

Herald 881

Chapter 881 Petricuno

There was indeed a reason why nobles did not like mercenaries in their territories and vehemently disliked them inside their cities.

It was because these men would almost always be troublemakers.

Not only would they be armed, but with many years of fighting under their belt, they would have a very rough and combative attitude towards any sort of authority, a will forged over many years of combat.

And it would be this defiant mindset that proved especially hard to control for the local city guards, as the veterans of the mercenary group tended to look after these, what they basically considered, peasants in armor.

So when you got a whole crowd of troublemakers, they soon started to pose a great danger to the city and its citizens.

And currently, the men inside the city of Kalimat were certainly paying homage to that reputation, as spurred on by the acts of a few drunken rambler, others too started to quickly follow suit, wreaking havoc on the town.

Many even cheered while doing this, shouting,

"Ahhhhhh! That's right. This place has nothing. No booze, no food, no whores. These ungrateful wretches are only alive because of us. Let's teach them some gratitude."

The reason why the men were shouting those particular things, and perhaps one of the reasons why it was so easy for these mercenaries to find themselves resorting to such violence was because some of the things these men were saying were indeed true.

Kalimat, this small town of less than 10,000 was utterly incapable of tending to such a huge amount of sudden traffic, so despite the city lord's best effort to try and stock the adequate supplies, due to the short duration of the notice, he was unable to fully prepare.

Hence many of the 3,000 men who were let into the city with the promise of a good time found themselves dry, hungry, and cold without a woman to hold.

And if you have already not paid your men for months, and then promised them adequate merriments to sate them in exchange, what you really do not want to do is then be unable to fulfill that promise.

But unfortunately for Perseus, unbeknownst to him, that was exactly what happened.

The five local taverns were certainly not enough to host the 3,000 men, be it giving them enough drinks or good food, the latter of which was something many of the men had been quite looking forward to as the military rations while on the move was certainly not gentle on the taste buds.

As for the town's two brothels, well they had almost instantly become the exclusive properties of the very top echelons- like Petricuno and the leader of the Kaiser family, leaving the others with nothing to squeeze or taste.

So it took only a spark to get the angry men going, as under a moonless, dark night, the 3,000 men quickly started to do whatever they wanted.

Now, in defense of the king, he did tell the city lord to make preparations for hosting 3,000 men.

But the lazy noble had only done the bare minimum, not paying much attention to the task as he did not think entertaining some lowly mercenaries was worth his time, and upon Perseus's arrival, simply pretended everything was in order as Perseus let the bloodthirsty men in.

The result of which culminated in the current tragedy, as many of these brutes broke into shops to loot it, while others broke into houses and shops to find their own booze.

And there, their eyes naturally drifted toward the gold, jewelry, and coins available around them. But perhaps most of all, they landed on the soft, defenseless women residing in the house.

And they were indeed defenseless despite their husbands being present.

For in front of these strong, fully armed men, and multiple of them at that, there was never anything any single man could have done anyway.

So many such women and girls were tragically shamed, their mournful cries shrouded by the cackle of these mercenaries enjoying themselves.

Almost all the women were forced to pleasure more than one man at a time, their clothes all torn apart.

And many times the mercenaries made them perform in front of husbands, or forced mothers in front of daughters, sisters in front of brothers, and even children in front of their parents.

The tragedy here was immeasurable and even if the affected people lived, they and their families would surely be scared for life.

However, this very thing was indeed unveiling right now, as contrary to anyone's expectation, the city of Kalimat was beginning to be sacked.

Given the size of the commotion, it did not take long for the word to reach Perseus, as the scant few city guards, seeing the extent of the disaster unfolding right before them, knew their limits, and instead of going on a suicide mission to try and stop a vastly outnumbered and out armored foe, instead decided to quickly retreat to the safety of the mansion, thus bringing with them the news of the disaster.

Bang!

The leader of the city guards had entered, or more like intruded onto the party with this fierce blast of the door, something that initially drew the ire of many present as they deeply scowled at the unwelcomed intruder.

However that anger quickly turned into stunned surprise upon hearing what was happening just a few hundred meters away from them.lights

However, the fact that some flashes of gold were already beginning to appear on the horizon that many could see even from the mansion irrevocably led credence to the captain's claim.

Surely that was the work of some overeager pyromaniac setting a house or two on fire.

"Your Majesty! Your Majesty! You must stop them." And seeing this, the first to break down was the city lord, who started to plead with Perseus with a panicked, flushed face.

"....." While Perseus's eyes initially turned very frosty and scary, as he was incensed over the fact that those mercenaries would even begin to try to do such a thing while he was still in the city.

However, the smoldering volcano quickly subsided.

Because the king soon remembered his position and the absolute state of his army.

Given the mercenaries made up more than half his army, Perseus could hardly afford to antagonize these men.

Especially given he had not paid the men.

The dangers of this had always been aware of Perseus, he knew to always pay his soldiers on time.

However right now, it was not like he really had any choice.

The man was desperate.

So even though he would have normally taken drastic actions by ordering the guards to seize these ruffians, right now, getting up from his chair, he turned to the city lord to say,

"Let me go to talk to their leaders. They will surely be able to calm the men down."

This was a much softer approach than the others had anticipated, but since the king had spoken, the others had to obey.

Thus quickly taking his entire entourage through the currently being violated city, Perseus eventually made it to the establishment where the two leaders were staying, the duo's presence taking some time to confirm.

But upon reaching it, what Perseus got was no deferent welcome or even a welcome for that matter, but mostly slurred, slobbering, intangible murmurs- such drunk were even the men stationed outside.

And it took Perseus exercising great patience to not blow his head right then and there, even though his entourage very much wanted to as evidenced by the scowls they were giving.

Instead, keeping his cool, Perseus persevered to meet with Petricuno, but even that meeting did not go according to plan.

When Perseus told the man of the things his men were doing, instead of sobering up, the drunk mercenary only snuggled closer to the two naked women wrapped around his chest, being fully naked himself too, which would have been a very rude gesture in front of anybody, as he then in a slurred speech groggily spat out

"Hah? My men are sacking the city?"

"Let them," He casually dismissed the alarming news like it was nothing, saying, "You stinky king have not paid us for so long. My men deserve it. Didn't you let us do the same to that other city? What's the difference?"

The casual, almost dismissive way that Perseus was being addressed made it very hard for the man to keep his cool even when he was trying his hardest.

But that patience finally burst when the drunk man let slip a thought he had hidden deep inside his heart.

Intoxicated and not even sure where he was, Petricuno, suddenly pointed his finger to Perseus and producing a very sleazy smile, slurred,

"Hehe, I know how you can pay us if you do not have the money, Your Majesty. Hehehe, I remember, seeing your wife. She was quite the beauty. Why don't you lend her to us hahaha... *clank*arghhhhh."

The man did not get to finish that sentence as suddenly there was a sharp clank of some type, followed instantly by an agonizing pain bursting out of his chest, following which he widened his eyes to see a solid steel piece sticking out it!

Perseus had struck!

Chapter 882 Petricuno (Part-2)

Perseus had married his wife, Lady Parthia of his own choosing, after being charmed by her looks and personality.

And it was not hard to see why, given she was definitely a beauty on par with Ophenia and The Queen Mother as could attested to by Alexander.

But initially, this act was fiercely opposed by the royal family, who found the woman to be too lowborn.

For Lady Parthia, though not a commoner, was born of only a minor noble house that was in decline at the time, as all its direct line of descendants had perished in a war some time ago, leaving only two sisters and an infant brother behind.

Thus many in court saw their courtship as the girl trying to grab the leg of the biggest and strongest tree out there to save her family.

However, Perseus did not give up.

He persevered to his utmost to get the girl of his dreams and ultimately, after quite some effort, he did manage to get her, as he was able to convince his family and the court to agree.

And the day they got married was one of the, if not the best day of his life, while the experience he had in his nuptial chambers that night was perhaps one of his most treasured memories.

What was better still was that Perseus's love was not only one sided,

The duo's relationship was reciprocal in nature, meaning Lady Parthia too loved her husband.

This was one of the only reasons why Perseus, in much contrary to his predecessors, had no mistresses or illegitimate children.

He loved her that much.

The reason for telling all this was because it meant to show that his wife was one of the man's reverse scales, one that never should be touched much less poked.

In fact, when the king had learned of Lord Theony's betrayal and how Alexander had taken over the capital as well as the palace, the man had been very worried initially, fearing the worst for his three family members.

There was even a point where he regretted not having taken them with him on the campaign.

And only breathed a sigh of relief upon confirming that his wife and two daughters were alive and untouched.

Incidentally, one of the reasons the man was even willing to negotiate up until now was because he learned his family was safe.

For if Alexander had touched or harmed them in any way, especially his wife, Perseus would have vowed to fight to the end.

