

Londoner 57

Chapter 57. Machetes

"Indeed," Kivamus agreed. "Take a look at it."

Yeden took the machete in his hands, and after taking a few steps back, he tried to swing it vertically downwards a few times, as if cutting an imaginary branch. However, his movements were noticeably different from Hudan, who was earlier trying to slash it in a slanted way, like he was trying to attack an imaginary person with it. Each man's profession seemed to have a distinct bearing on what they tried to do with the same blade.

Yeden nodded to himself and said, "These are good, milord. I can tell that they would be quite useful in cutting small branches. However, while these will still be helpful, would it be possible for us to get more axes instead of these machetes?" He added, "Right now, getting more axes would increase the pace of clearing the forest much more than getting more machetes."

"Certainly," Kivamus said. "I had given the earlier order based on my initial estimates. But we can surely change it based on our needs."

Hudan said, "Even so, I would like a few more of these machetes built as well, as long as they are still needed for cutting branches, since we can also use them as makeshift weapons."

Kivamus nodded. He asked the foreman, "Cedoron can make five axes or four machetes every day. Earlier I had told him to alternate his working days between both of them. What do you suggest now?"

Yeden took a minute to think about it, while moving his hand over his bald head. He looked at the blacksmith and asked, "Can you make both of them on the same day, or do you have to forge only a similar thing each day?"

Cedoron replied, "It would certainly take some adjustment to forge an axe and a machete on a single day, but it wouldn't be too difficult. I can make both of them everyday if you want it that way."

"That would be very helpful." Yeden looked at Kivamus. "In that case, milord, I would like Cedoron to make four axes and one machete every day. Or... maybe substitute one axe with a saw if possible. Depending on the shape of the tree, many times it's easier to use a saw instead of an axe." He added,

"This way we will get enough axes to increase our speed of clearing the forest, but we'll also be getting a steady stream of machetes as well, to cut branches as well as to stock up on them as weapons."

"That works for me," Hudan shrugged. "For tomorrow itself, I'll have to give more time to tell the basics to those workers who get these four machetes, but from the next day, I'll only have to give the basic training to a single worker every day, for the one machete which is made that day. That will be better for my schedule of training the guards, since telling the basics to just a single worker wouldn't take too much of my time."

"That's agreed then," Kivamus commented. He said to Cedoron, "You have your new orders now. Three axes, one saw and one machete every day. Can you do it?"

Cedoron gave a confident nod. "Certainly." He hesitated for a moment, but then seemed to make up his mind about something. "You asked me to be frank with you, milord."

Kivamus nodded. "Indeed. What do you have in mind?"

Cedoron said, "Your suggestion of using a few workers to assist me has been quite helpful, milord. So if you give me a few more of them, then I might be able to produce more tools every day. Of course, I cannot guarantee it, because there are some problems occasionally, but I still should be able to do better than that. Well, as long as my iron ingots last."

"That's very good!" Kivamus commended him. "In fact," he added, thinking about the specialized production lines on Earth, "instead of giving the task of making a complete tool to a single worker, make every worker specialize in doing a single task. For example, while only you will forge the iron parts for now, one worker can just work on making new handles from wood, another can work on attaching all the axe-heads or the machete-blades to the new handles, while another one can test them and properly fix the handles tightly if they are loose. This way, all of them will specialize in doing a single task and they will slowly get better in that particular task with more practice. It is called specialization, and this will make the production of new tools more efficient."

Cedoron thought about the idea for a minute, while gazing into the distance. "It does make sense, milord. As I do it now, I have to train each worker to do every single thing, but this way, I'll only have to teach about a single task to a worker, which will save my time as well. I will do it like this from now on."

Kivamus gave a nod and continued, "Don't worry about the iron, Pydas should be able to bring more of it in a few days." He looked at Duvas. "Send a couple of servants later to search for broken tools or any scrap iron in the manor. Many times they are just thrown away inside the barns or other places, but Cedoron should be able to make new tools from those. We need all the iron we can get right now to forge into new tools."

"I'll do that after this conversation," Duvas replied.

Cedoron spoke again. "Since making a saw wouldn't use as much iron as making an axe or a machete, I would suggest making more of them, until I get more iron ingots in a few days. This way I will be able to provide many more saws instead of only a few machetes or axes."

Kivamus looked at Yeden for his opinion.

The foreman shrugged. "That's fine with me, milord, especially if it's only for a few more days. I would rather have more tools right now, even if they are saws instead of axes, since I have a lot of workers who sit idle all day because of a shortage of cutting tools."

"Good. It is final then." Kivamus looked at the blacksmith. "Prioritize saws over other tools until Pydas brings more iron ingots."

Cedoron gave a firm nod in reply.

"Very well, you both can leave now."

With that, Cedoron and Yeden gave him a bow and turned back towards the manor gates.

~ Tesyb ~

~ Somewhere south of Cinran ~

After leaving their camp in the clearing near Helga's Inn in the morning, they had continued their journey towards Cinran. This time, Tesyb had taken a place on the middle wagon along with Yufim, and after traveling the whole day, now they were approaching the bustling town of Cinran. It was nearly dark now, but the stone walls of Cinran were already visible far in the north, with burning torches and lanterns kept at equal spaces on the top of the wall. Around them, there were a lot of empty agricultural fields on both sides of the road, since the harvest must have been done a while ago.

"How big do you think Cinran is?" Yufim asked excitedly.

Tesyb looked at the approaching walls. "Can't really say. The last time I was here, I was only seven years old, I think. I hardly remember anything from then."

"Well, at least you must have some memories of that time, unlike me, since my mother brought me to Tiranat when it was founded and I was only a baby at that time."

"One could argue you still are..." Tesyb muttered with a smirk.

