

## Londoner 63

### Chapter 63. Night Watch Duty

Kivamus pointed at the newly cleared area around them. "Ahead of that will be the first longhouse block, which will take twenty-five meters of space. Then there will be another road of ten meters width, and after that, the second longhouse block will take another twenty-five meters. That is a total of seventy meters. Now, the new village walls will be a hundred yards, that is, around ninety meters away from the rest of the village. That gives us enough space for another ten meters for the periphery road, which will run all around the village just inside the new walls. We can leave the last ten meters between the road and the village wall empty for now."

Hudan said, "Those ten meters would also help to keep the longhouses farther in case the bandits shoot arrows from outside the wall. And as I mentioned earlier, my Lord, we would need to use slanted logs from the inside of the new walls to give them extra support. That ten meters of empty ground will be quite helpful in that."

"Excellent!" Kivamus exclaimed. He looked at Taniok and Yeden. "That gives you the plans for how to use all the space here, and where to dig the foundations for the longhouses in the northern region."

Yeden gave a nod. "Certainly, milord. I will put the workers to dig accordingly, after making the measurements."

Kivamus said, "I have also told Gorsazo about the design of drains we will need to make on both sides of the roads, so you can talk with him about that. You are supervising the workers here, so you will be in charge of making the roads and drains as well. Of course, for the drains to work properly, the longhouses need to be at a small height from the surrounding roads."

He looked at the carpenter. "Taniok, make sure that the floor of each longhouse as well as the central courtyard of each longhouse-block is a little higher than the surrounding roads, so that the rainwater will flow towards the gates, and will fall into the drains running on the sides of those roads."

Taniok nodded. "I'll keep it in mind, milord."

"Later on, we will connect these drains to other such drains which we will dig in the village, so that the extra water flows towards the south or southwest into a new pond that we will dig near the new farms, to use for irrigating them." Kivamus looked at others. "I also want to connect the market square of the

village to this new housing region with ten meter wide roads, but that can't be done until we have shifted the villagers from their burnt houses to the new longhouses."

He added, "Apart from that, even two longhouse blocks wouldn't be enough to shift the whole population of the village to those, even though we might not need to do that anyway. But in case we do need to shift everyone, then by using such a planned grid design, we can easily make more longhouse blocks, here in the north. Again, that is for the future."

Gazing again for a minute at all the projects being undertaken around the place, Kivamus gave an appreciative nod. There was still a lot of work to be done in the village, but at least they were on the right path now. "Alright then, let's return now." He looked at Taniok and Yeden. "Keep up the good work!"

The carpenter and the foreman were surprised for a moment on hearing the praise, but they smiled and gave successive nods. "We will do our best, milord."

With that, Kivamus and Hudan, along with the other guards, turned back to return to the manor, while Gorsazo stayed back to tell the foreman about the design of the drains.

\*\*\*\*\*

~ Tesyb ~

~ Near Helga's Inn ~

After another night spent under the wagons at the same inn in Cinran yesterday, they had left the town before dawn today. Picking up the waiting guards at the thicket outside Cinran, they had traveled the whole day to reach the same clearing near Helga's Inn.

The journey had thankfully been uneventful, and after a quick check of the surroundings, they had made their camp in the same clearing again. Then, after a quick meal of their remaining bread - which was stale by now, along with some watery porridge they had to make because they were unable to hunt anything in the evening, most of the guards had turned in for the night under the wagons. The wagons themselves had been arranged in a circle again, leaving nearly no space between them, so that they had

to climb over the wagons to get in the middle. Although the merchant, Mr Pydas had also gone to sleep, he had looked worried enough since they left Cinran that it didn't seem likely that he would be able to get any sleep.

A little while ago, another guard had woken up Tesyb for his turn on watch duty, and he had been sitting on a log towards the south of the camp. He estimated that it must be around midnight now. Soon, Yufim, who had gone to relieve himself after waking up, walked near him and sat down on the same log. The campfire had been stamped out with only a few burning embers remaining in the middle of the circle of wagons. The half moon was just visible in the sky, but its light barely penetrated into the canopy of the dense forest. Without any wind, the forest was completely quiet as well, devoid of any sounds of birds or leaves.

Yufim gave a big yawn while stretching his hands above himself. "I am so tired, man. Why did they have to give us watch duty in the middle of the night?"

Tesyb shrugged in the near-darkness. "You can't be lucky every time, can you? Last time we had gotten the first watch, so we were bound to draw the short straw at some point."

"I do know that..." Yufim spoke with another yawn. He looked at Tesyb. "We were sitting in different wagons the whole day, so you never told me how the town was."

Tesyb gave a laugh. "Even in the darkness I can tell that you are still sulking about that."

"But I really wanted to see the town..." Yufim whined. "Come on! The least you can do is tell me stories about the place!"

"What stories? You know that I was on guard duty the whole time, and we slept under the wagons there as well. It's not like I had time to visit a tavern there."

