pity as he could not even guess the kind of discrimination and abuse she had had to suffer to make her like this.

But at least, up until now, she had her father to rely upon.

She had even lost that today, but instead of breaking down, the kind of strength and determination she displayed until now impressed Alexander and he felt confident that with his help the girl can have a normal life.

"That's right, Alex. I first met Ophenia when they sent her to my tent on the night Damious died to prepare me for my wedding. There, it was Ophenia who offered to sell herself as my slave," Cambyses was a bit offended by Alexander's insinuation that she somehow cheated the girl.

"Initially, she wanted to do it for free, only wanting food, cloth, shelter, and protection in exchange. It took a lot of haggling to convince her to take the bare minimum- two thousand tustas." Cambyses sighed with a bit of helplessness in her voice.

"Hmm, I see."

Alexander personally disliked slavery- the act of buying and selling humans like they were some commodity.

But he also understood that in the context of this time period, it was legal and morally and socially acceptable.

So although he did not like Cambyses buying slaves, he had given her the right to own property, which included slaves and Alexander did not want to break his own words.

"You bought the slave, so why is she calling me her master," Alexander at last noticed a slight discrepancy.

He did not want to own any slaves if he could help it.

"Because she's my gift to you. A beauty like her deserves to be tasted by only someone great as you. Think of it like a congratulations gift on becoming the commander." Cambyses beamed her white teeth.

"Mistress is correct. Only master with his divine providence can shield against my curse. If mistress were to own me, she would only suffer misfortune, like my father and Samaras." The way this war had ended, absolutely convinced Ophenia that she was unwanted by the heavens itself.

Understanding her mindset, to soothe the girl's frayed consciousness, Alexander consented, "Okay. you will belong to me from today."

Then he thought of a way to sever her from her tumultuous past, "But since you are hiding, Ophenia, it is not wise to use that name anymore. Thus, as your master, I now bestow upon you a new name, Talayin."

This came from the word 'talayi', which was Persian for golden.

"Thank you master for your blessing," Ophenia gratefully bowed.

"Now, Talayin, for your first command, as your master I command you to strip!" Alexander sternly ordered.

Chapter 84 Talayin's New Life

Alexander had just remembered something important amidst all the talking, something he had somehow overlooked.

He forgot to check for any identifiable marks on Ophenia's body, like a birthmark or a scar, that the temple could use to identify her.

It was a tiny, tiny possibility, but Alexander did not want to take any chance.

"Yes," Ophenia, hearing Alexander's command, without a single thought immediately threw off her one-piece chiton and bore her bare skin for all to see, hiding nothing from the world.

She was sculpted flawlessly, with a perfect hourglass figure, adorned with two huge jugs, a thin, smooth waist, and a huge, meaty rump.

Her flawless ivory skin reflected a golden sheen off the candlelight and her garden was hidden by a dense patch of golden forest.

Her beauty was almost devilish and even made Cambyses look pale in comparison.

And it made Alexander's loins wake up just from looking at the sinful body.

"Sheesh, have some self-control and at least wait till we leave." Mean jeered in an exasperated tone.

"Hehe, it looks like master like his present," Gelene let out a sultry chuckle.

Alexander ignored the misunderstanding and asked Ophenia, "Talayin, do you have any special birthmarks or other distinctive patterns on your body the temple might be able to use to identify you."

"Ah," Ophenia's eyes lit up in realization and confirmed, "Yes, I have one on her left arm. Here," she then pointed to a small patch of dark skin just above her elbow.

"Hmm, good, is that all?" Alexander asked for confirmation.

"Umm, I think that should be all," Ophenia answered uncertainly.

This confused reply did not satisfy Alexander and he ordered, "Cam, Mean, Gelene, grab a candle and search her body for any distinct marks. And Talayin, spread your legs, I can't see your inner thighs."

And so the trio scanned her body for any such signs and fortunately found none.

Alexander on the other hand searched every inch of her body for any signs of rash or skin infection, which was common to develop during campaigns, where access to clean water or baths was very limited.

Alexander shamelessly feasted his eyes on her bare skin, from her milky white breasts, her slightly chubby tummy, to around her groin area where such infections were especially prominent.

"*Sniff*, when did you last bathe?" Alexander whiffed a strong, pungent odor of sweat and ammonia from her privates when he went to examine her inner things.

The very personal question and its implied meaning made Ophenia shiver in embarrassment and with a flushed face she meekly whispered, "I don't remember."

"Huh?" Alexander seemed confused by the answer.

Nearby Gelene helped explain, "Aristocats don't like to bath master. They think taking baths will widen the skin pores after bath, allowing the infections in the air to easily enter their body. They rarely bathe in their lifetimes."

"widen the skin pores after bath, allowing infections in the air to easily enter their body? What nonsense was that?" Alexander asked in disbelief.

"Yes, master." Gelene delineated while nodding, "Instead of bathing, nobles frequently change clothes because they think the clean clothes, which are always in contact with the skin, will absorb all the filth. If they ever take bath it's usually as a therapeutic procedure, likely recommended by a doctor."

The reason why Gelene was so knowledgeable about this topic was because she was once the daughter of a noble.

Twelve years ago, while on one of her travels, she came under a bandit attack, and her entourage was all killed, while she was captured.

After being brutally raped, the bandits sold her to slavery, where she was eventually bought as a low-class prostitute by a brothel.

Six years later, by the machinations of fate, Gelene had the fortune of popping Octavius's cherry when Nestoras took his son to her brothel to make him a man, as was the custom among mercenaries.

After sleeping with, by that time, the high-class courtesan, the kid immediately fell in love with Gelene, and to indulge him, Nestoras using both coin and strong-arming the owner, bought her as a gift to Octavius.

And now she fell into Cambyses's hands and by extension Alexander's.

The revelation of the unclean hygiene practices somewhat disgusted Alexander.

In his previous life, Alexander always tried to take showers twice, once in the morning after waking up and once before going to bed.

He loved the feeling of cascading water on his skin and was generally very hygiene conscious, a habit he carried over his transmigration.

Even here, where his wandering mercenary life and constant lack of easy access to fresh water made it very difficult to take baths, he would at least try to wipe himself with a wet towel every day.

This was also because of medical reasons, as without modern antibiotics, Alexander feared even a mild rash or skin infection could be the end of him, like how it almost ended Nestoras.

So the revelation that Ophelia might not have even taken a bath birthed a strange sense of revulsion inside Alexander and he quickly stood up and moved his hands away from her.

Ophenia certainly felt Alexander's repelling gaze and in a panic blurted out, "Master I have taken special baths while studying the various religious rituals. The last one was about six months ago."

Then in a frightful, almost sobbing voice cried, "Master, please don't abandon me. I will change. I will take as many baths as you want. So, please don't throw me out, *sniff*, *sniff*."

By the end, the girl had large teardrops wetting her cheeks.

Seeing this made Alexander suddenly feel a bit guilty as he felt he might have overreacted.

"Alex, look at what you have done," Cambyses slightly scolded Alexander and then went forward to console the girl, hugging her and saying, "There, there. No one's throwing you out. Your master was just a bit surprised. You see, Alex is a genius doctor and he makes us take baths every day. He says it is very healthy."

"That's right. According to him, bathing helps ward off diseases," Mean supported Cambyses.

"Yes. So Gelene and Mean, I want you to help Talayin take baths every day from now on," Cambyses instructed, "Help her scrub every part of her body. And if a full shower is not possible, then use a wet towel to vigorously rub her body."

"Mistress, don't worry, we will keep her clean. We will also pay extra attention to her hair and remember to properly oil and wash it." Mean cleverly added.

"Yes, I will also help sister Talayin apply her hair dye. Rest assured, mistress, not a single strand of gold color will be visible on her head," Gelene joined in, not wanting to be outdone.

"Good," Cambyses nodded satisfied. And then seeming to remember something Alexander said to her last night, said, "Talayin, your master likes the pubes kept short."

She pointed at her crotch hair, "Either completely shave them or if you want to really keep them, just keep a small trimmed patch around your privates. And remember to dye them like your hair."

"As you wish mistress," Ophenia obediently replied.

