

Londoner 161

Chapter 161 Parting of the ways

Kivamus shook his head. "No, there has to be a chain of command here, otherwise you will just get bogged down with those requests all day and won't have time left for anything else, especially once we have constructed more longhouse blocks."

He explained, "The simple reason is that the majority of the complaints from those people are likely to be petty ones, maybe something like a person wanting to change their bunk from the upper one to the lower one for some reason, while someone would prefer the upper bunk only, and these can easily lead to arguments between them. So, this way, the administrator or the supervisor of the block can solve most of the problems himself or herself, and you won't have to be worried about such things. And if there is something that really needs your attention, then the administrator can come to talk to you once a day."

Kivamus continued, "The more these blocks run themselves, the easier it will be for us, and by following a proper chain of command, this system of longhouses can be scaled up very easily. This way, even if we have a dozen such longhouse blocks in the future, you'll still be able to solve their complaints within an hour, since you will only have to meet with their administrators, instead of hundreds of people who want to have their complaints heard." He added, "So basically, these four supervisors will have the task of running the longhouse blocks smoothly by themselves. But tell them that these are unpaid tasks and this is being done just to make the longhouse blocks organize themselves better." He snorted, "And if someone still complains about the absence of wages, just tell them that their compensation for that work is getting to live rent free in that block."

Duvas laughed and gave a nod. "I think I understand your reasons, so I'll find people for all those tasks by afternoon. That's three people in charge for now including the overall administrator, and maybe another one in the future once they start growing vegetable patches. But still, why would we ever build a dozen longhouse blocks? Even if we wanted to shift the whole population of the village into such blocks for some reason, they all can probably be shifted into just three or four such blocks. So why would we need any more of them?"

Kivamus chuckled, dreaming about the day when a series of factories would be running in Tiranat, giving him an opportunity to help his people by giving them proper employment so they would never have to see their children starving and they wouldn't have to depend on charity from anyone. And at the same time, he wanted to earn enough profits through it to ensure the proper safety of his village as well as of himself from the growing list of people who wanted to see him dead.

They had been lucky that they had basically gotten off scot-free from the recent bandit raid because Calubo's information reached them on time, but he knew very well that it wouldn't be the last raid. And those were just the outlaws in these forests. What if one of the nearby nobles, or that bastard Zoricus - who had enough resources to probably buy a whole army of mercenaries - decided that they were done with sending assassins in secret or nudging the bandit groups to attack his village, and brought their own guards or that so called army to ransack his village? He had no intention of giving them any chance for that. To prevent that, and perhaps to do anything at all in this world, he needed money. A lot of it.

And to achieve that, he needed a veritable army of workers to earn those profits for him while making goods for Tiranat to consume and export. He wasn't going to be a robber baron like those in earth's past, and he had every intention to provide proper working conditions and good wages to everyone who worked for him. But he also couldn't sit passively and let those greedy nobles steal what little he and his villagers had here.

He frowned for a moment. He was thinking more like an expansionist CEO these days instead of like a mid-level mechanical engineer that he used to be. But then he chuckled to himself. It seemed like he was going to get the results of that promotion after all - the one which he had barely gotten on Earth when he was torn from his life as Steven to become Kivamus. But instead of getting just a single promotion, it was like he had been propelled all the way to the very top, where he was in charge of taking care of everyone under him. The only difference was that instead of owning a company on Earth, he owned a barony in the Kingdom of Reslinor.

He glanced at Gorsazo for a moment and grinned - who must have understood that he had gotten another one of ideas from Earth in his mind - before he looked back at the majordomo. "Never say never, Duvas. Who knows, we might just need to house a lot more people in the future..."

Duvas gave a slow nod. "As you say, my Lord. Perhaps I'll understand those reasons in the future. Apart from that, I wanted to tell you that Taniok has already started working on the jail room we wanted to build here."

Kivamus nodded. "Let's see how long it takes. We have a lot of stuff we need him to do." He gazed towards the distance and muttered, "I really wish we had more trained carpenters here."

"We can't really do anything about that right now," Duvas remarked. "Anyway, I should go to the longhouse block now to see that everything is going properly. And I also need to allot the administrator and the other supervisors there."

Kivamus gave a nod, and the majordomo exited the manor hall.

Taking a deep breath, he gazed towards the long dining table where a few parchments were rolled up with half finished drawings. It was time to work.

