

## Londoner 191

### Chapter 191 Vigilance

He didn't know how long they kept waiting, but it couldn't have been more than five minutes. Before long, there was another sound of a howl, but this time it felt like it was coming from farther away. Hudan seemed to be listening carefully as well, then he nodded to himself, and ordered loudly to everyone, "We have to ride fast now. Let's go!"

Kivamus wanted to ask a lot of questions, but this time he listened to the guard captain's orders, and they all started galloping towards the west. Thankfully it wasn't completely dark, or there would be no chance for them riding this fast. But not being habitual of riding like this, it didn't take long before Kivamus' whole body started to ache from trying to hold on to the horse, especially on such an uneven terrain.

Soon, he saw the guards in front of him turning sharply left, and only then he realised that they had reached the northern road to Tiranat. He followed them as well in turning to the left, along with Hudan and the two trailing guards, and before long they saw the three guards on watch duty at the gap in the northern walls.

Reaching closer, they started to slow down, and he noticed that after seeing them arrive in such a hurry, the gate guards seemed alert and ready for anything with their swords already out. Once they reached the gates, Hudan looked at the standing guards.

"Be alert! There is a pack of adzee roaming in the east of the village," Hudan told the guards at watch duty, a flicker of fear easily visible over their faces. "I'll send more guards to back you up soon, but be ready for anything until then."

Then the guard captain looked at the other riders. "Three of you ride to the other village gates and alert the guards there, and stay there until I send someone to relieve you." Once they had nodded, he continued, "Tesyb, you will stay here for now to support them."

Once everything was arranged, Hudan looked back at him. "Let's go back to the manor now, it's not safe enough for you outside the manor walls."

Kivamus just nodded, his heart slowing down only now from all the adrenaline rush. They moved at a slower pace now, and it didn't take long until they were passing through the gates of the manor, making him give a sigh in relief. They had survived. For now anyway.

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A short while later, Kivamus was sitting inside the manor hall, trying to reassure his former teacher that he was fine. Duvas had looked worried as well, but he seemed satisfied after verifying that he was unharmed.

"I'll still say," Gorsazo said with a shrug, "despite the nobles in the Ulriga Palace likely being as dangerous as venomous vipers, at least we didn't have to worry about adzees or Goddess-damned bakkores in that place, or even about wild beasts like those vesorions south of the Nisador Mountain Range. Even in the village near Ulriga where my family used to live, there was never any real danger of these beasts coming there."

"That's probably because Ulriga is far away from the Southern forests of the kingdom," Duvas explained. "This barony - or maybe even most of the domain of Count Cinran - isn't called the most dangerous region in the kingdom without a reason. Apart from the risks of wild beasts' attacks and bandits' raids in these forests, Cinran is the closest town to the heavily contested iron mines of the Tolasi Hills, and it's also close to the border of Binpaaz as well as Girnalica. Of course, Tiranat is even closer to the borders, not to mention being located in the middle of these forests."

"Yeah..." Kivamus sighed, "Gorsazo told me about this when I was coming to Tiranat." He muttered, "My brothers sent me here for a good reason, didn't they?" Nobody gave any reply to his comment.

Before long, Hudan walked inside the manor hall, while accompanied by Feroy. Taking a seat on an armchair near the fireplace, the guard captain began, "That wasn't an isolated howl that we had heard earlier. The guards at the western gate - or the western gap, as it stands right now - had also heard the howls of an adzee, while a few workers who were working to clear land in the South even claimed that they had seen an adzee in the forests nearby. It was getting dark by then, so they couldn't be sure, but the foreman Pinoto had to order everyone to return back inside the walls."

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"Nobody was hurt, right?" Duvas asked with worry.

Hudan shook his head. "Not today at least, but you know very well that if an adzee had attacked a worker, he wouldn't be just hurt. We might be burying him by now in that case."

Kivamus exhaled loudly. While the adrenaline rush was over for him now, he still seemed to have a sheen of sweat on his forehead. It was a close call for him and the guards as well. Nobody knew what could have happened if that pack of adzees had attacked them between those hills.

Feroy, who had been leaning against the wall nearby, spread his hands wide as he spoke. "Either way, this means there is at least one adzee near the village, and possibly even a whole pack of them, since you all heard the howls near the hills nearly at the same time when the workers heard it in the west."

"That's true," Hudan agreed. He looked at Kivamus, "I kept telling you that we had to leave earlier... but at least it turned out fine for us..." Shaking his head, he added, "You don't know how glad I am that the village walls have been completed by now, otherwise I have no idea how we could possibly defend against the adzees at all. Just having three gaps in the walls to defend is a lot easier than defending the whole perimeter of the village."

Kivamus looked at the majordomo. "If the adzees are this dangerous, how did you ever defend against them before the walls were built?"

"It is very rare for adzees to come so close to the village," Duvas explained. "They have been known to stay away from any human habitations. It has only happened a couple times in the past that anyone has even heard the howls of them near our village. So we didn't actually have to defend against them until now."

"It's wintertime though," Feroy said with a shrug. "With a shortage of animals to hunt, the adzees might be roaming farther away from their usual hunting grounds. It is also likely that their dens might have been disturbed because of the forest clearing around the village."

"That's not possible," Duvas said with a frown. "Their howls are loud, and somebody would have noticed if there was a pack of adzees living so close to the village."

"No, you misunderstood," the ex-mercenary replied. "Any animals which might have been living in the forested area which we have been clearing might have moved further into the forests in search of new places to live, and eventually, they could have reached the area where these adzees might have been living."

"Anyway," Feroy continued, "most likely the adzees will just move on when they realize that there are so many humans here. They hunt at night, so there shouldn't be any risk of an attack on workers in the day. But we still have to be careful, just in case."

Hudan nodded. "I'll arrange our guards to be on constant patrol around the village on horses during the day wherever the villagers are working. For the nights, it is good that everyone will be inside the walls, and as strong as those adzees are, they can't break our walls. So we just have to be vigilant and ready at the gaps."

"They can still jump over walls, you know?" Feroy muttered. "The walls surrounding the manor are only ten feet high, so with a running start, it might have been possible for a strong adzee to jump over them. Thankfully, our new village walls are fifteen feet tall, and I don't think there is any chance of them being able to jump that high."

"That's good to know," Kivamus said with relief, "but we still have to be careful about defending the gaps in the wall."

"Certainly," Hudan replied. "I've already put four men on duty at night on each gap by pulling extra men from watch duty at the manor gates and by calling up our off duty guards. They were grumbling about it, but when they found out the reason for it, every single guard volunteered for extra duty, since nobody wants an adzee to enter inside the walls or it wouldn't end well for anyone. I'll keep this new watch duty arrangement for the next few days, until we are sure the danger has passed and the adzees have moved on."

"Good thinking there," Kivamus commended.

"Even though the guards just keep their swords with them on watch duty, I've also given spears to those of them who have been posted at the wall gaps," Feroy said, "since fighting an adzee from a distance is the only safe way, if there is a safe way at all against those menacing beasts."

He added "Unless someone is fighting in a knight's armour, it is best not to let an adzee come to a sword fighting range, otherwise you can consider yourself already dead. That's why our crossbow - even the single one we have - will be very helpful for this, so I have also given it to the guards at the northern gap. Apart from a bow, that's probably the best weapon to fight an adzee."

"But we don't know which of the gaps in the wall an adzee might attack from," Kivamus muttered. "It might just happen from the southern or the western gaps..."

#### Chapter 192 Prospecting

"That's true," Duvas commented. "Even if we had just three crossbows ready, it would have made us a lot more secure..."

"That's why Yufim and Nurobo - our best archers - will also be on duty," Hudan reported, "one of them at each of the other gaps in the village walls."

"That's better than nothing, I guess..." Kivamus muttered. He looked at Duvas. "Still, tell the fletcher to start working to make as many bolts as he can from tomorrow. Even though we only have a single crossbow right now, having a surplus of bolts is only going to help us in the future when we have more crossbows ready."

"He already has orders to finish up two dozen bolts for the first crossbow," the majordomo replied, "but I'll let him know to focus on making bolts until we have a stockpile of a hundred bolts at least, before he returns back to making arrows for the warbows."

"That should work," Hudan said, "although we could still use a dozen more spears. Usually the dozen we already have is enough for us since only around half of the guards are on duty at any time, but in emergencies like this when we have to put more guards on duty at the same time, it would help us a lot by allowing us to arm everyone properly."

"Duvas, now that Cedoron has forged all the tools we needed, tell him to start working on the spearheads in his spare time," Kivamus ordered. "I am soon going to give him another order for a safety lamp which can be used without much risk inside the coal mines instead of using an open candle there, but by the time I am ready with the design he can finish up the spearheads." He added, "We are paying his wages anyway, so we might as well use the stock pile of iron we had bought. Once he has done that, Taniok's apprentice should be able to provide good shafts for them."

The majordomo nodded. "I'll let him know, but you do realise that we can't keep splurging iron and money on everything at the rate we are doing currently, right?"

"We still have enough coin remaining to pay the taxes after the winter, even if barely, and by that time we should be able to start selling coal again," Kivamus reassured him. "But for that to happen, we need everyone to stay safe until then. So we simply can't start penny-pinching when it concerns our defence."

Duvas just grumbled something under his breath in reply.

Hudan began after a moment, "While it's certainly not going to be easy to fight against even a single adzee, I've told the guards to call me if there is any sighting of them in the nights, since other than Feroy, I am the only one with any experience fighting against an adzee."

