

Perish 161

Chapter 161: Warplane

Despite Maximus's hesitation on "whether to stay and defend" before the Roman Army's attack, once he decided to fight the Romans here, his commitment and vigor in battle were extraordinarily high. After listening to two veteran soldiers, he decisively gave the order: "Immediately inform Torrelugo, have the Second Legion advance! Uh...what about the Third Legion?"

Maximus's last sentence was directed at the two veteran soldiers because he realized that it was somewhat inappropriate for the formation of the Third Legion to remain in place after the Second Legion had advanced.

"Let Camillus lead the Third Legion forward, maintaining the same line with the Second Legion, but do not attack yet, to prevent the enemy from flanking," Quintus quickly added. He felt a bit ashamed, having been eager for the Second Legion to seize the opportunity, he had momentarily overlooked the Third Legion, and now this young leader who hadn't experienced a major battle spotted the issue.

"Then it's settled!" Maximus nodded heavily.

.....

"Legion Commander Torrelugo, the leader orders you to immediately lead the Second Legion to advance!"

Upon hearing the order delivered by Akegu, Torrelugo was overjoyed. Although he had become the legion commander of the rebel army, the blood of the gladiator still burned within him. He had been standing stupidly here, confronting the Roman Army for hours, and could hardly restrain himself.

"Quick! Quickly inform the Great Captains, tell the brothers to advance!" Torrelugo urged the messengers beside him.

The messengers galloped to each company. The attack order was not communicated using the military horn because the entire formation of the rebel army was curled up in a confined area, with each unit having its own task. If the attack horn sounded across the battlefield, it could lead to a

misunderstanding among the First Legion Soldiers who were defending the riverbank, causing them to abandon their advantageous position and launch an attack, which would be problematic.

The leader gave the order to the legion commander, the legion commander conveyed it to the Great Captain, and the Great Captain passed it to the Centurion. The process was a bit cumbersome, but the rigorous training of the Maximus Army over the past half year had its effect, and the entire relaying process went smoothly without a hitch.

"Bro...brothers, hear my command—advance!..." Centurion Tini Bazus shouted three times, shaking his short sword in the air a few times, then forcefully swung it forward while stepping forward.

The soldiers in the same row on the right followed closely, and the soldiers in the rows behind also followed suit, forming a 25x4 block of a hundred soldiers beginning to move forward. The entire western line of the rebel army was pressing towards the Roman Army as a long wall composed of countless such hundred-soldier blocks in staggered formations.

"Don't panic! Stick close to your comrades! Maintain the formation!..." Tini Bazus loudly reminded his subordinates as he advanced. The rumbling footsteps, clashing sword and shield, armor friction, and rapid breathing soon enveloped his ears, causing him to subconsciously raise his voice again and again, to the point where it quickly became hoarse.

As the distance closed, the dense silhouettes ahead came into view, and his heart started pounding rapidly... He had not been completely inexperienced with such a large-scale battle, having experienced it once in Little Asia. Despite having some experience, he still felt nervous because back then he was merely a humble long spear soldier, with no concern over his life or death. But now, he was responsible for an entire unit, with the lives of a hundred soldiers resting on his shoulders—a heavy responsibility.

"Damn it, if I had known, I wouldn't have become this Centurion!" Tini Bazus cursed under his breath, yet his right hand gripped the short sword tightly, and his steps became bigger and faster.

They were less than 50 meters from the enemy, yet the Roman soldiers in front were hastily forming ranks. He could see the tension on their faces and even hear the shouting and shoving from the opposite side.

This was indeed a great opportunity to attack!... Tini Bazus exhaled lightly, raised his short sword again, and shouted, "Brothers, charge with me!" After saying this, he dug in his heels and sprinted forward.

The Centurion is the crown of courage for the entire team and must be at the forefront in the charge.

Tini Bazus had only taken two steps when a strong figure on his right side overtook him. It was his friend from within the rebel army, the Decurion Samoras, who insisted on staying by his side to assist him during each of his promotions. This honest cowherd boy was not a man of many words but always silently fulfilled his promise to "protect Tini Bazus in battle," and this time was no exception.

