

Chapter 12 On The Run

Escape from Kalay:

DM: You ride. You didn't say anything about learning spells, or such. You reach the fork in the road and head east. After a while you pass a merchant heading back towards Daila. A while later, it's drawing on evening. Roll for reaction (= 4). You see them. A group of nine wolves are off to the side of the road, chewing on something. They don't seem to notice you as you ride by, and don't pursue. You ride on, and make it Kalay later that night.

Thumper: "Whew! Maybe we were too hasty in leaving town! Normally, a pack of wolves wouldn't be such a scare. I hope we can find someone here in Kalay planning to go on to Madra tomorrow. But, come. That's tomorrow's problem. Let's...."

In the morning, we definitely take the time to regain "normal" spell load. Then I'll see if anyone is going to Madra. If not, we'll ride together.

DM: You are sleeping at the inn, The Tired Miner. You go down stairs in the morning, and find someone familiar to you waiting there for you. They don't see you come down the stairs. When Clethera sees them, she recognizes them as the Earl's men. She pulls you back upstairs. They don't notice her do that, and you manage to get back to your room without being discovered. You get back to your room, a private one, when you hear a tap on the window. You look over to see a man looking in. He looks rather poor and run down, dressed in very dirty and ragged clothes, with very drawn skin. His hair, despite his still young looks, is already starting to grey. He motions for you to open the window.

Thumper: I do.

DM: He quietly slides in and motions for quiet. "Thumper and Clethera? I'm Nermus. I've heard of you from a friend. I heard you two all but fled Daila, and then got here late last night. Well, as you might not know, the Earl's after you. Apparently, he's not too happy that you helped capture his pet ship. He sent his flunky Miank here to bring you back. I've been sent as a favor to help you get out of town. We need to go now. I'll help you down, but I can't be seen helping you. Miank won't have called the town guard, that would be to public for his master's taste, but he will have people watching."

Clethera gives him a scathing look.

"Look, miss, you've got two options. Either you come with me and stand a chance of getting out of here. Or you walk downstairs and try to fight your way out. At least my way, you won't give the Earl an official reason to grab you."

Clethera looks at you. "It's up to you Thumper. I'll go if you go."

Thumper, "We're going. We can talk about it later."

DM: You slide out the window, and drop to the ground. You make your way towards the gate. You do grab your horses, and occasionally have to stop to avoid people who your escort deems suspicious. After a few tense minutes, you make it out of town. You ride hard for the road. Roll for Reaction.

Thumper: Reaction=4. Assuming the reaction is after we parted company with our guide, I will slip him a 50gp gem.

I'm guessing what we find outside the town are some more of the Earl's men. I'd like to stay on the road and head to Madra, of course. But, I'm willing to change my mind if need be. I figure we have a speed advantage. Clethara and I are both pretty lightweight, and wearing no armor. Our horses are big enough that we are like jockeys; not much effect. These guys that might want to chase us will mostly be in armor. After a good chase, only the fastest would be able to stay with us or maybe gain, and those guys are going to be few in number. Sleeps on them, or their horses, should be able to take care of the problem.

Once in Madra, here's what I plan to do. First, we'll find a tavern where I wouldn't normally stay, not the tavern for sailors. I'll let Clethara make arrangements for us to spend the night. Then I'll go to the tavern where sailors hang out. I'll rent a room, be seen, and tell the bartender to keep any messages for me until morning; I don't want to be disturbed. Then I discretely (no fancy hat or ears) go back to the other place and lay low with Clethara until the next day. I will discretely go back and keep an eye on first tavern and see if anything has happened. Any of Earl's men there? I want to see if we have been followed. Maybe Clethara has some other ideas of ways to tell. Point is, if followed, we'll need to do something different than if nobody following.

“Well, I had not thought out needing to be on the run. Certainly, the treasure we found wasn't worth the enmity of the Earl. I wonder if there is a way to settle with him? Do you suppose I should send a note? Offer a token settlement? Explain that we did not expect to find that the caves were his property? May need to wait a while first, though. I'd like to think he'd rather not have me as a problem, but as a successful contributor to the welfare of Daila. Somehow, I need to convince him that, in the future, I don't need to be a problem, but if I am, I can be a difficult problem.”