"I would hardly say that I have any experience either," Feroy snorted. "Apart from that one time when the mercenary group I was a part of had to take down one of them which was already injured, we just moved our camp if we heard adzees howling from nearby. It's foolish to try to fight with them if there is even a small chance of getting away from those beasts without a battle."

"That's still a lot more experience than the rest of our guards," Kivamus said, "and that experience is going to be invaluable if we really do have to defend against them."

"Let's just hope it doesn't really come to that," Duvas muttered while looking upwards with his hands joined in prayer.

After a while, Kivamus began, "There is something else I wanted to talk about. When I visited the coal mines today, I saw that even the areas so close to the village seem unexplored." Looking at the majordomo, he added, "You have already told me that because of the dangers of the forests and the previous baron's orders that nobody was allowed to claim anything from there, villagers just didn't have any reason to enter the forests. But I was thinking that if nobody has ever checked the nearby regions, then it's very much possible that we could be sitting on a gold mine nearby without even knowing about it!"

Duvas chuckled at that suggestion. "I can guarantee you, my Lord, that there is no gold or silver mine anywhere here. Getting easy money was something that the previous baron was very much interested

in, so he did send some prospectors he had brought in from Cinran to take a good look at the nearby areas in case there were any precious metal veins in his domain."

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Everyone listened carefully as the majordomo continued, "The previous baron started the search right after the village was established here, and he only gave up after the prospectors hadn't found any such ore in this place for more than three years. By that time the cost of keeping them on our payroll was getting too much, so he reluctantly had to accept that there was a reason that nobody in the kingdom cared much about this area."

Gorsazo, who had been quiet so far, spoke up. "But how far did those prospectors search? You have told us that the borders of this barony are not properly defined, nor is the south eastern border of the kingdom." He explained, "While the Nisador mountain range is accepted as our border in the South, it's not so clear in the southeast is it?"

Gorsazo added, "The wastelands south of those mountains aren't desirable anyway for any kingdom, but these dense Southern forests of the Reslinor Kingdom - which start close to Cinran - extend far into the territory of the Giralican Oligarchy, so there is no clearly defined boundary between the two countries in this direction. There has never been any reason for that anyway, since neither of the countries wants to fight just to get control of more trees. But all of that forested region from Tiranat to the edge of the kingdom's border in the Southeast still lies within this barony. So, how far did they go to search?"

Duvas gazed into the distance for a moment. "I can assure you that they had searched till the Nisador range in the South, including the foothills of that range. As for the Southeast, I know that they went quite deep into those forests, and still didn't find anything, but as you can guess, it's... dangerous to go too far in that direction."

"Because of Giralica?" Kivamus asked with confusion. "But you just said that nobody wants control of these forests, and with the borders so ill-defined in that direction, they can't keep armed knights stationed there anyway, just like Reslinor. So how would Giralican rulers even know if the prospectors had gone too far?"

Duvas hesitated before speaking. "I suggest you leave that topic for the future, since it is a lot more complex than you would expect. There will be a time to talk about it, but we have a lot of other important things to consider right now."

Kivamus frowned at that, but gave a nod. "As you say, Duvas. Suddenly, he realised something. "Wait, you said the previous baron searched for precious metal veins. So did he search for iron at all?"

"Not that well," Duvas replied after thinking about it for a moment. "The prospectors had certainly explored everything in the areas close to Tiranat - including iron, but as for the areas further away, the baron had told them to focus only on gold, silver and gemstone deposits as well, in case they got lucky. So I can't be sure about it, but it's possible that the prospectors overlooked iron ore in the distant parts of the barony."

"But why?" Kivamus asked with confusion. "I know that iron prices have fallen in the past few months as an indirect result of the recent food shortages, but even then it still sells for a lot of coin. And in case the food prices are not sky high, iron would be even more costly. You said that the previous baron was interested in making easy money, so why didn't he look for iron as well?"

Duvas chuckled. "I did say easy money, milord, and smelting iron from its ore is not easy at all. But you are right, usually, even selling iron ore would have been profitable enough, but this search by the prospectors was around fifteen years ago, and Reslinor was just settling down after a recent war with Binpaaz over the control of the Tolasi hills. Of course, during the war, iron was in very high demand - even as its ore - but when the war ended, the prices of iron crashed sharply, since there was no real demand for tools of war like armor for knights, swords, spearheads and iron tipped arrowheads - not anymore. All the nobles in Southern Reslinor already had a big stockpile of weapons gathered for the war, and there was no point in buying any more of them unless another war seemed imminent, which it certainly didn't just after the end of the previous war."

The majordomo continued, "The coal mines of Tiranat were discovered around the time of the end of that war, and that's when Tiranat was founded here. So, while gold, silver, and even copper would always stay in high demand because of their usage as currency, selling iron wasn't profitable anymore. That's why the previous baron had told the prospectors not to focus on iron after they had searched the nearby areas and didn't find it."

Kivamus nodded thoughtfully. "That does make sense." He added with excitement, "But it's still good news for us! If we hire prospectors again and send them everywhere within the borders of this barony, they might just be able to find iron ore here!"

Chapter 193 New Ideas

Hudan interrupted, "I don't think there is any harm in checking, but I am pretty sure you aren't going to find a big iron deposit here. The frequent skirmishes and wars over Tolasi hills aren't just to control

more land. It's because those hills contain the largest iron ore deposits that have ever been seen in Cilaria. If there was another big iron deposit in these forests, somebody would have noticed it by now and there probably wouldn't even be a war for those hills."

"Obviously, we can't expect to find another such huge iron ore deposit in these forests," Kivamus suggested, "but isn't it possible that we can find at least a decent size deposit here?"

Feroy shook his head. "It's unlikely, milord. The mercenary groups which I travelled with often moved through these forests, and while none of them were trained prospectors, some of them were still iron ore miners in the past, and they would have recognised if there was a big enough deposit, which extended across a big area." He added with a shrug, "That's not to say there can't still be a smaller deposit, since it's not like we checked every single place."

Kivamus sighed. That poured cold water over his enthusiasm. "Even so, it would be a good idea to hire a few prospectors just in case. Even a small iron deposit would be very helpful for us."

Duvas immediately protested, "But we just don't have the coin to hire those costly prospectors! We probably don't even have enough to pay taxes to the Count after the winter!"

Kivamus held up a hand. "Of course, we will do a search only when we have money to spare for it. I know we can't afford to do it right now. So maybe sometime next summer. But we will still need to hire them at one point, since none of you will be able to recognise ores easily. I believe I still would be able to recognise the ores, but it will take months to search over all the land in this barony, and it's just not feasible for me to spare the time to leave Tiranat for so long." He looked at the majordomo. "You said that there were prospectors in Cinran who could do this?"

Duvas nodded with reluctance. "There certainly should be. I will need to visit Cinran for this, but I think I might be able to entice a few of them to come here."

"I don't think that's a good idea," Gorsazo interrupted. "Any prospectors from Cinran would certainly be connected to Count Cinran, or maybe even to Baron Zoricus, and anything that prospector discovers here will be reported to them." He explained, "When the count finds out, then depending on the size of the discovery, he will either claim it for himself or at the very least demand hefty taxes. I think it would be a better idea to bring a prospector from somewhere else, who will not immediately blab about this to the count."

"I... can't deny that possibility," Duvas muttered with a sigh. "Count Cinran knows that we are already behind on taxes, so he wouldn't skip an opportunity to make up for it by bringing any newly discovered iron mine under his own control. That would easily defeat our purpose of getting any profit from those ores."

"Hmm..." Kivamus contemplated. "With the plans I have for the future, we are going to need and consume a lot more iron than we do currently, so I have no intention of selling the ore for coin in case we do find it here. But either way, you both are right. We can't take the risk of the Count claiming it for himself. That means we need to hire prospectors from Ulriga, or maybe somewhere even further away in case we want to keep such news away from my brothers as well."

"That should work," Duvas agreed. "But how will we even find prospectors in that case? I barely have any contacts outside Cinran. It's been nearly two decades since I moved to Tiranat, after all."

The majordomo looked at Gorsazo, who just shrugged. "Don't look at me. I was only a teacher in Ulriga. I don't know any prospectors there either, not that we are planning to hire them from the duchy's capital."

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Hudan and Feroy shook their heads as well.

"In that case, one of us will have to go on a recruiting mission to the north of the kingdom to search for them," Kivamus pondered, "but we still have some time until we need to finalise it. We will decide on it when we can afford them. For now, let's focus on our immediate concerns like you suggested earlier."

Duvas nodded. "I think that would be for the best."

"Alright then," Kivamus said. "It's already late today, and we all are hungry, so we'll skip any further discussion for tomorrow. Let's see what Madam Helga has cooked for us tonight!"

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The next day in the afternoon Kivamus was finishing up the sketch for a safety lamp for the coal mines, while waiting for lunch to arrive. Gorsazo was sitting close to the fireplace, while scribbling something on a piece of wooden board, probably planning for today's lesson in the first longhouse block. Hudan had gone to meet with the guards, while Duvas had been out for a while as well.

Thinking about last night, every guard on duty at the gaps in the village walls had heard howls of adzees all night. Some of those howls had also been audible inside the manor at one point, likely from those adzees who had wandered to the east of the village. The guard captain had told him earlier that an adzee was even sighted close to the northern gap, but thankfully there had been no attack so far. The howls had also stopped around morning, as expected, but every guard had still been ordered to remain on alert, even if adzees were known to hunt only in the nights.