"Well, what about your sister?" Yufim asked. "Didn't you say that you wanted to meet her there?"

Tesyb smiled fondly thinking of Isuha. "I did meet her. She is doing okay but things are getting worse in Cinran. The shortage of grain, and the rising grain prices are taking a toll on everything. I heard from some passersby that the marketplace there used to be even more vibrant, even though it was still the

biggest market I have ever seen in my life." He added, "Isuha even told me that they don't get many new orders now."

"She works as a seamstress, doesn't she?" Yufim asked curiously.

"She is only a helper to the seamstress there, from what she told me."

"Even so, she gets to live in such a big town!" Yufim said wistfully, "I wish I lived in such a place."

Tesyb scoffed. "And if you can't pay back a loan, the Count's men will happily auction you off into slavery. I would rather stay safe in our own village." He asked with a smirk, even if the young archer couldn't see it in the darkness, "How was your stay in the grand thicket? Did you finally get to swim?"

"Shut up! It was a thicket, not a town. Don't try to make me even more jealous!" Yefim retorted. "And it was so... boring..." he whined. "I even tried to sneak to the Kal river yesterday, but Nurobo caught me right before I was going to leave, dammit!"

Tesyb laughed. "It's not like you could even swim. Still you can..."

Yufim interrupted, "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" Tesyb asked while looking around himself, even though he could barely make out the trees in the darkness.

They waited for a few minutes to hear something, but it was silent after that.

"Must have been my imagination," Yufim muttered. "Well, what were you saying?"

Right before he was going to reply, Tesyb clearly heard the crunching of leaves nearby. He whispered, "Wait! There is something out there." He picked up his sword, which he had kept on the log next to him. Slowly, trying not to make any sound, he rose up on his feet. "Do you have your bow with you?"

"Why would I?" Yufim replied in a low voice, while getting up slowly as well. "It's not like I could hit anything in this darkness. I do have a dagger with me though."

"Why the heck did they even put you on watch duty in the night!" Tesyb retorted while trying to listen for any other sounds.

"Hell if I know!" Yufim muttered. "I'd rather have slept soundly instead of feeling useless like this. Ask Nurobo why he put me on watch duty!"

"That's actually a good idea," Tesyb said, thinking quickly. "There must be two other guards awake right now, on the other side of the camp. Go back slowly and let them know that there is at least one wild animal out here, and then wake up Feroy as well. He'll know what to do. And tell someone to light up the fire again, so we can actually see something in this Goddess damned darkness!"

Without saying anything in reply, Yufim slowly walked back towards the camp, trying not to make too much sound.

Tesyb kept trying to listen, but didn't hear anything else for a while. He knew that lighting up a fire in the middle of the night would make it more likely to attract any animals here, but at least they would be able to fight back in the firelight, instead of attacking blindly. Soon he heard some commotion in the camp, and taking a quick look, he saw that someone was using the embers to light up some wood again.

Keeping his drawn sword in front of him, he slowly took steps backwards, to get closer to others. Reaching the circle of wagons, he saw that the whole camp was buzzing with activity, even though he had still not found the source of that sound. Suddenly, it came into his mind that there could even be bandits trying to attack the camp right now, and he hadn't even thought about that. But at least Feroy was awake now, and he would be able to take care of things now.

In the light of the newly lit fire, he saw that Yufim and Nurobo had climbed on top of two wagons on opposite sides, while they had their bows and arrows ready in their hands.

The tranquility of the campsite was shattered by a sudden shout from the edge of the clearing on the other side. "Out there!" a guard warned, his voice filled with urgency. Tesyb, standing amidst the circle of wagons, turned his gaze towards the source of the commotion. Between two towering trees, a young

boar emerged, its beady eyes darting around as it surveyed its surroundings. It was a small creature, but its wildness was undeniable.

Dammit! They had not thought about such young animals when they put the wagons close to each other. That boar might just be able to squeeze between the wagons. Tesyb quickly took the opportunity to climb over the wagons to reach inside the circle.

The boar slowly moved towards the circle of wagons, exploring the place when Nurobo let out an arrow towards it, but he missed the boar completely. Immediately, Yufim shot it as well and he heard the sound of the boar squealing in pain. But then it charged towards the closest wagon, as Fero and another guard moved closer to that wagon as well. Luckily, that wagon was parked quite close to the next one, and the boar wouldn't be able to run between them. As the boar came closer, Nurobo shot another arrow, and this time his arrow did find the target, making the boar crash to the ground in pain just before reaching the wagons. Immediately, Fero and the other guard climbed over the wagons, and jumped off on the other side to finish it off.

Nurobo shouted from the top of his wagon, "The rest of you, stay sharp. There can be more of them out there."

Mr Pydas seemed to be completely scared and had climbed on the top of another wagon, and was sitting hunched while seemingly shaking in fear. Soon, Tesyb heard another growl behind him. He turned around and in the light of the now-roaring fire, he saw another small boar charging towards the wagons on his side, and he just froze.