"Good. Also, you are very beautiful and will easily draw attention. We will need to disguise you. Hmm," Cambyses put her hands on her hip and contemplated.

"First of all, you need to lose weight. Regular slaves are not so ..um..meaty as you, especially around here," Cambyses said pulling on the flabby meaty flaps around Ophenia's tummy. "I have some tools in my tent to help you, so please have Mean teach you." Cambyses was referring to the various exercise equipment Alexander had made for her.

"I will try my best," Ophenia nodded.

"And then, hmmm," Cambyses again began to rack her brains.

Alexander watched in silent amazement and approval as Cambyses really take on the role of the mistress of the house, making plans, issuing orders with confidence and authority, and being not afraid to take charge.

Alexander had taught her to be a leader and she was doing a fine job.

Alexander decided to weigh in, "Talayin, I see you have plucked your eyebrows. Never do that from now."

The women of this time thought a large clean forehead was very attractive and thus practiced the act of thinning out their eyebrows, which gave them a distinctive look.

"I have something that can draw fake eyebrows," Gelene quipped.

"Then use it on her," Alexander approved. Then he turned to speak with Ophenia, "You can put on your clothes now."

After she was done, Alexander announced, "Talayin, from tomorrow you will be helping out in the medical clinic. We are short-handed and need every able body we have."

"It was always my wish to help those wounded soldiers. Thank you, master," Ophenia gratefully answered.

"Don't worry, sister Tayin. Mean will teach you everything." Mean who had a habit of shortening names enthusiastically backed her up.

Alexander then further said, "Cam, also tomorrow announce that there to prevent the spread of a new disease, all medical personnel are to wear masks. Say that it's my command."

"So, all of you are to cover your mouth and nose with a cloth. This will help hide Talayin's face."

"Good idea," Cambyses praised.

Ophenia was truly touched at the length these people she had just met were going to shelter her.

At long last, she felt her cold heart stir a bit.

"And now for the last unpleasant part." Alexander suddenly ominously announced.

He then out of nowhere took out a small dagger, coated it in alcohol from a nearby jar, and put it over the fire burning in the indoor stove, sterilizing it.

Once the steel started glowing red hot, he took it out, and walked over to Ophenia, "Talayin, I will burn away your birthmark. Are you ready?"

"Ahh!" Mean put her little hands on her mouth and let out a scared gasp.

Alexander's question also reminded the others that there was the birthmark issue to deal with, something they had forgotten when their conversation got derailed.

The drastic question also caught Ophenia completely off caught and she became a bit frightened of the potential pain.

She had assumed she would have to just cover the mark.

But soon, her determination and hatred for the temple took over and she clenched her teeth, "Please do it master. I am ready."

And as soon as she said it, Alexander grabbed her left arm in blinding speed, located her birthmark, and before Ophenia could understand what was going on, pressed the red hot metal again the mark, burning it away.

"Aghhhhhh," Ophenia let out a continuous painful scream at this, but amazingly did not pull her arm away.

And after an instant, Alexander pulled off the knife, a white patch now replacing the former dark patch of skin, a painful stinging sensation permeating from it.

"Good, girl. Brave, girl." Cambyes cooed near Ophenia, attempting to lessen her pain as Alexander doused the affected area with cool, refreshing water".

"You did well." Alexander praised. Then he bandaged the burn, saying, "Don't add any oil or cream to the burn. And don't break the blisters."

These were also same the instructions Alexander got from a doctor in his previous life when he had accidentally burnt his hand during cooking.

"Thank you, master," Ophenia slowly gasped out.

Thankfully the pain was slowly fading.

"Okay, we are done here. Gelene, Mean please escort Talayin to her tent." Alexander gestured. "And be sure to help her apply her hair dye today," Cambyses again reminded.

"We will do it right away," Gelene reassured.

As the trio was exiting the tent, Alexander called out from the back, "Talayin, I want you to forget all the unpleasant things that has happened to you till now. You are no longer Ophenia, the girl that was all alone and hated by the world. You are now Talayin, and you have people who love and care for you."

Alexander felt the mentally frail girl needed some encouragement.

"That's right, we are all sisters here, Tayin," Mean joyously said, grabbing Ophenia by her right arm.

"Um, I hope you will not let the past shackle you, Talayin, And once the situation becomes a little less dangerous, we will have a proper feast to celebrate you joining our family," Cambyses spoke like the mistress of the house.

"Thank you," Ophenia let out a genuine big grin that seemed to illuminate the world around her.

For the first time in a long time, Ophenia felt truly happy.

Chapter 85 Cambyses's Hand Skills (R18)

"Well, how have you been? Any pain still?" Finally alone, Alexander could, at last, spend some intimate moments with Cambyses.

"No. It hurt a bit in the morning after I woke up, but after Mean rubbed some ointment on it, that soon subsided." Cambyses cheerfully said.

"That's good. So, what did you do the rest of the day?" Alexander curiously asked.

"After breakfast, I wanted to go and congratulate you. But Mean was adamant about not letting me leave the bed, saying you personally told her to stop me. Also, Camius came to tell me you were in an important meeting with all the other mercenary leaders. So with nothing to do, I again slept till noon. After lunch, I was finally let out and went to check on the clinic and then got Mean, Gelene, and Tayin to help me clean your tent."

At this mention, Alexander looked around to see that the tent was indeed free of much of the dust.

"So, how was your day? How does it feel to be one step closer to your dream?" Cambyses had a light smile on her smile.

"Work! Lots of work!" Came a tired response.

"Hehe, it seems my hubby needs a little encouragement." Cambyses's voice all of a sudden turned sultry and erotic,

"Cam, you!"

But before Alexander could react, Cambyses's hands boldly grabbed Alexander's jewels and whispered, "Shush, take off your clothes and let me serve you."

Cambyses then expertly started stripping Alexander of his armor, till very soon he was just in his loincloth.

"Cam, I haven't taken a bath yet." Alexander feared he smelled.

But Cambyses hushed him, "Just sit on the bed and enjoy, hubby. It's your present for becoming the commander."

And so with Alexander sitting on the edge of the bed, Cambyses kneeled in between his legs and with a strong tug, finally freed his meat spear.

"Ah!" Immediately, after seeing the engrossed stick of meat, Cambyses let out a yelp of surprise.

Because although she had glimpsed at it before yesterday, it was dark, and only now, was she able to closely and carefully observe the large beefy rod.

And, the more she looked, the more she became astounded by the size of it.

Thick, veiny, and throbbing, it was fully turgid and its red engrossed head was peeking out of the foreskin.

'Had I truly taken this mammoth beast inside of me yesterday? How did it ever fit inside my tiny hole?' These questions involuntarily floated inside her mind.

"Cam, are you alright?" Seeing Cambyses stare unblinkingly at his rod, Alexander called out to snap her out of it.

"Ah, yes," The call broke Cambyses out of her trance and she lewdly smiled looking at his penis, "It was such a cute thing. When did it become such a beast?"

She then used an index finger to poke and prod the standing tower, playfully pushing it all different sides and giggling as she watched the thick rod return to its original standing position no matter how much she bent it.

"Hehe, this is so fun," Cambyses giggled.

"Agh, Cam," Alexander grunted, finding the teasing unbearable.

Cambyses could see the veins throbbing in anticipation, so using her fair, dainty left, she firmly grabbed the root of the hot rod and breathed on it, "So, this is the naughty boy that skewered me last night, huh? It really hurt you know."

Then in a mock admonishing tone sneered, "Naughty boys should be punished, *slap*."

Cambyeses had flirtatiously slapped the meat stick.

"Cam,, you,,," Alexander blurted in surprise at the sudden action.

But Cambyeses was too engrossed with her new toy to pay attention

"Bad boy, *slap*, naughty boy *slap*. Bad boy, *slap*, naughty boy *slap*." " She kept repeating this as she hit the hard rod from left to right, and then from right to left.

"Ahh," Alexander could only moan as the rough play sent waves of pleasure coursing through his body.

"Wow, I can feel your cock getting bigger in size." Cambyeses exclaimed in glee, "Alex, you pervert, does hitting you make you excited?" She asked obscenely.