Seeing the broad back of his friend, Tini Bazus felt his blood boil and shouted again, "Kill the Romans!"

"Kill the Romans!!!!..." At this moment, the soldiers of the Second Legion of the Maximus Army, under the leadership of their team officers, erupted with a thunderous roar, like a roaring tide crashing fiercely towards the Roman Army still struggling to organize their ranks.

.....

"Fool! Idiot! Son of a bitch!..." Governor Crodianus kept cursing his legion commander Curius (who was temporarily given command to lead the army crossing the river and attack the rebels to the west).

The attack on the stone bridge was thwarted and retreated, and the northern assault was weak and unable to land...this could still be somewhat understood, as the enemy occupied advantageous terrain. Hence, Crodianus pinned his hopes for victory on the west, but unexpectedly, Curius messed it up. Now, the western army was being overwhelmed by the enemy due to disorganization and unable to leverage their actual combat power and numerical advantage, which made it hard for him to accept.

After venting his anger, a staff member, who usually had a good relationship with Curius, cautiously said, "Who could have expected this group of rebels to be so fierce."

Chapter 162: Battle Opportunity_2

"Hmph, just a bunch of desperate scoundrels." Crodianus shot a glare at the staff member. Although the enemy's performance was indeed beyond his expectations, he would never believe that this ragged rebel army could be stronger than his troops.

Then Crodianus noticed the sun, already sinking behind the western mountain peak, and his irritation grew. He turned his anger toward his most capable subordinate: "Antonius, what is he doing! He has led the army to the battlefield, yet he doesn't attack immediately, instead becoming a hindrance to our allied forces!

Bubius, go to him right now and deliver my order. Command him to assault the enemy's left flank at once to ease Curius's pressure. Otherwise, I will personally take over command!"

"Yes, Governor."

...

Upon hearing Crodianus's order, Antonius felt wronged. "Bubius, it's not that I don't want to attack, but the soldiers are too exhausted! Last night, they landed at Castellum City by ship and haven't had proper rest. Early this morning, after hurriedly eating breakfast, they marched over ten miles and then crossed the river to fight courageously, defeating the rebels to the west...

Due to the Governor's orders, they had no pause to rest and rushed straight here. Some soldiers are so drained they can't even lift their swords and shields, collapsing directly onto the ground. The Roman Legion Soldiers are still performing relatively well, but the Citizen Soldiers from various towns have been falling behind during the march and haven't yet arrived. If there isn't a period to rest and recover their stamina, deploying them back into battle will be very difficult!

If it weren't for Curius's impatience to attack, engaging without consulting me and bringing his troops here, how would this confusion between his advancing army and mine, which was still in recovery, even occur!"

Antonius's final sentence appeared to blame Curius's recklessness, but covertly, it was a veiled criticism of Governor Crodianus's impatience. Antonius knew clearly that while Legion Commander Curius may have mediocre military ability, if it weren't for Crodianus's eagerness for victory, even if Curius rigidly followed traditional Roman tactics, he wouldn't have made such a major blunder.

Bubius pretended not to notice the undertone in Antonius's words and spoke gently: "You and the soldiers' exhaustion, the Governor knows well. Your achievements are also remembered by him! However, now the battle has reached this stage, and time is running out!

If we cannot follow the original plan and defeat this rebel army before nightfall and seize their camp, retreating will leave us nowhere to rest! Moreover, if this drags on, and the rebel main forces arrive to reinforce, that would be the worst-case scenario! To overcome the dilemma of our forces and preserve our previous victories, we must ask you to encourage the soldiers to fight one more time!"

Bubius's words were earnest, and Antonius listened. He scanned the surroundings at the soldiers slumped on the ground, remained silent for a moment, and sighed deeply: "I'll do my best. I hope the soldiers will still obey my orders. I have a few suggestions I'd like you to relay to the Governor."

"Please, go ahead."

