

Chapter 24 An Exploring Mission

A Mission for the Nomads:

Thumper: (I've been approached by a nomad saying that The Nomads want to commission a ship to find a new homeland for them.)

I tell Bardus, "I'm interested. One place I know about. Might be of interest. I don't think it's big enough. Smack in the middle of Ocienna. Surrounded by mountains. There is supposed to be a desert area. But it's only maybe two times the size of what you have now. It's well away from the coast. I can't take you there. I could try to get you close. But, isn't that the place the King says no? Do you know of that place? I don't know if any people or any monsters are there. Maybe a scout can be sent to find out. You may already know of that. Or know that it's not suitable. I think it's too small. Poorer land than what you have now, too."

"Now, say you want to go somewhere we don't know. We have to explore. Do not know how long. Maybe month. Just look to see if someplace is there. Don't need lots of people. Don't need horses. If find, look around. If looks good, come back for more. With horses maybe. So can explore. See how big. Then decide, is this the place? But, first we have to find. Maybe 5 maybe 10 warriors? Good with scouting. Patient while nothing found yet. Know how to pray for direction, wisdom. Know how to smell wind for trace of land. How soon go? Maybe now?"

I ask Grisham, "How soon can we go? I obviously don't want a naval escort, and the sooner we are gone the better the chances of avoiding interference. Maybe if there's a cargo for Daila we'd take it, but I'd just as soon skip that. We know we are blocked to the North. Saw it ourselves. I have a mind to search West, then South, see if we can pick up the barrier and follow it. Carefully. So, lay in as much food as we can, stuff that will last. Some fishing supplies too maybe. Maybe a "cargo" said to be food supplies for the record, but it's really for us. If there's a merchant that can keep quiet about it. I'll have to "lend" the ship's fund some money again. Unless our friend here can help finance things. And let's go as soon as Bardus here can go. Wonder if there'd be some professional talent around? Trouble is, we wouldn't want our mission to become well known, I think. We've got Temek, but a ranger or cleric would be nice to have. Maybe Bardus's people can do that though."

"Bardus, if not Now, where your warriors board? Here? No port in Nomad territory. If go, best quickly. Be nice to see some money, too. If go to your city, delay. Best go now."

DM: "Yes, that desert Nomads wanted as home. King say no. To get there, have to fight way through kingdom. We no want war with Loomerya."

"Nomads learn patient. We wait. We wait many years to find Home. Loomerya no wait. Loomerya try to take plains. Loomerya not have soldiers yet. Two, maybe three months. We wait. Loomerya, maybe not. You take up on offer? You come to city with me? I leave when I find captain, am told to bring captain with me. We bring back warriors and money for trip."

(Grisham) "Cap'n. I may have heard somthin'. Listening to old sea yarns yah hear thins. There might be a place. I'd need to talk to some of my people, maybe four days?"

Thumper: "Four days? That's a long time to wait. But in something like this, any information is like gold. "Yes, Grisham, if I must go to meet the Nomads before we can depart, then that's what I must do, and that gives you some time while I'm doing that. I'm going to press to make it

as quick as I can. Do what needs to be done. Find out anything you can. Maybe two, maybe three days if possible. Four if necessary. But I'm a bit concerned about that Admiral. Try to make it look like nothing out of the ordinary is going on. I'll leave the ship's fund with you (35gp). You also have the month's operating funds. I will pay for anything else needed when I get back."

"So, Bardus, you are not ready to go right now. You say I must go with you to meet your people first. Can we go now? Fast. Pronto. Immediately. Quickly. You have good horse I can use? My horse is in Madra." (If he doesn't have a horse for me, I'll try to find a good one in town that I can buy, then resell when I return.)

DM: (Grisham) "Well, Cap'n. I can try to make it three, but I'm trying to give you time to get to this city and back, and give me time to outfit the ship. Hopefully you'll bring back some of this gold they're promisin'. From what you're telling me, I figure that Admiral was gonna fire you anyway. Don't know anythin' about 'im o'course. I think 'es gonna have his hands full with all them transfers. We'll have time to get away."

"Bardus Nomad. He always ready. He ride in five minutes if you ready. Have Horse, not nomad if not have horse. Good Horse. Bardus no have horse for you. Borrow horse from another Nomad if town if want, or get horse. You choose. We ride in hour if you willing."

