

Londoner 93

Chapter 93. Return of the Caravan

~ Tesyb ~

~ On the road to Tiranat ~

They had been outside the village for a week now and finally they were approaching the village again. He was thankful to the goddess that the trip had gone without any trouble. This time they had been lucky that no wild beast had attacked them on the way. There was a small scare a few days ago after they had camped in the same clearing when going to Cinran, when one of the guards on watch duty had woken up everyone with a claim that he saw a young adzee between the trees late in the night. It was a spine chilling night for everyone since it was well known that adzees always moved in packs, and if an attack happened, it would be from a full pack of adzees, unless that young adzee had gotten separated from its pack.

After that, all the guards had been wide awake and ready with weapons to fight against the adzees, knowing very well that without being fully covered in plate armor like a knight, their weapons might not do anything more than inconvenience the pack of adzees before they relished a hearty meal of freshly killed guards. But thankfully, no attack had happened, and nobody had even seen any other adzee after that. Even so, all the guards had been clutching their weapons with them all night long, with nobody getting any sleep that night.

Back in Cinran, they were able to retrieve their wagon which they had given for repairs to the wainwright, and seemingly the Goddess was smiling upon them, since they were able to hire another wagon along with two horses to pull them. Feroy had told them that they certainly could not take the risk of any information about their caravan getting into the wrong hands, so they did not try to hire any other mercenaries for that wagon. With just fourteen of them in total including Mr Pydaso and his own guard - since they had not anticipated that they would be able to get another wagon to hire, it had led to two of the wagons having only a single guard with them. But thankfully they had been safe on the journey.

Those extra two wagons had meant that this time they were able to carry a bigger amount of wheat with them to the village along with some other things. That grain would go a long way to feed the villagers in the coming winter.

Based on the cloudy skies these days, along with the bone chilling cold they had braved on the journey, the harsh winter of Reslinor was nearly here now, so the caravan wouldn't be able to go to Cinran again before the roads were blocked. They could still try, but there was a big possibility of the wagons getting stuck on the road on their return journey because of snow on the road.

A lack of wind in the forest had prevented them from shivering too much, even though it was still very cold. For a while, it had seemed that it would already start snowing on that road - especially since it went much closer to the Arakin mountains than Cinran or even Tiranat.

However, he still wished that the manor would be able to send the caravan again. He had no idea how much grain was needed to feed the whole village, and he had to trust that Lord Kivamus and Mr Duvas would do their best to keep the whole village fed. Even so, he did know that any extra grain wouldn't hurt their grain stores. That he would be able to meet his sister once more in that case was certainly not the reason behind him wanting to go on another trip. Not at all!

He shook his head to clear his mind as he saw the familiar trees of fedarus giving way to open ground a few hundred yards away in front of them. They were nearly back to the village now. He just hoped that the grain they had brought with them would be enough - since it didn't seem likely that they would be able to go on another trip, as much as he wanted to.

Looking at the wagon in front of him with bulging sacks of grain loaded on it, he couldn't help but thank Lord Kivamus for doing so much for the villagers in the short time he had been here. A few weeks ago he couldn't have imagined that even the homeless children and the elderly would be getting two meals a day - even if they had no coin to pay for it! At that time, even those with working age men in their families didn't have enough to feed their children because of the persistent shortage of grain in the village, but the baron had been trying his best to make sure that nobody went to sleep on an empty stomach.

He didn't know where the coin was coming from to buy all this grain - especially since the manor was barely able to sell any coal these days. The small amount of coal that Mr Pydaso took with him on these two trips was much less than the amount the village usually sold to Cinran in the past. Before leaving for Cinran this time, he could easily see the strain on Mr Duvas' face when he was talking to the Baron on their resting day. He had been too far to hear any of that conversation, but it had to be about the limited coin the village had. They weren't able to buy anything before the new baron came here, after all. Even so, there was nothing he could do about it anyway. He would let his betters worry about the finances.