~ Maisy ~

~ Mr Kigeir's home ~

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It was afternoon now, and it was finally time for them to leave now. Earlier, Elsie's mother had plainly told Mr Kigeir that she simply wouldn't allow them to leave in the cold of the morning. That meant she and Timmy had gotten a few more hours to play with their only friends in this world - Elsie and her little brother - apart from a tasty meal as an early lunch for them. But she had to keep blinking while eating so her tears wouldn't start falling down.

But now they really had to go. Mr Kigeir had even closed up his shop - which rarely got any customers these days, from what she had seen - to take her and Timmy to the longhouse block himself, with his family accompanying them. Leif had to go to work as a laborer earlier in the morning, so he had already said his goodbye to them.

She didn't have anything to pack anyway, apart from a new pair of clothing that she and Timmy had been given by Elsie's mother, once she had seen that their old clothes were too damaged. They had also been given a patched up blanket by Elsie's mom today, which was actually one of the best the family had.

Stepping outside, she held the hand of Timmy, trying to put on a brave face, even though she really just wanted to hide and cry in a corner. Elsie had also been sobbing earlier, but now she was just quiet, completely unlike her usual bubbly self.

It was certainly cold outside, but she was mostly used to it from her time living in the streets. But still, she already missed the warmth of the house she was leaving now. There was already some snow gathered on the ground, and in the morning, she had tried to make some snowballs to fight with others, but her heart wasn't in it, so she had given it up when Elsie had just looked at her with wet eyes instead of throwing a snowball back at her.

As they started moving through the narrow streets, she tried looking around her to distract her mind, and saw a lot of other villagers moving in the same direction as them. Many of them were carrying some patched up sacks and wooden bowls, and a few of them even had separate clothing on their shoulders, while some of them were holding a big pack over their heads, with a few pieces of dried straw poking outside from the holes. Was that a straw mattress like the ones in Mr Kigeir's house?

She kept looking around as they walked, and before long, they were walking over a piece of plank kept over a long ditch, with the huge longhouse block looming in front of them. She stopped to look at it for a moment. Just how big was that building? It could probably hold dozens of houses like the one she was leaving behind!

Reaching close to the gates, they paused for a moment to let a small crowd of villagers pass through the gates first. And immediately, the thought that she was leaving behind her only friend along with the family who had taken care of her and her brother returned back to her mind, making her blink back her tears.

She turned around and found Elsie looking directly at her as tears fell from her best friend's eyes. Would she even be able to talk with Elsie anymore? What would happen to their dreams of becoming maids in the baron's manor together after they had grown up? Would their little brothers ever be able to do their mock sword fights with sticks from now on?

Maisy looked down, not wanting to think about it anymore. It hurt too much.

But suddenly, Elsie ran up to her father and with her hands on her waist, she asked angrily, "Why can't they stay here? Why are you sending them away!"

Mr Kigeir looked at Maisy and her brother for a moment, before he replied in a tired voice. "I already told you Elsie, I don't want to see them go either, but I simply won't be able to feed everyone if we all stay here."

"But the baron is providing free meals to all of us children every day!" Elsie retorted.

Mr Kigeir shook his head slowly. "Not anymore, Elsie. Now that the longhouse block has been built, he will stop providing those free meals. From today the food will be cooked within the longhouse for those who live there. That means there won't be any more free meals for either you or Maisy, or for your brothers."

Elsie gazed back at her, but Maisy just looked downwards again, not knowing what to say.

Her best friend turned back to her father again and glared at him. "Then she can eat half of my food!" She begged again, "Please don't leave them here, papa..."

Mr Kigeir looked at them with resignation and spoke in a soft voice, "That won't work for too long, Elsie, not when our shop barely gets any customers these days. Believe me, I have already thought of eating only half my meals for this, but such a thing isn't sustainable for our already big family..."

Maisy looked at him in surprise. Why would he say that? Why would he skip his own meals for orphans like them?

Maisy glanced towards Timmy who had been crying silently, and it hurt her more than anything else. Not wanting to prolong their suffering any longer, she took a deep breath. It was time.

Holding her little brother's hands, she started walking towards the gate of the longhouse block. And as much as she wanted to, she didn't look back, or everyone would be able to see what a big crybaby she was. Elsie was shouting her name from behind, and she just wanted to turn around and run to her. But she couldn't.