This made Alexander blush a bit, but still, the pleasure he felt was undeniable.

"Then, here, *slap*. Let mistress discipline you even more, *slap*. You perverted slave, *slap*, hehe" Cambyeses let out a burst of lascivious laughter as she started hitting him harder, her face contorted into that of a lewd bitch in heat.

"Cam, ahhh..where ah..did you ..ahh,, learn this?" Alexander squeezed out the question amidst the mind-numbing pleasure.

Cambyeses today seemed so different, so aggressive, compared to yesterday.

It was as if someone had replaced the pure girl with a succubus and that contrast turned Alexander so on.

"Hehe, do you like your present hubby?" Cambyeses only chuckled in reply.

The reason why Cambyses was so bold today was because her competitive spirit was pushing her to do more as she felt she had been entirely passive yesterday.

This was also why, contrary to what she said to Alexander about how she spent her day, in reality, she had spent the entire day in the tent, recounting her experience to Gelene and learning tips and tricks from her on how to take charge and pleasure men.

And now, like a good student, she was putting her new skills and vocabulary to practice.

"So, this is what they call precum?" Cambyses curiously pointed to the clear fluid that had started leaking out, scooping it with her finger and forming sticky stings between her fingers with it.

"Hehe, it almost looks as if your cock is crying! Awwww, did it hurt too bad?" She mockingly cooed at it like consoling a baby.

Alexander felt a strange sense of humiliation and at the same time arousal at this novel play.

He had not experienced such a thing even in his previous life and this act caused even more precum to sprout out.

"*Lick*, mnn, it tastes salty and bitter. And it has a strong smell" Cambyses commented as she put her precum-coated index finger inside her mouth. "But, I like." She added with a vulgar smile.

"So, let mistress make you feel all better." Cambyses grinned and then started gently but firmly squeezing the base with her left hand, while at the same time started moving her right hand up and down the shaft.

This was a proper handjob.

"Ah, yes, faster," Alexander urged as he felt he was close.

Cambyeses silently glanced up to give Alexander a sultry look and with a smirk, rapidly started pumping with both her hands.

Her palms were wet, soft, and warm, and the way they massaged his delicate organ, how they moved in synchronization with one another, and how they squeezed all his sensitive spots, all felt heavenly to Alexander.

"Cam, it feels..ah..too..good," Alexander groaned.

"Haha, then here's more," Cambyeses beamed as she then boldly used her fingers to peel back the foreskin and finally reveal the red bulbous head underneath it.

"Oh," As the sensitive head was exposed to the cold air, it sent a chilly stinging sensation running all over the body, making his thick organ immediately spasm in joy.

"Ehhhee, it's twitching so much. So cute," Cambyeses giggled as she started massaging the delicate, soft head within her right palm while continuing to pump up and down the shaft with her left.

The creamy, elegant hands and the hot, comfy palms soon edged Alexander close to salvation as his organ started twitching.

"Hehe, your cock is quivering, are you ready to come?" Cambyeses could also feel the rod quiver in anticipation.

"Ah, yes, coming," Alexander grunted as he could feel the fluid rise through the tube, his release imminent.

Cambyeses then increased her pumping to short rapid strokes as she attempted to send Alexander over the edge with one last burst of speed, "Then, come. Your mistress permits you, slave. So, come!"

"Ah, coming, *spurt*, "spurt*. *spurt*." And then, with one last grunt, Alexander, finally let it all out, as his rod continuously shot out thick white ropes of cum into the air.

"Kyah," Cambyses reflexively let out a whimper as the exploding white, hot essence directly hit her face, painting it white.

The amount sprouted was huge and it managed to cake Cambyses's entire face, from her lips to her cheeks to even her forehead in a gooey, creamy colour.

And soon, some of it even began to trickle down her face and drop onto the ground.

She looked gorgeous to Alexander.

"*Lick,* so that's how you taste like, mmmnn," Cambyses erotically licked off the dense white fluid off her thick, red lips like a cat finishing its milk, her red tongue dyed a sinful white.

"Cam...," Alexander could not believe how sexy his lover looked.

"Hmm, it tastes fishy. A bit like the precum, but much stronger."

Cambyses then in an obscene act started to use her fingers to scoop up all the cum off her face and eating them, "It's also a bit slimy and chewy, I like it!"

Cambyses had an unmatched lewd, lascivious smile plastered on her face as she shamelessly devoured the objectionable fluid.

Alexander had never seen such a vulgar show and it made his little brother wake up immediately.

But he pushed down the lust with rationality and hurriedly said, "Cam, you get cleaned up and ready for the bed. I am going to take a bath."

Then without giving Cambyses a chance to input her thought, Alexander quickly ran to the back to get a shower.

And when he got back, his head a bit cooled, the scene that greeted him again immediately sent back all the blood to his loins.

Because there on the bed was Cambyses, with nary a thread on her, her legs spread wide in an obscene M shape.

She looked at Alexander with her limpid, chestnut eyes and then in an act of absolute profanity, spread her drooling cave using both her hands and shamelessly moaned, "Master, breed me!"

Chapter 86 Exploring Cambyses (R18)

The sudden transformation of the once pure Cambyses into such a seductress made Alexander's blood boil with lust, and he almost lost all his rationality.

"You temptress! You better be ready," Alexander growled in a low deep voice as he sped towards Cambyses, intent on fully fulfilling her wish.

She appeared to be fully lubricated from the previous play and so without wasting any time, Alexander strongly gripped her hips, aimed with weapon directly towards her hole, and in one mighty swing of his hips, jammed it all in.

"Ohhhh, yes!" Cambyses let out an ecstatic howl as she felt the hot, rock-hard rod skewer her, ripping open her insides and kissing her cervix, sending electrifying pleasures to her brain.

She relished having her hole filled, feeling as if she was finally complete, and loved how the huge organ put pressure around her nether region.

"As tight as ever, Cam," Alexander groaned at the vice-like grip of the flesh tunnel, a tunnel that seemed to get hotter and narrower the deeper one went.

It seemed even tighter than yesterday and much more enthusiastic as the soft, wet walls continuously pummeled his engrossed spear.

"Ohh, Alex, move. Fu*k me." Cambyses lewdly demanded, as just being filled did not feel good enough for the girl.

"*Pah*, *Pah*, *Pah*," So Alexander complied, fiercely pounding the lewd hole with strong thrusts and enlarging the tunnel.

"*Squelch*, *squelch*," The dirty water from her cave wetted the two hips and they regularly collided with such force that it produced an obscene sound, reverberating throughout the tent and fueling the two's lust even more.

"Ah, yes,..so good. Pound your mistress harder, slave!" Cambyses cried in sensual moans, loving the feeling of her cave being gouged out as he pulled back out and then again pushed back in as he fiercely rammed her.

She had also developed quite a bit of liking for the master-slave play and so egged Alexander on to punish her even more.

"Let me show you who is a slave," Alexander lustfully growled and started thrusting with more speed, while rotating his hips and changing his attack angle every time to hit all the different spots.

"Kyahhh, it feels so good. I didn't know I even had such places," Cambyses yelled in rapturous joy at the new feeling.

Her cave also began to respond to this prodding by spasming around Alexander's member, violently biting into it as it discharged more and more sweet water, drenching even the girl's puckered, pink hole down below.

Alexander methodically explored all the nooks and crannies of Cambyses's cave, with shallow thrusts, with long thrusts, with quick thrusts, and with strong thrusts, slowly savoring the taste of the different texture and suction of her bumpy folds and driving Cambyses almost insane with pleasure.

"Ohh, Alex, ohhh, I love you. I love you so much," Cambyses bellowed the proclamation, spreading her arms open towards Alexander and asking for a kiss.

"*Mnnph*, *Chupa*," Alexander and Cambyses crossed lips like lust-filled beasts, strongly sucking on each other's tongues, and lips and drinking each other's saliva.

"*Chupa*, *Pah*, *Squelch*, *Slap*," A carnal cacophony of crass music filled the air as the couple engaged in primal, almost bestial copulation and seemed to drown in each other's lust.