Thumper: I tell Grisham, "Do what makes sense. I'll be back."

(to Bardus) "I'm going to find a horse. You come. You know horses, yes? Advice. Then we go." I go out and try to find a horse ASAP. As soon as I have one, I'll leave with him.

DM:: "Aye aye, Cap'n."

So, you quickly run off to try and find a horse. You find a small stable, Black Waterside Stables, and try and find a horse. He has quite a few: (...) These are a fresh batch of horses, none have been trained or named.

Bardus says "These Loomeryan horses. Not Nomad horses. Not as good. Best horse here, I see, is last horse. It good and strong. You can get good horse from Nomads. Good Horse."

Thumper: Yep. I take the last horse (paying 45gp). I thank Bardus for his advice. "We can go now?" (I might not have everything I'd like with me, but I would have clothes for in town, hopefully heavy enough for the journey.)

DM: You buy your horse (Do you name it?) and ride out very soon afterwards. You're prepping to leave when Werning runs up with a bag in his arms. "Fer you, Captin. Mr. Grisham told me to bring you this stuff. Also, here's the cutlass your fair lass gave you. Mr. Grisham wanted you to have a weapon. (I rolled for your stuff you had on you. +1 cutlass 1, no, spellbook 3, yes, extra clothes 6, yes.) So, now you have your stuff for your trip. You leave Dale with Bardus. You see, in the short time you were packing your stuff into saddlebags, he has donned leather armor and helmet, pulled a shield with a white stallion on a green background, and is mounted on a fine horse, Spear in hand.

You leave. You cross the two bridges, and turn north to ride along the Lunpal Forest. You can ride side by side, however Bardus's horse is far more accustomed to this than yours is. You pass by a camp on the edge of the woods, one small tent. You keep riding. You eventually

reach the foothills of the Equatorial Range, and you reach the pass. As you are passing through, Bardus is in the lead. Reaction: 1. From behind a series of rocks placed in the pass, 8 dwarves pop up, with crossbows. You weren't going full out, more of a quick trot, it's too rough to sprint through, so he pulls to a halt thirty feet away, and I assume you do too.

One of the dwarves walks around the rocks and speaks you Bardus. "You not welcome here. This dwarf territory. Leave now, or die."

Bardus decides to try and implant his spear in the dwarf's head. He misses and the spear is implanted in the ground. The dwarf runs back to his lines, yelling for his dwarves to fire when he's out of the way.

Thumper: The horse's name is Nyeteemini. I do try to use the name so he becomes accustomed to it. Not the brightest horse around, so it probably doesn't matter.

I have my normal "at sea" spell load since I had not planned on making this trip and was in a hurry to go. I assume I don't know any of these dwarves. Don't have much time to act. I will immediately cast "sleep" as soon as I see there's going to be a fight, which is about the time the dwarf is ducking the spear. Since everybody's watching that, they probably won't see me cast sleep, and the dwarves should all be targetable. Priority on ones with crossbows. I'll roll some d4's: 1+2. (In case I get 4d4: 4,3) Great. I slip off behind the horse (to get shelter) and cast another: 4+2 (if 4d4: 1,2). If any are still up and unwilling to surrender or run, I'm casting MM, and I've got a lot of them(5). Here we go: 3+1(+2)=6hp, 1+2(+2)=5hp, 1+4(+2)=7hp, 4+1(+2)=7hp, 4+3(+2)=9hp. After that I've got darts, but don't want it to come to that. Hopefully Bardus has been busy as well.

Assuming we "win," I don't want to kill the dwarves. I'll let sleepers lie untied. They have 20 minutes to snooze. I will take their money/gems but not weapons. Weapons can be cast someplace not far away where they'll have to look for them and won't find them right away, but not hidden. (Maybe Bardus has an opinion, if so I'll listen to him. I'm just following a 'Not a bad neighbor' policy. No need to kill them. Leave them with what they need to survive. Might need friends someday. Of course, if one of those weapons is magic..... (let me know.) The wounded ones – I'll try to make sure they won't bleed to death, so when their friends wake up, they'll have help to get home. Are these "Yellow" dwarves? Wouldn't be red or black here, I'm guessing.

If we "lose" plans will be different. I don't want to have to use my "ring" but will if necessary, and try to get on my horse and follow Bardus if he retreats or escapes.