Thus for Petricuno, a lowly mercenary to see such things about the queen of a nation, his death was not underserved.

Nor did he ever see it coming.

For even the wielder himself did not know what he was doing until he had finished doing it.

Perseus did not know what had come over him, but upon hearing his wife's name come up, and hearing the filthy things being said about her, his body had reacted almost instinctively.

Unsheathing his sword with a sharp *clang*, his blood burned with fury that such a lowly mercenary would dare to say this thing, as he drove the weapon into the man's chest with nary a thought about the consequences.

And the large steel blade worked just as intended, as it dived deep, deep into the chest of the mercenary leader, who still had that bewildered look on his face as if he could not fathom what was happening to him even as the life was bled out of him.

Splurt, *Splurt*,

Perseus expertly retrieved the deeply driven sword with a strong tug, as the dying man then slumped weightlessly onto the bed, with a huge gaping wound on his chest that was profusely gushing out blood, his eyes still sporting that incredulous look with a slightly agape mouth.

Petricuno perhaps was unaware of his death even as he died, or at least astounded that he had died like this, in such a random way, in such a random place.

As the man who once dreamed of becoming the biggest mercenary leader in all of Thesos, it was certainly a lamentable way to die.

Kyaaaahhh

The first people to react to the man's death were naturally the two prostitutes beside him, who understandably were shocked to find their patron dead upon just waking up.

Hence letting out this pitched scream at the top of their voice, these naked ladies tried to quickly bunch up and get away from Perseus in shock and fear, pulling the bed sheets closer to hide their shame as well as making it appear like it was a curtain that would be able to shield themselves from attacks.

"Haa... haa" While Perseus, ignoring the terrified two only let out tired pants of exhaustion, his enraged eyes now looking unfocused and confused, as he felt his small entourage give him stunned looks of incredulity.

Because they all knew what their king had just done and what all this meant.

Perseus killing Petricuno here likely meant losing the 3,000 to 4,000 mercenaries under that man's leadership, and even the possibility of losing the whole Tibian contingent.

Because other than Perseus, Petricuno was one of the other reasons the Thesians were able to be suppressed from deserting.

The mercenary leader still very much wanted to defeat Alexander and worked to ensure the fellow brethren he came here with toed the line.

In that same vein, whenever these Thesians raised the issue with Perseus, the king could point to Petricuno and say that the man had also come from the same place as them, but he was not leaving, so why were they?lights

But now with the man's death, that deterrent was obviously gone.

So losing the entire Thesian contingent would amount to close to one third of their entire force.

Such a thing would be crippling to any army, much less the current, so much weakened army of Perseus.

And it was not like Perseus was unaware of the consequences

Hence the tired pants at the man woke up to the fact of what he had done, as looking at the dead mercenary leader in the following moments Perseus felt a surge of immense helplessness.

Yes helplessness, but not regret.

He did not regret what he had done.

For if he was given the chance, he would have likely done the same thing again as he would never let anyone besmirch his wife.

But what really struck Perseus hard was how as the king he was actually being made to feel fear for the death of a mere mercenary leader.

Just a year ago, he could have just snapped his finger, and ten of these types of people would have come scrambling to kiss his feet.

Oh, how the mighty had fallen!

And thus in the subsequent few moments, Perseus lamented his own loss of power.

However, the strong man did not stay in that state of mind for long.

What was done was done.

Resolving himself that there was no use crying over spilled milk, hence the king's mind began to race about what to do next.

Beucæ it had to be remembered that they were still inside a brothel that was teeming with mercenaries.

And given the piercing shriek those two girls had given, this human alarm bell was very much likely to have at least a few men already on their way.

As a matter of fact, the king could already hear the footsteps on their way.

So now the question became how was Perseus going to handle these men when they got here.

Explain himself? Say he found Petricuno like that? But how?

Given the short very short window of time Perseus was presented with, he found himself unable to come up with anything remotely believable.

"Kill them!"

So he came up with the only viable option for him, as he hissed the command to his entourage, asking them to ready their sword and be prepared to cut a bloody route through the entire building.

It would be extremely dangerous but that was the only thing Perseus could think of.

So the man and his few bodyguards quickly poised their bodies as such, placing their hands on the hilt of their swords and being ready to strike at a moment's notice.

"Your Majesty! Enemies! Enemies are inside the city! They are burning the city!"

Thus imagine their surprise when they got this panicked shout instead of an inquiry, as the messenger, a lean man, with a face like a fox with whispers along his cheeks alarmingly pointed to a part of the city while saying so.

"Enemy? Which enemy?" And such was Perseus's surprise that he was unable to even understand the context of the man, as the man posed so while cleverly moving his body right in front of Petricuno's sprawled corpse, thus blocking the man's view.

It was to be remembered that currently, it was light, and given the brothel's naturally low illumination, this man had been unable to make out the state of their boss under such dim candlelight.

Perseus was saved.

"The Zanzanites! The Zanzanites are attacking. Someone opened the gates and let them in!"

"A few of our brothers are holding them in the market place but we need reinforcements, Your Majesty! Hurry!"

For Perseus, it was like the man was out of the frying pan but into the fire.

Chapter 883 Brawl In Kalimat (Part-1)

When the captain of the city guards had informed everyone of the disaster unfolding right next to them, the very first thought that had went through Papando's mind was that it was all a ploy by Perseus, cock sure that what the mercenaries were doing was all orchestrated by the very man sitting on the chair of highest honor.

'This is exactly what the Lord of Zanzan had warned us about.'

At the news of his city being sacked, Papando actually felt a bit elated initially, as the man saw himself as being vindicated in his suspicions towards the king.

And this conviction that Perseus was the real puppet master was so strong that he would have bet not only his money but his very life too on that hypothesis.

After all, the man had Perseus's precedence to back up his thoughts.

Thus when Papando saw his father plead to Perseus asking for help, his very first instinct had been to try and shout incredulously at the members of the court, "What are you people doing asking help from him? He is the mastermind! He did it once, now he is trying to do it again!"

But Papando of course suppressed it.

He knew he would likely be silenced the moment he uttered this.

And it would not have to be Perseus who did it either.

No, his father would have been more than glad to do it.

So seeing the man who sired him grovel at the 'architect of the whole thing', the son had sneered, 'Heh! This is like watching a chicken ask for help from a fox.'

And then he grit his teeth and bid his time, as his mind raced with the thought of wanting to open the gates and let in Grahtos.

By this point, Papando had put all his hopes of saving his city on only Alexander's men.

And fortunately for him, Papando did not have to wait long for that chance to present itself, as Perseus and the city lord quickly left the party with their guards to go take a look at the situation for themselves, thus leaving Papando all alone to do what he liked.

The city lord had pronounced a throwaway line at Papando asking him to look after the place while he was away, but Papando of course did not care.

Instead, just as planned, he quickly led a small number of his guards who were also his conspirators towards that fateful western part of the city gate and luckily found the place that would be usually guarded by at least a squad men even at the worst of times, now unnaturally vacant.

In fact, from the looks of it, Papando found the place to be literally deserted.

But then again that was understandable if one took into account just what was happening to the city right now.

All the guards stationed here naturally had families and loved ones of their own residing inside, so it was only human that they rushed to confirm their safety first.

But that also meant leaving the entrance to the city wide open for any people with 'nefarious thoughts.'

Thus taking advantage of the situation, Papando was unable to skip the 'persuade the guards or kill them' section of his adventure and quickly operated the complex mechanism to open the heavy wooden entrance.

Following which he lit up a torch and started to wave it around, signaling to Grahtos to make his move.

"Look! There! The signal. The gate's open."

And it did not take long for Papando to get a response, as the lookouts stationed by Grahtos on that solitary hill there quickly answered back with their own light signal, following which the camp of 5,000 men quickly started to organize themselves.

Since the soldiers already knew such an order could come, there was no panic among the ranks despite the time of the day, and the ranks quickly formed up under the moonless night, with many of the men holding torches to try and illuminate the pitch black surrounding.

And it was truly a pitch black surroundings.

It was a level of darkness that would be difficult for modern humans to relate to, as due to the advent of widespread use of electricity and abundance of artificial light, people rarely got to experience such true darkness, the level of darkness a night could truly possess.

Those who did experience it however found the description 'pitch black darkness' to be really apt, for if one was out on a moonless night with no light sources, you would feel almost that the surrounding darkness not only existed but appeared to be encroaching on one's own self, trying to devour you.

It was a feeling that had to be experienced to be truly appreciated, and in fact, when Alexander had first transmigrated, he was initially actually afraid to go out at night, just because of how very dark it was.

It was because of that even with numerous torches lit, Grahtos's contingent of 5,000 advanced towards the city slowly and cautiously, afraid of bumping into or tripping against someone or something along the way.