DM: After you manage to get out the gates, which for some reason were open during the evening, you slip him the gem, and he vanishes.

They see you just before you notice them. A group of giant rats chewing on something. When they see you, they try to attack, but by a swerving you manage to evade them. After you ride on they go back to chewing. You are riding hard and manage to reach Madra by early morning, call it an hour after dawn.

Pursued in Madra:

DM: The gate is open, and you take a roundabout way and arrive at the Horseshoe Inn. Clethara makes arrangements for the two of you to stay for three nights, with the option of extended stay. You head over to The Mainmast Inn, and loudly arrange for a room and tell the barman you wish not to be disturbed during the day. He will keep any messages for you, and you make your way upstairs to your room. You change into something less conspicuous and slip out of the window. (Dex roll: 1) You manage to easily slip down to the street and head back to the Horseshoe. No one notices you, it's still early morning, and you make it without incident. You spend the rest of the day in your room with Clethara. Late afternoon arrives. You are sitting around in your room, discussing your situation with Clethara, when you hear something crash downstairs. You slip out the door.

You hear the following from the top of the stairs. "Listen to me miss," it sounds like a hard voice, "I'm on official business for the Earl of the Northern Reaches. If you don't bring me a drink right now, it'll be the worse for you."

A smaller voice, a woman's, "Sir, we're out of drink. The ale's gone, and the mead's bad. There's nothing to bring except for wine. That man has the last of the drinkable stuff."

"Then find some, you..."

Another voice, a man's, breaking in: "Orrock! We are not here for you to drink your pay away. Now, get upstairs and find that piece of trash. The boss wants to be done here by evening."

You hear a grunt, the scraping of a mug across a table, the shout of a man, "Hey that's mi... ." A growl, and someone move over towards the stairs.

Just as the footsteps reach the bottommost stair, the door bangs open again. "Halt in the name of the King," a voice shouts.

Everyone quiets.

"You and you," says the voice, "By orders of the King's Hand, The Most Honorable Sir Sasko: All of those who are under command of the Earl's Hand Miank, are hereby ordered to leave to city. We are here to make sure you leave. Any who choose to resist shall be arrested." The sound of maybe a dozen armored feet enters the room and nobody makes a sound.

Finally, "Alright then, Orrock, let's go."

They leave, with what sounds like most of the soldiers.

Then, the same voice as earlier shouts to the patrons in the bar, "By order of the Mayor of Madra, we, the Militia of Madra, are looking for a Thumper of Daila. He is a Captain of the cargo vessel Vigilance, and is most distinctly known by site by a pair of bunny ears sticking out his hat. If anyone sees anyone matching this description, please tell a guard."

You slip back to your room and just begin filling in the gaps of what Clethera didn't hear, when you hear a knock at your door. "Thumper of Daila. This is Captain Egrard of the Madra Militia. Please open the door."

Clethera looks at a lost for words, her face white.

Thumper: I think I'd have been out that window (invisible) well before the Captain of the Militia makes his demand. "Clethara, I'm heading over toward the Mainmast. I'll try to come back later. You might want to talk to this guy. Or, want to come with me? They may have someone watching the windows. I'm guessing it's me they are after, not you."

I do slip out the window, and should be outside listening when the knock comes at the door. I'm guessing there's something to stand on, if on ground floor the ground, if not an adjacent roof, or ledge, or something. (Surely Clethara would have thought of looking for a room with a possible exit.) At least, for now, I'm not moving further. I stay out of the way in case he sticks his head out the window (or arms). I'll also note whether there are people watching.

DM: You are on the second floor. The time in between you getting back to the room, and the guard knocking on the door, was so short that you didn't have time in between telling Clethera what was going on and going to the window. You slip out the window just as the door opens.

The Captain's voice, "By order of Sir Sasko, the King's hand, I am ordering you to tell me where Thumper of Daila is."