DM: These are 2d4 for sleep spells. So, in all 9. Although, only five of these dwarves actually fall asleep. The other three run.

So, you come over to look at the dwarves. No, these are not Yellow. They have tunics under their chainmail of Blue. They have chainmail on, of average quality. They are armed with crossbows and battle axes. You scatter their weapons, and you notice the one taken from the lead dwarf is rather nicer than the others. On its hilt it is inscribed. "I am Guntera, bringer of final sleep." Do you take it?

All the dwarves have for treasure is a combined 46gp. Bardus has been helping to scatter the weapons, but while you're looting them, he's retrieved his spear and has mounted, ready to go.

You continue, and make it out of the pass. You sprint across the plain, as night is falling. You reach the city. Well, the Nomads might call it a city, but it's really a large number of tents

and makeshift wooden structures located around the “citadel.” You quickly weave your way through the tents, following Bardus. There is quite a bit of notice of your arrival. Many men come out of their tents with weapons to stare at you. A few even mount horses to follow you.

Council of the Nomads:

DM: You finally reach the citadel. There seems to be some effort to haphazardly restore it, filling in the gaps in the wall with wooden beams, and building a set of doors at the top of the stairs, which are flanked by 4 nomads. Bardus has a quick conversation with them, and they shake their heads. He turns to you. “Council not available. We wait till morning. You have tent? No, you guest. You sleep in my tent.”

So, he takes you to his tent. It’s sparse, with a bed roll, a lantern, a few weapons, and some other basic things. I assume you re-learn spells, then go to bed? Unless you do something else, nothing happens until morning.

Bardus wakes you early and says, “Come. Food, then Council.” He takes you to a long area where other men are being fed. You eat, it looks like some sort of meat, and based on how everyone else is eating, table manners seems to be filling your mouth, then chugging ale.

Afterwards, you are brought back to the citadel, where you enter to see a large horseshoe sized table. Around the table are 16 men seated. Each seems to have a different crest placed in front of them on the table.

One of them stands up. “You are sea captain. Bardus tells that you will look for new home. We as Council, will give you gold and men to search. How much do you think search will cost?”

Thumper: Um, the axe “Guntera”: It seems too nice to leave here to perhaps get lost. Yeah, I’ll take it. Guess I’ll call these guys “Blue Dwarves.” Did we take the pass through the mountains that I’m already familiar with, or a different one? I’ll split the 46gp with Bardus. Later I’ll ask if he is interested in the axe. If so, maybe we’ll figure some game of chance that gives each of us 50% chance to win the axe, and one of us will get it. I’m happy if it involves skill, as long as the odds should be somewhere not too far from 50%. Throwing horseshoes maybe? Dunno. Whatever Bardus things is fair. I would relearn spells, with a “shield” replacing one of the MM. Is this the same “citadel” (at Darthen) that I visited before?

To the council: “I don’t know how long the search will take. I will plan to search for at least a month. A month when I’m not earning money carrying cargoes for other people. A month risking the ship in monster infested seas. What is fair? One thousand gold pieces maybe? By end of one month, we should discover something. We might discover a place where you can go. We might discover that there is no way of traveling beyond the outer barrier reef. That’s what is said. But, I have reason to hope that there is a place to go. I think there must be an opening in the barrier, because all of these sea monsters which have recently appeared came from somewhere. But maybe I’m wrong. The second reason is that the pirates have gone somewhere. If we find this place we are looking for, they may well be already there. Or, there may be more than one place.”

“So, within a month, we either find that there is someplace you can go, or we will find that there is no passage through the barrier reef, or we will find that there is a passage though the barrier reef. If there is a place, or there is no passage, we come back. If there is an opening in the barrier, we go on and explore beyond, seeking a place. If that happens, it may take more than

a month. Maybe two. Maybe longer. I will plan to come back within two months. Whether land found or not. Then you decide whether to seek further.”

“I think asking 1000gp value in gold or gems is very modest price to ask for this voyage. It hopefully will cover costs. If we find some treasures along the way, we keep half. Maybe you can add bit more of supplies for the trip. Things that may help. It will be long, and on the ship, so maybe no horses, and not too many warriors, until land discovered and we come back. Need warriors who are brave, patient, and can fight a sea monster or monsters on land. A healer would be very helpful.”