Maisy sighed while holding back her tears. She had really enjoyed spending time with her best friend and her family, but she knew it wasn't going to last. Good things never lasted for people like her, after all...

Reaching at the tall gates, she wiped her eyes with her sleeves again, and stepped inside the place which was going to be their new home. Or at least, their new shelter, since there was only one home she had known after her parents had passed away, and the residents of that home were now standing outside,

and they were probably going to enjoy their own lives without two helpless orphans disturbing them. Elsie would also be able to find a new best friend now soon enough with her cheerful personality and would easily forget about her...

She blinked her watery eyes, already knowing in her heart that it wasn't true or that family wouldn't have taken them into their home anyway. She knew it was just a silly lie she was trying to make up for herself... But she still had to make her heart believe it, or it would hurt too much.

She forced herself to keep walking further while holding Timmy's little hand, instead of turning around and running back to the only family they had known in their short lives. Tears kept falling from her eyes as she kept walking. It wouldn't be long before they all would forget about her and Timmy anyway, right?

Right...?

Chapter 162 A New Home?

~ Kigeir ~

~ Outside the new longhouse block ~

With a heavy heart, Kigeir looked at the orphans trudging slowly towards the gates of the newly built longhouse block. Elsie was hugging his side while sniffing, while his youngest had been picked up by his wife to make him stop crying. And he was already getting worried about Maisy and Timmy. Would they even have enough food to eat there? Would there be enough coal to keep the place warm?

Why had it come to this? Was there really nothing he could have done to prevent this?

Suddenly, his wife asked with glossy eyes, "What if... what if we asked the baron to give us that grain directly?"

Kigeir looked at her in confusion. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," his wife explained in a hurried voice, "the baron is already going to provide the food for the children here, so he's already using his own grain stores for them. So can't you ask him to just give that

directly to us to feed them? That way we would be able to keep them within our house. It breaks my heart to see them go away from us..."

Kigeir thought about it for a moment, a sliver of hope blooming in his mind. "I think... it may be possible, but it's very difficult to get an audience with the baron. I wanted to ask the previous baron for permission for something in the past, but I never even got to meet him. But yes, I will try. I have to try."

He handed over Elsie to her, and started walking towards the gates to check if the baron had come there as well. He even planned to go to his manor if he couldn't find the baron here.

As he looked around, he hugged his arms around himself. Although the snowfall had paused for now, it was still just as cold outside. But at least he didn't have to worry about a shortage of coal this winter.

He gazed south towards the village once he couldn't find the baron or his retinue anywhere, but there he saw the old majordomo walking towards the longhouse slowly, while wearing his fur coat. Right! He could ask Sir Duvas as well.

Walking quickly to him, even though his bad knee was aching a lot in this weather, he asked that question to the majordomo, who was only accompanied by a single guard of the manor, making it easy to approach him.

Sir Duvas looked surprised by his question. "I had already sent someone to announce it at the market square. Didn't you hear? We won't be able to shift everyone in the first block itself."

Kigeir was quite surprised by that. "I thought... I thought it was our last day with the children we had taken in, so I didn't go to hear at the market square yesterday when I heard that there was going to be an announcement there, since my family wanted to spend our last time with them together. And I forgot to ask about it from my neighbors later on, with my mind constantly worried about those children. But it's such a huge building so I thought every homeless person would have to shift here by today."

"No, no," Sir Duvas shook his head. "It is certainly huge, but it still won't be enough. That's why we'll start the construction of the second block from tomorrow. We also have some more people arriving here in the coming days who will also need more bunks anyway." At his curious expression, the majordomo waved it off. "You don't need to worry about it right now."

Kigeir nodded, thinking what it meant. "So does it mean that there will be at least a few people who have to be left outside of this block until the second longhouse is built?"

The majordomo gave a nod while looking at him curiously. "Do you want to keep the orphans at your home?"

"Yes!" Kigeir nodded immediately. "Yes, they are like my family now. And yesterday, my wife was already threatening me to find a way to keep them at home, or she would stop cooking food for everyone."

Sir Duvas laughed loudly at that. "It's good to hear that she cares so much about the children."

Kigeir asked after a moment, "So will the baron allow that?"