Yufim sulked. "Shut up! You are mean!"

Tesyb just shook his head at the archer's antics and looked ahead as the caravan kept moving on the dirt path. Hearing the sound of water flowing nearby, he looked to his right and could barely make out a river flowing in the light of the moon, a little far away. "That must be the Kal River."

"I want to take a swim in it! It's such a bummer that there isn't a river in Tiranat," Yufim moped.

"Do you even know how to swim?"

Yufim looked away. "I can still learn..." he muttered.

Tesyb couldn't help but give a small laugh at that reply. As the caravan reached near a thicket of trees, the wagons ahead of them started slowing down, before finally stopping.

"Why are we stopping already?" Yufim asked as he stopped their own wagon, while looking around them carefully.

They didn't have to wonder for long since another guard came running to all the wagons, telling them to gather around.

Once all of the guards had gathered near the middle of the caravan, Feroy said, "Now that we are nearly here, we need to change the look of the caravan." Looking at the merchant standing nearby, he added, "Mr Pydas has told me that there will be a lot of unnecessary questions at the gate if we go in with a dozen armed guards. And there is no real risk of someone looting the caravan inside the city, so I am leaving half of our guards here. We will only be going inside with a single driver per wagon, with most of their weapons left with those who'll stay here. This way, any onlookers will only think that we are drivers for the wagons, and not trained guards."

He added after a moment, "There are twelve of us, not including Mr Pydas and his own guard, so six of the manor guards will go inside the town as drivers for each wagon, while the rest will have to stay here. This will also help us in case a scout of a bandit group notices the caravan leaving with only a single guard per wagon, since they wouldn't expect that we would actually have double the number of guards than what they expected. I am also leaving one of the horses here - one of those pulling the damaged wagon, in case you need to get in touch with me quickly for any reason."

He continued, "Since those who are new guards would make it very obvious to anyone watching in the town that the caravan is not as well protected as it looks, so I am leaving the new guards here. You all will stay inside this thicket." He stared hard at all the new guards. "Do not leave this place, especially in daylight. That is an order!"

Tesyb and other new guards nodded on hearing that.

"They will still need someone to keep an eye on them here," Nurobo said, with both of his hands on the side of his huge belly.

Feroy gave a slow nod. "That's a good idea. You should stay here then." He looked at the new guards carefully before saying, "Tesyb, you come with me in place of Nurobo."

Tesyb gave a nod in reply, while Yufim whined, "That's not fair... I want to see the town too!"

"Shut up, you idiot," Tesyb chided him. "We aren't here to enjoy the sights!"

Yufim just looked at the ground, sulking.

All of the guards who were going inside the town gave most of their weapons to Nurobo and others who were staying back, while only keeping a dagger in most cases. Feroy, along with Pydas' own guard, still kept their swords though. They also transferred some of their stored food from the wagons for those who would be staying in this thicket.

Feroy said to those who were staying back, "It will take nearly the whole day tomorrow to transfer all the coal as well as to buy the grain sacks and everything else we need, so there is no point in leaving the town tomorrow evening. So you all will have to spend two nights here. I will bring the caravan the day after tomorrow around dawn, so be ready to leave by then."

Nurobo gave a nod. "Don't worry Feroy, I'll take care of things here."

"Good," Feroy nodded.

Before long, Tesyb and the other guards took their places on the wagons again, this time with only a single guard per wagon, and with a flick of the reins, the caravan lurched forward again.

Soon, the caravan reached the dirt road next to the walls of the town, before finally reaching the gates. Tesyb saw that there were three guards at the closed gates, standing next to a burning brazier. Looking at the caravan approaching, one of them held up his hands to stop them.

"Hold up right there! What business do you have here?" one of the gate guards asked in a loud voice.

Tesyb was far enough behind the leading wagon, that he couldn't hear what was replied to that. For a while, Pydas and Feroy, who were in the leading wagon now, discussed something with the guards. Soon, they seemed to be handing over what seemed like a few coins to the guard, who appeared to be grinning now. Finally, another guard opened the gates, waving them inside, and the caravan entered the town.

As Tesyb's own wagon entered the gates, he saw the mighty stone walls of the town passing above him. He thought wistfully that if they had something similar in Tiranat, his house wouldn't have been looted and burned by the bandits. He shook his head slowly. Cinran was the residence of the Count, and it was a big town, unlike the poor village called Tiranat. That wasn't a fair comparison. How could a small village compete with a town like Cinran! But at least these walls would ensure the safety of his sister here.

Inside the gates, it looked quite dark. He had thought that there would be burning torches and lanterns kept everywhere inside the town, but other than on the top of the town walls, there were hardly any torches here. He had also expected that there would be a lot of people on the streets even at this time, but perhaps he had heard too many grand stories of big towns and cities. But at least he would be able to see Cinran's huge marketplace tomorrow, unlike Yufim, who must still be sulking in that thicket. He couldn't help but give a small smile thinking of his friend, who still seemed to be quite innocent.

Soon, after the caravan took a few turns, they entered what seemed to be an inn, with a big empty area for parking wagons. One by one, the wagons were parked next to each other, while the horses were detached from the wagons to give them water and feed them. Feroy gathered all of them together, and said, "This is where we'll stay for the night. Mr Pydas and his own guard will take a room in the inn itself, while it is another camping night under the wagon for the rest of us."

It seemed logical that the guards would have to stay with the wagons to protect their cargo, but Tesyb had still expected a few groans at that. However, the other guards only gave firm nods after hearing it. That went to show the difference between seasoned veterans, and new recruits like him and Yufim. He steeled himself for the next day - he was here to protect the caravan and not to sightsee, just like he told Yufim earlier.