"Well sir, I can tell you that I have no idea."

“Then, why did the bar women downstairs tell me that someone matching his description was seen here earlier?”

“Well I have no idea. I've never heard of this Thumper.” (Ch roll=3, under.) “Why are you looking for him?”

“We've been ordered to bring him in for questioning about his involvement in certain doings of the Earl of the Northern Reaches. Maybe you didn't hear, but we just stopped two of the Earl's men from coming up here themselves. Sounds like he's done something to piss off the Earl, and we need to find out what's going on.”

“Well, is there any bounty on this Thumper, I'm looking for some money.”

“Not much, just 25gp. Why, madam, do you know something?” His voice sounds slightly accusatory.

She giggles, “Of course not, I told you I've never heard of him before in my life.”

“Very well Madam. We'll be leaving now. If you hear anything, tell one of the Milita.”

“I will be very sure to do just that.”

They leave and she sticks her head out of the window. Just as she does, roll for reaction.

Thumper: I roll a 1. Great.

DM: I'll roll for it if I need it. I assume you climb back in. You said you were going to the Mainmast Inn. So, you drop down to the street level. (Str roll: 15, Dex roll:12). Ok, you literally drop. (Dex roll to see if you land on your feet: d20=9, you land on your feet.) ...

Thumper: Six men and I didn't see them? I'd be invisible, so there would seemingly be a chance for them not to recognize me. And for me to sneak away.

DM: You are dropping into kind of an alley just off the road. Six men in uniforms (chainmail, sword, and shield all decorated with a red diamond on a white background) are standing at the corner of the building where the alley meets the main road. There is only one way out of this alley, the other way runs into a wall between the two buildings.

You didn't see them. You literally drop, but land on your feet. You make some noise landing, and two of them look over.

“Hey, I thought I heard something over there,” says one.

“Yeah, I thought I heard it too,” says the other. The group moves over, and (Dex roll=10) you just manage to evade the group.

“Nothing. It sounded like someone landing on the ground.” He looks at the ground. This isn't the main street, and it's dirt. “Yeah, look here, two foot prints, looks like they landed hard, too.”

What seems to be the leader of this group asks, “can you tell which way they went?”

They begin looking around in the alley.

It takes a little bit of time but one of them says, “Yeah!” They begin walking towards you.

You could try to escape either past the militia, or over the wall.

Thumper: If I can reasonably expect to get over the wall (how high? Etc.) I'll go that way. As quietly as possible. If not, I try to stay out of contact and wiggle my way through. It's night, after all, and I should have a decent chance to make it past them.

DM: It's actually late afternoon, but very close to night.

The wall is about 7 feet high and made of the same wood material of the Horseshoe. (Dex roll: 10 Strength roll: 1.) You make it over, and they don't notice you.

You make it to the Mainmast, invisible, without any more mishap. However, once you reach it, you notice 4 more Militia soldiers sitting in the bar. What do you do?

I Make an Appearance:

Thumper: When I see that the Mainmast is staked out, I wouldn't enter. I'd figure that things are pretty well under surveillance. I've already taken too many chances. I'm going to find someplace, say a corner of the barn. I'll take off the invisibility ring, and change back into my normal "Thumper" outfit. Then put the ring back on. I'll look for the Madra Militia headquarters. That's where these guys are from, right? I'll find a convenient spot nearby to discretely resume "visible" status.

I then stride right up to the door (gate?) and say, "I am Thumper of Daila, and I request an interview with Lord Sasko, or whoever may be acting as his agent, your Captain, perhaps. He should be expecting me."

(Thumper, Narrative):

I was liberal in spreading tips around, with 4 gold to the gate guards, 5 more to the desk sergeant, and 5 more to the aide. That helped. I was indeed taken to see Sir Sasko, "The King's Hand," who questioned me closely.