Antonius bent down, picked up a dry tree branch, and began sketching on the ground as he spoke: "I've had people survey the battlefield earlier. The rebels have defensive positions on the southern bank of the Womans River, and to the west, they initially adopted a defensive formation. But due to Curius's mistake, they initiated an attack. I must say, this rebel force has a decent grasp of timing in exploiting opportunities."

Bubius slightly furrowed his brows.

"However, because of this, their original defensive formation has been disrupted, creating a significant gap in the line between the rebels on the southern bank and those to the west—" Antonius jabbed the ground forcefully with his stick on the lines he had drawn, "If the Governor can divert some troops to attack here, it should have a positive impact on the overall situation."

"I noticed this myself on my way over, but the troops under Curius are now being pressured by the rebels. Over ten thousand soldiers are packed together and have lost effective organization. Extracting soldiers from the rear will likely be very difficult. Besides, the reason they've managed to hold off the rebels might be because of the thickness of their formation. If the array is thinned out by reallocating soldiers, I fear it might lead to the collapse of Curius's army!" Although Bubius didn't command soldiers, he had some military insight and voiced his concerns.

"It doesn't matter if we can't draw troops from the west – we can take them from the north."

"The north?"

"Look, our northern forces haven't been able to advance onto the riverbanks due to the terrain, and their casualties seem to be higher than here. Yet the rebels stubbornly hold their positions at the riverbanks without counterattacking. Hence, the northern troops can withdraw temporarily, reorganize their formations...

Over ten thousand soldiers aligning in thickness of eight columns for a river crossing assault haven't been effective at all. It would be better to pull out half of them to attack the location I just mentioned. Ideally, we should deploy the Roman Army in that area for better results."

"That... could be worth considering."

"I also hope the Governor will order the City Guard of Mateninum to launch an assault from the city against the rebels' rear."

"There aren't many soldiers stationed in Mateninum City. They pose little threat to the rebels, and if they launch an attack recklessly, what happens if the rebels seize the chance to invade the city?"

"I believe this rebel force lacks more troops beyond those deployed in formation and battle here. Otherwise, why wouldn't they send reinforcements to cover the significant gap in their lines?" Antonius stated confidently. "If the Mateninum people leave the city to attack, it will disrupt the rebels' rear and lower their morale."

Even if the rebels have some extra troops, they'll be constrained and unable to commit them entirely against us. If they do invade Mateninum City, they'll waste personnel suppressing unrest in the city, which would actually benefit our operations. And as long as we secure victory in the end, no one will make an issue of it..."

Antonius's last sentence was spoken ambiguously, but Bubius understood clearly: Since the rebellion began last year, multiple towns in Italy have been seized and plundered. The Romans had grown accustomed to it, and the fate of a small city like Mateninum was hardly worth mentioning.

However, Bubius still showed hesitation. "The Governor might agree to your proposal, but we didn't plan for this in advance. The land route to Mateninum is cut off by the rebels. As for contacting them by sea, there's no nearby port. A messenger would have to return to Castellum, then take a ship to reach Mateninum, which would take far too long. By then, the battle will surely be over."

"There's a solution." Antonius smiled confidently. "With my years of experience, whenever an army goes out to battle, plenty of merchants follow, hoping to profit after the army's victory. This time our operation was highly confidential, so there were fewer merchants ahead. But since our battle is close to the coast and near busy shipping routes, there must be merchant ships lingering near the river's mouth, observing the battle, waiting for our victory so they can purchase war spoils. We can entrust them to take the Governor's orders to Mateninum City."

"That... might indeed be worth trying."

"And my final suggestion." Antonius's expression turned serious, and he spoke in a solemn tone: "As you just said, the battle situation isn't favorable for us. The Governor must make a decisive move! Deploy the Military Law Team to supervise the troops on the northern and western fronts. Even if casualties increase, pressure the rebels enough so they don't dare to divert their already limited forces to support other areas..."

Chapter 163: The Riot in the Supply Camp

"I will relay all of your suggestions to the Governor, I am sure he will adopt your opinions. However, you must also—"

"Don't worry, I will secure victory in this battle for the Governor!" Antonius threw away the stick in his hand, looked at the battlefield ahead, and said confidently.

.....

