

## Londoner 87

### Chapter 87. Scouting

Duvas shrugged. "We could certainly keep the fish in those buckets themselves, but it would be a very small amount anyway, and a single wagon of fish transported in those buckets would probably not be enough to feed even the whole manor for a day."

Immediately, Kivamus thought of an interesting idea. "That was till now, but we are digging a new pond in the south of the village, aren't we? I know we only thought of digging a small pond, but what if we expanded it further? Wouldn't that allow us to put those fish in that pond? In time, and if the pond is big enough, those fish would start to breed there, and we would be able to get a steady supply of fish here itself."

The guard captain gave a slow nod. "Hmm... That is a good idea... but digging the pond to be that big would take time." He added, "More importantly, if we just want a small number of fish for them to start reproducing in that pond, we can just transfer some fish from the northern stream to that pond. That would work just as well."

"Oh! That's right! Let's do it then," Kivamus said.

Duvas observed, "It wouldn't be easy, but it certainly can be done."

Kivamus nodded. "Of course. Digging the pond to be that big is a longer term project, and we cannot afford to put any workers on that right now, but once other things of more importance are done, we can certainly do it. And like Hudan said, we can just use the fish from the stream for that. Or, like I was thinking a few days ago, since we do need to fill that pond with water for irrigation, and it cannot be done bucket by bucket, so we will need to connect that pond with the stream anyway. And that way, some of the fish would migrate to the pond by themselves, and in due time, the village would have a steady source of fish right next to us."

"I'll let Pinoto know about this, so that he can plan the pond's location well in advance," Duvas said. "We have already told him to dig a small pond, but work on that would only start after the trees have been cleared for a decent amount of area."

Kivamus said, "Also, since we will have our three... no... four wagons back once the caravan returns from Cinran, so after that small pond is dug and filled with water in a month or two, we can still send a couple

of wagons to Kirnos to buy some fish. By that time our grain stores would start to get low, so getting those fish into the pond would help them to reproduce faster so that we can start getting at least some fish by the end of winter." He added, "I realize that those fish are habitual of surviving in moving streams, but since that pond will still be connected to the stream, the water inside that pond wouldn't be completely stagnant, especially since the farmers will be drawing water from it to irrigate the farms. It is far from ideal, but it should still allow us to keep fish there."

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~ Calubo ~

~ Somewhere on the road between Tiranat and Cinran ~

It had taken them more than two days of walking but they had finally reached the road going from Tiranat to Cinran. He and the two other bandits, whom he had named the fatso and the runt based on how they looked, had walked all the way through the dense forest, along with the single horse that Nokozal had given them. It was a very cloudy day, and the weather was getting really cold now, with their breaths visible in front of them.

The fatso spoke, while pointing at a small bluff at the edge of the forest right next to the road, "This seems like a good place to keep watch."

The runt gave a nod and pushed Calubo's back to keep him walking. Initially, they had tied both his hands behind him with a rope, but when that had led to him falling continuously, thus slowing them down further, the fatso had untied him with a warning that if he ran it wouldn't end well for the stonecutters back at the quarry. However, the runt had suggested a better solution - better for him maybe! After that, the fatso had tied one of his own hands with one end of the rope, and Calubo's hand with the other end of the rope. That still left the possibility open of Calubo untying the knot, but he didn't want anything bad to happen to Hyola, so he hadn't even tried to run. The bandits knew that fact just as well as him, so they were satisfied with that arrangement for now.

As they walked towards that bluff, the runt said, "I think I recognize this place. I'd say that we are a few hours south of where the forest starts on this road when going southwards from Cinran."

The fatso replied, "Then this should be a good place to plan an ambush, since any caravan coming south would be alert after they enter the forest, but by the time they reach here, they would have let their guard down. And from what you said about how far we are, any caravan going south would reach here around evening, which would be a good time for an ambush, since our shadows would mix with those of the forest, which would give us more time before they realize that there is an attack."

The runt grumbled, "If the chief had given us another horse we would have reached here much faster, but we had to waste more than two days just walking to this place! Who knows if a caravan is still coming..."

"You know why he had to do that," the fatso replied. "We don't know for sure where that village will send the caravan, so he had to give a horse to the other scout group on the road going to Kirnos." He looked around for a moment while rubbing his arms around himself to warm his body.

The ease with which they talked about looting a caravan, taking food from those who would be nearly starving if they didn't get that grain, thoroughly enraged Calubo. And yet, there was nothing he could do about it, at least for now.

The runt gestured towards the top of the bluff, while he tied the horse to one of the trees. "I'm so tired, man... I have traveled on this road in the past once, and from what I remember, this is a three day journey for any wagon or a caravan, which means we should have enough time to plan an ambush as long as they go on just one more trip. Come on, let's go and lie down for a while."

"I am just as tired as you are," the fatso replied while pointing towards the Arakin mountains in the east, "but it seems like it will start snowing within a few days here, especially this close to those mountains. So I think the caravan would likely be riding those horses hard, and they would try to complete the journey within two days for each side, which would shave off an extra two days from a full round trip. That means they might have already returned back."

"Stop trying to jinx us!" The runt grunted, "Why are you even thinking of such a thing?"

The fatso snorted. "Anyway, we should still take a look at the road to see if there are any recent tracks. We can rest after that." He pulled the rope tying him to Calubo. "Walk!"

They started walking around the bluff and reached the road. For a moment they just looked around the road to see if someone was coming. Seeing nobody else was nearby for quite a distance, the runt squatted down and gazed at the ground for a while. "There are no tracks here, since it seems the ground has been dry for a while. Let me look around a little more."

Then he walked away further on the road and kept looking at the road carefully. Suddenly, he started to shout, "Come here, I found something!"

As the fatso tugged Calubo towards that place, the runt started speaking quickly as he pointed at the ground. "There was a caravan here! I'm sure of it. You can easily see from these marks that a horse has passed here, along with a wagon wheel. One of us should return back immediately to tell Nokozal about it!"

"Are you an idiot?" The fatso scowled. "I can see that, but look at how dry the ground is. There certainly was a wagon which passed from here - but we can't say for sure if those tracks are a few days old or a few months old! If we are wrong about this, and Nokozal brings everyone here for an ambush while the real caravan goes on the other road, he will tan our hides! I think we should wait for a day or two to see if there really is a caravan passing in front of us before telling him."

The runt shivered for a moment, and Calubo thought it was more likely from the fear of getting beaten by Nokozal instead of the cold. "It would waste another day though..."

The fatso muttered, "Eh... who cares... I am fine with it as long as the chief doesn't give us a beating."

"Come on then, let's go back to that bluff," the runt grumbled towards them.

The fatso nodded and Calubo joined them without any protest. Making them think that he had completely accepted his current situation would only help him in the future if he did find a way to escape without the stonecutters getting any retribution for it.

Finally, they started walking back and reached the top of the bluff and lied down at the edge to keep watch on the road, while still keeping themselves hidden. They might as well get some rest. It was going to be a long wait anyway.