They fiercely ravaged each other, entangling their tongues together, biting and pulling on each other's lips like marking them as one's territory, and devouring each other's musky odor, all while Alexander pounded Cambyse's tiny, wet cave ruthlessly.

It was a supreme tunnel of flesh- hot, wet, and incredibly tight, and the lower mouth kissed and sucked Alexander's little brother even more fiercely than Cambyse's upper mouth did to Alexander.

And soon, the pleasure was too much for Alexander to bear, as he grunted, "Cam, I am gonna come."

"Umm, me too. Let's come together." Cambyse's cave was also twitching, ready for her first orgasm.

Alexander sped up and soon, with one last long thrust, hitting her deepest cave, "Aghh,..." with a short moan he let it all out.

"Coming, coming, ekkkkk," Cambyse too came in an ear-splitting scream, as she vividly felt the hot magma erupt inside her and dye her cave a beautiful white.

"Cam, you succubus!" Alexander clenched his teeth, his sensitive organ almost crushed by the rapidly spasming walls, those folds hell-bent on milking him dry as he sent out his second batch of essence.

Cambyse's cave seemed to have come alive as she orgasmed, violently massaging and squeezing Alexander's spear at the root and greedily sucking out all his fluids into her womb.

"Yes, fill me up." Cambyse rejoiced in the sensation of her inside being flooded with Alexander's baby batter and she was in paradise.

"Haah, haaah," Cambyse let out panted breaths after the release, swimming in the cozy, warm feeling, as she felt a surge of drowsiness overcome her.

But just as she was about to close her eyes, she felt Alexander's strong arms suddenly grab her hips, and in a swift violent twist, she was flipped around and made to lie on her belly.

"Khay," Cambyses let out an involuntary yelp of surprise as her vision spun and she felt Alexander silently lift her ass high up in the air and expose her most precious parts to his eyes.

A deep tint of red colored Cambyses's face as she had never before felt so naked and ashamed, with both her holes fully exposed to Alexander's burning gaze.

And no doubt Alexander was carefully recording the magnificent scenery in front of him.

The lewd hole was slightly pulsating, continuously leaking an obscene mixture of Cambyses's love juice and Alexander's discharge that overflowed out of her tight cave and trickled down her thighs.

Above it, Cambyses's dirty pink hole was laid bare for Alexander to clearly see, to the point he could count the individual wrinkles on the small, puckered hole.

But those were not the most magnificent sights in Alexander's eyes.

It was in fact the twin, fat, creamy spheres of exquisite meat that hid these holes that attracted Alexander's eyes the most.

It was Cambyses's ass!

Cambyses had a pear-shaped body, meaning her breasts were a modest B cup, but what had always drawn Alexander's eyes were her meaty thighs and huge ass.

Alexander had always found her disproportionately bigger ass extremely attractive and if he had one regret yesterday, it was that he could not fully savor it.

A regret he vowed to make up today.

So, he immediately pounced on the soft, flawless, rump with his wolfish claws, kneading it, massaging it, pinching it, and squeezing it, taking in the supreme feeling of the squishy flesh and leaving long, deep, red marks on the fair skin.

"Alex, ohh.." Cambyses bit her lips to suppress a moan as she had a light orgasm at the shameful rough play.

'She's that sensitive?' Alexander was surprised at how quickly she came and continued the play, even more, loving seeing her ass ripple and jiggle under his hands.

Alexander kneaded the cheeks like he was kneading dough and Cambyses loved every second of it as she moaned and cooed and came under his touch.

But soon, just touching was not enough as Alexander prepared to start the main course and placed his red, hot poker at her entrance.

"Alex, what are you doing?" Cambyses's voice quivered in both fear and anticipation as she understood the roughest pounding of her life was about to begin.

"*Slam*, Alexander used his actions to answer, as his beefy rod violently smashed inside, easily penetrating the hole once again and making Cambyses howl in pleasure.

"Yes, soo deepp," She screamed as the spear went deeper than ever before, stirring up her insides and turning it to mush.

Alexander felt the friction between him and her walls was even greater now due to the new position and it allowed for greater stimulation as he pounded against her walls, bumping against the rough folds and reaching even her deepest and narrowest corners.

The lewd lubricant of love nectar and semen made the tunnel smooth and slippery and it allowed Alexander to directly hit Cambyses's cervix, pushing against it and sending mind-shattering pleasures to her brain.

"Ahhhh," Cambyses continuously elicited lust-addled roars of joy as she kept on having light orgasms after orgasm.

"*Pah*, *pah*, *pah*," Cambyses's sensual moans were like the greatest opera to Alexander and he kept on the attack, relishing in the sight of how Cambyses's ass shook, rippled, and wobbled under his mercilessly attack.

His member's bulbous red head kept repeatedly hitting the solid wall of the cervix, wanting it to break it open like a battering ram and invade her baby room, while his shaft was being massaged by the continuously orgasming hole, its fleshy folds wrapping around the thick rod like an octopus and sucking it in.

But Alexander was not yet satisfied, he wanted more pleasure.

He then looked at the creamy white ass floating in front of him and it looked so alluring, so defenseless and so tasty that he just could not resist.

"*Smack*", He spanked her.

"Mmmmm," Cambyses immediately moaned, as Alexander felt her cave twitch uncontrollably.

She had come again!

'I thought her boobs were sensitive, but her ass is on a different level.' Alexander excitedly thought as he found his new toy.

"*Smack*", He again struck her, with even more force this time.

"Mm," Cambyses bit on her fingers this time to suppress the moan.

This did not please Alexander, as he started to hit her two, magnificent globules even more relentlessly.

""Count slave, *spank*" Alexander ordered.

"Ahh, one," Cambyses screamed in sweet agony.

"*Spank*."

"Two, ohh."

"*Spank*."

"Three, yes."

Every time Alexander hit her, he could feel her hole shiver and spasm, squirting out little jets of shower, as she continuously came.

This heavenly sensation filled Alexander's mind with even more lust as he rapidly started to pound her while playing her ass like it was a drum, alternating between her two ass cheeks, the saccharine sound of his palms hitting her flawless meat making him even harder.

Cambyses was also on cloud nine, as she spread her legs apart and arched her back downward, effectively raising her ass to allow Alexander better access to her hole as she sang like a lust-filled canary.

"*Spank,*

"*Uwuuu," At last, Cambyses seemed lost in heat, and forgot the count.

"Insolent slave, *spank*, count," Alexander playfully growled.

"Yes, master, harder. Punish this lewd slave even harder," Cambyses moaned, each of Alexander's hits making her almost roll her eyes in pleasure.

"*Spank*, what a naughty slave," Alexander grinned after giving a mighty slap, mesmerized by how the flesh wobbled and rippled as the shockwaves traveled.

"Yes, Alex, I am a naughty slave. I am your naughty slave," Cambyses cried.

"Haha, *spank*, *spank*. Good, slave, do you know who your master is?", Alexander had lost count of how many spans he had given her and his palms felt a bit sore, while Cambyses's ass had turned from porcelain white to a bright red.

"Yes, Master Alexander. I am yours and yours only. My lips are yours, my tongue is yours, my boobs are yours, my ass is yours, and my pussy is yours. I am your slut, master... ohh" Cambyses seemingly came from her own naughty talk.

Alexander too was surprised by this level of lewdness and continued the play, "*Spank*, excellent slave. Master is very pleased. Master will mold your cunt into his own personal pussy, *spank*. It will only fit his size."

"Thank you, master!" Cambyses said, thrusting back.

Alexander was soon close to the edge when his eyes suddenly caught something amusing.

"Slave, what's this?" Alexander jeered as he poked at her wet, glistening butthole, which was staring at him the entire time, opening and closing as if it was breathing.

"Ahh," Cambyses let out a sensual moan and thought, 'No way! There!'

"Hehe, it looks like one hole is not enough, you lewd slave." Alexander vulgarly sneered.

"Alex, that.." Cambyses broke out of the play a bit scared.

But Alexander had other plans.

"Let's come together, ahhgh," He then suddenly stuck his middle finger inside her asshole as he ejaculated for the third time.