Oluus stood on the hillside, with the formation of the soldiers of the Third Legion arranged behind him.

After Maximus's orders were issued, Camillus led the Third Legion to advance alongside the Second Legion. However, when the Second Legion engaged with the enemy, the Third Legion remained in place, maintaining its formation unchanged.

Over half an hour had passed, and the front line of the Second Legion, originally at the same level as the Third, had moved forward a considerable distance. The sight of the Second Legion soldiers pressing hard against the enemy gave a sense of reassurance to the previously anxious Third Legion soldiers, while their battle cries stirred the bystanding Third Legion soldiers into a state of fervor, their calls for action incessant, causing quite a headache for Camillus.

Fortunately, most of the officers in the Third Legion were Roman veterans (after the Maximus Army stationed in Sarabia, Oluus had sent people to Apulia and Calabria to recruit some former comrades who were leading hard lives and harbored resentment towards Rome into the ranks), and they worked hard to stabilize their troops' emotions.

Camillus also had Oluus stand at the front of the line and issued an order: Anyone who dares to cross the position where Oluus stands will be punished according to Military Law!

As a seasoned veteran of many campaigns, if he spotted a chance for victory, Onis would have unhesitatingly suggested that Camillus command the army to attack the flank of the enemy engaged with the Second Legion. The reason the Third Legion remained inactive until now was not entirely due to Maximus's orders but primarily because of another enemy army not far behind the Roman Army that was fighting.

At this moment, the Roman Army that Oluus was observing from a distance, previously seen only as a silhouette, was starting to become clearer...

Finally, they're coming... What arose from the depths of Oluus's heart was not tension but excitement, and he turned around to see that most of his soldiers were staring ahead with intense eyes.

He nodded secretly: The soldiers' morale was good, and they held a certain geographical advantage (the Third Legion's formation was slanted forward, extending to a height on the hill that was difficult to traverse on foot, giving them a commanding advantage over the enemy's attack). Of course, there were also disadvantages: To occupy as much of the favorable terrain as possible and to prevent the enemy from easily outflanking them, the Third Legion had stretched its formation, resulting in a thinner formation, and the weapons and equipment of the soldiers in the rear were not as superior as the opposing side's...

But Oluus knew that the approaching Roman Army was the same one that had previously defeated Attutmus's army upstream. After long marches and continuous battles, how much energy would they have left?... Therefore, this battle, the Third Legion had a chance for victory!

This Roman Army had clearly learned the lesson from the punishment army; it had arranged its formation from afar, first advancing towards the hill, then beginning to turn left as a whole, facing the Third Legion of the rebel army to the east... The entire process was exceedingly slow and disordered, repeatedly stopping to reorganize the formation.

At last, this Roman Army began pressing towards the Third Legion.

Under Oluus's keen observation: The phalanxes of the Roman divisions were out of step and disorganized, the Roman Soldiers appeared dispirited and slack, with people occasionally tripping over the mountain rocks... The cursing of the team officers within the military formation was incessant.

Oluus felt a surge of confidence, even more assured of victory, as he turned back to the rear of the formation.

Simultaneously, the shouts of "prepare for battle" from the team officers echoed throughout the entire array, and then the Third Legion soldiers sitting on the ground quickly stood up, raised their shields, gripped their short swords tightly, and, both nervous and excited, widened their eyes to watch the enemy approaching step by step.

There were no javelins to be hurled (the javelins of this Roman Army had already been thrown in the battles upstream), no charges (since the hills overgrown with wild grass and bushes were not conducive to charging), and the Roman Army slowly approached, then the sky filled with the sounds of battle cries, and soldiers from both sides raised long shields and thrust short swords, with the splattering of blood constantly appearing in the entwined formations...

.....

"Leader Maximus, the Roman Army that had just retreated across the river has started attacking again, with a Military Law Team following behind them. It seems they're planning to go all out! Moreover, they've split a unit that's preparing to march west along the river, likely just as we predicted—they

intend to attack the left wing of the First Legion!" Flanitnus, who had gone to observe the enemy's movements on the northern line, shouted loudly before he could reach Maximus's side.