Sir Duvas smiled and gave a nod. "Of course. He would prefer it if the children live with a family who cares for them instead of making them stay in such a crowd here."

"That's so nice to hear!" Kigeir said with a rare grin. "Please thank Lord Kivamus for this! But can I request you for something else too?"

On Duvas' nod, he added, "These days it's so cold outside that I don't want the children - all four of them - to walk in the snow every day to the manor for food. Would it be possible for us to get that grain directly so we can cook meals for all of them at our home?"

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Sir Duvas gave a satisfied smile. "Of course. The baron had already anticipated that some people would want to keep living in the houses of neighbors instead of moving to the longhouse immediately. So at least for this winter, he will continue to provide free meals to the elderly and children who are still staying outside of the block for now." He added, "But even if we provide you the raw grain instead of providing the cooked meals for the children, now it will have to go to feed them instead of adding it to your winter stores, like it was until now in return of giving them a place to live."

Kigeir thought about it and nodded. "That is still better than what I expected."

The majordomo continued, "You'll still have to send someone to pick it up from the manor every week. I won't be able to send the grain personally to everyone who wants to let the previously homeless people stay with them from now on."

"That works just fine for me, Sir Duvas." Kigeir added, "I'll send my older son Leif to pick it up." He gave a grateful nod. "Please thank the baron for this. My children have been so happy these days to have someone else to play with, unlike the days before the arrival of Lord Kivamus, when they looked worried about the food shortage even at their young ages. And I would like to keep housing those two children with my family as long as I can afford it."

Then Kigeir thought about how it would feel if he had to let Maisy and Timmy move to another place after these kids had lived with his family for even longer.

No. He didn't even want to think about it. He looked at the majordomo and grinned. "Actually, I don't think I can let them go away from my family ever again. It seems I have five kids now."

Sir Duvas smiled at him in response and patted his shoulder. "You're a good man, Kigeir."

Kigeir nodded gratefully. "I'll take my leave then," he said to the old majordomo. "I have to give the good news to my family now." He smiled and added, "To my newly-expanded family."

He turned around, and started walking quickly to where his family was waiting. He had to find Maisy and Timmy too. He grinned again, thinking about how happy everyone would be to hear this news.

~ Maisy ~

~ In the courtyard of the longhouse block ~

Timmy was gazing downwards while sitting on one of the swings which they had found in the courtyard of the longhouse block, while Maisy had been half-heartedly pushing him from behind, so at least he would be distracted and wouldn't be scared anymore.

When they had reached inside that courtyard earlier, she had also been scared by that big crowd inside, while Timmy was clutching her from the side. They had no idea where they were supposed to go, or where they would even get food here. Would it really be a new home for them? Or would it be the same as the time when they lived on the streets? Would they have to look for and steal food from here as well? She didn't know.

She had kept moving further without knowing whether to go, but then they had seen that swing after coming inside. Timmy had become happy and had run directly to its empty seat, asking her to help him in swinging, but that happiness hadn't lasted long. Maisy didn't even have the heart to sit in it. What would be the point? How would she enjoy it without her only friend by her side?

Since then, she had been observing everyone around her to see where all the villagers were going. It seemed that in the courtyard, there were three doors on the three sides of the block where people were going with their belongings - that had to be where they would sleep - apart from another two doors on the fourth side of the block on the left of the gate, whose purpose she had no idea of. But earlier, she had seen a woman taking a big cauldron there, likely for cooking. Maybe that's where she would have to steal food from?

She gave a dejected sigh completely unsuited for a ten years old, and gazed at the ground with wet eyes, forgetting to keep pushing Timmy from behind. Why did everybody keep leaving her? First their parents died and left her, then their only aunt died, leaving them alone again, and then this family who had been caring for them had also left her and Timmy...

Why? Why!

After a moment, her brother turned around in confusion and looked at her face. What's wrong, Maisy? Why are you crying?

Maisy shook her head slowly and smiled at him after wiping her eyes with her sleeves. No. She couldn't keep crying. She had to be strong for him.

"Don't worry about it kiddo," she tried to reassure him. "Now let's look for a place to sleep, 'kay?"

Timmy gave an uncertain nod in reply and stood up from the seat of the swing. Taking his hand in her own, Maisy steeled herself and looked around them at the crowd milling about in the courtyard. How was she supposed to find where to go?