"Ekkkkkkkk," Cambyses too came, squirting everywhere, the sensation of having her butt invaded sending her over the moon and her face distorting into that of a lewd, lascivious, lustful woman.

'So this a woman's bliss,' Cambyses thought as her consciousness floated out and she fell asleep exhausted.

Chapter 87 Loss Statistics

Alexander woke up at the crack of dawn, surprisingly the crackling boom of thunder that was playing outside.

And soon, the pitter-patter of raindrops started atop his leather tent, as a torrential rainfall greeted him first thing in the morning.

"Mnnn," By his side, the nude seductress moaned as Alexander's movements disturbed the beauty's sleep.

And this sensual sound drew Alexander's attention to his partner sleeping beside him, and the erotic sight that greeted him immediately made his little brother wake up, which was almost a perfect replay of yesterday's happenings.

Cambyses lay asleep bare, her face down and peaceful, as she exposed the sexiest part of her body to the heavens above, unhindered to Alexander's gaze- her glorious ass.

The unblemished, fat piece of meat was no longer the previous flawless white, but the brutal spanking had dyed it with a red hue and Alexander could even see tiny blisters under her skin, as a turbid puddle of holy nectar and white goo pooled around her nether region, her petals and inner thighs decorated with crusts of white dried flanks of his essence.

This erotic scenery once again reminded him of the magnificent time he had with this hot piece of ass, how he had kneaded it, how he had spanked it, how he had abused it, and how it made Cambyses sing the most lascivious songs and his hands could not resist coping a feel again.

"*Squeeze*," Alexander relished in the springy, bouncy feeling as memories and sensual sensations came flooding back and his little brother urged him to start his morning exercise.

"Master, mmnnn," Cambyses cooed in her sleep as the pleasurable stinging sensation appeared again and she unconsciously started drooling down there.

This siren's call made Alexander feel getting up in the morning was becoming exponentially more difficult as he resisted the urge to just pound the sexy succubus here and now.

But just like yesterday he lampooned how reality got in the way of his whims and fantasy and so, with a playful, "*Spank*", naught slave," he got up.

He covered Cambyses with a nearby blanket as it was getting a little nippy and then refreshed and dressed himself, ready to take on the long day.

Alexander came out of the cozy tent, being immediately blasted with the chilly, moist gust of the approaching winter and after giving Hemicus the same order he had given yesterday, to go get Mean, he made his way to the command tent, escorted by a guard who held a primitive umbrella or more accurately a parasol above him.

Soon, the five leaders representing their individual mercenary groups and Menes now representing the Cantagenans gave attendance in front of Alexander and submitted their written report, detailing the condition of their respective groups.

"Hmmm, the numbers are as bad as I thought," Alexander sighed loudly after viewing the parchments, making the others cast a gloomy shadow on their faces and silently agree with this assessment.

Seeing this, Alexander did not choose to sugarcoat the matter to boost morale.

He had always believed instead of lying and being comforted with made-up statistics, it was better for the higher-ups to confront the truth so that they can better prepare for the future, "I will now read aloud the combined report, so all of you can get a complete picture of the situation." he stated.

He then spoke, "The losses for the first battle are as follows: First the Cantagenans- They started the war with nineteen thousand (19,000) infantry, five thousand (5,000) archers, and six thousand (6,000) cavalry."

"In the first battle their losses were catastrophic, their entire cavalry and sixteen thousand (16,000) infantry and archers were lost. So, they lost twenty-two thousand (22,000) in that fight." He calculated.

"Moving on to Damious- They started the war with seven thousand (7,000) infantry, Heh, so much for the leader of a ten thousand mercenary team." Alexander could not help but taunt the late mercenary leader who usually called himself such mostly as an advertisement strategy.

But he quickly returned to track, "Anyways, in the first battle he lost two thousand five hundred (2,500) as killed or wounded."

"Afterwards, Alcmene had three thousand (3,000) and lost a thousand (1,000), Regias had three and a half thousand (3,500) and lost a thousand (1,000), Meniscus with two and a half thousand (2,500) suffered five hundred (500) casualties, Petricuno with two thousand (2,000) lost five hundred (500), Melodias with a thousand (1,000) men had seven hundred and fifty (750) killed or wounded and then, at last, I had thirteen hundred (1,300) men and lost four hundred (400)." Alexander finished.

"The Cantagenans suffered so much in the first battle. I wonder why?" Petricuno asked puzzled, a frown decorating his forehead.

Alexander quickly gave the answer, "The reason for the Cantagenans suffering such a hugely disproportionate number of casualties was because, one" he raised his thumb, "they were much less trained and much less experienced than us, so they were less disciplined and broke formation too quickly. And two" Alexander said raising his index finger, "the more important reason being they were in the middle section of the army which was most hit hard by both the fleeing cavalry and the Adhanian slingers, absorbing the bulk of the damage."

"Yeah, those poor guys were indeed unlucky," Heliptos had a tinge of sympathy for the innocent conscripts.

'Oh, the greedy pig has actually a heart?' Alexander thought in surprise as he was reminded that humans were not cupboard cutouts of just one trait.

"Heh, better them than us," Menicus's gruff unfeeling sneer countered Heliptos.

Alexander here refocused his attention on the data and decided to tally up the results for everyone's convenience, "So, in summary, we had fifty thousand (50,000) at the start and lost twenty-eight thousand five hundred (28,500)."

"Amazing, commander!" Melodias let out an abrupt cry of disbelief at the speed Alexander was able to give such a precise number.

"Huh?" Alexander looked confused at the sudden, out-of-nowhere praise.

"Hehe, only someone blessed can do such complex calculations so quickly," Menicus smiled and agreed.

'Oh, I forgot these bumpkins can probably at best only identify and copy numbers. Simple mental arithmetic is considered advanced calculus to them,' Alexander had an undeserved, smug feeling rise up in his heart.

Though his inherent advantage lay in his advanced learning thanks mostly only due to living in the right time, Alexander did quite like being praised for his intellect.

It was a vain feeling, but even Alexander was human and not immune to such flattery.

But he kept the façade of a professional poker face and continued, "Now, for the second battle: "Cantagenans had eight thousand (8,000) remaining, of which two thousand (2,000) were wounded and unable to participate, so six thousand (6,000) were killed."

"Damious retreated with two and a half thousand (2,500) after losing two thousand (2,000). Alcmene lost one thousand and five hundred (1,500), Regias suffered two thousand (2,000) men as casualties, while five hundred (500) men from each of their camps chose not to follow them. And at last my camp lost around a hundred (100) men."

Alexander then looked up to see the silent dark faces and continued,

"So to tally up, the second battle had around fourteen thousand (14,000) men and about two thousand five hundred (2,500) survived. *Sigh*, almost five out of every six men died." Alexander could not help lampoon at the imprudent attack, though in the long run, he was its greatest beneficiary.

The others too took some time digesting the horrifying losses and Menicus joined in with Alexander's sigh, "Haaahhh, these numbers are really something. In my thirty-five years of fighting. I have heard of such numbers but never seen them."

"Out of the fifty thousand, we lost forty thousand. Those Adhanian bastards really showed us," Melodias cursed with clenched fists, both praising and cursing his opponent, a sentiment seemingly shared by all in the tent.

Alexander too felt a bit surreal announcing these numbers aloud, being even a bit flabbergasted at their eighty percent loss rate.

Even though he had mentally made similar projections, it was still a large shock for him to witness the loss of forty thousand souls within a span of a few hours.

Even in Alexander's previous life, where countries possessed weapons of far greater lethality, such huge losses within such a small time frame were almost unheard of.

But Alexander did not let his mind wander for too long as his eyes regained their sharp focus and said, "So to recap, we have, counting the wounded, around ten thousand troops in total left.

Heliptos has- Two thousand five hundred (2,500).

Petricuno has- One thousand five hundred (1,500).

Menicus has- Two thousand (2,000).

Regias and Alcmene mercenaries have- Five hundred (500) each.

Melodias has- Two hundred and fifty (250).

And I have - Three thousand (3,000)."

Alexander counted the Cantagenans as his own.