With prior preparations, Maximus remained relatively calm, turning to say, "Pequot, it's your turn to take the field!"

"Leader Maximus, wait a moment!" Quintus advised, "If you send the entire Guard out, you'll have no troops left. If any sudden incidents occur afterward, we won't be able to handle it!"

Maximus hesitated slightly, then heard Pequot quietly say from behind, "Maximus, rest assured, I only need 500 men, and those Romans won't set foot on the riverbank!"

"500 men might be too few, take 600 with you." Maximus gave Pequot's shoulder a firm pat, "600 men to hold a gap over 200 meters wide... I'm counting on you!"

"Don't worry!" Pequot nodded firmly towards Maximus, then looked at his comrades and shouted loudly, "Brothers, it's our time to shine!"

Chapter 164: The Riot in the Supply Camp_2

"Roar!!!" The guards raised their arms and roared.

Most of the soldiers in the Guard had been brought over by Pequot from the defeated remnants of Enomai's forces. Maximus had appointed them as his guards, partly to win hearts and minds, and partly for ease of governance. After all, they had been accustomed to the lax discipline of Enomai's army and would certainly struggle to adapt to the strict regulations of Maximus's forces at the beginning.

And indeed, that was the case. Over the past month, they had caused some disturbances, leading many soldiers from the three legions to regard them with strange looks, secretly calling them "barbaric outsiders," which left them holding a deep grudge and eager to prove themselves.

Watching the 600 soldiers of the Guard, armed relatively well, charge aggressively toward the northwest, Flanitnus muttered in a low voice, "After a month in the cage, the hunting dogs are finally unleashed! Hopefully, they will prove useful..."

Maximus felt a bit nervous; there were simply too few members in the Guard.

"If they only block the breach and hold the riverbank, there shouldn't be a problem. The concern is if they get too eager for merit and adopt an active offensive strategy, chasing the enemy into the rivers..." Quintus's warning prompted Maximus to make an immediate decision, "Akegu! Keep an eye on Pequot for me and constantly remind him to hold the riverbank and not stray far away!"

"Understood!"

Watching the attendant sprint away, Maximus instinctively murmured to himself, "I wonder where Spartacus and his reinforcements are now?"

Quintus and Flanitnus exchanged a glance but said nothing. They could see Maximus's tension and unease: in truth, a young man not yet 20 years old commanding such a large-scale, life-and-death battle, amidst a thunderous battlefield filled with bloodshed and chaos, receiving all sorts of good and bad news one after another, and still managing to maintain such composure—his performance was already quite remarkable.

"Report, leader, bad news! Mateninum City has mobilized troops!" A scout raced in from the east.

Maximus's heart sank sharply.

Flanitnus was the first to ask, "How many? Infantry or cavalry?"

"Approximately six to seven hundred, all of them infantry."

Quintus immediately suggested, "Leader, this should be the City Guard of Mateninum, with weak combat capabilities. Let the remaining members of the Guard and Hagux's cavalry take care of them, aiming for a quick resolution!"

Maximus took a deep breath, steadied his emotions, and then nodded to Quintus, beginning to issue orders.

.....

Sistos cautiously lifted the tent flap and peeked outside.

"Hey! Who allowed you to come out? Get back into the tent, or you'll be sorry!" A middle-aged man wielding a spear spotted him from afar and shouted harshly.

Sistos quickly ducked back inside.

Immediately, several other blacksmiths in the tent surrounded him, whispering anxiously, "What's going on outside now?"

"Has the Roman Army won?"

"Are those rebels about to flee?"

...

"Everyone stop talking, do you want to attract those rebels here?" Sistos glared, and the tent fell silent instantly.

"I took a look outside. The people guarding us in the camp are still there and haven't relaxed." As soon as Sistos said this, the surrounding people became visibly dejected.

"However—" Sistos raised his voice a notch: "I noticed that outside the camp, there are barely any soldiers left by the rebel leader."

An elderly blacksmith who had served in the military during his younger days spoke thoughtfully, "We peeked before—the rebel leader had over 1,000 soldiers around him. Now it seems they've moved to the east... Remember the sounds of fighting we just heard from the east? Mateninum City is in that direction."