And once they did arrive at the gate, Grahtos sensibly did not push his entire army into but ordered,

"Send 500 men in as the vanguard first. Check if it is a trap."

Yes.lights

The man rightfully feared that leading his entire legion through the narrow streets, he would be beset from either side by the ambushing enemy and cut down in a pincer attack.

Grahtos of course did not trust Papando as much as he outwardly appeared to show, as neither did the man's officers, who raised the possibility that the whole thing might be Perseus's plan to cut down a large part, if not, at the very least a part of Alexander's army.

But then again, he also could not dismiss the man, for the bait was that lucrative.

Grahtos knew he had to bite and see, even if it might be a trap, Perseus was a such prize that it was worth almost any risk.

Hence Grahtos decided to proceed, but with a bit of caution.

500 men, acting as vanguards were sent as bait.

And composing them were mostly expendable levied peasants of the army, who were the unlucky few that came here in the first place due to being sent here by their more elite squad mates to gather ingredients on their behalf.

But then instead of being able to return, they were made to stay and camp here on Grahtos's order.

It was these men, tired from a whole day's march, and then woken up after only a few hours of sleep, that were chosen to be the sacrificial lambs, as bait against the possibility of a clever ambush.

So it was quite lucky for them that there was no such thing, as confirmed by the men after fanning out to the surrounding streets and finding them to be utterly deserted.

"Good!" Hearing the report and finding that what Papando had said was truly genuine, Grahtos was ecstatic.

He would never admit to it, but the real reason, the real reason and not the one he gave to his officers on why he did not inform Alexander of this opportunity but instead preferred to act on his own was because he wanted the glory of it.

He wanted to be the one to capture Perseus and take all of it.

It was very selfish of him, he knew that, but given the size of the prize, Grahtos could not resist.

'Perhaps I will be made a Talukder (Viscount) for this!' Grahtos dreamed.

Hence, with the man within his grasp, Grahtos turned to his men and loudly shouted to give one last rousing speech,

"Soldiers! The prize is right there!" He pointed towards the city,

"All you have to do is go and take it. There must be nothing in your mind except winning. A victory here will end the war. It will mean ultimate glory for all of you, it will mean ultimate glory for Zanzan, and it will mean ultimate glory for your lord, Pasha Alexander!"

"Now go! *Trumpet!*"

Making the men pumped up for battle, Grahtos quickly blew the battle trumpet, and instantly the legionaries began to pour into the city with loud cheers, "Ahhhh!"

Their overzealous cheers however had the unintended effect of drawing the attention of the nearby mercenaries, although at first these men were not alarmed.

Because they did not really know who was making such a huge ruckus.

They would have had to be psychic to hear a sound and assume that Papando had opened the gates and let Alexander's men inside the city.

So instead, due to the pitch black darkness of the night, they initially thought it was just a different group belonging to them who were perhaps getting a bit carried away with their fun.

Some of the more eager ones even ran towards the sound, thinking there was something interesting there.

Thus imagine their horror when they laid their eyes upon the telltale, distinct blue armor that had been burned into their retina as being the enemy's.

"Wha... what!"

"Ene...*agghh*!"

"Why are they...*ugghh*"

And an instant later these 'vanguard' mercenaries were dead from a storm of projectiles.

Chapter 884 Brawl In Kalimat (Part-2)

As the legionaries made their way along the single, one way street, they soon found themselves being confronted with what appeared to them many shadows recklessly running towards them.

Given the ambient darkness, the men were unable to judge who, or even what these were.

But it did not matter anyway.

For they knew the only friendlies were the people beside them.

So by default, everyone else was the enemy, regardless of whether these men were civilians trying to run from the disaster, or soldiers coming to meet them.

That was their order and there was only one recourse for the men to take.

Kill them.

Thus as the mercenaries wildly running at the approaching black curtain finally closer to see what they were facing, they did not even get to finish their shouts of shock and alarm for they were instantly peppered by a hail of javelins and crossbows, and as such the legionaries drew first blood.

Following which Grahtos's men continued on their way, slowly and steadily advancing their way towards the town center since the street they were on led straight to that- from the gate to the marketplace.

And it was slow progress as the surrounding darkness made it very hard to see any potential potholes or small craters laid strewn about the badly maintained roadway.

So the men tried to be careful to not stumble.

It was an endeavor made all the harder by the fact that the surrounding houses appeared to tower on either side of the road, soaking away what little ambient light there was and drowning the road in inky darkness.

And this absence of light was as much a hindrance to the legionaries as it was a boon for the mercenaries, for the slow advance of Grahtos's men gave them just the amount of time they needed to

make an educated guess of what would have happened to the men who had went to 'greet' the approaching crowd.

And given their vast battlefield experience, they were soon able to come to the most likely scenario- an enemy attack.

And their panicked shouts laid credence to that fact, as some of the more sober men started to cry and haul towards their comrade, urging them to quickly form up.

And the language they used to do this was as crass and rude as could be imagined from these rough men.

"Bitch! Get your ass back here if you don't want to die!"

"Motherf***! Listen to me."

"I will skin your ass, you ass whooping tramp."

"Maggot! Stop fucking that dead whore and get your shield!"

All such and many more 'colorful' languages could be heard being thrown at the drunken men who were in the middle of drinking or 'enjoying' themselves with a woman.

But to the credit of the mercenaries, all these calls worked, as alarmed by the loud thuds of the heavy boots of the legionaries, the Petricuno and Kaiser mercenaries were able to quickly start forming into at least some sort of acceptable formation to try and hold the enemy.

Here, it was also almost a godsend that many of the men had entered the city with their shields still with them, despite Perseus's urging to enter unarmed, as they cited distrust over the local militia's attitude towards them, to which the king acquiesced as he did not want to squabble over such a petty matter.

Thus now, having access to their most important weapon, the men at least held a sliver of chance against a vastly outnumbering foe, as the thinly lined men, locked shields and stood defiantly shoulder to shoulder against the inevitable onslaught that was to come.

"Throw! Shoot!"

Once the legionaries got close enough to the marketplace, the officers leading them quickly shouted these words just before the point of imminent contact, and the men obeyed to the dot, bringing a hail of projectiles on the hastily arranged mercenaries.

And staying true to the pilum's prowess, many subsequently fell to its lethal fire.

However, although highly effective, the attack was still limited in its efficacy, as the narrow streets limited how many men could stand in one row, meaning it limited the number of projectiles that could be thrown.

Furthermore, given the relatively ambient darkness still present, the legionaries refused to charge to capitalize on the enemy's moment of weakness, but instead opted to approach the enemy slowly and tentatively, thus losing a critical opportunity.

This was also caused by the fact the vanguard that made up the attacking force was made up of those inexperienced peasants mentioned before, so they lacked the proper courage and coordination to attempt such a thing.

Instead, afraid of fighting, many of these men even tried to shrike away when presented against the spears of the mercenaries, even though a strong push might have ended the fight then and there.

Yes, that could have indeed been the case.

Because it had to be noted that although the mercenaries had managed to form a line, it was really by the barest technical sense and any strong attack would have knocked them out.lights

So it seemed that in this case, Grahtos's over cautiousness came to bite him in the back.

He had used the low quality troops to poke for any traps and ambushes but subsequently had forgotten to switch them for the vanguard, thus denting the spear of his attack.

Thus now facing these novice troops, the mercenaries were allowed to perform a miracle as they withstood Grahtos's deadliest attack, one that was laced with shock and surprise.

And then over the subsequent hour, the mercenaries found their ranks swell as more and more men started to join them after waking up to the danger that was being posed at them, and thus their position began to strengthen.

It was also at that point that Perseus was informed of the disaster unfolding in the city, as the messenger dashed through the halls of the brothel looking for the king.

And his mind was so occupied with the thought of the news that it did not even register the pitched screams of the two women.

Instead he only concentrated on the task at hand, and left quickly afterward, not even bothering to pay any attention to that scene as he threw it into the trash can of his mind.

No questions such as 'Why the king was inside the room Petricuno was in?' came to the man's mind, although that was also due to the fact that the man did not know where Petricuno was staying.

As for the ones that did know, they were also high level people, meaning they were also drunk out of their minds and asleep, or had already gone out to lead the defense.

It was due to such a combination of factors that Perseus was almost miraculously able to avoid getting caught red handed.

However, although scot free on this charge, the news that he let him to do this did not inspire a breath of relief in him.

'Enemy! How are they here? Who opened the gates?' Instead, Perseus's mind was a mess, and his heart started to beat naturally fast as he started to smell the whiff of conspiracy and his instincts told him that he might be in great danger.

To the man, it felt like he was simply taken out of the frying pan and then put into the fire.

But whatever the case was, the king did not have the luxury to dwell on that for much longer.