Coming back to the present, he took a step back and looked at the parchment carefully. He had to think really hard about this design, since everything would have to be forged by Cedoron by hand, so he needed to keep the design simple but still effective. It had taken more than a few tries, but eventually he had settled on a design which only needed an iron gauze to surround the burning wick inside the lamp. This should keep the flames inside the surrounding gauze in case there were flammable gases inside the mine shafts, but it would still provide a decent amount of illumination for the miners while keeping them safe by preventing any explosion from happening. They certainly didn't have anything like petroleum or kerosene to burn inside the lamps here, but the vegetable or even animal sourced oils which they did have should be enough to do the task, even if at lower efficiency.

He nodded to himself. It still wasn't going to be easy to make, but he was confident Cedoron should be able to do it in a few tries. Rolling up the used parchment to show to the blacksmith later, he rolled out a new one so he could start working on the water wheel sketch for dewatering the mines. He glanced at the shelf at the edge of the hall, which was holding a steadily decreasing number of unused parchments. At the rate he was using them, he was quite sure they wouldn't even last all winter - despite paying a pretty penny to Pydaso to buy so many of them. So he needed a better solution to allow him to sketch more freely without worrying about the cost of these expensive parchments.

This world certainly had paper available here, with all the books in the library of Uriga palace being made of them, but with the laborious manual process of manufacturing it, that paper was way too costly for them to buy. It wasn't like he had the Duke's treasury at his disposal to buy more paper, like for those books in that library, not that buying anything was even an option right now during the winter with the northern road blocked with snow. Hmm... He would have to think of some new ideas for this soon.

Before starting the new sketches, he walked near the fireplace where Gorsazo was already sitting and took a seat on one of the armchairs to get some rest and bring some warmth into his body.

Soon, the outer door of the manor hall opened and Duvas walked inside while looking like he was shivering. As the majordomo took a seat, Kivamus poured him a mug of water from the pitcher of hot water which Madam Helga had been so kind to refill and heat up regularly.

With a grateful nod, Duvas drank greedily from the wooden mug, and then took a minute to heat up his hands close to the fire. Before long, the majordomo looked at him again. "I just came from the northern part of the village, and I met Taniok there. He told me that the second long house will be completed by this evening."

"That's great to hear!" Kivamus grinned. "This will allow us to house nearly all of the villagers who need a better place to live."

"Certainly," Duvas agreed, "although many of them are already living there."

"How is that?" Gorsazo asked with confusion while looking up from the wooden board he had been scribbling on.

#### Chapter 194 Designs

"The outer structure of the second block was already finished up a few days ago," Duvas explained. "Since Taniok and his apprentices had started working to fix the new wooden bunks on one side of the block, many villagers - mainly those who had been working to build that same longhouse - asked me to allow them to live there in the nights on the other side. I saw no reason to disagree, since the roof was already completed and it was safe enough to stay inside by then. By now, it is already half full, with the villagers moving in steadily to live inside that block, since even sleeping on the wooden floor inside that block is much warmer than their damaged huts in the village."

"That was a good decision," Kivamus praised. "Once the second block is completed by evening, then including the first one, we can house nearly two hundred and fifty people in total there - even if just counting those who have been allotted a bunk. Including those who are sleeping on the floors, it would be even higher. However that still leaves nearly fifty people in Tiranat would still be living in their huts in the village, with the remaining fifty or so people staying inside the manor."

"That sounds accurate," Duvas remarked. "We won't be able to house everyone in the longhouse blocks until we finish a third one, but even if we skipped the other projects which we need Taniok to finish first, that block won't be completed before the end of winter, so there is no point in starting it now."

That's true," Kivamus nodded. "There is no need to change our plans then. Tell the carpenter to finish up the smokehouse in a day or two, so that he can start working on the village gates after that. Once that is done, he can start the construction of the barn in the South for growing mushrooms, and only then can we think about starting the third longhouse block."

"I'll let him know," Duvas replied.

"Also, call up Cedoron here by the evening," Kivamus ordered. "I have finished the design of the safety lamp but I will need to explain it to him thoroughly before he can start working on it."

"Of course," the majordomo agreed. "That being said, he should finish the spearheads by evening anyway, so he would already be coming to the manor to give them to us. Taniok's apprentice will also start working on making the shafts once the second block is finished by evening."

"Hudan would be happy to hear that those spears will be built so soon," Kivamus commented.

Duvas gave a nod. "There is also another thing, my lord. You need to find some free time - either this evening, or maybe tomorrow morning, so you can inaugurate the second longhouse block as well."

"Is there really a need for it?" Kivamus asked. "I already don't have enough time these days with my daily personal sword training with Hudan, and then drawing up these sketches. And what's the point of inaugurating it anyway if people are already living there?"

"It's still a big event for the villagers," the majordomo replied, "and they would be very glad to see their Lord coming out for this, not to mention it would temporarily distract their minds from the constant threat of the adzees in the night. You really should do it, my lord, and it won't even take too long!" Duvas urged again.

Kivamus sighed. "Alright. I don't have time this evening since I have to talk with the blacksmith, but we can do it sometime tomorrow."

"I'll make the arrangements then," the majordomo replied with a rare grin.

Before long, Madam Helga entered the hall from an inner door with her hands holding up a steaming serving bowl. Clarisa was following up behind her, while bringing up other things as well.

"Food is ready, milord!" the young maid announced enthusiastically. "I helped in cooking too!"

"That's wonderful, Clarisa," Gorsazo said, before he scolded, "but don't forget to finish up your homework!"

"I won't!" Clarisa replied with a grin.

Kivamus smiled at the young maid who had been doing quite well in her studies. "Alright then. Let's eat!"

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It was already the evening of the next day, but it had been snowing heavily outside since the morning, giving Kivamus an excuse to skip today's sword training with Hudan. The guard captain was already too busy and exhausted making sure all the guards at the gaps in the village walls were alert and ready throughout the night, so he hadn't opposed too much when Kivamus had told him that he wouldn't be practising today.

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Throughout the previous night, there were a few more howls of adzees audible in the village, but this time they had sounded like they were coming from a longer distance, which meant the pack of adzees was probably moving on in search of easier hunting grounds. So it seemed like the danger had finally passed, but Hudan had assured him that they would still keep the extra guards at the gaps in the village wall for another day or two, just in case.

Kivamus had also met with the blacksmith yesterday evening, and explained the design of the safety lamp to him in detail. Cedoron had been daunted at first after seeing the complexity of it, but he had shown the blacksmith that it was still just a combination of separate parts which could be made more easily, even if the final result looked more complicated. Eventually, after taking nearly an hour to ask

many more questions from him about the design, Cedoron had rolled up the parchment and accepted it as a challenge to make the safety lamp, and Kivamus was quite confident that the talented blacksmith would come through on his promises.

Earlier today, Kivamus had also visited the second longhouse block to inaugurate it by cutting another rope tied at its gates, and the gathered crowd of villagers had cheered loudly at the rare event despite the persistent danger of an adzee attack. It seemed like majordomo had the right idea after all.

He had also decided to use today's extra free time to finish up the sketch for the waterwheel he wanted to be built here. Thankfully, this was one of the simpler designs he had to work on, so just one day had been enough to finish it, and now Darora could start crafting it from tomorrow once he had explained the design to the young carpenter.

Coming back to the present, the fire was burning brightly in the fireplace, with some extra small sized branches kept on the side to add more wood to the fire when needed. Duvas had just returned inside after finishing the allotment of grain rations to the labourers for this week, while Gorsazo was waiting to start teaching Syryne when she returned from outside. Lucem and Clarisa were also sitting nearby on a bear pelt which acted as one of the carpets in the manor hall, although only Clarisa seemed interested in listening to Gorsazo's lessons to Syryne, even if she didn't have a high hope of understanding much of it. On the other hand, Lucem had been pestering her to play tag outside, but a single scolding from his mother when she had come to deliver lunch was all it took to make him calm down and sit quietly.

Taking a deep breath, Kivamus took a step back from the long table which doubled as his workbench, and looked at the sketch he had just completed. After a lot of thought, he had settled on the design of what was called a reverse overshot waterwheel. It was used to great success in Roman times on Earth to drain water from much deeper mines than what they had in Tiranat. Without access to any better power sources, the wheel would still have to be turned manually by a labourer stepping on the cleats one by one - which were just a series of horizontal planks jutting out to the side of the waterwheel - just like he was walking upwards on a staircase.

This way, the waterwheel would start moving by the labourer's weight pushing one side of the wheel downwards, thus rotating the wheel continuously. Of course, there would be cleats on both sides of the wheel, so that the force of two men's weight could be used at the same time to rotate it.

This rotational movement would make a series of small wooden boxes - which were basically cuboid shaped buckets - which would be attached at the circumference of the wheel to start dipping into the standing water one by one, thus filling them with that water. Once those boxes reached near the top on

their circular journey around the wheel, the slight tilt of those boxes would drain the water inside them to a trough on the side of the wheel.

That trough would still need some extra planks to build, but it would allow the water which would fall steadily from the waterwheel's rotation to easily flow outside the mineshafts through that trough, where it would simply flow down the hills.

Because this waterwheel needed to be strong enough to support two men's weights as well as that of the water it would be lifting to a height of nearly three meters, it would have to be fixed on a sturdy wooden stand. However, he had designed it in such a way the wheel could be assembled and disassembled easily and quickly. That would allow them to shift the whole arrangement of the waterwheel to another mineshaft where water was gathered.

This design, while sounding complicated, would be very simple for a skilled carpenter to make, since it only required him to connect the wooden planks and beams in a specific arrangement to build the whole waterwheel and trough arrangement. He was confident that Darora should be able to build it in around a week with the help of his apprentices, now that there were more than enough iron tools in the village for everyone.