"The Mateninum people have dispatched troops!"

"Not necessarily; it could be the Roman Army landing at Mateninum Port."

"Either way, these rebels are completely surrounded and will soon be crushed by the Roman Army. We'll regain our freedom soon!"

"You're thinking too simplistically," Sistos said with a bitter smile. "Once the Romans crush the rebels, I'm afraid we won't gain freedom—we might even be killed or enslaved instead."

"How is that possible?!"

"Based on my experience serving in the Roman Army, it's very possible!" The elderly blacksmith replied gravely, "Once the rebels collapse, the situation will turn chaotic. Without ample time to prove that we aren't rebels, and without the Romans having the patience to distinguish, it'd be simplest if they just kill everyone."

"Then... what should we do?" The other blacksmiths began to panic.

"We can't just sit here waiting for the rebels to lose. We must break out now! Charge out of the camp and head toward Mateninum City. As long as we reach there, we should be safe!" Sistos clenched his fists and said firmly.

"That's too dangerous! Even without the 1,000 guards, there are still hundreds of soldiers watching over the camp!"

"Those people are hardly soldiers! They're just older laborers temporarily pulled from their so-called 'supply camp.' Without armor, shields, or short swords, just holding simple spears and sticks—there's nothing to fear!"

Sistos flexed his burly and powerful muscles, characteristic of a blacksmith's strength, and said in a rallying voice, "What's more, there are thousands of people in this camp. Most of us are Sarabians,

many of whom don't want to join the rebels and were forced to. At this moment, they probably share the same thoughts as us, but they're just waiting for someone to take the lead. If we stir them up, we could cause chaos in the camp and escape easily!"

The blacksmiths hesitated and wavered.

Finally, someone gritted his teeth and said, "Staying here could mean death; trying to escape could also mean death. If we might die anyway, why not fight against the rebels!"

His words prompted the others to agree one by one.

After they reached an agreement, Sistos walked to a corner of the tent, where someone was lying down.

Sistos kicked him rudely and said, "Kadesos, get up!"

Kadesos slowly opened his eyes with a puzzled look and asked, "Sistos, what's going on?"

Sistos stared at him coldly, "Don't pretend to be asleep—I know you heard everything we said. I'll ask you just once: Will you join us?"

"I..." Kadesos was reluctant to oppose the rebel army. In his heart, he understood one thing clearly: He was entirely different from these blacksmiths. They were either Sarabians or freedmen and had lived decent lives earning high wages from their craft in workshops. Now that they were forced to join the rebel army, they naturally held resentment.

But he, on the other hand, despite being favored by his former master, had never escaped his status as a lowly slave. Being ordered, scolded, or beaten was a regular part of life, something he'd grown accustomed to. It wasn't until the rebel army captured Sarabia that he was made the workshop overseer, discussing matters with him and even seeking his opinion—he felt freedom and respect for the first time. Daily conversations with the rebels had gradually made him realize that he and the rebel soldiers were truly on the same side. Why did he have to be assigned to share a tent with these bastards?

Facing Sistos's menacing glare, although Kadesos was intimidated, he mustered the courage to advise, "Free Italy will not lose. Their main forces are almost here—you shouldn't make any foolish moves."

Chapter 165: Defeat

"Bang!" A strong force suddenly struck the head, and Kadesos' head buzzed, leaving him unconscious.

Then, the tent was lifted, and Sistos led the blacksmiths as they rushed out, each racing towards the nearby tents, shouting as they ran, "We've lost!! The Romans are coming to kill us!! Run away!!..."

.....

"What did you say?! There's chaos in the camp?!" Maximus charged towards the messenger cavalry, urgently asking.

"Yes... it's those blacksmiths. They disobeyed orders, burst out of the tent, spread rumors, causing some panic, then they tried to escape the camp amid the chaos, Capito is currently leading troops to intercept them—"

"Is the whole camp in disarray?" Quintus immediately asked.