From the sound of it, the defenses of the city were in great peril, and the men needed his help to inspire them and help turn the tide.

So he quickly bolted out of the brothel, before he and his man quickly joined the active defense of the city.

Luckily, the brothel was right around the marketplace so Perseus did not need to go far.

Also as a side note, those two prostitutes that were with Petricuno, Perseus killed them before he left the room.

They were the only two people who could definitely identify Perseus as the mercenary leader's killer and the king would have been foolish to let them live.

When Perseus had given the order, those girls had screamed, cried, and pleaded, but it was to no avail, as the men around the king quickly grabbed the duo and slit their throats, giving them a quick and relatively painless victory.

It was a tragedy that Perseus took no joy in committing, and the man knew those girls were innocent bystanders who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

But such was life.

Perseus did not have much mental capacity on the right and wrong of the deed for long, as he had to quickly join the battlefield, and found that upon seeing him and his entourage joining the fray, many men cheering.

Much of the city garrison who had been diverted from all parts of the city shouted,

"His Majesty! His Majesty is here."

"Ancestors bless us. We have not yet lost. We cannot lose!"

"The city lord is here too."

"Fight men. For your city. For your lord."

Until they were struck from the back too that is, as Grahtos caught them in a glorious pincher attack using the eastern gate that is!

Perseus was now trapped!

Chapter 885 Brawl In Kalimat (Part-3)

When Grahtos had first launched his attack, the man was super confident that the offensive would be an instant grand slam.

And it was reasonable to assume so given that he had caught the enemy completely unaware, with many of the mercenaries caught literally out of their pants.

Hence Grahtos was of the mind that he would have to 'just kick in the door and the whole thing would come tumbling down.'

Thus it was very frustrating for him to find himself bogged down right at the start of the offensive, unable to proceed further.

And when inquired about it, the reason quickly revealed itself as retold by a runner,

"Commander, the troops at the front are refusing to advance! No matter how much we try to urge them they are like mules, refusing to budge!"

Yes.

Despite the forceful urging and even screeching shouts of the officers on the frontlines, the low quality troops at the vanguard refused to charge and push the enemy back, instead being content to simply stand still and turtle like a coward.

The darkness of the night, the inexperience, and lastly the loud cries from the fearless mercenaries opposing them all worked to make these novice soldiers shake in their boots despite their overwhelming numbers, and some of the units were even pushed back.

And this result was not because of a lack of trying on the officers' part, who had shouted fiercely things such as,

"You maggots! Advance!"

"Move forward or I will skin each and every one of you."

"One month! All of you will have one month of your pay docked."

"Go men! Just one push. Push them once and they will crumble."

But nothing moved them.

Threats of punishments, beatings, and pay cuts all proved ineffective as one would have to live first to experience them.

While glory and honor meant nothing to the dead.

Hence for a time the battle appeared struck at a deadlock.

Hearing the situation, Grahtos was at first infuriated.

And for a moment, he even wished that these low quality expendable troops that he had sent forward had 'expended' themselves so that they could have made way for better ones.

However now that he was in this situation, there was little more that could be done.

At least that was what it seemed like to Grahtos who could only grind his teeth and wait for the cowardly peasants to make their move when they felt like it.

Or so it appeared, until suddenly, Papando, who was accompanying him proposed to him in a very enthusiastic voice, "Lord Grahtos! There are still other ways into the city! Like the eastern gate overlooking the river. I can go open it for you."

The man revealed with a flushed face, before pointing to the opposite side of the city,

"The streets there also lead to the marketplace. But from the opposite direction. If you attack from there, you can catch the enemy in a pincer attack!"

Papando seemed very excited by the possibility.

"That?" And at being pointed in this new direction, Grahtos initially widened his eyes in shock and surprise.

If he could truly do it, that really might end the war in one swift move.

So Grahtos was certainly moved.

However, thinking for a second, something then popped up in his mind.

"The eastern gate should be all the way out on the other side. Won't you get caught trying to do this?" He posed to Papando with a slightly worried face, understanding that since Papando claimed his plan was to open the gates, naturally he would have to be inside the city.

And who knew if the defenses around the gates had been strengthened following Grahtos's invasion?

"Don't worry Commander!" But Papando was hungry to prove his worth to Grahtos and by relation to Alexander.

So brushing away Grahtos's concerns, he proclaimed, "They have not yet found out that it was me who opened the gates."

"So I can easily disguise myself as being reinforcements from the mansion. No one will suspect a thing."

Grahtos found that Papando had at least given some thought to the move and was not simply rushing blindly suicidally.lights

"Hmmm!" Hence Grahtos hummed a bit to himself, tracing his chin as he thought about what Papando said, finding that since the man put it like that, it did not seem like such a bad plan.

"It's so dark here. How will you be able to distinguish yourself so that my men don't attack you while you move? Or Perseus's men for that matter?"

However, he still had this one last thing to pit-nick here.

"....." And regarding this Papando had no foolproof method to guarantee his safety.

Because the darkness really made it hard for him to avoid these obstacles with certainty.

"We will keep to the alleyways. Your men have not spread to those parts Commander Grahtos and given the armor we are wearing, men from our side will not attack once we have shown ourselves or even just heard our call." So Papando proposed this.

And this could indeed work, as the legionaries and Papando wore very distinct garb.

Not to mention the very clearly different languages they spoke.

Also as a side note, the entire discussion between Papando and Grahtos also occurred mostly through translators given the language barrier.

All this meant that it would not be hard to distinguish Papando once he identified himself.

However the antithesis to all these plans was that a sneak attack from the dark might take the man out before he could even do such a thing.

So although all this sounded good on paper, all of it really meant only minimizing the possibility.

Thus even Papando himself was not sure how efficacious he could be with his words.

"...*Nod*....." However Grahtos, since the man was offering, and knowing the prize at hand, did not try to change Papando's mind.

After all he had met the man not even for half a day and really had only a fleeting feeling for the man's life.

And if Grahtos could exchange his life for a win here, he would absolutely agree to it over a hundred times.

Thus he agreed to let the man try and open the other gates.

And Papando happily accepted the permission, and he started to hastily make his way toward the gate.

While Grahtos, after seeing Papando disappear into the inky darkness of the night, decided to carry out an independent move of his own.

Understanding what was at stake, and what would happen if he failed to escape Perseus when given such a golden opportunity, he prudently decided to shed his pride and sent riders asking for help to Alexander.

And that was the messenger the young lord of Zanzan got, who came to his camp, pleading to help and save their city!

And hearing it, Alexander did indeed quickly react, leaving a third of his men behind, he took around 20,000 men and started a rapid march towards the city.

For Papando, the journey towards the eastern gate actually proved surprisingly uneventful, despite all the assumed dangers, as Papando and his small group were able to fortunately blend themselves right into the night, their diminutive size proving a boon here.

Even the place they were most afraid of- the marketplace, which they found had by now turned into the most 'hot' place in the city, its vicinity turning nearly into a full blown raging battlefield did not pose any difficulty for them.

It could even be said ironically that the fierce tempo of the fight actually played to Papando's advantage as the mercenaries and the small garrison facing the Grahtos's immense force appeared extremely disinterested in trying to pick fights with anyone else.

So Papando was able to quickly get access to the mercenaries' flanks, who gave him no mind once they saw his armor, only occasionally giving out some shouts to call and haul at him, which of course Papando either ignored or pretended not to notice.

Thus almost like a repeat of last time, Papando found himself once again standing in front of another gate, and wouldn't you know it, this place too was deserted.

Although that might not have been that much of a surprise if one thought about it, since all the available men had called up to help defend the marketplace.

Such a huge flaw might not have opened up if Perseus or the city lord had more time to organize their defenses, but given the complete suddenness of the attack, they were simply not able to institute such precautions.

Which worked perfectly fine for Papando, who got to work almost like clockwork, and within minutes the large contingent of 2,000 men that Grahtos had sent to circle around the city and take position around the eastern gates were let in.

"Haaahhhaaa!" And the men entered the place with a huge rumbling cheer, although the sheer clamor and din already present worked to mute a lot of that.

However the men did not care much about that, as with the vanguard now being led by Grahtos's personal men, they were able to scythe through the darkness like it did not exist, covering the relatively short distance quickly as they beelined for that juicy exposed nape that the defending mercenaries were showing.

Chapter 886 Brawl In Kalimat (Part-4)

Grahtos's pincher's attack from behind managed to catch Perseus completely and utterly off guard.

The king perhaps did not even think such a possibility existed.

In fact, when the first sword strike had begun to hit them, some of the mercenaries had even cried out not in horror but pure unbridled rage, "Bastard! The enemy is in the front. What are you doing?"

Yes.

They initially thought that this group of men had gotten confused in the darkness and was hitting their own men.

And it took them a small while to even realize what was really happening.

And what was a horrifying realization was that!