He wanted to know about the recent incident at the caves, the load of spice that Vigilance carried to Daila, and even transactions with the Red Dwarves. Also, the wreck of the Flame. I answered as honestly as I could, attempting to avoid mention of anything unnecessary that would trouble the Earl, but also making sure I was casual and open with Sir Sasko. Seems he's the King's "fixer" for internal affairs. I also told him about Lunpal, and what we found there, with Lord Harlet living in the woods with a large band of experienced rangers, claiming to be the legitimate Lord.

Well, it seems like the Earl got more than his allotted share of the spices from Madra somehow. The ship that came out of Injuma Bay to intercept us, and fight the "Return of the Flame," was none other than a navy ship, the "HMS Vengeance." It would have helped if she had displayed the king's colors. Apparently, Sir Sasko is suspicious of some of the dealings with the Red Dwarves. He wasn't so concerned about the caves, apparently. The continued existence of Lord Harlet was a surprise. I told him what we had seen. I was required to stay there at the garrison overnight. I continued to spread "tips" around and was well treated as a guest, staying in the central tower in one of the lieutenant's quarters. I took the liberty of glancing at his books, one of which described the course of the war to date. He also had a map of Oceana, the first I had seen.

By the next morning, Lord Sasko seems to have decided I was innocent of any of the nefarious activities being engaged in by the Earl, and I was given a certificate saying so. We talked a bit, and I mentioned my concern for the Vigilance. He said he would have the ship brought to Madra where it would not be seized by the Earl. I gave him 200 gp for his trouble and to help with the expenses of doing so. In all, I must have spent over 250gp in a day or so. Money well spent.

I was conducted to an interview with Lord Sasko a couple of days later, and given messages to deliver to Lord Harlet. I'd hoped Clethara would be able to go with me on that mission, but she was ill. Lord Sasko provided Dendrum, a good fighter now serving in the Militia, and Brother Hesia, who was borrowed from the Church.

We made the trip to the woods West of Lunpal, without going through the town itself, by going North along an old logging road. We happened upon some rangers who made arrangements to conduct us to Lord Harlet, and I delivered the messages. We stayed overnight in Harlet's camp. He insisted that we be blindfolded. It's into the woods maybe 3 or 4 miles, perhaps a mile or so west of the logging road, as near as I can reckon. One of them gave me a potion for Clethara when I mentioned that she was ill.

We returned the next morning with messages back from Lord Harlet, taking the southern route past the Tolbi road on his recommendation. But, at the last bridge approaching Madra there was a party of the Earl's men, eight of them, who tried to stop us. I was planning on retreat to Tolbi, but Drendum charged. Hesia and I followed him in. A couple of sleeps as well as Drendum's swings put them all down except a couple who ran, and they returned later to get slept too. Hesia rode for help from Madra, and returned with a dozen soldiers who took custody of the prisoners, who we had tied to trees. Upon return, it was in the wee hours, but I was soon conducted in to deliver the messages.

DM: Elike was the Ranger that you met first. The Lieutenant's name was Lt. Hopkirk.

When you get back to Madra, you go to the Horseshoe. You give Clethara the infusion given to you by Harlet's man, and she takes it. Immediately, color returns to her face, and over the next two days she recovers. Brother Hesia leaves to return to the church, and Drendum returns to the Militia Barracks.

My Ship Comes In, and a New Mission:

DM: While you are sitting in the Horseshoe during the day when a man wearing the crest of the Militia enters the [common] room. He looks around for a moment before noticing you. He comes over to your table. He bows slightly to you and says, "Thumper of Daila, Sir Sasko, Hand of King Charles Rupert, gives his compliments and requests your presence immediately. I have been sent to escort you to him."

This soldier is armed dressed in chainmail with shield, both decorated with the Crest of the Militia (Red Diamond with a Black Cross on White). In addition, He has a badge on his arm that you've only seen on the three lieutenants who you shared a table with in the mess hall. Also, on his shield, above the diamond, is face of a horse. He has a longsword at his side, and a helm tucked under his arm.

