

Londoner 94

Chapter 94. Maisy And Elsie

~ Maisy ~

Ten-year-old Maisy was smiling today, as she waited outside the baron's manor along with many other villagers for the caravan to come back. Someone had seen the caravan coming from the north, and before long the news had spread throughout the village like wildfire. So she and Elsie had been waiting in the empty area here for the caravan to pass in front of them, along with Mr Kigeir.

She had heard from others that the villagers had also gathered here when the caravan had arrived a week ago as well, but she hadn't found out about it in time that day. But today she didn't want to miss it! It wasn't every day that a caravan came to the village, after all.

So when she had asked Mr Kigeir that she wanted to go there, he had agreed easily, and Elsie - his daughter and her new best friend now - had tagged along as well. Timmy had wanted to come as well, but his own new best friend - the younger son of Mr Kigeir - had wanted to play with some wooden toys again, so he had changed his mind before leaving.

Unlike the first time when she had come here for the first free meal, when she and Timmy had been scared by such a big crowd, she didn't feel scared today - at all! There was also a brazier burning close to them, since Mr Kigeir hadn't wanted them to get sick in this cold, so he had asked a few other villagers to make some space for them near the brazier. Without that, it would be really, really cold! They were standing at the front of the crowd, so that she and Elsie would be able to see the caravan easily.

Elsie was just as energetic as ever, and kept pointing out people she recognized here and there in that crowd. Looking at her and Mr Kigeir - who had put his arms on the shoulders of both kids protectively, she couldn't help but smile. Living with his family in the past two weeks had probably been the happiest time of her life. She got three meals a day now! That was something which she couldn't even have dreamt of in the past.

Of course, two of those meals were provided to the children and the elderly outside the baron's manor, but seeing the frail bodies of her and Timmy, Elsie's mother had decided on the very first day that she would provide another meal to them at their home when she cooked for others. Maisy had thought of protesting, but when the rare smell of fresh bread that Elsie's mother had bought from the baker wafted throughout the house, she had forgotten about denying that tasty, tasty bread!

As she heard a commotion from nearby, she shook her head to stop thinking about food again. It was wonderful living with Mr Kigeir's family, but she knew that it wouldn't last very long. She had heard that the new longhouses that the baron was making for the homeless and orphans would be finished soon, and then she and Timmy would have to move there. Elsie still didn't know that they would have to move away from Mr Kigeir's house soon, and she already knew that Elsie would be sad to lose her new best friend, just like she would be. But at least Maisy would have very good memories of the time living with them.

Giving a sigh completely unsuited for her ten year old life in this world, she looked as the first wagon exited the last row of houses and started to pass in front of the waiting crowd towards the gates of the manor. Two huge horses were pulling that wagon, along with two scary men with swords who were sitting on the wagon's seat.

But as they came into the light of the braziers and burning torches kept nearby, they slowed down the wagon, and one of those men stood up and pulled away the thick cloth covering the wagon, and pointed at the many sacks kept there with a roar. Immediately, the waiting crowd started cheering and clapping loudly as well. Elsie asked Mr Kigeir about those sacks, and he told them that they must contain grain!

As more and more wagons kept coming, she tried to count them, but soon she forgot her counting as the enthusiasm of the crowd became too loud. All those wagon drivers were now standing on their seats, cheering just as loudly as the villagers. When Elsie started cheering, she couldn't help but start clapping as well. It was rare to see everyone so happy in the village! She even saw the old Father Edric there, who was one of the few people to give some food to orphans like her and Timmy.

It felt really good to her to be a part of such a happy crowd. Also, all of those wagons had so many sacks kept on them! That was so much food! She hadn't ever seen that much food in a single place in her whole life!

The wagons kept moving slowly, and one by one, they started to enter the open gates of the manor. As the last wagon entered the manor, the cheers of the villagers died down slowly, and many of them began to return back. But she would still stay here, because soon she and Elsie would be getting their evening meal here, after all. As the crowd started thinning further, she saw a few maids of the manor along with a few guards coming out of the manor, and as always, they were pushing forward a couple of carts towards them! She couldn't wait to eat the warm, tasty food again!

In the beginning, even after she had gotten food for the first time here, she had sadly thought that it was only a one time thing. Although she had heard that the baron was the richest man in the village, how could even someone like him afford to feed so many people every day?