Before finalising this design, he had also thought about making a hand cranked pump of some kind, but that would need to be built of iron for the most part, and that was something he wanted to avoid to save on the costly metal. With the huge amount of water gathered inside most of the mineshafts, it would still take a long time to remove all the water from even a single mineshaft using that manual pump - probably as long as removing the water bucket by bucket - and that was time which they didn't really have.

That's why he had wanted to build something which could remove water at a larger scale. While it was still true that crafting this waterwheel would take another week, once it was built and installed inside a flooded mineshaft, he was confident that this waterwheel could remove all the water inside a single shaft within a day.

Of course, the fact remained that Tiranat's coal mines had more than a dozen mineshafts in operation when they were still working.

#### Chapter 195 Estimates

This way, if he made a reasonable assumption that a single mine shaft could be cleared of all gathered water every day or maybe even every two days, then they could start sending workers to dig coal from there much sooner. The reason for it was that he had designed the whole waterwheel system in a way

to make it easy to disassemble, so that they could easily shift the waterwheel to another mineshaft with the help of a couple of nodors and a wagon when one of them had been emptied of all gathered water, and then repeat the same process in the next shaft.

This had added to the complexity of the water wheel, and would add an extra day or so in building it, but it would be worth it in the long-term - especially since he had estimated that with the eastern stream was a little below the level of the ground in the village, so they would need to lift the water for two or three metres before it could flow on its own to the farms in the South. So once all the mineshafts had been cleared of all standing water, he planned to shift that water wheel to that stream. The only difference would be that instead of using human power, it would use the force of the flowing water to turn the wheel, and that would still lift the water to the full height of the wheel which would be enough to transfer the flowing water from the stream to the canal they planned to dig from there to the farms.

If all went well, he estimated that all the mineshafts should be free of water within fifteen days or so after the water wheel was built. These three weeks - including the one needed to craft the wheel system - should be quite helpful for the labourers to clear a lot more land in the South before they had to return to coal mining - which was quite unlike doing it manually bucket by bucket, where they would need to send a lot of workers to clear that water for those three weeks as well, which would have wasted a lot of productive man-hours. But this way, once everything was installed and tested properly, they needed only a few men in the mineshafts to move the wheel in turns, with gravity taking care of the rest once the water was lifted to the troughs. That would leave the majority of workers to keep working in the South and the other projects.

There was also the fact that they had two extra iron axles to use for the wheel, which Hudan had liberated from the damaged wagon at the limestone quarry. That was what had made him decide on the water wheel design, since having those sturdy axles ready to use would make it much simpler to build the waterwheel, since they didn't have the necessary knowhow to build those axles here. Although he was fairly sure that Cedoron could still do it given enough time and resources - but time and iron were always in short supply, so those axles had turned out to be a blessing for them.

Giving a satisfied sigh, he carefully rolled the parchment with the finished design until the time he met with the carpenter to explain it to him. Right after he was done and had kept the parchment on a nearby shelf, he heard the outer door of the hall opening. Turning around, he saw Syryne walking inside with snow already gathered on her fur coat.

"Milord," the young woman reported excitedly, "I'm just coming back from the servant's hall with good news! I had given the losuvil extract to drink with water to a guard who had gotten injured while training earlier today. I wanted to test it sooner, but I had to wait until someone had gotten injured with a cut

and bruise on his shin, so when Hudan told me about the injury, I saw it as a good chance to test it today."

"Alright," Kivamus nodded. "What's the verdict then?"

Syryne stopped in the process of removing her fur coat, and looked at him in confusion. "The what?"

"Uh..." Kivamus hesitated. "I mean, what's the result of that test?"

Syryne stared at him for another moment, before she shook her head and grinned. "It works! And it works much better than even a freshly made losuvil paste!"

Everyone in the room turned to her, listening carefully as she began to explain. "For reference, a fresh batch of losuvil paste starts working within an hour for a small wound, and the person doesn't usually feel pain anymore after a few hours. This time, when I told the guard to consume the reddish powder along with water, Hudan had to uh... nudge him to do that, since the guard wasn't ready to believe that something edible - like it was just normal food - could help him to heal."

She added, "The best part with taking the powder directly was that he didn't even have to remove the bandage from his leg like he would have to if he had to apply the paste directly on the wound, as it is done usually. I had even taken the hour glass from your room to measure the time accurately."

Duvas immediately reprimanded, "That's the only hourglass we have in the manor, and it's for Lord Kivamus' personal use! What if its glass had broken when you had taken it away? It was very costly for the previous baron to buy it!"

Before Syryne replied anything, Kivamus interrupted. "Don't worry about it, Duvas. I was the one who had told her to take it. We needed a way to measure how long it takes for the powder to start working." He gestured to the young woman to continue.

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Syryne nodded. "Anyway, the guard consumed the powder right after we heard five bells from the temple, and within half an hour he was walking and jumping around without any pain at all!"

"It still wasn't a good idea for him to jump around right after an injury," Duvas remarked, "even if it was a small wound and he was bandaged already."

Syryne laughed. "Of course, Hudan had immediately scolded him and told him to sit down immediately, but the point is that the powder worked, and it worked much better than I ever imagined!"

Kivamus glanced at his former teacher who had gotten quiet, so he walked over to Gorsazo gently put his hand on his back in consolation.

Gorsazo gave a weak smile. "Don't worry, I'm okay. I just wish such a thing was available in the past..."

"So do I," Kivamus agreed. "But we can't change the past, so we have to do our best to make this powder - this medicine - available to everyone who needs it in the future." His former teacher just gave a nod in reply.

Seeing that Gorsazo would be okay, Kivamus looked at the young woman. "Well done, Syryne! You have done everything outstandingly! Now that we have confirmed that it works even in a powder form - as something which can be ingested, it will make it a lot easier for us to package it in an easy way to transport and store it, like as pills or small consumable tablets. Once we are able to make it regularly after the winter, I will talk with the blacksmith to make a simple tablet press machine, by which a person can use it to compress the powder into small pills." He added, "That being said, how much of the powder did the guard have to consume?"

"Not much at all!" Syryne replied. "Barely a small pinch of it was enough to start working within half an hour."

"That's very good," Kivamus smiled. "That means this powder is very potent and even a small amount of leaves will allow us to make a lot of pills."

He pointed at the shelf containing parchments nearby, "Now that we know that the process of preserving the losuvil extract works so well, you need to write it down again in another place, just as a

backup. Once it is done, Duvas will keep this new copy, as well as the original copy you had written earlier, inside two separate strong boxes so that it makes it less likely for the exact process to be lost or stolen. We will keep it there, until you need to start making it again after the winter, after which you will return the parchment to him once again for safekeeping."

Syryne looked confused. "Is it really necessary to go that lengths to keep it that securely?"

Kivamus nodded, remembering that she wasn't present for the discussion where he had explained the risks of the process leaking to someone like Zoricus. "It really is. Trust me on this." Then he looked at the majordomo and smirked, "Be happy, Duvas, you are going to get another source of revenue stream after the winter - just like you always wanted."

Duvas grinned. "I can't wait for the day, milord. Our strongbox has been nearly empty for months now, and I really want to see it full of gold for once!"

Everyone laughed at that golden vision, but suddenly they heard the sound of the same howls they had been hearing for the past few days.

"Those adzees are still here..." Syryne muttered with a tinge of fear in her voice.

"So it seems," Duvas agreed, "but they haven't tried to attack the village, so I think they aren't going to do that anyway. We should be safe enough."

"What about the labourers working outside?" Kivamus asked. "They would still be out of the village walls at this time, won't they?"

"No. Since the first time we had heard the howls," the majordomo explained, "Hudan had decided to bring all the villagers inside the walls at least an hour before sunset, so that there wouldn't be any risk of them being attacked by the beasts. With an hour wasted in the morning, and one in the evening, that slows down our work progress on clearing the forest outside the walls, but that was still deemed to be safer than risking the villagers' lives."

Duvas continued, "Anyway, he had decided to do that only whilst the danger of an adzee attack remained here. So we will return to the regular work schedule of using every available hour of daylight after a few days, once we are sure that the adzees have moved on completely."

Kivamus gave a nod. "That was a good decision. Let's just hope they decide that we aren't an easy target for them."

Syryne gazed towards the north fearfully. "Yeah... I would certainly prefer not to become an evening snack of an adzee..."

Kivamus had thought that the joke would work to change the tense mood inside the hall, but immediately, they heard another howl, with Gorsazo frowning towards the north where the sound had come from, while Clarisa had clutched a nearby chair in fear. Looking around for Lucem, he found that the boy was actually hiding under the long table.

"Don't worry kids," Gorsazo tried to reassure them. "Our guards are strong and ready for them, and nothing will happen to you all."

Clarisa gave an uncertain nod, but at the same time, they heard the loud sound of a horn blowing from the north.

"Is that...?" Kivamus looked sharply at the majordomo.

Duvas, who had stood up in surprise on hearing the horn, nodded with a wavering voice. "It is. An adzee must be attacking the northern gap in the village wall..."

#### Chapter 196 Danger

For a moment, Kivamus thought about running to the northern gap in the walls to take a look, as well as to help the guards. But it didn't take him more than a moment to realise that he would only be a liability there, and would prevent the guards from fighting to their full capabilities. Thankfully, it was only around sunset now, so all the guards would be ready and alert at the time, including Hudan and Feroy, otherwise if this attack was around midnight or even later, it could have been much worse. He just hoped that they would be able to kill or at least scare away the adzees without any loss of life.