When the men was able to at last clearly see the 'blundering fools', their rage instantly melted away like wax, as if they were hit by a terrifying flame of fear and shock.

The blue armor, the unique helmet, and the telltale sword and shield formation, all pointed to only one answer.

And understanding they were being attacked from both sides, the shock and surprise the mercenaries felt could only be imagined.

"Fuck! How the fuck are they here?"

"Get out the way fuckers. Run! We have lost."

"Dammit! To think this is how we die."

"Dammit! This entire campaign has been cursed."

These types of shouts and many more began to echo throughout the rank as the solid line began to wobble.

But although shaken, these men were not stirred out of their will to fight, as it could be seen from their speeches.

They did not sound like they were despairing, but only appeared to be unresigned to such an ending.

They really lived up to their name as veterans.

And true to that, instead of losing heart and running, they rallied!

"Brothers! There is no escape for us. So let us fight to the death. Make these slave farmers earn their coin."

"Three heads! All you bastards must get at least three heads before you die. Or I will look at you in the afterlife."

"Bah! You pathetic animal fuckers think you can kill this daddy? Hahaha, come! Try!"

They then began to pump each other up like so, as the rearmost echelons began to turn and face the eastern gate legionaries.

Due to the congested space around the marketplace, the experienced men quickly came to the conclusion that escape was out of the question, as the heavily urbanized terrain made the escape route too narrow, never mind the darkness of the night.

So they reckoned that if all of them were to start running with no sense of direction, probably half of them would be killed by their own men as they pushed, shoved, crushed, and trampled each other to death.

While the rest would be butchered from behind within seconds, as the mercenaries would be clogging up their own escape.

So faced with the decision to run and die, or fight and take a few with them, the answer was easy.

And perhaps much more than death, what really spurred the men on to fight was how they would die—under the hands of a few untrained, lowly peasants.

This to them seemed very dishonorable.

After all.

How many such low born people had they killed?

How many wives of such low born people had they taken?

How many such low born people had they bullied?

Remembering all those instances, many of these bellicose men found themselves wanting to fight to the bitter end.

Of course, these men were mistaken on the premise that their opponent was all present levies, but there was little time or incentive for these men to verify their claims.

"Ready! Throw! Charge!"

Once Grahtos's men from the eastern section finally made contact, they performed their standard attack with the pilla just as ordered, and quickly followed it up with a proper, heavy charge, smashing into the defending mercenaries.

However, the effects of this were less than desirable.

Because compared to the first opportunity, the enemy's line was so much thicker and the men much more dogged.

Hence the lines did not snap like they would have done so back then.

Also, even if the lines were to snap, where would they go?lights

Remember, the core principle of a pincher attack was that you attacked from both sides, and the enemy broke and ran from either side, kind of like squeezing on a sandwich and letting all the sauce spill out.

But now, in this congested quagmire, as Grahtos's western and eastern halves pushed Perseus and the mercenaries internally, with nowhere to go these men could only retaliate and fight back.

Grahtos had forgotten, or more like was unable to swerve around a critical battle mantra- never trap your enemy with nowhere to go escape.

And the narrow streets and houses of the city were all doing exactly that.

It was because of this that Grahtos's pitch perfect charge did not have as large an effect, as the mercenaries were able to even counterattack, forcing the over eager legionaries back a bit.

And then following that the battle once again developed into a brutal melee, as the legionaries found themselves hacking a path through the enemy one soldier at a time.

Now, in fear of making the mercenaries too extraordinary, it had to be also noted that despite the intensity of the resistance by Perseus's forces, which was no doubt great, it was still not enough to stop Grahtos in his tracks.

The manpower and tactical advantage was too much in that respect so as to be able to be overcome with sheer willpower.

Hence the only thing the mercenaries could try to do was make the man bleed, and perhaps even succeed in making him bleed badly.

And if it had been a regular fight, perhaps they might have stood a shot at making Grahtos back out, in fear of the losses he took.

But that would not be possible this time.

For given the prize at hand, the grand prize of Perseus's head, well Grahtos would be more than glad to bleed his men and bleed a lot, lot more if necessary.

Furthermore, the mercenaries were really not making Grahtos take as much as they were thinking they were.

Because given the darkness of the night, after a few hours of fighting, both sides became tired and turned down the intensity, as they had found it very difficult to see much of anything.

Only occasionally would there be a silver of light, reflected off the blade of an incoming attack, and the men would have to hastily scramble to react to that.

Thus faced with this mortal uncertainty, the men found it much more sensible to rather defend than attack and expose themselves, greatly preferring to hide behind their shields and turtle, for the time being.

Hence the fighting reached a stalemate and turned to simmering intensity, as both sides waited for the sun to make things clearer.

As they waited, one of Perseus's close royal bodyguards in a hushed voice chimed,

"Your Majesty! We need to escape! Our forces cannot hold on. Now that the fighting has died down let us make a break for the gates!"

The man had the shrewd insight to be aware that their current tie was only a momentary occurrence in the equilibrium pendulum, and that it was soon to surely and decisively swing in the other side's favor.

So he urged his king to take the chance when it was still being presented it to him.

"No! I can't." However Perseus rejected it, reasoning, "The southern gate is still locked. And it will take some time for us to open all the complex mechanisms guarding it."

"By that time the enemy will surely have caught up with us. And out of formation, we will surely be slaughtered."

This analysis clearly showed how good a strategist the man was, as he was able to see the issue even when placed under such dire straits.

Perseus also knew he was currently like the cornerstone holding the entire defense together.

Many of the men, mostly the ones from the garrison were still standing holding their spears and shields because the king was fighting with them.

And even the mercenaries, although not outwardly so appreciative, still occasionally sent out loud hurrahs and shouts at him, both to pump themselves up, as well as to try and intimidate the other side.

So if he were to bolt, a large part of his defense risked dissolving with him.

And then both he and his men would end up on the chopping blocks.

However, although very grim, Perseus did not only lament his position.

The crafty king still had the state of mind to try and come up with something clever.

Something miraculous that might yet let him continue to fight another day.

So turning to his small number of men from his royal guards, he ordered, "Forget trying to open the gates from the inside. That will take too long."

"Instead you three go scale the walls and meet up with Phillips. Tell him what is going on and order him to assault the gates using the elephants and tear it down!"

"We will make a break for it once the sun is up."

Yes!

There was more than one way to open a door after all.

Grahtos's bird seemed to want to escape the coup.

Chapter 887 Phillips At The Gates

Due to the city gates being closed, even Philips, who was just on the opposite side of it, had no idea of the life and death battle his father was facing.

The marketplace was unfortunately too far from the place they had camped to allow even the sound of the raging fight to carry over, so instead, given the current time and being tired from the day's march, the prince and his entourage of more than 20,000 men were doing what was naturally expected of them- being blissfully asleep.

Only a few sentry were still up, guarding the place, but these men too failed to notice anything abnormal going on in the city as they were primarily on the lookout for only nearby enemies, not trying to see how their king was doing inside the city.

"*Yawnnn!* Those lucky bastards inside the city. I bet they are having the time of their life."

And it was one such ordinary guardsman who grumbled like so to his mate sharing the watchtower, rubbing his exhausted eyes constantly to try and ward off sleep.

"Awww... Yeah!" And as if to prove that yawning was contagious, the man too involuntarily felt such an urge to do so upon seeing his partner, as he moaned in frustration, "Why did we have of all people have to stand guard here? What are we even guarding against? The enemy is miles away!"

Guard duty was among the most painful duties a soldier could get, as it required one to once again stay up the whole night after a hard day's march, while everyone else got their sweet sleep.

It was thus so detested that the commanders would many times post the men as a punishment for something they had done.

And although these two men were not being punished, they were certainly unlucky and rambled and grumbled their grievances to each other.

They saw no point in this watch duty as in their minds, there was no way the camp could be in danger.

"Yea... Hey, look!" That was until one of them, who was halfway through agreeing with his colleague suddenly spotted a light source.

And it was a light source that seemed to be making a beeline towards them, or more specifically towards the camp's gates.

"Halt! You!" And once the light source, which turned out to be three distinct ones when observed up close enough, got near enough, one of the men from the top of the tower barked this command in a haughty voice, while the other readied his crossbow.

Yes, by now Perseus's army already had access to crossbows, although they were very limited in supplies.

They were usually given to only noblemen, so to answer the question of how this poor man had gotten the privilege to use it- well it was simple really, he looted it off a dead nobleman when he was cleaning the battlefield.

And then managed to convince his commanding officer to let him have it for a healthy bribe.

As for what the bribe was, well let's just say that particular officer had a general likeness for men.

Anyway, such backstory aside, perceiving danger to be approaching them, this guard quickly took aim, threatening the men with death unless they obeyed.