But day after day, they kept getting food here two times a day, and slowly she had started to believe that it wasn't just a lucky dream where she and her little brother got to eat warm food every day. Now it was a regular part of their lives.

As Mr Kigeir pushed the two of them gently towards the children's line forming in front of the gates, Elsie took her hand in her own, and started pulling her towards the carts.

For the first few days, every child had to be present here to be given food, but slowly the maids had started recognizing them, so they had allowed younger children to stay at home in this cold weather if there was someone who could take the food to them. So Mr Kigeir would take two other bowls of food back to their home for his own younger son and Timmy.

Usually they only got porridge or bread with plain soup, but sometimes they were given warm stew with vegetables! She had also heard from a maid a few days ago that there might even be something called cheese given to them in the future. She hadn't ever heard about anything called cheese, but Elsie had assured her that it was very tasty! Elsie had said that she had even eaten some cheese in the past!

Well, she would decide whether it was tasty or not, after she actually got to eat it! She couldn't believe everything Elsie said after all, since she had still never seen any unicorn in the village, even though Elsie kept saying that they lived in the village too. And Maisy had even looked for them!

She would try again to look for any unicorns which were hiding in the village, but that was for later. For now, she couldn't wait to find out what they would get to eat today!

~ Kivamus ~

~ Baron's Manor, Tiranat ~

It was morning now, and he was going to have breakfast with others soon. For now, he was standing outside the manor house looking around the place, while clutching his fur coat tightly around himself.

Yesterday, the caravan had arrived back safely, and he had found out that they had even been able to hire an extra wagon. Everyone in the manor had been quite happy to know about it.

However, the weather had remained overcast throughout the night, as usual, while it kept getting colder every day. Earlier, when he had gone to do some running along with other guards, he had felt that it must be around five degrees Celsius now. While they were still above freezing temperature for now, it wouldn't be long before they would see snow here. Although Feroy had reported to him that they hadn't seen any snow on the road either, when they were returning. And since that road was located closer to the Arakin mountains, it would take a few more days to start snowing in Tiranat after snowfall started there. However, he had again seen the sun shining for a short while in the morning, before the clouds covered it again.

Of course, after giving him the basic report of the caravan's journey, Feroy hadn't wasted any time before he got... well, wasted. They only had a small amount of ale remaining in the manor now, but he had still allowed Feroy to drink, since it wasn't likely that the caravan would be able to leave again after all. He had led the caravan safely through two journeys, so he deserved to have a night of rest anyway.

Coming back to the present, he noticed that the servants of the manor were already hard at work unloading those sacks of grain into the waiting carts, before leading them to the growing stockpile of wheat in the grain barn. Thankfully, they had enough braziers now, so the servants were able to work in relatively warmer conditions under the wagon sheds. He had also gone to take a look inside the grain barn along with Madam Nerida earlier, and she couldn't have been happier to see so much wheat being stored there. It was such a rare sight for them in the past few months, after all.

Before leaving for the village alehouse yesterday, Pydaso had let him know that he would be back before noon today to finalize the payments for everything. Kivamus would have to wait until then to find out the full details of what they had been able to buy. Even so, having two extra wagons this time compared to the first trip would certainly have allowed them to bring more grain than last time.

However, even with that, they would still be short on grain by the end of winter, and they wouldn't be able to start planting seeds unless they bought more grain. The one hundred and seventy-five sacks of grain that they had estimated to feed the village for four months hadn't included any grain to use as seeds after all. That would need another sixty sacks of wheat. And from what Feroy had told him, the prices of grain would keep rising through the winter, and even if they bought more wheat after that, it would cost quite a bit more. Buying more grain now would have been much safer and cheaper for them. He sighed. If only they were able to go on another trip...

Even though the weather kept getting worse every day, he would still try to convince Pydaso to go on another journey to Cinran, as unlikely as it seemed for him to agree to that. For now, he would have to wait for him to report back. Although even if the merchant didn't agree, at least there was the consolation that with all their horses back, the construction of everything would speed up with their help.

Soon, Syryne came outside the manor hall, and told him that the breakfast was ready, and others were waiting for him. Giving a nod, he started walking back to the warmth of the manor hall.