

## Londoner 64

### Chapter 64. A Clash With Beasts

Immediately another guard ran towards him and slapped him on his back. "Wake up, you moron! Don't freeze now, or you will be dead within a moment."

Tesyb shook his head to clear his mind, and put his sword in front of him, while staying in the cover of the wagons and readied himself to fight the approaching boar. He thanked the Goddess that this one was also a young boar. It was charging into the empty space between two wagons, while the remaining guards were standing within the circle of wagons. These two wagons had enough space between them that such a young boar would be able to run between that space easily.

As the archers noticed it, both of them shot arrows towards it, and this time, none of them missed, making the boar squeal in pain, immediately slowing it down. At this point the boar was hobbling, and it slowly entered the circle of wagons. As it crossed the gap between two wagons, a guard who was staying behind the cover of a wagon, slashed the young boar on its side, making it screech in pain again. The boar shook its head wildly and gave a roar, before it tried to charge towards that guard, who rolled to the side to get away from it. However, the boar was unable to run fast because of its earlier leg injury and it nearly fell down on the ground while trying to turn its body towards that guard.

Tesyb took the opportunity to move behind the struggling boar and tried to stick his sword straight into it, but he underestimated the strength of the boar's hide, and his sword skidded away over the boar. The other guard shouted at him, "Keep your grip strong, and don't lose your sword at any cost."

However, the archers shot again at it from its side and while one of the arrows missed it, Yufim's arrow hit the boar directly on its neck, making it completely fall down on the ground. Immediately, another guard slashed it again on its legs, making the boar unable to get up from the ground. Tesyb quickly ran towards the boar, and this time he stabbed his sword into the neck of the boar with all his power. The small boar thrashed a little for a moment as he pulled out his sword, before another guard struck the fallen boar again, until it became quiet.

Feroy jogged towards them, and said, "If two young boars were here, there would likely be a fully grown boar as well nearby. Stay sharp everyone." He shouted towards the archers, "Nurobo, Yufim, stay up there and keep an eye around us."

Tesyb asked, "Wouldn't having a spear helped us here? It would have been much safer than fighting them head on. Why didn't we take any of those from the manor?"

An experienced guard answered, "The previous baron's guards had taken the best weapons - including all the spears with them on that unfortunate trip, and we don't have any other spears left in the manor now. Do you think we came without any spears by choice?"

"We got lucky here," Feroy muttered, while poking at the dead boar. "If it was a fully grown boar, it would have been much more difficult to kill it, even though we would have had the advantage of staying inside the circle of wagons, which it might not have been able to cross."

"Certainly," the other guard said. "It was a good idea to arrange the wagons like that."

"The first thing I am doing after we reach back, is to petition Lord Kivamus to have some spears built for us," Feroy said. "It's too risky to fight such dangerous beasts without them."

All the guards kept waiting for a while, but no boar or any other wild beast came to attack them. At the same time, Mr Pydas seemed to be wiping his forehead with his sleeves, again and again, even in the chill of the night.

Feroy said, "It seems like we will be safe for now, but I will still put half of us on watch duty during the night, including an archer in each shift, just to be on the safer side." He said to the other guards, "Keep the fire burning all night, so we can see if something is coming to attack."

Another guard looked at the dead boar next to them, and asked, "Pity we can't take them with us, or the blood would spoil the grain on the way."

Feroy nodded. "Two of you, pick up the boars one at a time and throw the carcasses far away from the camp. We can't risk other bigger predators smelling blood and coming here. Another four guards will go with them, in case something is still out there, while the rest of us will stay here to protect the camp. Take a burning torch with you for light as well."

Tesyb looked at the boar wistfully. "Can't we even get some of it to eat?"

Feroy sighed. "I'd have loved that as well, but without better weapons like spears and with half of the guards barely knowing how to fight, we were barely able to kill even these young boars. Dressing these

animals would take time - time in which a bear, or Goddess forbid, an adzee can come here from the smell of blood, and we just can't take that risk." He looked at the other guards. "Now go before the boars lose too much blood here and attract any predators from the smell. Throw it at least a few hundred yards away from the camp."

Soon, half of the guards picked up the dead boar and carried it away. The rest of the guards remained vigilant, since there were only seven of them there at this point, until the other guards came back. Before long, the group of guards returned, and picked up the other boar and took it away as well. It was a difficult time, since they wouldn't be able to fight another boar until the guards returned.