Duvas already seemed to be praying to the goddess, while Kivamus still couldn't sit idle, and started to pace inside the hall, waiting for any news.

\*\*\*\*\*

~ Hyola ~

~ A short while ago ~

Hyola was standing just inside the gap in the northern wall, where a gate would be built in the future. Although even with the gates not completed, the village was already a lot more secure than the limestone quarry had ever been, and yet she couldn't wait for the day when the gates were built, and Tiranat became a fortified village, even if it was only by a wooden palisade.

It had been snowing continuously today, even though the snowfall was light at the moment. But the guards who had to go for watch duty on the gates were the ones who were given the limited number of fur coats for their shifts, and that helped a lot to protect her from the freezing cold. A brazier was burning nearby as well, where the guards at the wall gap duty went to heat up their hands in turns. Of course, that brazier was kept nearly a dozen feet to the side of the gap in the walls, so that it wouldn't be easily visible from the outside, which would only attract more animals and wild beasts.

Hearing the sound of someone walking behind her, she turned around and saw Yufim walking towards her and the other guards on duty.

"What are you doing here?" she asked the young archer who had his long flaxen hair tied into a knot at this time. "Aren't you supposed to be off duty right now?"

Yufim grinned. "I've also been posted to a wall gap for tonight, and it's only an hour until my shift starts."

"You could have been resting until then," Hyola muttered. "Goddess knows we barely get any rest these days."

"Sure, I probably should have," Yufim shrugged, before he raised his eyebrows, "but I thought maybe you'd like to have another round of archery competition with me to see who is the better archer!" He grinned again. "Of course, I already know I am the better one by a huge margin, but still, it wouldn't hurt to prove it to you again."

Hyola laughed. "What do you mean by again? I already defeated you last time!"

Yufim huffed. "That doesn't count! A dog had barked outside the manor walls right when I was going to shoot an arrow. So it's not my fault that I only hit the head of the straw mannequin instead of its eye!"

Hyola snorted. "You are just being a sore loser. Just accept that I am better than you!"

Before Yufim could retort again, she heard the voice of Feroys scolding them from nearby, "Be quiet, you two!"

Being completely surprised about when he had arrived to the northern gap, Hyola quickly turned her head to the South and saw that the ex-mercenary with a short beard was standing only a few feet away while glaring at them. She wondered if it had already been an hour since his last round to the village walls.

"When did you come here?" Yufim asked in surprise while looking at the new arrival. The other three guards at the gate, none of whom were new recruits, only glanced at them for a moment, before they turned to the north again to watch out for any dangers.

"I've been here for a while, kiddo," Feroys snorted. "I was just seeing how long it would take for you two to shut up before I needed to do it myself."

"It's not my fault..." Yufim sulked. "She's the one who keeps saying that she is a better shot than me!"

Hyola just shook her head at the childish antics of the archer, who was probably a year or two older than her, while Feroys just pointed towards the north. "You both can decide who is the better shot after your shift is over. Now stop your chit chat, and do your duty and keep watching out for any movement in the north." He smirked at the young archer, "Since you've been so generous to arrive for your duty an hour before you were due, consider this extra hour also a part of your duty tonight."

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"That's not fair..." Yufim whined.

Feroy just pointed towards the north again without saying anything else.

Yufim nodded reluctantly, and leaned against the log wall with one shoulder, with his other hand holding his warbow.

Hyola turned towards the north as well, while thinking about these still incomplete walls. Another guard of the manor had told her in the past that when he had visited Cinran a few months ago, he had seen that the much bigger town had huge stone walls all around the town to protect it from any raids from the neighbouring country of Binpaaz. Of course, Tiranat's wooden walls couldn't even be compared to those sturdy stone walls, but once the gates were built, they should be more than enough to protect the village from any wild beast attacks, and even from a bandit raid - which she had found out had become very common in the last year.

As she saw the sun begin to dip under the horizon in the west through the leafless Fedarus trees found everywhere, she thought about her previous month here. When she and the other stonecutters had arrived at this unknown village, she had no idea how her life was going to turn out in this place. She didn't even know if they would really be treated as free people instead of as slaves, and yet, everything that the guard captain had claimed at the quarry had turned out to be true.

By now, everyone had settled very well in their new home at the western section of the first longhouse block, and surprisingly there was more than enough work for everyone. Most of the former stonecutters now worked as labourers to cut trees in the north, or to clear fields in the South, but some of them had even been recruited as specialised craftsmen, including one of them as a fletcher. Her good friend Darora had even become a full-fledged carpenter of Tiranat, and he already had his own workshop near the market square along with a couple of apprentices, even if the land and the building was owned by the baron.

Of course, she was also a manor guard now, who got better wages than the labourers, even if it was only in the form of food and lodging for now. She couldn't wait for the day she would get her first real wage as silver and gold in her hands. That would be the first time she would have ever earned even a single

copper in her life - since she had been sold as a slave when she was still a child, and she certainly wasn't paid any coin as a slave.

Wondering where she would spend that coin, since she had already seen that most of the shops in the market square were still closed these days, but the alehouse was always open, even with as few customers as it got these days. If nothing else, she could treat Calubo to a meal and a drink there once she got her wages in the future.

Thinking about him made her smile again. He was on duty at the western gap in the walls in this shift, but she couldn't wait until her shift ended and she could meet with him again. Their daily meal time together in the servants' hall - which is where she lived too, on the upper floor - had already become her favourite part of the day by now. She just wished time would pass faster and her watch duty would end soon.

Since the time they had found out that there was a pack of adzee nearby, Hudan had extended their working hours from eight hours earlier to twelve hours now, until the danger of an adzee attack had passed so that they could man all the gates with enough guards at all times, especially since she was the only woman to be actively posted at the village walls until more crossbows were built. That had easily led to none of them getting enough rest in the past few days.

As she was thinking about what they would get to eat tonight, there was an adzee howl from somewhere in the distance. Immediately, she saw the other three guards at this gap became alert, with their hands on the hilts of their swords. Of course, there were a few spears kept next to the walls as well, but it seemed like the guards were more habitual of using their swords instead of the spears.

She heard the sound of someone running from behind, and saw that Feroy - who probably hadn't gone too far by now - was jogging towards them after hearing the howl. Reaching closer, he shouted at the guards in a low voice, "How many times do I have to tell you all that if you hear the howl of an adzee you need to get ready with spears! Your swords aren't going to do a damn thing against those vicious beasts!"

Immediately, the guards scrambled to pick up a spear each, while Feroy took one himself as well. Yufim had already taken his warbow in his hands, ready with an arrow in his other one. Taking their lead, Hyola also picked up the crossbow which had been tied to her waist, and began to load it, just in case. Hopefully, it would turn out to be a false alarm again, just like many times in the past few days.

Once she had the crossbow bolt loaded and ready to shoot, she gazed outside the gap in the walls towards the north, and all she saw was more trees in the fading light of the sun. Even when she had heard the howls in the past few days, the adzees had been far enough that she hadn't actually seen them here, and hopefully, this time would be the same as well.

Before long, there was another loud howl, this time from much closer, and it chilled her to the bone, making her heart pick up speed. That pack of adzee couldn't be coming towards them, could it? Just the simple thought of facing an adzee made her freeze right where she was standing.

They were a tense few moments, as everyone gazed into the north, trying to look for any hint of an adzee prowling there, and yet there was nothing.

Hyola's racing heart was just beginning to slow down, when she saw some movement in the trees ahead.

#### Chapter 197 Moment Of Truth

"There!" She immediately whispered to the others as she pointed towards that area, while the guards just gave nods in reply, nobody wanting to make any unnecessary sound with an adzee so close to them. Their hearing was known to be excellent, after all.

She didn't know how long she kept waiting with her muscles tense and ready, but slowly she saw the distinctive grace of the movement of a fully grown adzee slowly walking between the leafless trees while gazing towards them with its piercing red eyes. Its thick fur was more grey than brown in this season, but it blended so well between the winter foliage, that she didn't know if she would have ever noticed it in the night. The beast was easily as tall as her, and she had no doubt that a single swipe from its powerful paws would be more than enough to take her life, despite the leather armour every guard was given.

Just as they all had been trained by Hudan in case of an adzee sighting, she slowly took a few steps back along with Yufim, while Feroy as well as the other three guards with spears moved to the front with silent steps. They had planted the butt of the spears on the ground, while the spear heads were around the height of the chest of an adzee, to deter it from charging or even jumping towards them. She and Yufim had taken positions between the guards, a few steps behind them, with her crossbow and his warbow ready to shoot.

By now, her heart was beating so loudly that she thought everyone would be able to hear it and would realise how scared she really was. Despite her regular training with other guards in the past month, this was the first time she was facing a real danger in front of her where her life might be lost before she

even blinked. But she forced her feet to stay planted on the ground, even if her brain told her to just run away from the gates to be safe.

She noticed that her hands had started shaking by now, but she clenched her fist tightly around the crossbow, and took a few deep breaths to calm her mind, while still looking carefully at the single adzee which had stopped maybe fifty feet away from them. She looked around the beast in search of the rest of its pack. They didn't even know if they could defeat a single one, but what if there were more of them out there? Once again, her brain started telling her to leave her post and run away to the longhouse block where she should be safer. Shouldn't she do her best to save her own life?

She shook her head. No, she won't run away! She had been trusted by Lord Kivamus to become a guard, and it was her duty to protect the other villagers. This was what she had been training for. She never wanted to return to her life before she had arrived at the village, where she only depended on others to protect her. She did not want to feel that helplessness ever again.