“If we are successful, and discover a place to go, then maybe you would be very generous to me.”

DM: Bardus wants the axe. He wants to have it as a trophy of dwarven weakness. He will challenge you to sword fight, to archery, or spear throwing for it.

“We will pay your 1000gp. We will give you 40pp, 3000gp, 3 goblets worth 150gp each, and a golden nugget worth 50gp. Does that agree with you? We send 16 warriors with you. Each one is warrior in need of deeds to their names. They will all carry enough food for themselves for two weeks. Nomads are not of the water, but these will be yours to command. They will try to learn ways of sea. If Nomads are to leave, they may become of the water. You search for full moon cycle? Two? Ah, two full cycles of moon. If you find home, let warriors discover. Make haste. Nomads are patient, but Loomerya is not. If Loomerya find out we find new home, they will fight for it. If you find home, and take Nomads there, Nomads be very generous.”

So, it'll take a full day's ride to get back to Dale, so if you leave now, (after you get to money given you, and your 16 companions are selected, provisioned, and ready to go, it's midday. They are willing to ride through the night to get back, but are you?

Yes, that was the same pass you know of.

Thumper: I will tell Bardus, “I would rather not be wounded in a sword fight, and I have not the strength for throwing spears well, so I will engage in archery for it.” (With my having a minus 5 for non-proficiency and no bonuses, this is going to be a laugh. I hope they have a light enough bow that I can borrow for the purpose. If not, we could use darts instead. I will lose with good grace and enjoyment. Go ahead and, shoot, I'll make 5 die rolls. Hopefully that is enough: 2 (that probably missed the target), 9, 5, 16, 16. “Hey, I'm learning!”) Hopefully this happened before the council so it does not hold things up. If you need more die rolls, make them for me.

“Agreed. Let's go now.” (I assume they are sending some extras to return their horses? Maybe selling horses? Turn them loose and let them find home? Not my problem though. Curious though. I won't say anything.)

In Dale, I'll ride to the ship, tell Grisham briefly of arrangements. Make introductions. Leave matters in Grisham's hands while I sell the horse, then return hopefully ready to go. (If the nomads have someone handling their horses, I'll give my horse to him to avoid any unnecessary delay. If we're lucky we'll be able to catch the morning galley. Of course, we have extra help for rowing. Will we need more provisions? I hope Grisham has at least a month's food supplies enough to cover our guests too. I really don't want to wait once we get there. We want to be gone before anyone decides to forbid it. (We should already have fishing gear for catching fish from the ship to supplement rations.)

Thumper, narrative:

My contest with Bardus was a joke. There were jeers, and even lewd remarks in common. I then pulled out my rabbit (the white one) and tried to hit it with darts. I actually did! Anyway, it became more laughter than jeers. Finally, I picked up the axe, presented it to Bardus, and said, "Your axe! You won the contest. Besides, what am I going to do with an axe? I give it to you." He took it.

As it turned out, only five, not 16, nomads would go with us on the exploring trip of the Vigilance. Bardus was not one of them, but my friend Darmit was. A nomad named Orestes was leader of the five nomads, and the others were Alarxis and Murcus. There was another, whose name started with "T" that I don't recall at the moment. No cleric! I suppose all these nomads are something of a ranger, but not having a cleric is going to be bad. It was not a good omen.

(In fact, where have all the clerics gone? Stark has not been around. Brother Hesias is off in Ocienia. Sister Sue hasn't been seen for several months, and Sister Priscilla was unavailable even for the relic expedition. Two junior clerics, or cleric applicants, that applied to be in my crew, disappeared, apparently after having been sanctioned by The Church. What has happened? Has the Church disintegrated too? If this is to be an "adventure", how can we manage with no clerics? With the Nomads not sending any, and with only the five Nomads plus Temek and Grisham as fighters, if fighting is needed, we are at great risk if we meet any serious hazards.)

I got back to Dale with the five nomads, and Grisham was there, ready to go. The nomads planned to just release their horses and let them find their way home. I tied mine to one of theirs, and away they went. We planned to leave Dale in the late afternoon. I am making arrangements for this diary I've been keeping to be taken to Clethara's parents for safekeeping until I return.

Here ends the account by Thumper of his life as a magic user of Lumeria.