"No, the transport and kitchen personnel aren't panicking, mainly the area where those Sarabians live near the warehouse is somewhat chaotic..." the cavalry responded.

Quintus regained his composure and comforted, "Leader, don't worry. With Capito there, the camp's disturbance will soon be quelled."

At this point, Maximus no longer appeared anxious as before. He nodded and said, "Capito has always been in charge of logistics during the march, I also believe he has the experience to restore normality in the camp quickly and minimize losses. Also, I have to thank you, Flanitnus."

"Thank me?" Flanitnus was taken aback.

"I think if it weren't for you consistently training the logistics personnel, how could they maintain order when unexpected incidents arise in the camp!" Maximus said seriously.

"That was your suggestion, leader. Initially, I had some objections to it." Flanitillus responded candidly, then added, "However, leader, if you hadn't forced those Sarabians who were unwilling to join the team to leave, today's chaos in the camp might not have happened."

Maximus casually replied, "It's a bit of a hassle now, but maybe it will bring benefits in the future, just like having you train the Supply Team earlier."

After speaking, he turned his gaze towards the battlefield ahead.

.....

The hill was full of routed soldiers.

Attutmus didn't know how long he had been running in the mountains, he only knew that at the very moment the troops truly collapsed, his mind went blank, and he involuntarily fled along with the soldiers around him...

He was starting to regain his senses now, first halting his already numb feet, then turning to look back at the foot of the hill.

"Leader, don't... don't stop, otherwise... otherwise, the enemy will catch up!" A guardsman behind him breathlessly reminded.

"Where are... the enemies behind us! Damn it, all of you just... just stop!" Attutmus gasped and cursed.

The warriors hesitantly looked back: the Roman soldiers who were previously shouting and fighting from behind had at some point ceased their pursuit and were reforming their lines to retreat, now somewhat distant from them.

The Romans finally left! ... The guard soldiers, relieved, stopped fleeing, with some collapsing to the ground, and some even shedding tears of relief...

Yet, Attutmus, ignoring his exhaustion, began to gather the scattered routed soldiers...

It took some time to assemble over 3000 men.

Recalling that there used to be a massive army numbering over 20,000, now reduced to a mere fraction, each looking dejected and defeated, Attutmus felt like crying.

"Leader, what do we do now?" One subordinate anxiously asked.

What to do? ... Attutmus himself was a bit lost, he knew clearly that his troops' premature defeat inevitably increased the defensive pressure on Maximus' army, out of responsibility, he should lead the troops to support them. But given the warriors' current state, they might lack the courage to face the Romans again...

"Let's go down the mountain first..." Attutmus said dispiritedly.

Before long, Attutmus' troops found their way back on the mountain road, and during this process, more routed soldiers rejoined the ranks.

The mountain path they were on was not the usual rugged and steep mountain path one might expect, as the Romans' pursuit for road facilities was unlike any typical City State could compare with, apart from the road being narrow and lacking drainage ditches, sidewalks, and street trees, the road surface was as level and solid as a main road, only undulating with the terrain... The Roman Senate had improved the traffic of Italy's eastern mountainous areas through such roads, strengthening its governance over its inland. Of course, such a mountain road also allowed Attutmus' army to keep up with the Maximus Army who marched on the flat coastal roads earlier.

"Leader, there's cavalry!" A soldier suddenly shouted, scaring the others into immediate panic.

"Don't... don't panic!" Attutmus was a bit flustered himself, but he forced himself to look calm, staring at the cavalry emerging from the southern mountain path bend,

some were armored, some dressed in plain clothes, their weapons varied.

"These should be our cavalry!" Once Attutmus said this, the warriors began to cheer: "Reinforcements are here! Reinforcements are here!!..."

The cavalry unit also noticed them, slowing their advance, and then one of the leading cavalry shouted, "I'm Okmar, whose leader's troops are you?!"

Attutmus stepped forward and shouted, "Okmar, it's me, Attutmus!"

The cavalry immediately quickened their pace, Okmar arrived in front of Attutmus, took one look at the state of the warriors behind him, and understood, saying, "Spartacus will soon arrive with the troops, where are the Romans?"