"Open the gates! His Majesty's orders!" However that hostility instantly plummeted the moment they heard this familiar language, their mother tongue.

It was surely to be from their own side, and as they got closer, that suspicion ceased completely, as once upon a more detailed look, the duo quickly recognized the distinctive armor the three men were wearing.

'Royal guards!' The words immediately thundered across the two's minds, as they hastily scampered to let the esteemed men in, their minds deathly afraid to think why these men would be here at such an odd time.

They were also half afraid they might get court martialled for pointing a weapon at them.

But the three bodyguards were of course not bothered by this.

In fact, they did not even register it as an offense since they had much, much bigger problems to deal with.

Hence, entering quickly, they immediately sought out the prince's tent.

And once they located it, they chose to eschew the stationed guards' offer to go wake the prince up and instead personally entered the place, hurriedly trying to wake the sleeping man up and deliver the news,

"Your Highness, His Royal Majesty is trapped in the city! He needs assistance. You must join him!"

The men tried to be as concise and as succinct as possible, in fear of wasting time.

"Wh... what? Trapped? Who? Where is father?" However, in doing so, they presented Philips with a situation he had no context of and so understandably found himself confused.

All of this was too out of the blue and unexpected for him to easily grasp.

"Ah!" And finally recognizing this, the men then took a few minutes to help him catch up.

"Someone opened the gates! His Highness is trapped in the marketplace. We cannot open the gates from inside. So he sent us to ask you to open the gates and join him!"lights

One of the men said.

Now, here readers would do well to take a very good at the phrasing of this sentence, as the message being delivered here was, although true to its essence not exactly what Perseus had asked.

To quote the king, he specifically said to ask Philips to 'tear down the gates or walls with the elephants to help them escape'.

He certainly did not want Philips to join the fight.

Granted, in the current circumstance perhaps this might seem like only a very subtle wordplay. But like how the flutter of a tiny butterfly could cause a hurricane somewhere else, fortunately, or unfortunately, this paraphrasing would have a great effect on the outcome of the battle.

As to which one, well that remained to be seen in the future.

For now though, what had to be done first and foremost was to have Philips wake his army up.

Upon learning of his royal father's predicament occurring just beyond those gates, all the inherent sleepiness the man had been inflicted from being prematurely woken up evaporated like dew under the summer sunlight and the Crown Prince felt his heart burning in anxiety.

So once he got up to speed, Philips wasted not a single moment in attempting to mount a rescue, as he started to bark out one order after another in a tyrannical voice few heard him ever utter before.

And with the royal having taken charge himself, even personally going into some tents to wake up the more senior officers, the whole camp soon found itself awake, aware, and ready.

The regular grunts reported to their station as fast as their legs could carry them, the officers tried their best to get them in proper formation, while the top brass held a very short meeting to understand what Philips as well as Perseus wanted of them, and strategize on how to achieve that.

The entirety of this took around two hours, which was lighting quick when you understood what mammoth task it involved getting 20,000 men up and ready in the middle of the night in almost pitch black darkness save for the occasional braziers.

So this clearly went on to show Philips's own innate military prowess, proving the apple had not fallen much further from the tree.

Thus at this point, Philips found himself commanding a full fledged army, the men all arranged in neat rows.

"Get the elephants! Pull down the gates and be ready to charge!" Then without further ado, Philips gave the decisive order.

Following which, just as the esteemed prince wanted, very thick ropes were quickly tied to the undefended gates on one end and fastened to a team of six elephants on the other, with each door given to three of the beasts to pull apart.

"*Trumpet!* *Trumpet!*"

And then with this loud strenuous cry, the brutal tugging contest began.

The several tonnes heavy behemoths' sheer muscle power fought a brutal contest against the material strength of the heavy timber and metal locks holding the gate together, the magnificent animals furiously moved their legs, making the ground underneath them quickly form a dent.

As these beasts were arranged side by side, their frantic steps or attempts to take a step appeared like caterpillars wriggling legs, and

Creak, *Creak*, *Clang*, *Snap*.

Soon such low pitched murmurs began to ring out around the door.

"Good! Good!" And encouraged by the quick apparent result, Philips cheered as such, thinking the gate was just a bit away from toppling.

After all, seeing the elephants at work and watching the powerful muscles at work firsthand, Philips could feel the power at work there, so there was little doubt in his mind that the results would soon be manifesting themselves.

'Father was right. These beasts are really something.' The Crown Prince thought gleefully.

However, despite all the reassuring creaking and snap, as time went on, Philips found his optimism waning.

There was no doubt their efforts were having an effect, but clearly, it was fast enough, as even after almost half an hour of this brutal attack the gate still held.

If Philips was thinking of quickly coming to his father's rescue, he was to be disappointed.

Chapter 888 Phillips At The Gates (Part-2)

"Hurry up men! Force march! Your brothers need you!"

In the dead silence of the night, this forceful, slightly irritated shout rang particularly loudly across the wide, open Tibian countryside, as Alexander from atop his horse sounded a bit annoyed.

Upon receiving news of Grahtos, the young pasha had mobilized his army as soon as possible, waking the camp up and putting two thirds of his men on a forced march, wishing to come to his detachment's aid yesterday.

To make the pace even faster, Alexander did not even make the men carry their 30 to 35 kg heavy baggage of supplies, only equipping them in their armor and weapon and perhaps a water pouch for the journey.

All so that he could cover the 20 kilometer journey at the maximum pace possible.

However, despite all that, given the general ambient darkness, as well as the fatigue of the men, the soldiers could only move their legs that fast.

They tried their best, but that did not seem fast enough for Alexander.

"It will be sunrise by the time we make it." Hence a bit annoyed, Alexander pursed his lips and murmured to himself, at the advancing rate, as he had hoped to arrive at the battlefield sooner.

But since he could only push the men so far, Alexander had to settle for wishing Grahtos would be able to keep Perseus trapped in the city in the meantime.

While Alexander was racing towards Kalimat in the dead of the night, inside the city, after waiting for what to him seemed like ages, Perseus was beginning to get a bit frustrated.

"The gate is not opened yet? What's taking so long? Did the men not deliver the message properly?" The king furrowed his brow and swore, turning his head towards the sky above to let out a sigh of exasperation.

He could already tell the darkness was starting to dissipate as the horizon did not look as dark as before.

And this observation made the man feel quite pessimistic about his future.

Contrary to normal human nature, right now Perseus hated that the darkness was fleeing and dawn was approaching, for he feared what the next day would hold.

Once everything became clear, the enemy would surely revamp his attacks, and that would not bode well for him.

"The Prince is trying Your Highness. It's just that door is proving more difficult than anticipated."

And sensing Perseus's anger, one of his guards quickly tried to soothe him as such.

While the city lord who was also participating in the fight close to him darted his eyes a bit uncomfortably since he felt he might know why the Crown Prince was having a hard time breaking through.

Fearing an attack from Alexander, the portly man had replaced many of the aging gates with brand new ones, thus reinforcing his defenses.

This was of course a very sensible thing to do as a whole.

But right now it seemed to have come to bite them in the back in a twisted way.

About this incident, the large lord kept his mouth tightly shut, as revealing it now would have no positive effect.

So instead he only gritted his teeth in fear and frustration at the current predicament, 'Dammit! We cannot even return to the mansion! Is this where I die?'

The mansion was of course a much better stronghold than the marketplace and would have been able to provide much greater protection to its inhabitants.

So Perseus and company had every incentive to try and access it.

And the reason why they did not do so was simple because the path was locked.

The building lay north of the city, and Grahtos's men coming from the west had managed to swing left and block off the only street leading there.

Thus Perseus's only escape route was to the south, which his son was trying his damnest to open.

Philips by now had no idea how long he had been going at it.

But he did not know this was the third time he had to change elephants.

Meaning the initial 6 that were tasked with snapping the gate down had been switched after they had gotten tired with a fresh batch, and then swapped back in once they had recuperated long enough.

"Come on! Come on! Come on!" And recognizing the peril his father might be in, every second Philips remained stuck here felt agonizing to the man, and he had to murmur such words to keep his mind distracted.

It was at this point he also regretted not having any access to any siege equipment like a battering ram, and being forced to rely on this primitive, brute force method.

In fact however, there was a far easier method than this available to Philips, if the man had only put a bit more thought into it.

If the Crown Prince was a bit more clever, he could have recalled how the three royal guards had scaled the wall to come deliver the message and then do the same, just from the opposite side.

Yes!

Given the walls were literally empty, some of Philips's men could have easily entered the city by climbing up them and then opening the gates from inside, saving Philips potentially hours!lights

It was such a simple solution, but for whatever reasons- be it the stress of the suddenness of the attack, the explicit order from his father, the darkness which obscured the walls and thus that visual stimuli, the inherent grogginess or simply forgetfulness, the man had failed to come up with this.