Thumper: Well! Hmm. I was planning to do some things to obscure my tracks a bit, but I guess 2 days... Well, OK. I have been checking by the Mainmast daily to see if any messages have been left for me there, and I paid the bartender a tip of 5 gp to "look out for my interests." I do expect to be back there, but, well, for now the lady had chosen. Glad Clethara is better.

Yes, I will respond with enthusiasm, "Well, my good man. Thank you, and I will be pleased to go with you to return Sir Sasko's compliments in person!" I assume Clethara is a witness and knows where I'm going.

DM: There haven't been any messages for you at the Mainmast.

Clethera is there and sitting with you. Also, sitting at your table is Lifaen who just got into town. When the messenger arrives, and gives his message, Lifaen gives you a surprised look. Clethera nods at you, and Lifaen just looks surprised. You go with the messenger, and are taken to the Garrison. He leaves you at the gate with one of the two guards, and he takes you to Sir Sasko's Office. When you enter through the door, the man sitting at the desk asks you to come over to the desk. When you walk over, he pulls out a bag with a scroll attached. He hands it to you. The note reads:

To Thumper of Daila, Captain of Vigilance.
From Sir Sasko, Knight of the Red Diamond, Hand to his Lumerian Majesty King Rupert Charles, etc. etc. etc.

In my haste to read the response from Lord Harlet of Lunpal, I failed to remember to thank you properly for aiding us in this mission. I hereby give you 50gp as a thank you. Also, in case you have not been down by the wharfs since you got back, your ship, the Vigilance, is now riding at anchor, and manned by a four man crew from the Navy.

The man sitting at the desk then asks you to sit down for a moment, as Sir Sasko is in a meeting with a Lord at the moment. Looking around, you see a pair of chairs sitting around a small table. The Guard who escorted you in bows slightly and leaves.

Maybe five minutes later, you hear a crash as a door opens, and someone storms down the stairs. The guard sitting behind the desk stands and pulls a sword from his chair back.

Suddenly, a man appears at the bottom of the steps and yells back up. "And don't think I haven't gotten a better offer. You'll regret today!"

The man gives the guard a withering look, and then notices you. "You! You are Thumper. Well, it looks like his Royal Flunkiness upstairs is running out of competent messengers." He gives a laugh, rather hard and cold, and then departs.

The Guard makes sure he leaves, and then shuts the door behind him. Then, a bell rings from somewhere, and "Thumper, you can go up now."

When you get upstairs, you find the door to his office is standing open. The office of Sir Sasko looks slightly different than you remember. A vase of flowers that was on his desk is no longer there, as are a pile of parchment. A set of books have vanished from the desk. As you look, a clutter of parchment is littered across the office floor, books, some torn, are on the floor, and the vase is in pieces on the floor. Sir Sasko is in the process of picking up the parchment when he sees you.

"Oh, Thumper. Thank you for coming on such short notice. Please sit down." He gathers up the last of his papers and sits down in his chair. "Before we begin, in case you don't know the name of the man who just insulted you. He is Otho, usurper to the lordship of Lunpal. He was here at my invitation, but as you saw, our meeting did not go as planned."

"Moving on to our business. I have another job for you. As I said earlier, we are short on both Diplomats, and even more on Translators. You said in an earlier interview that you spoke dwarvish, and had conducted negotiations with dwarves. Well, half of this next mission will involve just that. I need you to deliver two messages. I need you to visit Lord Rextul in Kalay, and deliver a letter from this desk. The second part of this mission will take you into the mountains. We need to contact the Red Dwarves. Thumper, will you accept this mission?"

Thumper: After receiving the pouch with the 50gp, I'm pleased, and give the man at the desk a big smile. I will give a few gold from the pouch to him for his assistance, and will say, "Perhaps a couple of these need to go to others? You would know." (I give him 5gp total.)

I thank Lord Sasko for the consideration given for that last messenger trip. Is this to be shared with Brother Hessia and Drendum, or have they been compensated separately?

Upon Otho being mentioned, "Thank you; I had not met the gentleman, and wondered how he might have known me." I'll offer assistance in cleaning up, and would be happy to go ask the sergeant at the desk to send up some help.