This raw number was known to many, so they only nodded, though some had a tinge of pain in their heart as Alexander, who was already so popular, at least on paper have the highest number of troops.

They had all assumed the Cantagenans were at most a thousand men and even then most were wounded, but with two thousand of them, even if only fifty percent of them were combat worthy, it was still a large number.

A few leaders lampooned that if they had known this earlier, they would have split the Cantagenans among themselves, and now could only console themselves by saying these green conscripts were no match for their veteran troops.

Chapter 88 Food And Route

Alexander was not aware of the salt inside some of the leader's hearts, not that he would have cared anyway even if he knew.

He had somewhat predicted this, but he had already eaten it, and there was no way he was gonna spit it out.

So, what if some of them were a bit sour in heart?

What could the leaders realistically do to him anyway?

Nothing!

Done with delivering the unpleasant report, Alexander felt he should give some good news as he then shuffled some parchment over and commented, "On a cheerier note, our food situation seems to have improved. It's now quite good."

"Hmm, let's see," Alexander confirmed the numbers on the parchment and said, "We have managed to collect about four hundred tons of horse meat from roughly two thousand dead horses. That should be enough to last four-five weeks."

The report that the leaders gave him also contained slaves and pack animals that too needed to be fed, which Alexander took note of, particularly the large number of Cantagenan slaves and servants but did not loudly announce their numbers.

Alexander arrived at the four-five week number by estimating that the ten thousand men and the various slaves servants would get about one kilogram of meat a day.

p "Hmm, eating so much meat for so many days...that's.." Melodias frowned a bit.

Even these ancient people knew such a meat-heavy diet was certainly not healthy.

It was devoid of any carbohydrates like grains and vitamins from any fruits and vegetables, and would likely cause constipation and even scurvy.

"Thank the stars you are not starving, brat," Menicus scolded Melodias, unhappy at this nit-picking.

"That's right, It is because of the divine knowledge from commander that we have escaped hunger and starvation. You are being too greedy, leader Menicus," Heliptos enthusiastically joined Menicus berating Melodias.

"Yes, yes, my bad." Melodias, being the mild-tempered man he was, quickly backed down.

"We do have some grain," Alexander interjected the lively discussion, "But, I have decided to feed it to the animals instead."

"Commander is prudent. We very much need those animals and they cannot eat meat. They should get the grain," Petricuno remarked at the correct decision.

Others too had looks of approval at the decision.

Alexander here added, "But do not worry, all of you will get grains in your meals. We can spare a bit and your health is very important for the proper functioning of the army."

"Haha, commander is truly the best," Heliptos let out a laugh of genuine praise at this good news and many others followed.

But one Melodias lamented, "**Sigh*, if only we had carried more grain at the beginning," which drew similar sympathetic sighs from others.

Alexander noticed that Melodias, the usually carefree spirit was somewhat agitated and nit-picking today, so he joked, "Leader Melodias, you seem to be in a bad mood today. Woke up on the wrong side of the bed today? Hahaha,"

Others too joined him, which produced a slight flush on Melodias's face as he nervously laughed Alexander off, "N..no commander, it's nothing, ha..haha..ha, it's nothing," He repeated to emphasize.

Though Alexander could clearly sense something was definitely the matter, as if Melodias was holding back something.

But he chose to respect Melodias's privacy and not pry.

Instead, his mind floated to ask the question, 'Why did we have such an acute shortage of grain?'

And the answer was 'Because we did not carry much in the first place.'

The reason for this on the surface bad planning was because the goal of this campaign was to take advantage of the royal coup in Adhan and enter the capital at lightning speed and thus reinforce the weaker Ptolomy, who had prayed for the alliance's intervention for massive land and wealth concessions.

To achieve this great speed, Agapios had, rightly, in favor of speed and maneuverability, discarded any large supply lines, instead choosing to carry just five days of rations and deciding to forage and steal from the local populace to make up for any shortages.

But Agapios had grossly misjudged the severity of the drought Adhan was facing and quickly ran out of food.

His only saving grace was that at the very start he had managed to sack the prosperous port of Acme, which- being a major trade and supply hub had large stores of grain hordes by the rich merchants and local nobility, rich merchants and local nobility who Agapios had promptly slaughtered and relieved them of their possession,

That grain had tidied them over till now, but Alexander lampooned how even that stock was running critically low.

But he knew there was little point moping about it, but instead chose to return his focus to the meeting and addressed, "Fellow leaders, the grain situation is bad, but we can survive. One tiny silver lining of losing forty thousand men in one day is that we now have much less mouth to feed." He stated in a schadenfreude tone, which made the others draw rueful smiles.

Alexander then advised, "I hope each of you will try to reduce the number of mouths even more. Especially the female slaves and servants, who are of little value now, and will only slow us down."

"In my case, I have noticed Cantagenans bought a huge number of slaves and servants, and I intend to let go of most of them, as they are nothing but a burden now. And I hope all of you can follow." Alexander issued a heartless command.

And Alexander's loyal follower Heliptos agreed immediately, "I agree, commander. I will keep the bare minimum, and dismiss all the extra freeloaders."

Though the others gave an anemic response as they were not keen on discarding their slaves.

In reality, this was not because they disagreed with Alexander, but because mercenaries typically contained no or very few non-combat participants and almost everyone in there had a role to fill.

For example, taking Alexander's case, he was both a squad captain and a slave under Nestoras.

Mean was Cambyse's- the leader's daughter's slave, and a skilled medical staff by her own right, in addition to being also proficient in household chores.

The various female slaves present were also needed to maintain the proper working of the group, from cooking, to sewing, to cleaning.

Many female slaves also helped relieve stress, particularly for the captains and the leader.

Like Gelene was Octavius's exclusive slave but she had also occasionally served Nestoras before his groin infection.

Alexander had even seen the father-son duo in a devil's threesome with her, which inwardly disgusted him, not particularly by the act, but by the incestuous nature of it.

Next Melodias reported a second good news, "Commander, my scouts have reportedly found a viable route to Acme. A few locals seem to have given them similar directions."

This brought some much-needed cheer into everyone's hearts as they felt flight was still possible.

"Good, assign those riders double the food rations today," Alexander decided to reward the scouts.

He also noticed Heliptos's face droop low in shame, clearly indicating he had failed in his promise to find any guides among the Cantagenans.

Petricuno did not let go of this opportunity and taunted, "Leader Heliptos, how about you? Hehe, any luck?", which only managed to draw a cold, freezing look from the greedy mercenary.

Noticing his own faction's man in a dilemma, Alexander here decided to help him out a bit, "Leader Heliptos, you have only looked at the soldiers, Also remember to check the servants and slaves. Some of them are very capable and likely held significant positions before."

Being helped out of his predicament, Heliptos immediately praised him, albeit a bit exaggeratedly, "Thank you commander for your sagacious advice," he loudly proclaimed.

All present men observed, recorded, and analyzed this little exchange, and each drew their individual conclusion.

But Alexander himself ignored this bootlicking and issued further orders, "Leader Melodias, remember to not just scouts south. Send scouts also north. The land bridge to Cantagena is up north."

They had previously come via south, landing and taking Acme, and now, because they were unfamiliar with the terrain, they intended to return via the same route, hoping to catch or steal ships from Acme or its nearby cities and then sail to Cantagena.

"Commander, are you thinking of going north?" Petricuno exclaimed in surprise and a little afraid.

The north of Adhania was very treacherous, full of marshes, and rocky terrains, and around winter like now, prone to massive snowstorms.

It was not a nice place to march to.

But Alexander alleviated the panicked mercenary, "Rest assured, Perticuno, if nothing changes we will surely march south. But the south is a peninsula and I don't like the idea of being trapped in a foreign land surrounded on three sides by the sea. So, the northern route is just a precaution."

He then revealed his fears, "Remember, we sacked Acme just two weeks ago and I am afraid of the number of ships we will find there or around there."

This cold analysis bought the leaders back to reality as they began to ruminate that maybe just reaching Acme will not achieve salvation.

"Is this commander's intuition?" Menicus asked cautiously.