As they kept waiting, the guards didn't return for a while. Tesyb spoke to Yufim, who was still standing on top of a wagon, "Can you see them? It's been quite a bit longer than they took to throw away the first boar."

Yufim stood up on his toes, and gazed in the direction the guards had gone for a moment, before replying, "I can't see anyone there. Maybe they just got lost?"

"That's the best we can hope for," Feroz muttered.

Suddenly, Nurobo, who was standing on a wagon on the other side of the circle, gave a shout, "I see them! They are coming from this side."

As Tesyb turned around to look there, he saw three of the guards walking back, with one of them holding the burning torch they had taken with them. For a moment, he thought they had lost the other guards, before he saw that behind the first three guards, one of the new recruits, who seemed to be hobbling, was being supported on his shoulders by two guards walking next to him. When they reached the circle of wagons, Feroz asked, "What happened there? You had gone in the opposite direction."

One of the guards spoke up, "Someone suggested that we should throw the second boar a little distance away from the first one, just in case some other beast had already started munching on the first boar." He wiped his forehead, which was shining in the light of the campfire with sweat, and continued, "Everything went fine initially. We found another place to throw it away, and were returning from there, when we heard something nearby. I couldn't see what it was, but it was something big for sure, and it was coming close to us."

Another guard continued in his place, "Not knowing what it was, we started running in another direction, so that we wouldn't lead it to the camp. It could have been a Goddess damned adzee for all we knew!" He shook his head as he recalled the events, "We didn't have to run for too long, before we stopped hearing the sound of that beast. Maybe he found the smell of the second boar by then, I don't know..." He pointed at the guard who had been hobbling, "But this idiot lost his footing and twisted his ankle, I think. So we had to slow down after that."

Tesyb looked at the sky, feeling exhausted after everything that had happened. "Thank the Goddess you weren't chased back here. I don't know if I could have fought something again right now."

Feroy grunted and patted his back. "Don't worry, you did okay in the fight earlier." He looked at the others who were supporting the injured guard. "Check in the firelight if his skin was cut open as well. We should have something to tie his ankle in one of the wagons. Make sure to bandage it well in the proper position. Nurobo will help you with that."

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~ Tesyb ~

~ Approaching Tiranat ~

With no serious injuries in yesterday's fight other than the twisted ankle of a recruit, the night had passed uneventfully, and they were able to leave the camp around dawn today. It was evening now, and finally, after nearly a week of being outside his home-village, they were getting close to Tiranat now. Their week-long journey had gone well, and they were able to fulfill their mission of bringing a lot of grain back to the village. This haul of grain would go a long way towards ensuring the villagers had enough to eat in the coming winter.

Soon, Tesyb was able to see the houses at the northern edge of the village in the distance, and he thanked the Goddess that everyone had returned back to the village in one piece. This time, he was sitting in the leading wagon, and he was the first to notice something was different. Usually, whenever he reached the village after returning from the coal mines, the houses were visible right next to the tree line. But this time he could easily see a lot of empty area between the approaching tree line and the first houses of the village.

"Whoa there..." The guard sitting next to him pulled the reins of the horses to slow them. Tesyb tried to look around him for the reason, and soon he saw that there was a narrow trench dug right next to the road on each side. Although there was enough space for the wagons to pass easily, it was unexpected, and he couldn't think of a reason for that. The other guard shouted towards the trailing wagons, "Keep an eye on the trenches here!"

As their wagon moved further, they exited the tree line, and here, he could easily see all the differences. A lot of trees had been cut, with some of the stumps still standing, while a few others had been uprooted completely and had been gathered together on the left. A lot of newly cut logs had been piled up on the right, with a smaller stack of planks kept nearby. There was also something quite unexpected. It was a large wooden contraption of two huge wheels with a thick axle between them. With a log kept under it, while still loosely tied to the axle, it wasn't difficult to guess the use of it, but he was surprised to see such an unusual thing in Tiranat.

Closer to the village, he saw that in one particular area, all the stumps had already been removed, and the ground there was in the process of being cleared completely. He also saw a small trench dug in straight lines there. He guessed that it must be the place where the new longhouses were going to be built.

A lot had happened in a week here, but he was glad that it was finally a change for the better. As their caravan reached the first houses, he thanked the goddess for sending the new baron here. He would have to make sure to visit the temple tomorrow.