Feeling that her mind was more clear now, she slowly raised the crossbow in front of her eyes, with a finger of the other hand ready on the trigger, despite her arms shaking in fear. All the guards including her had been given a rundown by the guard captain, who was the only one who had fought an adzee in the past, that unless it seemed like an adzee was immediately coming towards you with an intention to attack, you let it go. Those beasts liked to stare at their prey for a while, while they decided whether it was going to be an easy kill or not. So if there was even a small possibility of the beast deciding that it wasn't worth attacking you, you just didn't start the attack yourself, or you risked dying an avoidable death.

The adzee looked like it was staring right at her, so she did exactly the same and stared right back at it, despite her heart beating loudly in her chest. For a while, she thought that it was just going to scare them and walk away, but then the adzee raised its snout higher, sniffing the air, before it gazed towards them again and slowly started to move in their direction.

Only a few moments later, Feroy whispered with everyone still looking ahead, "It's going to attack us soon. Spearmen, hold your positions. Archers, start shooting. Yufim, target its head. Hyola, hit wherever you can." Then he took the horn which was tied to his waist, and blew it loudly, startling the beast.

It barely took a moment for Yufim to begin to nock an arrow on his heavy warbow, while Hyola put the beast's head in her crossbow sights. Did Feroy really think that she was a worse shot than Yufim, telling her to hit wherever she could? Hah. She will show them all.

As the beast slowly moved closer to them, Yufim let his arrow go, with Hyola's broadhead bolt only moments behind it.

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Without waiting to see whether it had hit the adzee, Yufim began to nock another arrow, while Hyola tried to hurry to load the crossbow again. Suddenly, she heard the wailing sound of the adzee howling in pain. She took a moment to glance towards the beast, and noticed that with the power of the bolt being more than enough at this short range, it had pierced the adzee's snout near its nose. How had she managed to even hit it with her hands still shaking?

She felt victorious for a moment, thinking she was the one who had made the beast howl in pain, before she noticed the much longer arrow shot by Yufim sticking out of the adzee's eye! He was the reason for the beast's painful howl, not her...

She looked at the young archer in disbelief who was already nocking his second arrow by now with concentration. How could he have hit the eye in his first try for Goddess' sake! That had to be blind luck!

She returned to load the crossbow again, before she heard the whistle of another arrow being shot by the young archer. Being very curious if it was really going to hit the other eye of the beast, she felt vindicated when she saw that it only hit its snout. As she used the goat's foot lever to nock the crossbow string again, she realised how difficult even that shot must have been, with the adzee continuously shaking its snout left to right trying to rid itself of the painful objects.

Once again, she loaded a broadhead bolt, since the distance was so short, and raised the crossbow in front of her eyes, trying to shoot at the beast's head again. Before she could pull the trigger, she heard the sound of another arrow whistling ahead, and this time it hit the beast in its neck, with the adzee howling loudly again. Hyola took her time to target this time, and soon she saw her bolt hitting the beast on its stomach, quite far away from her target of its other eye, because the damn beast was moving so much! No, it wasn't because her hands were still shaking! She glanced at the young archer in annoyance, who had his brows furrowed in concentration, his hands as steady as a mountain. How in the Goddess' name could he target so well!

Suddenly, she saw movement towards the north, and saw that the beast had somehow rid itself of the arrow in its eye, while the other bolts and arrows were still sticking out of it, while starting to move towards them slowly while growling. She thought this would be a good time for the other guard to make a run at it with spears - with the beast already injured - but once again, Feroy spoke up in a soft voice,

"Hold your positions, spearmen! Even if it tries to jump at us, keep the spears planted in the ground, and do not try to run towards it!"

As the beast kept moving slowly towards them while growling continuously, she heard movement from somewhere behind them. Taking a moment while loading the third bolt, she saw Hudan, Tesyb and another three guards running towards them with spears in their hands. Thankfully, the beast seemed to be moving slowly now, which gave time for the new arrivals to take their places between feroy and the other guards, which made the spear-wall a lot more dense and stronger.

Yufim let loose his fourth arrow, but this time it only hit one of the front legs of the adzee. By now, Hyola was close to loading the third bolt, and wanted to target better than the archer despite her rapidly beating heart, but then she saw the adzee starting to pick up speed while running towards them, even if it seemed like it was stumbling a little because of the arrow sticking to its leg.

Even if she had been trying her best to calm her heart and steady her hands, the primal sight of such a huge beast running towards her with an intention to tear them from limb to limb broke all the courage she had built up, and she unconsciously took a few steps behind, stumbling on the snow gathered on the ground. Yufim supported her by grabbing her arm which prevented her from falling, while he pointed to the inner side of the walls. "Come on, our task is done now!"

Not knowing what to think, Hyola quickly jogged a dozen feet towards the cover of the sturdy log walls, and began to reload her crossbow just in case. However, Yufim had already nocked another arrow, but this time he seemed to be waiting for a better opportunity. By now, the spear-wall consisted of nine guards, who had arranged their spears in two layers. She peeked between an inch wide gap in two logs of the wall, and her heart stopped for a moment as she saw the beast running at full speed towards the guards.

"Hold your positions!" Hudan ordered loudly, and within a moment, the adzee - which probably wanted to jump over the guards completely - mistimed its jump while stumbling on its injured leg.

Seeing it as a good opportunity, Yufim - who had been standing at the edge of the wall's gap - let loose another arrow which hit the beast in its muscular chest right before it began its jump. She saw with bated breath as the huge beast's jump fell short and it fell right on the spears pointed towards it, howling in pain once again.

At the same time, one of the guards screamed loudly in pain while holding his leg.

## Chapter 198 Aftermath

Hyola wasn't sure how the guard had gotten injured, but immediately another guard pulled him away from the wildly thrashing beast.

With the weight of the heavily muscular adzee being so high, she heard the sound of a couple of spears snapping from its weight, before gravity took over and the adzee fell back on the ground just a few feet in front of the guards, with most of the spears still jutting out of it. She thought she heard another guard screaming in pain, but she wasn't sure in all the confusion.

The adzee was still moving enough that all the guards had now taken a few steps back to protect themselves, but the huge guard captain, who had somehow still been holding his spear, gave a loud roar as he pulled that spear out of the beast, before he stuck it once again in its neck.

Taking his lead, Tesyb - who resembled Hudan the most with his similar muscular build - somehow managed to grab another spear sticking out of the adzee despite all its limbs flailing around, and using all his might to pull it out with a groan, he stuck it once again in the other eye of the beast, making its movements slow down further. Copying them, the other guards tried the same, even if only a few were able to muster the strength to pull out a spear.

Eventually the beast was pierced repeatedly with the spears - again and again and again - until it seemed like it was taking its last breaths. Finally, after a few more shuddering breaths, the adzee's head finally fell down on the ground, and it stopped moving completely. It was easy to see how huge the beast was when it took nearly all the space of the gap in the village walls.

Hyola kept staring at the beast with concentration using her crossbow sights in front of her, her heart still not believing that it was dead, but then one of the guards raised both of his hands up in the air, and gave a loud whoop of victory, with others following him in the cheers.

Hyola just stared at the dead beast for a moment, before realising that it really was over. Suddenly, she felt her legs give out beneath her, and only Yufim's support prevented her from falling down on her butt. She felt the crossbow fall from her loose hands, as she took deep breaths again and again to try to calm myself. Had she really just faced a Goddess' damned adzee and lived to tell the tale?

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~ Kivamus ~

~ Baron's Manor ~

Kivamus was still pacing around inside the manor hall with worry, with others' expressions mirroring his own. Would the guards really be able to kill such dangerous beasts? Or would the pack of adzee kill their guards and run amok in the village taking who knows how many lives?

He had even thought of going to the roof of the manor house, but the northern gate wasn't visible from there anyway, and by now it was dark enough that he wouldn't be able to see too far even if it was visible.

Before long, the outer door of the manor hall opened and Hudan walked inside, looking like he had just finished a marathon. The guard captain gave him a tired smile, then grinned. "We did it, milord! We just killed a damned adzee!"

"Are you serious?" Syryne asked from nearby, while the kids peeked from their hiding places with faces full of hope. Duvas seemed to be looking upwards in prayer for a moment, before he gazed at the guard captain too.

Hudan nodded while taking a big gulp of water directly from the pitcher kept on the long table. "Yup! It took a hell of a lot of effort to kill that huge beast." He looked at Syryne. "But before I tell you all more, one of the guards broke his leg from a simple swipe of the beast, while the thrashing of the beast when it was dying opened a gash in the arm of another guard. A few others have some minor injuries as well. Nurobo has already bandaged them - along with a splint for the guard with a broken leg - but they could really use some losuvil powder right now."

Syryne looked at Kivamus for permission, who gave a quick nod, before she rushed into an inner door. Soon, she was back with a spoonful of the reddish powder in a wooden bowl.

Hudan pointed towards the outer door. "A guard is waiting outside. Give it to him and he'll take care of the rest." When that was done, everyone looked at the guard captain in curiosity, with the kids now having changed their places to move right next to the huge man - he was still their best storyteller after all.

The guard captain began, "Thankfully, it was only a single adzee, which had probably strayed from its pack. For some reason I felt that the beast was sick or maybe too weak from hunger, otherwise it would have been a lot more fierce and dangerous. We also got lucky in some other ways.

"So the goddess was looking out for us," Duvas smiled.