As neither did all the men around him, who too were single mindedly focused on obeying the king's order to the letter, nothing less, but also nothing more.

Thus came the following result, where the elephants went at the door for quite some time, wasting precious time, as the heavy main door tried to resist with all its might.

And it was here that Philips for the first time in his life learned just how hard it was for wood to be forcefully pulled apart,

But eventually, like any other material, no matter how strong it might have been, it was inevitably worn down.

The sheer muscular prowess of six elephants was nothing short of incredible.

So at last the various planks of wood holding the huge gate together began to slowly buckle, split, and splitter, as Philips imagined he could see light coming from there.

And then finally, right around dawn, as the surroundings were just starting to get bright, it happened!

Twang!, *Twang!*, *Twang!*

Giving one last cry as such,

Bang! with a thunderous crash the whole thing came tumbling down, as one part of the gates smacked into the ground, opening the way forward.

"Ahhhhhh!" And Philips did not even have to give the order to advance, as some of the more eager men rushed into the city on their own, crying out terrifying battle cries as they sought to come to the defense of their king.

"Reinforcements! Reinforcements are here!"

"We are saved! Praise the prince!"

"Hurry! Hurry and make your way towards the gates."

"We don't have much time. Let's run while we can."

And since it was already dawn, with the surroundings becoming clearer by the second, hearing the loud shout and seeing the charging men, everyone's attention was drawn to that place.

And no one was left in any confusion as to which faction they belonged to.

Their armor made that endeavor moot.

Hence Perseus's side cheered jubilously, as if like the gate to paradise had been opened, as many of the units, especially the outer ones began to rush towards their freedom.

While in the complete flipside of the coin, Grahtos and his officers cursed, "Dammit! Why now?"

They could not believe that Alexander had still not arrived, and with this development, well it seemed the bird was getting ready to fly off.

Intense regret particularly filled Grahtos's heart, as he felt mortified at the thought of letting Perseus escape, both because of what it would mean for the war, as well as what it would mean for him personally.

If that were to really happen, if Perseus really were to escape, and then if Grahtos's delay about informing Alexander was revealed in the post battle analysis, well, then man would do well to prepare for what was to come.

Perhaps he would be able to squirm out of being heavily punished by claiming he did not tell Alexander fearing it might be a trap, but even that excuse would be pretty weak.

So even if Alexander bought it, he would certainly favor him less from then on.

And all this went without saying anything about his colleagues, who would surely kick him when he was down and try and replace him in Alexander's eyes.

This was only natural as if Grahtos were in their shoes, he would have probably done the same.

But then again, even if he wanted to stop Perseus, what could Grahtos do?

He was already doing what he could.

"Get out of the way!"

"Ahhhh! Don't push!"

"Stop! I'm on your side."

However, it seemed Grahtos did not need to do anything, as Phillips's men who were charging into the city found themselves colliding with their own men who were trying to escape the battle, thus creating a clog of their own.

Chapter 889 Phillips's Blunder

As Perseus's men tried to escape the city, unfortunately, they found themselves blocked at the gates by the very force that was sent to relieve them.

One side wanted to rush in to help the besieged men, while the besieged men wanted to rush out to try and avoid the encirclement.

And thus the two sides unfortunately crashed into each other, right in narrow single laned streets.

And then as it could be guessed chaos ensued.

"Move! Let me through!"

"Get out of the way!"

"Aghh! Don't! I.. I can't breathe."

"Stop pushing you fuckers!"

It was as such, with both sides trying to get to their destination at the same time that they found themselves deadlocked.

And then desperate, they shoved, pushed, and even stabbed each other to try and escape.

All of which of course did nothing other than to claim a few needless lives, as the congested streets proved to be too potent a choke point for anyone to reliably escape.

Many were even killed by crushing, i.e. death by asphyxiation.

It happened due to the fact that the surrounding sea of men pressed down on the chest so much that it made it impossible to even move it up and down, making even the simple act of breathing untenable.

It was like this the men from both directions found themselves in an unsolvable knot.

And then to add a bit more spice to the chaos and kerfuffle, the mahoots driving the elephants also let two of the largest beasts they had into the narrow streets, thinking Perseus had called for them.

And then they found themselves stuck.

"Damn it! We can't turn. There is not enough space!" It was only then they understood just how narrow a place they had driven their animals into.

There was very little space for them to maneuver, and certainly not enough to turn the beasts around.

As for the elephants themselves, being placed in this very claustrophobic environment with so many men who were making so much noise, they quickly began to feel very uncomfortable and unable to move freely, they suddenly froze in fear, refusing to budge.

This remained the case even when their trainers tried their darndest to move them, the beasts only standing stock still and appearing afraid and very jittery.

What the trainers here were trying to make the animals reverse blindsided in a straight line, but that was something the two seemed very reluctant to do.

"Don't poke them too much. Or they might charge! Remember that the king is with us!" And due to the following fear, the mahouts were also unable to try all the tricks in their bag, particularly having to rein in their use of the huge pointy sticks that they used to control the animal.

For they dreaded to think what would happen if these massive behemoths went berserk and started to rampage, as the utter destruction they could wreck in a congested space such as this could hardly be imagined.

It would be like a wrecking ball mowing down pins in the shape of humans.

And if the king was to get caught up in such a charge and die as a result, well then everything would be over, then and there.

Thus the trainers atop the elephants had little recourse other than to let these moody animals get used to their new surroundings in their own time, whilst in the meantime, they kept blocking the way out of the city like they were royalty.

And seeing this one, at one point, a few daredevil and half crazed soldiers even menacingly approached these beasts with their spears, wishing to carve open a path for themselves,

"Don't attack them! It will go berserk and start attacking everyone. Then we will all die."

But the mahoots from the top warned them as such, their voice as loud as they were terrified.

And fortunately, it was a potent enough warning to make even those red eyed men back down.

They looked at all the huge size of their 'enemy', heard the occasional angry trumpeting cries, and observed the swords that were menacingly tied to the animal's tusks.

All of which did wonders to make them come to their senses.

After all, they did not want to be flung, trampled, or skewered by a pair of raging elephants.

Thus for the moment, the entire contingent appeared stuck inside the city, neither able to move forward nor backward.

And it was exactly foreseeing such chaos that Perseus had asked for his son to simply open the gates, not enter it.

But since the message subtly got changed in the delivery, Perseus's men thus found that their only route out of the city was blocked.

What a blunder such a small change caused!!lights

And as a consequence of this blunder, panic and fear finally began to settle in among the men trapped in the city.

They had been fighting the whole night, all in the hope of being able to escape the city if they held on for just a bit longer.

And then they were shown that hope, the gate of redemption was right within their grasp.

All for it to be cruelly taken away from them in the blink of an eye.

And what was perhaps most ironic was the fact that it was their own men who had inadvertently done that, somehow due to completely altruistic reasons.

Perhaps the men there would not have felt so much regret even if it had been Alexander to be the one who had done it.

So as they were stuck here with no way out, it was only natural that after a while, these tired and outnumbered men started to lose faith.

And as morale plummeted, desertion among the ranks began to set in!

It was of course not on an en masse, as there was simply no space for an en masse desertion anyway.

But many, especially those around the outer fringes of the formation, began to try and look for a small way out, such as attempting to fit their body through the small creases and crevices around the elephants' legs and bodies.

The numbers involved in this endeavor were predictably minuscule, and the ones succeeding even tinier.

It would be like if the total number of men present was like an ocean, then the beasts were acting like a filter, letting out only a single drop at a time.

It was nowhere near enough.

But it was still enough to disrupt unit cohesion as even those who did not run, still kept their eyes and ears perked up looking for a chance to do so if the opportunity arose.

Thus much of the men's attention was currently divided, enabling the legionaries to get a deadly strike in more easily.

And observing all the panic and desperation starting to set in from atop his horse at the back, Grahtos, of course, rejoiced.

It was a complete reversal of his fortunes like the sides of the coin had been flipped like he had been given a second chance at life.

And the man intended to fully capitalize on it.

"Attack! Now is your chance men! Attack!" Clearly recognizing the disorderly formations, the general immediately launched a full fledged counterattack with every single man he had, and since it was already morning, the legionaries were able to effectively coordinate their attacks, letting them be very effective.

Thus, just as Perseus was at his most vulnerable, Grahtos commenced his most deadly attack.

And just as it was expected, this time the men found results.

The energetic legionaries found the enemy lines to be not as solid as they had once been, and many of the very front and rear echelons started to give away when poked and propped from both sides.

The chaos and indiscipline had spread well and truly by now among the enemy's ranks, and even the elite mercenaries had gotten worn out by this point, both by fatigue as well as the fear of impending death.

They might have reaped many lives, but when it came to their own, they too found themselves afraid.