Although it had been a few weeks since that last bandit raid, he couldn't help but worry about another such raid. Even though the baron had recruited a dozen more guards - they were barely trained as of now, and in the face of a serious bandit attack, he didn't fancy the chances of the village too much. Still, he had to do his best in what he was tasked with - and that was to protect the caravan on the journey and the manor after that.

Back in Cinran, after much pleading, Feroy had allowed him to visit his sister as long as he didn't take too much time. But he had been happy for however long he got. Isuha was living alone in such a big town, and any visit from her family would make her happy. And as expected, she had been overjoyed to see him again. Once he had given her the news that their father had now been employed as a foreman in the village - one of only two such supervisors in the village for now, she hadn't been able to stop her tears of happiness from flowing. Since his father had gotten injured a few years ago he hadn't been able to work at all. So finding out that he could still contribute to the village, while earning some coin as well was a very welcome news for her.

Just in case, he had asked her if she had told anybody about him and the caravan before leaving. However, that had gotten him an immediate whack on his head, along with a scolding that she wasn't an idiot to let that information out and risk her brother's safety! He rubbed his head thinking about that. She had hit him hard and it still hurt a little!

As they came closer to the tree line, he saw that narrow trench across both sides of the road again. He still didn't know what their purpose was going to be, especially since they were more than a hundred yards away from the last of the houses. As they crossed that trench, he and the other guard on his wagon kept a sharp eye on their surroundings - since this was the time when caravans lowered their caution and were easy to ambush, even though they were right next to the village now. This time his wagon was in the middle of the caravan so he couldn't see the village very clearly yet, but he was certainly very happy to be back to the village now.

As their wagon crossed the tree line - which was much farther from the village now, he saw that a lot of laborers were doing a variety of tasks here and there. In fact there was a worker doing something anywhere he looked around him.

It was evening now, and it was soon after sunset, with only a small amount of daylight remaining. But he could see the zeal with which all the villagers were working even in that small amount of light available at this time. Seeing everyone hard at work gave a good deal of satisfaction to him. He still couldn't forget the droopy eyes and spiritless walking of the villagers a few weeks ago. At that time nobody had anything to do, and the whole village felt like it was just wasting away. However, today it seemed like everyone was doing their best to make sure all the tasks the baron had given them were completed on time. Everywhere he looked, there was some kind of construction or other work going on.

Closer to the houses, he saw that many workers were hard at work pulling up debarked logs one by one using a rope to make another wall of a longhouse, while one side of those walls was already completed. He wasn't sure how a longhouse was supposed to look - but however it was shaped, it was certainly going to be very large, looking at the square shaped arrangement of the trench which went around those hard working villagers.

There were two such square shaped trenches, one inside the other. However, the outer one had to be above twenty-five yards on each side! Assuming that would be the outer wall of the longhouse, just how big was that longhouse going to be? He could easily see a hundred villagers living inside that building! A normal house in the village outside the manor was usually around five to eight yards on the longer side. Even the largest houses in the village were not bigger than ten yards on a side! He shook his head again with a smile. He did know that there were nearly a hundred villagers who were homeless before other villages had taken them in temporarily, but even so, Lord Kivamus certainly didn't do things at a small scale, did he?

Looking around, he saw that there were many other trenches as well. Further away from the village - towards the tree line, there were two other such pairs of square shaped trenches. He could guess that those were also going to be longhouses in the future. However, there were many other smaller trenches there as well, and those seem to be interconnected to each other and to a bigger trench going towards the west of the village. He couldn't guess what those trenches were for. Well, no matter, he would find out soon enough anyway now that he was back in the village.

More importantly, he was happy to be back home! He wasn't sure if he could have said that a few weeks ago - he had hated his inability to do anything to provide food for his half-starved parents at that time. But their situation had changed so much in the last few weeks. Now he was a guard in the baron's manor, and his father was a foreman - both of them with a regular income! Very good income, in fact, since guards and foremen were paid more than coal miners, after all. So today, it couldn't be truer to say that he really was happy to be back home!