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"Your prayers must have worked for sure," Hudan said, "since the beast was seen lurking around near the northern gap before it got too dark to see, otherwise we would have never found out about it unless it was already attacking. Just by chance, our best archer - Yufim - had strolled to the northern gap an hour before his watch duty started, just to pester Hyola for another round of archery to see who was better, while Feroy was nearby making his hourly rounds around the village, so he was there to lead the guards in the defence, and he knew the exact right time to blow the horn."

"In fact," Hudan snorted, "Yufim was supposed to be posted at the southern gate for tonight, but I found out that he had exchanged his watch shift with another archer who was supposed to be at the north so he could challenge the woman. Either way, it still worked out for the best, so I only gave a verbal lashing to the archer for this."

"But there are still just four guards posted at the gaps in the village wall these days," Duvas said with a frown. "Even with Yufim and Feroy going there, it would still be just six guards there. How could they defeat an adzee with just that few guards?"

"Exactly!" Syryne wondered. "It's not like any of them are armoured knights! It's just not possible for them to kill an adzee with that few men!"

"Let me continue first," Hudan said with a proud smile. "They didn't do it just by themselves. I was giving spear-fighting training to a few other guards in an empty area in the northeast of the village, so five guards including me had rushed to the gap in the northern walls immediately after hearing the horn. By the time I reached there, I found that Yufim had already hit the beast thrice with an arrow." He continued with everyone's eyebrows raised in surprise, "and one of those arrows was right in the eye of the beast!"

"Wow..." Lucem mumbled with awe.

"I'm not kidding, even if only blind luck could have done that." Hudan added. "Hyola was also there with the crossbow, and she had also hit the adzee twice by then. She could have done much better, but this was her first time facing any real danger, otherwise I think she could have done just as well as Yufim. Even so, the fact that she was able to hit the beast twice with both of her bolts despite having no experience of archery just goes to show how effective those crossbows will be in the future when we have more of them in the village. Anyway, by then Feroy had already made a spearwall even if it was with just four guards in total, but then we five joined them as well, and we were able to make a two layered spearwall of nine men, just in time to see the adzee making a run for us."

"Why with two layers?" Kivamus asked in confusion.

"Because we didn't know whether the adzee was going to charge straight at us," Hudan answered, "or whether it would try to jump over us. If Yufim hadn't managed to hit the beast in the leg right before it leaped, it could easily have jumped right over all the guards - reaching our undefended rear. That would have ended very badly for us if its leap was higher than the spearheads. Of course, that lucky arrow in the eye of the beast must have already damaged its coordination badly enough that it couldn't jump or even run properly after that."

"What happened then?" Clarisa asked with her eyes wide.

"I'll spare you kids the gory details," Hudan said with a laugh.

"Not fair!" Lucem whined.

Kivamus laughed at the kids' enthusiasm, while being quite happy that they had managed to deal with the threat. He looked at Lucem. "You can hear more when you grow up. Or, you can even join up as a guard in the future. For now, that's all you're gonna get." Gazing at the guard captain again, he asked, "Nobody died, right?"

Hudan nodded. "Yeah, thank the Goddess for that. Although it was a very close call for the guard with a broken leg. There were a lot of other things which could have gone wrong - from Hyola not spotting the beast in time, to Yufim not having reached the place before he was due for his shift, or me having finished the training earlier, which would have meant we would have been too far to support the guards in time."

"All's well that ends well," Duvas commented. "We can just be glad that nobody died. With this losuvil powder available even in the middle of winter for the first time, it would also make it much easier for the guards to bear the pain until the injuries heal, otherwise at least one of them might have died from infection, as in the previous winters."

"The guards are more than thankful for that," Hudan said, "I can assure you of that much."

"I have to say though," Kivamus remarked after a while, "when I was sent to this village and I found out how dangerous Tiranat was for so many reasons, I didn't think that it could be a good thing as well. With all the dangers surrounding us - from the bandit raids to wild beast attacks - it is certainly giving some much needed combat experience to our guards."

"I agree with you there," Hudan said. "No matter how much I train the new guards, most of them have spent their lives digging and transporting coal. That might have made them physically strong, but in front of a charging adzee, that previous experience doesn't do anything for them. But as it is going right now, every single fight raises the confidence and experience of our guards, just like I am confident Hyola would do much better than next time she faces a danger."

Duvas shook his head. "I'm not sure if it is a good thing or a curse that so many dangers surround us."

The guard captain began after a moment, "Anyway, now that the beast is dead, at least we are going to get a good amount of meat from it."

Kivamus nodded. "But it's a pity that its pelt isn't going to be of much use after that many holes made by the spears."

"No need to worry about that," the majordomo assured him. "That pelt is still going to sell for a lot of gold after the winter. It is such a rare thing for an adzee to be killed, after all."

"What about the holes and damages to the pelt then?" Kivamus asked with a frown.

Chapter 199 Departure

Duvas laughed. "It's just not possible to kill an adzee while trying to preserve its pelt. That beast would easily tear you into shreds in that case. Be assured, we will carefully salt it for the winter, and Pydaso or any other merchant would be glad to take it off our hands after that."

"That's certainly good to hear," Kivamus nodded. "But about the adzee meat, is it even edible?"

"Of course," Duvas snorted. "It's considered a delicacy in these parts of the kingdom. If this had happened near Cinran, a minor bidding war would have started between the nobles in the court of Count Cinran, just so they could brag to the other nobles that they just had some freshly butchered adzee meat as dinner!"

Kivamus laughed loudly hearing about the nobles' habits. "Well, that just means we can have it for ourselves for our dinner tonight! If that carcass is big enough, we might even be able to give a small portion of it to everyone in the manor." He chuckled, "It might even give them bragging rights in front of the rest of the villagers. "

Hudan agreed with a laugh. "If you really want to share it with everyone, then you don't have to worry about that meat not being enough. That adzee would easily weigh as much as six or seven grown men."

"Five to six hundred kg then..." Kivamus muttered. "That would still give us hundreds of kilograms of fresh meat. I don't think we can consume that much meat in a single meal. That reminds me, how is the smokehouse construction coming along?"

"Should be ready by now," Duvas replied. "I met with Taniok earlier in the day when I had gone to visit the northeast of the village, and he had assured me that it would be done by evening."

"That's very good!" Kivamus exclaimed. "It would prevent any wastage. For any leftover meat which we can't consume inside the manor for tonight's dinner, send it with a few servants to the smokehouse to preserve it for the future."

Duvas nodded, while Hudan gave a chuckle again. "Inaugurating our smokehouse by smoking an adzee meat inside it for the first time? I like it!" The guard captain added with a smirk, "Feroy is out on another patrol right now, but I can speak for him in that even he would love to brag about it to anyone who doesn't get that meat tonight!"

Everyone laughed at that, while Lucem looked like he was salivating at the thought of their upcoming meal.

After a moment, Hudan suggested, "I would recommend you to give a few medals to the guards. A baron's Medal of Courage would be good for Hyola, while a Baron's Medal of Sacrifice can be given to each of the two guards who had gotten seriously injured."

"I think that's a great idea," Kivamus agreed. "It's a good thing that we had gotten extra medals built from the blacksmith the first time. Those guards would be in a lot of pain for the night, so I'll distribute them tomorrow. That being said, I think we need another type of medal, this time for academic or scientific contributions to the progress of the village. I will talk with the blacksmith to have it built by tomorrow evening after I have sketched a design for it later today."

He had something like the Nobel prizes in his mind with this, even though the contributions might not be at that scale yet to anyone who would get this medal. It also didn't make much sense to make separate prizes for Physics, Chemistry and such, but he could certainly make a single medal for science. He continued, "We can simply call it The Baron's Medal of Science." He looked at Syryne with a grin. "Can you guess who would be the first recipient of that?"

For a moment, the young woman looked confused, before her eyes went wide. "Me? But I barely did anything! I just followed your instructions and your ideas!"

"It's true that I might have given the initial suggestions," Kivamus agreed, "but it was you who performed the whole preservation process so well and managed to create such a useful new medicine for us. You deserve the medal."

"But still..." Syryne looked at everyone's faces, and only found supportive smiles everywhere. Then she sighed and gave a huge smile too. "In that case I'll gladly accept it, milord!"

Immediately Lucem and Clarisa gathered around the young woman with wide eyes. "Are you really going to get a medal, big sis?"

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Kivamus looked at the small caravan behind him for a moment, before he had to mount his horse as well. It was early morning, and the sun had just risen above the Arakin mountains in the east. With the consistent snowfall over the last week, there were a few inches of snow gathered everywhere, but thankfully it had stopped for now which would make their journey easier.

It had been a week since he had given the medals to the guards as well as Syryne in another simple ceremony outside the manor gates. He had also explained the details of the water wheel design to Darora on the same day, and the talented carpenter had done outstandingly in the previous week. It meant that the young carpenter hadn't been able to work on the second crossbow until now, but he should be starting that work from tomorrow after everyone returned from their upcoming day trip today.

The blacksmith had come through as well, and he had already provided the first safety lamp which would be extremely helpful for them today. It had taken him more than a few tries with many wasted attempts, but eventually, Cedoron had been able to build the oil lamp which resembled what he had drawn in the sketches. In the absence of any crude oil, animal-based oils will have to do as its fuel, but it should still do the task. Once the safety lamp had been tested inside a mineshaft today, he planned to give orders to Cedoron to start forging half a dozen such lamps in total.

Behind the band of six horses including his own - where Hudan and five other guards had already mounted their rides while they waited for him - there were two wagons filled to the brim with ready-to-assemble parts for the water wheel, along with a few wheelbarrows and a couple of carts to easily move the parts wherever needed. This reverse-overshot waterwheel certainly hadn't been tested yet - apart from connecting all the parts late yesterday evening to check that they fit properly - but he was confident that it would work just as they had planned.