It seemed everybody was afraid to die.

Although ironically, that fear only worked to haul the scythe wielding apparition ever closer ever faster.

"Your Majesty! Look out... arggh!"

As more and more time passed, Grahtos began to make further and further advances into the enemy's ranks, with at some point the attacks even starting to reach as deep into where Perseus was placed, right in the very core of the formation, proving just how degraded the outer rows had become.

Facing attacks from both sides, the king found his forces being chewed up and spit out at a rate almost perceptible to the naked eye.

"Fuck!" And understanding the predicament he was in, Perseus, crudely cursed and cussed in a way that was in much contrast to the way he was brought up, as he murmured in regret, 'I knew this would happen! That's why gave them those instructions!'

Despite wanting to avoid this very scenario, somehow it seemed Perseus's worst nightmare had come true.

"Fuck it! If I'm going to die, might as well die fighting!" And then in a voice filled with anger and desperation, the king suddenly declared such, deciding to join the frontlines himself.

Chapter 890 Perseus's Last Stand

As time wore on, and the sky became brighter and brighter, things continued to improve for Grahtos.

And as a way to maintain balance, things kept going south for Perseus.

Chaos, panic, and desertion all started to inflict and spread throughout the army, while Perseus found himself helpless to do anything about it.

Until finally the man decided not to do anything.

Perseus found himself completely pushed into a corner with seemingly no way out.

So at the end of his ropes, he relinquished all control of the battlefield to the whims of all the individual men there, letting them whatever they wished, while he himself wanted to try and kill as many enemies as possible before he was eventually surrounded and butchered.

He would wash all his worries and fears with the blood of the enemy right in front of him.

"*Clang!* Let's die a glorious death!"

It was with those words that the warrior king at last drew his sword, swearing to himself like a martyr and throwing all his regrets and concerns to the wind, as he wheeled his horse directly to the very frontlines, joining the fight himself.

And soon he had his first kill, as his sword came down on an unsuspecting legionary.

And then in the following few while, the king found his blade dyed with a good few kills, proving his skills as an elite warrior.

After all, he had been trained since birth for moments just like this.

"Hahaha, this feels great. Brings back memories." The familiar swing of the blade also worked quickly to bring out memories of his youth in Perseus, of a time when he had fought on the very frontlines under his father.

Those were the happy times and remembering it brought a large smile to his face.

Perseus also began to soon feel much lighter and happier as he waved his weapon from his horse, the movement and exercise distracting him from the dire situation he was currently facing.

And as this euphoria filled him, the man decided to fully embrace it, handing the worry of life and death over to his ancestors above.

In such a state, Perseus was able to achieve great success with his blade, his brave and charismatic approach to the fight letting him effortlessly cleave through many opponents.

However, after a while, he noticed that no matter how many men he killed, the enemy's number in front of him never seemed to dwindle even by a drop.

When one of them fell to his blade, another soldier was already ready and even somewhat eager to replace him, taking up the mantle to continue challenging the king.

Hence to the royal man, their numbers appeared unending.

This was not of course normal, as soldiers tended to very avoid skilled opponents.

However, in this case, the phenomenon was due to his identity- Perseus, the king of Tibias.

And it was evidenced by the fact that even though the noise of the battlefield, Perseus could clearly hear the distinct hoarse cries of many officers in azhak urging their men as such,

"That is the king! Kill him!"

"10,000 ropals to the one who gets his head!"/

"Which of you can get him, the Pasha will reward you personally!"

"Land, women, gold... whatever you could ever want! Kill the king and it will be yours!"

Given Perseus and his bodyguards' very distinct and flashy armor, and the fact that this was their fourth time (Zanzan, Sissillpond, Lilybee, and now) seeing Perseus garbed as such, it was only natural for the other side to recognize him.

Thus Perseus was like a fire in a dark winter night, like a candle to which moths were being drawn, the men were attracted with almost a near suicidal zeal, for they understood what it could mean if they managed to kill him.

It would be enough to change not only their lives but the lives of at least the next three generations.

Hence the number of people who were willing to try their luck at this dangerous endeavour despite the immense risks involved numbered literally in the thousands.

Heck, if Alexander was here and he was still that slave from before, he too would have thrown all concerns to the wind and tried his hand, pitting freedom against death.

Thus Perseus was made to face one challenger after another.

As time passed, the king had lost count of both time and how many waves of enemy he had repelled, but estimated that it had to be approaching at least double digits.

At least the various corpses that lay strewn about around his horse seemed to imply that.

However that did not seem to discourage new men from trying their luck anyway.

For although the feat of a single man could never affect the overall state of the battlefield, killing him could.

Thus currently Perseus was facing his latest challengers, two relatively young boys from atop his horse.

And it was one of those young nameless soldiers who was the one to launch an attack, thrusting up his sword diagonally to try and land a hit on the king.

"Agghhh!" While at the same time, the other brother launched a diversionary attack to draw the king's attention away, loudly shouting as such.

And wouldn't you know it, this did create a momentary lapse in Perseus's concentration as he was forced to parry that attack from the other brother, twisting his body to try and deflect the blow with the shield that was coming from the left side.lights

Which suddenly opened up a small gap in the defense, that the nameless soldier was able to take full advantage of, timing his attack carefully and luckily landing a good sword strike on the king's breastplate, as the high quality steel penetrated the bronze armor like butter, before tasting blood and flesh!

"Argghh!" And as the stinging sensation of the stab coursed through Perseus, he involuntarily let out a pained cry.

And that sounded like music to the young boy, who thought he had gotten a solid hit on the man and hoped to see the man topple over any second now.

He could not believe he had managed to wound the king, a man of almost divine status, someone who had until now faced around ten men and came out unscathed.

He felt it would be a story he could tell for the rest of his life and still never get bored.

However this accomplishment soon proved to be a much greater bane rather than a boon for him.

As in a kind of UNO reverse of how Perseus got previously distracted, this boy too got distracted by his own accomplishments and

Slash!

The elite king, rapidly recovering from the wound, quickly got his bearing and fiercely counterattacked, using his height advantage from atop the horse to deliver a solid downward pummeling strike with his blade right onto the boy's helmet, severely denting it in the process and cracking the skull underneath even through all the protection.

If the boy's head had been naked on the head, the blade might have dug into his skull as far as the nose bridge.

Such was the strength behind the attack!

Puuchi!

And even with the helmet on, the boy's face soon began to flood with blood, as his open skull leaked with faucet and his body reeled and he fell over.

If he was not dead yet, he would very likely die unless he received immediate medical care.

"Brother!" And seeing this, the other brother felt his eyes redden, as he tried to rush to the other's rescue.

However unfortunately for him, there stood a very formidable man on his horse between him and that.

And in much contrast to what the duo had thought, although injured, Perseus did not seem at all fazed

This was because fortunately for him, the wound he got was relatively shallow, since the inexperienced peasant levy did not put enough power into the stab itself, and forgot to properly drive in the steel.

Of course that did not mean it still did not hurt, and Perseus did have to forcefully suppress the stinging pain of the injury.

And perhaps it was pain that made the man quite angry, as he fiercely fell upon the poor, untrained boy, determined to make him pay.

While the poor levy could only scamper behind his shield and try and hold on for dear life, for he was absolutely no match for someone even a fifth of Perseus's skill.

The 'duel', if you call it that, seemed destined to end soon, and in Perseus's favor at that.

Or so it seemed!

For not far away from this clash of 'titans', on a rooftop was a Thesian soldier belonging to Perseus's army watching all this happen.

This clever man had climbed up to this high vantage point to avoid the chaos and congestion of the streets below, and being a silent observer, he burned with pure rage at Perseus for dragging them to his death trap.

He wanted to try and take his revenge.

To accomplish this, he picked up one of the heavy earthen tiles that lined the roof of the house, and quickly took aim, hoping to spot an opportune moment to throw it, preferably when Perseus stopped moving.

And as lady luck would have it, that situation would quickly present itself, as that poor boy was soon unable to withstand Perseus's brutal attack, and tripped and fell, while the king paused momentarily to raise his sword and deliver the killing blow to the defenseless man.

It was this very chance that man had been waiting for so long, and he grasped it with both hands, expertly twisting his body and instantly throwing as accurate a shot as possible.

The huge projectile wheezed through the air like a rocket, making a low droning sound, before

Bang!

It luckily hit the target!

While for the recipient of this- Perseus, the hit came out of literally nowhere.

One moment he was looking down at a lowly peasant who dared to challenge him, wishing to gut him alive.

And the next moment, there was a huge earthen tile headed straight towards his face.

The king perhaps did not even understand what hit him, as the huge tile shattered into a thousand tiles upon contact and the huge momentum tipped him off balance, knocking him off his horse.

Thud

He fell head first into the stone paved streets and then instantly lost consciousness.