

Londoner 108

Chapter 108. The Final Tally

Pydaso began, "This time I brought sixty-one sacks of grain with me, along with fourteen sacks of the vegetables which you had ordered. The rest of the space was taken up by more iron ingots, a barrel of ale and the commoners' soap you wanted."

He added, "Oh! And before I forget, I was also able to bring some butter and cheese this time. Those weren't cheap, but since it wasn't a big amount, I bought it anyway since you had specifically ordered me to buy them."

"That's fine," Kivamus said. "And it's good to hear that you were able to buy all of that. And what about the parchment and ink you had promised to bring?"

"Of course, I brought those as well." Pydaso added, "Now should we tally up the total price?"

At Kivamus' nod, Duvas took over and started negotiating the price of everything with the merchant one by one, while scribbling on a parchment with a quill. Kivamus tuned out their conversation, trusting the penny-pinching majordomo to get the best deal he could for the village.

While he waited for the result of how much all this purchasing would set him back, he mentally added up how much foodstuff they had been able to buy in these three trips, and it turned out to be two hundred and six sacks of wheat along with twenty-six sacks of vegetable, not including the butter and cheese.

Including those vegetables as part of the diet would reduce their consumption of wheat, and so the village would be able to get by with just one hundred and fifty sacks of wheat for the winter months, instead of the one hundred and seventy-five sacks that they had planned for in the beginning.

That left them with around fifty-six sacks of wheat for sowing as seeds in the spring, before taking into account the grain they might lose to rodents or rotting, although this being the winter should reduce that by a good amount. It certainly wouldn't be the same in the summer months, but that worry was for the future.

That meant they were still short on wheat for sowing compared to the sixty-six sacks they needed to sow to harvest their targeted amount of six hundred and sixty sacks of wheat to feed the current population of the village for a full year, while still retaining enough grain to use as seeds in the year after that.

However, while they wouldn't be able to complete all the sowing without buying more grain, fifty-six sacks would still allow them to complete most of the sowing. He nodded to himself in satisfaction. That was much better than what they had anticipated a few weeks ago. Being able to send the caravan for a third trip had certainly helped a lot in that, and sowing wouldn't have been possible without it.

Now he just had to make sure that nothing happened to their new stockpile of grain during this time. They couldn't afford to lose even a single sack of grain to a bandit raid right now. But at least all the guards were back now, and with Hudan and other experienced guards training the recruits regularly, they will hopefully be able to repel any bandit attack even before the village walls were completed.

Before long, Duvas nodded, and said, "So the total cost for this trip comes out to be three hundred and forty seven gold crowns for the food, and ninety six golds for the remaining items. That is a total of four hundred and forty three gold crowns for everything. After reducing the price of the coal which Pydaso will take back with him in the four wagons, we have to pay a total of three hundred and ninety seven gold crowns and eight silver pieces."

Kivamus looked at the majordomo. "Alright Duvas, go and pay that amount to Pydaso now. As Duvas went inside the manor hall to bring the required amount of gold, he looked at the merchant and said, "You have been very helpful to us, Pydaso. Without you agreeing to take the risk of making a third trip, it would have become a very difficult situation for us.

Pydaso gave a genuine smile. "Think nothing of it, milord. It was also helpful for me to agree to go on those trips. Now I can return to my family with my head held high, knowing that I will be able to provide for them in the winter. And while I have to finally leave by tomorrow, it's been very good doing business with you, milord. And I will certainly be back after the winter, soon after the snow melts and the road from Cinran opens again."

"I'm glad to hear that. And of course, you would be more than welcome here," Kivamus replied with a smile as well. "While I believe that other merchants will also start to come to the village by then, you will still be the first choice for us whenever we want to buy or sell something."

He added, "However, I was curious about something else. You had brought two other drivers with you when you arrived in Tiranat for the first time around a month ago, only one of which is still with you." He added with a grimace, "The less we mention of your other driver the better. So how are you planning to drive back the four wagons this time?"