With Taniok's apprentice having already provided a dozen more shafts for the spears, he was again working on making more wheelbarrows these days, which meant there was no shortage of them in the village.

A pair of horses would be pulling each wagon, while a dozen workers including Darora would be walking behind them to the coal mines in the east to install the water wheel there. Two of the four nodors they had in the manor were also coming with them so that they could pull the smaller carts after loading them with a few parts, as closer to the entrance of the mines as possible, and hopefully even inside the mineshafts, since the horses and the much bigger wagons wouldn't be able to do that in the cramped spaces.

Most of the fur coats they had in the manor were being worn by those who would be going to the mines today, since it could get quite windy on the narrow passages between the hills, even if it would again become quite warmer inside the mineshafts.

Duvas would be staying at the manor to oversee everything, while Feroy would be in charge of all the guards until Hudan returned back. Gorsazo would soon be starting to tutor Syryne for her individual classes he gave every morning, while Lucem had kept asking if he could go to the coal mines as well, but a single scolding from his mother had been enough to make him join his sister for her tutoring classes, even if he didn't have much hope of understanding there anything yet.

Giving a satisfied exhale, Kivamus mounted his own horse, and gave a nod to Hudan. The guard captain immediately ordered everyone to start moving, and with that their small caravan of two wagons, a pair of nodors and ten horses started to move towards the gates of the manor.

Before long, they reached the newly built longhouse blocks in the north, where there was a lot of activity as usual. A stream of people were entering and exiting the gates of both the blocks, with a small gaggle of children running with steaming wooden bowls in their hands, which must contain some freshly cooked porridge from the kitchen to give to the labourers who were working farther in the north.

There was also a thin plume of smoke coming from further ahead in the north east, which is where the first smokehouse of the village was already in operation. Apart from the manor servants who were tasked with working there, there was also a guard posted there at all times to prevent any stealing of the large quantity of meat being smoked there. With four hunting groups in operation once again after the threat of the adzees had passed, they were getting a good amount of meat every day now, which is why that smoke house was going to be vital in their attempts to minimise the usage of wheat to preserve it to use as seeds after the winter. It still wasn't going to be enough at the current rate, but at least they were on the right path now.

Soon, they reached the northern wall of the village, and he watched with quite a lot of satisfaction as the guards at watch duty saluted him and Hudan both - which was something new that the guard captain was teaching them on his suggestion - before they opened the newly built gates in the former northern gap. After the second long house had been completed around a week ago, Taniok had been working hard as well, and he had just finished this gate two days ago.

These days the old carpenter was working to build the gates in the southern gap of the walls, which would only leave the gap in the south-west, which would be his last task before he could start building

the barn in the south for growing mushrooms at a larger scale. Only then could they start constructing the watchtowers inside the walls.

He shook his head. So much work to do but so few skilled craftsmen in the village...

#### Chapter 200 The Water Wheel

Regardless of the chronic shortage of craftsmen in Tiranat, Kivamus still estimated that all the gates would be built within ten days or so at the current rate. With the sharpened tops of the stakes which formed the village walls easily standing more than fifteen feet high - and with the gates built till nearly the same height - they would act as a strong deterrent to any wild beast attacks or bandit raids in the future.

The periphery road just inside the village walls - even if it was just a wide track of packed dirt for now - would also allow the guards to quickly ride to the location of any breach in the walls - if it even happened at all with these towering walls.

They kept moving north after passing through the gates, and he watched with satisfaction as the tree line had moved further away from the village walls, which were already nearly a hundred meters away from the last of the houses in every direction. He estimated that by this point the tree line was easily around 300 meters away from the walls, which meant they were close to reaching their target of clearing around 500 meters of land in every direction.

Of course, like he had planned in the past, Madam Helga had been instrumental in finding out those areas which had any useful shrubs or herbs, which is why they had left a few trees in such areas and tied up a rope around those trees to mark it as a small ecological preserve, which would also double as a park for children and the elderly in the future. After the snow melted in the spring, he would even get a small pond dug in the middle of those parks, which would also make them a place for the birds and small animals to eat and rest.

He had also been told that the foreman of the south, Pinoto, had been managing the workers under him quite well, and with the help of the log movers they had already cleared an area of around 600 meters by 600 meters in the south. Of course, that was after leaving a gap of around 500 m in the south ahead of the village walls to make it easier to see an attack early, unlike the time when Nokozal and his band had hidden just outside the village between the trees.

This lopsided progress was mainly because the majority of the laborers were working in the south these days - since all the labourers who had been working in the construction of the second longhouse block were free these days to cut trees in the south until Taniok finished up all the three gates - which is why

the progress there was a lot higher than in the other directions. However, that was still less than half of the cleared land they needed to sow enough seeds to feed all the villagers from the next year. Still, he had confidence that they should be able to do it by the time the ground thawed after the winter.

A side-effect of all that logging were the tall piles of criss-crossed logs kept at so many places around the village. Those were going to be instrumental for them in making more buildings in the future.

As the small caravan kept moving on the northern road through the 300 meters of empty area ahead of the village walls, he gazed at all the newly cleared land around him. It would take quite some time before they even filled up the empty area between the last houses of the village and the new village walls with more longhouses, a new marketplace, some warehouses and barns, a barrack, as well as other buildings, but that extra 500 meters of space in every direction outside the village walls would make it easy for them to expand the village further in the future.

That wasn't going to happen any time soon, but he already realized that manpower shortage was one of the major limiting factor for them these days to make the village more secure and prosperous, which is why increasing the population of the village in the future - so they could get a lot more workers - was something he was already thinking about in his free time.

Before long, the expected fork in the road arrived, and they turned towards the east. The flooded coal mines awaited them.

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It was nearly evening time now, and Kivamus was sitting on a small rock overhang next to one of the walls inside a mineshaft, as he waited for Darora to finish the modifications. Earlier in the day, after reaching the coal mines, they had parked the wagons in the small plain area between the hills, and the labourers had started moving the parts to the first mineshaft that needed to be cleared of water. Some of them had taken the small parts in wheelbarrows while pushing them up the hill to the cave-like entrance of the shaft, while the heavier parts had been put in a cart for one of the nodors to start pulling up the hill.

Of course, before entering the shafts he had explained to Tesyb about how to use the safety lamp they had brought with them, and with his eyes full of wonder, he had used the lamp carefully to check the quality of the air inside. Thankfully, there were no harmful gases inside the shaft today, so after verifying it by moving further inside the shaft and checking with the safety lamp, they still had to light the candles which they normally used. A single safety lamp simply wasn't going to give enough light for Darora to work.

It had taken nearly half a day for him to assemble the water wheel with the help of the other labourers, as well as the long trough needed to make the water flow to the outside of the mineshaft, and everything had been completed by late afternoon. However, when the labourers had started to climb on the planks which worked as cleats on the sides of the waterwheel to rotate it, they had immediately found a problem. The angle of the cleats was simply too sharp for them to stand with their full weight without getting disbalanced.

This was exactly the reason why he had brought Darora with him. They had looked at the water wheel carefully and found that it would need only a small adjustment in the angle of the mortises where the cleats were attached to the water wheel. That was what the young carpenter had been working on since then. It shouldn't be long before he is done.

While the carpenter had been working on the modifications in the afternoon, a few of the labourers and guards had taken the time to ride to the stream which was located further in the east, and they had been successful in catching enough fish for everyone. They had roasted them in the empty plain area between the hills, and that had turned into a tasty and fresh lunch for everyone.

Back in the present, he noticed in the flickering light of the candles that Darora had just stood up after attaching the last cleat once again into the new mortises he had cut into the water wheel. Soon, the young carpenter walked towards him. "Milord, it's done. It should work much better now."

Giving a satisfied nod, Kivamus stood up. "Alright, let's try it again then."

At his gesture, Tesyb - who used to be a miner in the past - called up two of the labourers. "Time to work, lads. Each of you take a position on either side of the wheel, and start climbing on the cleats. Make sure to hold the overhead support tightly, or you'll fall right into the water below."

The labourers gave excited nods, and did exactly the same. One by one they kept stepping on the cleats, which moved downwards by their weights, before they climbed to the next cleat. With a groaning noise,

the iron axle which they had liberated from the quarry to use as the axle for the water wheel after greasing it properly, began to rotate slowly.

Within the same motion, the waterwheel started to rotate as well, and the square boxes attached at the circumference of the wheel began to dip into the water one by one. Acting as small tilted buckets, they picked up a good amount of water in each of them until the rotation of the wheels brought them to the top of its circular journey, where gravity took over and the water simply flowed down to the sides of the wheel into the troughs fixed on both sides of it, before it joined into a single trough further towards the entrance of the cave.

As more and more water kept falling into the troughs, it began flowing continuously towards the entrance, with everyone following the front line of the flowing water with a lot of enthusiasm by walking alongside the troughs like a small procession. It didn't take long until the water reached the end of the artificial path it had been forced to follow, and eventually it began falling down outside the cave entrance with a splash. Immediately, the cave was filled with the resounding cheers of everyone.

"We did it!" two of the labourers who had helped in assembling the waterwheel exclaimed while giving a double high five to each other.

Hudan was grinning nearby, while Tesyb was celebrating with his former workmates in the mines. Darora was standing next to him, while watching with satisfaction at the continuously flowing water.

"Well done!" Kivamus congratulated the young carpenter. "You have performed outstandingly, once again!"