'If he was right about the last battle, what's stopping him from being right a second time,' The veteran mercenary thought prudently.

"Haha, I just want to keep my options open. It even could be Adhania is waiting with an army up north, waiting to catch us off guard as we march south, haha." Alexander chuckled at the unlikely hypothetical scenario.

"Okay, commander, I will send half of them today north," Melodias was convinced by Alexander's reason.

Chapter 89 Reorganizing The Command Structure

Alexander was pleased by Melodias's quick consent and so about to move on to another topic, when suddenly his eyes caught a small detail missing from one of the reports, the one from Menes.

The black giant had stood beside Alexander like a towering, granite statue, unmoving and mute the entire time, as if trying to make himself one with the air.

"Menes, there's no report of the number of animals the Cantagenans have. Why?" Alexander gently inquired.

"Commander, the Cantagenans have too many animals and no one knows the exact number. I had assigned a few people to count them, but they could not finish in time." Menes succinctly explained.

Then he promised, "I will give the numbers by today afternoon."

"Okay, have it by lunch," Alexander said understandingly.

Right then, Melodias piped, "Commander, I know the rough numbers."

"Oh, how?" Menes quickly jumped in between, a bit shocked that someone else had finished the work assigned to him.

"Hehe, captain Menes, let me first apologize. You were unable to find anyone who knew the number of animals likely because of me."

Then Melodias expounded, "You see, after the commander had ordered the formation of a scouting regiment, I went to the Cantagenan camp and chose the appropriate horses. But I also had recruited the horse trainers there because they were skilled riders themselves, much better than my own men. Hehe, sorry."

"I understand," Menes, the usually quiet man, replied flatly.

"So, what's the number? Don't be shy." The ever-impatient Petricuno's rough voice echoed.

"Ahem," Clearing his throat, Melodias reported, "We have about three thousand pack animals, with one thousand five hundred horses and mules each. "

"So, much?" Alexander exclaimed.

He did not really have a first- hand experience managing logistics at such a huge scale before and was truly surprised by the numbers.

He had assumed they would have at most a thousand animals.

The reason for this discrepancy was because he had assumed the Cantagenans to be like the mercenaries, lean and mean with their supply lines and opting for soldiers to carry most of their own baggage and not be so wasteful.

But he was wrong.

"Why do we have so many horses?" Menicus asked puzzled.

This point had also been noticed by others who were similarly confused by the disproportionate number of horses present.

Horses were usually too precious to be used as pack animals and usually would carry less weight while eating more grain.

So, using them as beasts of burden was certainly an abnormality.

Melodias himself had this very question and also got the answer, "Because the Sycarian cavalry had bought extra horses with them and had even used some of their war horses as pack animals. The original number of pack animals is said to have been close to seven thousand."

"They replaced the mules for horses, beasts who can both fight and pull. Impressive," Menicus, even with all the years under his belt was impressed by this move.

But impressive or not, this new number possessed a dilemma for Alexander, who was now faced with the unique problem of having excess horses and mules.

Usually having excess beasts was a very good thing, but now, it caused Alexander to frown, "Hmm, we don't need so many animals, We also don't have the grains to feed them."

"We also don't need more meat now." Heliptos reminded.

"Hmmm," Alexander hummed as he stroked his chin,

And then, as if he found a solution asked, "Melodias, how many scouts do you have?" He wanted an exact number.

"One hundred and six," Came Melodias's almost memorized reply.

Alexander then closed his eyes, did some math, and said opening his eyes, "Okay, here's what we will do."

He issued the order, "Every ten men will be given a horse to pull their cart. After we let go of excess slaves and the wounded who cannot march, we will have at best twelve thousand men with us. And that's a high estimate. So that's twelve hundred horses."

Alexander then looked around to see if everyone was still following and was greeted with faces that seemed amazed at the simple mental math.

Seeing everyone was still paying attention, Alexander continued, "Two hundred will be made into scouts and cavalry. Does anyone have experience commanding cavalry?"

He looked expectantly around at the leaders, only to be disappointed with shaking heads.

Although such was to be expected.

Horses were supremely expensive to breed, grow and maintain, and thus any cavalry was far out of the financial capabilities of most mercenaries.

Many only had a few exclusive horses for their higher-ups and to send messengers over vast distances.

Although Alexander was a bit disheartened at this, he immediately thought of a way to exploit this great opportunity.

"Ahem, I remember Meldias saying he had taken some Cantagenan horse trainers as scouts. They should know a thing about cavalry tactics. Please have them teach us how to effectively use them." Alexander cunningly said.

"That's a great idea, commander." Melodias grinned at this idea.

Then Alexander unveiled his trap, "Yes, Menes reported to me there were a few Sycarian servants within the Cantagenan ranks. You should all know the fame of Sycarians cavalry. These people learn to ride before they are weaned. So, please those instructors to me." Alexander said with a big grin.

Everyone could see Alexander was about to form his exclusive cavalry corp, and though they wanted to stop him, they could do little to stop him.

After all, it was them that gave Alexander the Cantagenans, thinking they were not worth the trouble.

So Melodias, with an uncomfortable "Okay," gave in.

But Alexander did not simply swallow the whole pie and said, "The twelve hundred horses will be used both as pack animals and for battles. So, each leader must send two hundred people each to learn cavalry tactics by breakfast. Yes, even you two," Alexander said, looking at the new Alcmene and Regias mercenaries.

"Ohh, thank you, commander," Their faces lit up like the Christmas tree as both of them understood how lucky it was for them to have equal quotas as the other big groups.

Though in reality, Alexander did it because he did not want to give more cavalry to the other, much stronger mercenary leaders and enable them to oppose him.

The other mercenary leaders were too pleased with the suggestion, as being able to command any cavalry was almost the modern equivalent of being the captain of an aircraft carrier strike group or becoming the head of the special forces, the sign of a true elite.

"Haha, If it's the commander, I am sure he can make the finest cavalry. I will give you two hundred of my finest men," Petricuno's glee was practically overflowing, which was also an accurate representation of the other leaders' feelings.

"The commander's plans are as deep as the oceans," Heliptos praised.

"Having fourteen hundred cavalry will enormously boost our strength," Menicus analyzed with a smug smile.

This sentence suddenly reminded Melodias of the horses Alexander had left out,

"Oh, Commander, what about the remaining hundred?" He asked, curious.

"Yes, yes, I have not forgotten them, I have just decided to use them for something different." Alexander smiled.

This enigmatic smile made all the others look at him with held breath, so he started, "You see, when I was in the front lines, my captain was with me too. And in the middle of the battle, something had caused him to lose concentration and it got thirty-three of my brothers killed."

"That incident kept haunting me in the past few days as I kept asking myself, 'What could have been done differently to make my captain keep his cool?' And then, yesterday, I came to the answer," Alexander paused to take a breath.

Then continued, "I understood that phalanx captains are too vulnerable at the front. They are easy to spot, with them constantly yelling commands and if they are killed, it causes chaos in the ranks."

"Even if there's an assistant to take over, sometimes it's not clear if the commander is dead or wounded. All the soldiers also will not immediately know that their commander is dead and command has been passed on to a different person. So they might be confused by receiving orders from someone else. Worse still, there's a possibility that even if the commander is wounded he might be able to still fight or issue commands."

"Such nuances can be very hard to determine in the middle of the battle. and thus can lead to either assistant not picking up the command quickly enough, or picking it up too quickly, resulting in the phalanx being issued two different, many times contradictory commands."

Alexander then brought his hands in front of his face, interlocking the fingers together, and said, "So, to protect them, from now on, all phalanx captains will command from the back. And so that they can have a better view of the surroundings, they will all ride atop horses."

After Alexander finished his speech a silence settled in the tent for a while, which was broken by a joyous cry of Heliptos, "Sage! Commander, you are a sage!"

The mercenary's body was literally shaking with excitement as his eyes shot up in happiness and a huge smile formed on his face.

"Hmm, Alexander, I never believed that claim about you being a god." Menicus had an unusual seriousness to his voice. "But, after interacting with you, with the way you speak, with the way you think- unrestrained by convention, and with the way you carry yourself, I am forced to rethink my stance."