Pydaso replied, "Today I'll ask around in the village for two men who wish to accompany me back to Cinran for the good wages of a wagon driver, where I will return the two wagons I had rented from the local merchants. And after that, those hired drivers will either have to walk back to Tiranat through the forests, or they could stay back there while looking for some work to spend the winter in Cinran."

"Is that normal?" Kivamus asked with curiosity. "I mean, will you even be able to get someone here who wants to leave their home for a few months?"

Pydaso shrugged. "I am not certain about that, Milord, since it is the first time that I have lost a wagon driver because of... those reasons. And because you had given me a big order, I also had to rent another wagon from Cinran. So it's an unusual situation for me as well. However, from what I know, there are always a few people in every village who are willing to do a job for coin, whether it's working as a wagon driver, or staying in a bigger town for a few months to look for work there. It's not like everyone always has a paying job in any village, so they should still be willing to accompany me back."

Pydaso continued, "However, from what I have heard in my short stays here, I realize that these days you are providing a lot of work to the villagers. If anything, there is more work to do in Tiranat than there are people willing to do it. So I'm not really sure if I will be able to find someone for it. But I still have to try." He added with a shrug, "It's not like I can leave those two wagons back here, or I would never be allowed to rent a wagon from Cinran again."

Kivamus nodded slowly as he thought about it. After a while he said, "You know what, you've been very helpful for us, so I think I can help you in this. From what I know, it would be unlikely for anyone in the village to want to stay back in Cinran for this particular winter - especially with the concerning food situation everywhere, and it won't be a safe journey either if they walk back on foot through the forests."

He added, "That journey will easily take a week or two on foot, and they might not even survive the journey, either because of the cold, or if a wild beast attacks them. There is also the fact that you will be vulnerable to any bandit attacks on the road if you travel with unarmed people as wagon drivers."

Kivamus continued, "So tell you what, I can send two of my guards with you to drive the wagon to Cinran. And I'll also provide them with two horses, which they can use to ride back. While a wagon would surely get stuck on that road if enough snow has gathered by the time they return in a few more days, the guards can just circle around a big pile of snow on their horses and move for a short while through the forest. So they will be able to return back on horses, even though any wagons wouldn't."

Pydaso looked thoroughly surprised for a moment before he said, "That is a very good offer, milord, and it does make sense. Of course, this is because the winter is still starting. Give it another week or so and even travel on horse or foot wouldn't be possible anymore - at least that close to the mountains."

Kivamus gave a nod. "That's true. But even then, it will only take the guards a few days to return back on a horse, and since the snow will still not be that deep within the forests, it should be doable. As for those horses, you can just hitch them to one of your wagons while going to Cinran, and then those guards will take back those horses before returning. This way I will be reasonably sure of your safety, and I wouldn't have to risk two of my villagers losing their lives in the forest."

Pydaso seemed to think about it for a while before he stood up and bowed. "Thank you so much for this, milord. I will gladly accept your generosity."

"You have helped us a lot in the past few weeks," Kivamus said with a smile, "so I don't want you to harm your business by being unable to return your rented wagons. And if the merchants of Cinran had refused to let you rent a wagon from them again, I would also be losing out on trading through you. So you can say that this benefits me as well."

"That's true enough," Pydaso said, "but at least let me pay the wages for those guards for that duration. It's the least I can do to return back the favor."

"Well, I already pay the monthly wages to our guards," Kivamus said, "but since those guards will also be risking their life more than they would have if they stayed back here in the manor, so you can give them whatever you think will be a good amount for a wagon driver's wage as a... let's say, hazard pay. That full amount will be just for those guards themselves."

"That... is an interesting term, milord," the merchant remarked. "But I gladly agree. I would have had to pay the wages for a week for two wagon drivers anyway if I had hired someone from the village for this, so I will just give that amount to those guards themselves. And I thank you milord, once again, for helping me so much."

Kivamus smiled. "Think nothing of it."

By then, the majordomo had returned with money, and he provided the previously agreed upon amount to Pydaso, who counted them carefully with the deft hands of a merchant, and after giving another quick bow, he turned around to leave.

However, Kivamus called him back. "Before you leave, Pydaso, I want you to try to buy something for me when you return back here after the winter."