The veteran mercenary had a strange glow in his eyes as he gazed at Alexander with a profound gaze.

Chapter 90 New Cavalry Units

Alexander was quite genuinely surprised by this sudden turn of seriousness among the leaders.

He did not think his idea was not too radical or revolutionary, as he had copied it from the Romans.

So, he tried to play down his brilliance: "Leader Menicus is too kind. But I am just a humble, ordinary mercenary." Alexander flashed a shy smile.

"*Shake*, no." Menicus shook his white-haired head. "You are humble, I will give you that. But you are the furthest thing from ordinary."

Then without giving Alexander a chance to stop him, Menicus continued, "In my thirty-five years as a mercenary, I have seen and met many people. I have even met some Cantagenan senators. But people like you, with your kind of intellect, I can count them on one hand. And those were all old veterans."

Then he kept on going, "And this is all the more impressive when considering your backstory. How could a slave from a tiny mercenary group, with no access to proper education be so erudite?"

Menicus then cryptically finished, "Such thoughts are worth thinking over."

To Alexander, it seemed the old man was saying this not to others but to himself.

'Are all old men so scary?' Alexander lampooned as he felt a similar feeling from Menicus as he did from Aristotle.

Their power of observation and making a solid conjecture based on that observation was frightening.

"Haha, I have always known the commander was special from the day I met him. I believe without a doubt he is Gaia's chosen." This time was Menes, who could not hold his silence when it came to praising Alexander.

"Commander is singular. My previous leader would just bark orders if he wanted something done. But the commander takes the time to patiently explain the reason for his command before issuing it. He treats us like actual humans," Heliptos too praised him from the bottom of his heart.

The other two leaders were also nodding in concert, while Melodias was silently staring blankly at Alexander as if his mind was lost in some deep thought.

'I have made up my mind,' Melodias clenched his sweaty palm as he spoke in his mind, like he had reached a pivotal decision.

But, then, Petricuno spoke up to point out a potential problem of Alexander's new command, "Commander, if the phalanx captains are not the in the front line, sharing life and death with the

soldiers, I fear morale will decrease. Many soldiers might feel discontent at the captain's relative safety compared to them."

"That...Petricuno with the captain safe, naturally he can better maneuver the formation and thus keep the phalanx safe." Heliptos hurriedly jumped to defend Alexander.

"But, the captain might also launch reckless attacks," Petricuno argued.

Here Alexander decided to intervene and stop this from becoming a debate, "Petricuno has made some excellent points." He praised.

'Oh, here it comes..' This thought flashed inside many minds as they had understood a bit of Alexander's speech pattern by now and sensed a rebuke of Petricuno was coming.

But surprisingly there was no rebuke as Alexander instead suggested, "Let's do some military drills. I'm sure the soldiers are bored in their tents anyway. Have one side lead the traditional way and another my way. Then you can decide."

Alexander finished with a smug smile as he was confident about the results.

"Thar's right. Let's do a full-scale exercise. It's always prudent to test new formations before using them in battle." Menicus readily agreed.

"Yeah, my soldiers are just sitting idle. A bit of exercise will be good for them," Heliptos was excited to try this novel approach.

"Good, then let us meet in the clearing once the rain stops," Petricuno decided,

Then thinking the meeting was over, seemed ready to say his goodbyes.

But, "Ahem" Alexander then coughed a bit to tug their attention back to him, "Fellow leaders. I am not done yet."

He announced, "We have around ten thousand men. With each phalanx being around two hundred and fifty strong, that means we will have forty captains and need forty horses."

"Also each of their heralds will be given a horse so they can quickly deliver messages. I have found that delivering messages running on foot is too slow. Many times it takes so much time that the captain finds the situation has completely changed so that the previous order is no longer valid."

At last, Alexander added, "The remaining twenty horses will be used by the stratos (thousand-man leader) and their heralds. Ten stratos and ten heralds- so twenty horses."

Alexander did not count horses for the leaders and their heralds because all of them already had a few horses with them from the start.

"So that's where the number hundred came from," Heliptos, who was illiterate, was amazed by how Alexander was able to combine seemingly random numbers to get a nice whole one.

"Haha, to assign horses to even heralds. We sure are being generous," Petricuno had a good-natured laugh at their extravagance.

"Leader Petricuno, with all our recent misfortunes, we have earned this. Don't be a killjoy! Rejoice, haha, rejoice," Heliptos boisterously laughed.

"Yeah, I guess you are right. Who knows when we will get a chance like this again," Petricuno formed a reluctant, rueful smile.

If they were not in such trouble, such extravagance would have called for celebrations.

"Hehe, it seems the commander had thought of everything," At last, after a long time of silence. Melodias opened his mouth.

"Almost," Alexander lightly smiled, "There's still the matter of how to deal with the mules."

"What does the commander plan to do?" Heliptos understood that since Alexander had bought it up, he must have already thought of something.

"If no one has any objections I would like to give them to the slaves we will leave behind. I do feel bad about just leaving in such a place."

Alexander really did feel sorry for them.

But what could he do?

This dire situation called for such actions.

"Sure, we have no problem," Menicus consented on behalf of everyone else.

After all, they could not carry them, had no one to sell those to, and had no need for their meat.

After Menicus finished, a sweet, sugary, sycophantic voice floated into the tent, "Commander has a kind heart. As expected of a divine being, full of benevolence."

This sentence was not uttered by Heliptos as one might expect, but by Melodias!

'What has gone into Melodias today?' Alexander asked himself.

And such similar questions were also asked by the surrounding others, who all gave Melodias a weird look.

But Melodias seemed disinterested to explain himself.

And so Alexander decided to ignore it and chose to ask about the last topic of the day.

"So, the last topic how's it going with the. re-possession of the Cantagenan properties. How much have we got?" Alexander asked with a bit of eagerness mixed in his voice.

After all, he too was looking forward to the large loot

"We are still counting, but conservative estimates put the total numbers at around a hundred million tustas." Menicus had a very happy undertone to his voice.

"Oh, that much!" Heliptos felt his greed rise. Divided five ways it was twenty million for him.

Enough for his two thousand mercenaries to last for about half a year.

"So, how much is it in coins?" Alexander suspected most of this value was in stuff like leftover clothes, carpets, tents, small gold ornaments, cooking pots, etc.

Otherwise, if Samaras had so much cash, he would have already paid them some coin to get them to join the second battle.

And this suspicion was proved true, as Menicus said, "We have found both ropals and tustas. Tustas are about only twenty million. Ropals..which we took from Acme....well when converted to tustas, would make around another twenty-twenty-five million."

"Those bastards never intended to pay us in the first place," Petricuno cursed aloud.

Twenty million tustas divided by twenty thousand mercenaries was one thousand tustas per person.

While Cantagena owed them five thousand tustas each as two months of unpaid wages.

Even when only counting the ten thousand mercenaries, it was still not even a month's pay.

And even when Damious, with his five thousand alive troops, had forced Samaras to hand it all over, Samaras still was five million tustas short.

"It seems the Cantagenans have gone as poor as a temple's mouse," Menicus sighed, adding, "Thesos will not be peaceful."

The veteran mercenary had the vision to understand that Cantagena would not have such an act that tarnishes their reputation so much if they were not desperate.

And with their current loss in Adhania, this desperation will turn into weakness.

And when a superpower becomes weak, the states under its influence will start getting ideas of their own.

Treaties will be broken, new alliances will be made as client states seek out new protectors and war and hunger will spread as the big tries to eat the small to get bigger and stronger, while the small might try to bite a chunk of the big to get bigger and stronger itself.

All this biting and ripping will soon cause bleeding and then the sharks will come smelling the blood.

And this is especially true if that shark is called Exolas.

Alexander, who lacked the proper geopolitical knowledge did not understand Menicus's last sentence, but he had little time to pay attention to such cryptic sayings anyway.

Because, he was instead busy calculating how much stuff would he realistically be able to carry, and how much he would have to leave behind as ten thousand men carrying the stuff of fifty thousand men would create such a huge baggage train that it was in no way feasible.

He would have to pick and choose what to carry and what to leave behind.