Right at that moment, she thought someone was calling her name. She looked around in confusion, but saw nobody she recognized. Right. Who would know about them anyway at this place? She must be hearing things.

She took her little brother's hand and started walking towards one of the doors in the courtyard, trying to make space between those giant people. Perhaps they could even find an empty corner inside near the fireplace. But would there even be a fireplace here? At least they had that thin blanket with them now which she had been carrying on her shoulders, which was a lot better than the time they lived on the streets. Hopefully, it would be enough to prevent them from freezing to death like their parents in a past winter.

Once she reached closer, she thought that someone had called her name once again, making her look around in confusion.

Timmy stopped as well, looking towards her, but he looked confused too after she heard someone calling his name as well. What was happening? Were they both hearing things now?

But then Timmy started urgently pulling her arm, and pointed behind her. "Maisy! Look, look!"

"What is it?" Maisy asked in confusion, as she turned around as well. And then she saw a sight she had never expected to see.

Chapter 163 Orphans No More

She saw that the whole family of Mr Kigeir was quickly walking towards them, looking quite happy, with Elsie and her younger brother in the lead, who started running when they saw her and Timmy.

But why? Why were they here again? Maisy was confused. They looked happy as well. Didn't they already forget about her and Timmy? Then why were they coming here?

But then Elsie reached closer and ran towards her and hugged her tightly, with Maisy barely managing to keep standing from the force.

"Maisy!" her best friend bawled into her shoulder. "You can come back with us!"

"What?" Maisy looked around in confusion, and saw that the two younger kids also seemed to be crying while trying to punch each other at the same time... Perhaps it was a way of showing how much they cared about each other?

Elsie took a step back and looked at her face. "You can live with us now! Papa asked some bigwig and he allowed it!"

Maisy blinked in surprise, her heart beating loudly. Was that really possible? Could she and Timmy really go back to live with them again? Elsie wouldn't joke about that, right?

Then she looked behind Elsie, and saw Mr Kigeir and his wife also reaching there with wet eyes and huge smiles on their faces. Were they crying as well? But why?

Reaching closer, Elsie's mom bent down and pulled all four children closer and hugged them, while starting to cry openly.

After a moment, Elsie's mom looked at her. "I am sorry, Maisy! I am so sorry that we let you both go away from us! Please forgive us! I will never let that happen again!"

What was happening? Maisy didn't know what to think about, although her eyes had also started tearing up without her permission.

Was it really true? Was this really happening or had she fallen asleep near the swing and started dreaming?

After a while, Elsie's mom stood up, while still holding her and Timmy, and looked at them in the same way that she looked at her own children. "You can come live with us now," she said. "Both of you."

Maisy's mind had seemed to have stopped working by now and she couldn't think properly. Her heart had realized what was happening, but her brain still refused to accept it. She tried to say something but her voice had stopped working too. And all the time Elsie had been clutching her from her side, while Timmy was still holding her hand.

She felt a lump in her throat, but then swallowed to get her voice working again. "Is it," she whispered, "is it really true? You are not leaving us here?"

Elsie's mom started crying again, and bent down again to clutch all the children once more. "Yes it's true! And don't you worry, I will never let you go away again! You both are also my children from today." She looked at her and Timmy for a moment and grinned with teary eyes. "You both have a mother and father too from today."

Maisy blinked her eyes, trying to clear them at least a little bit, and looked at Mr Kigeir, who had been standing nearby while rubbing his eyes. When he noticed the question in her eyes, he gave a smile and nodded.

At this point, Maisy's brain simply gave up any more protests, and she began crying openly as well while holding Elsie's mom tightly. And before long, Timmy and other children joined her as well in another group hug.

She didn't know how long it took for all of them to calm down, but eventually she wiped her eyes and saw that Elsie's mom - no! her mom! - was looking at all of them lovingly. Then she looked at Mr Kigeir - no, she looked at papa! - who gave a nod.

He wiped his eyes as well, and gazed at all four children for a moment with a smile. Then he grinned. "Come on children. Let's go home!" He held the hands of both boys, while Elsie's mom - no! her mom! - held the hands of the girls, and they started walking towards the gates of the longhouse block.

Maisy's heart was still beating too fast. Even though she had realized by now that it wasn't a dream, she was still surprised that somebody would even care about orphans like her, whom nobody used to give a second glance in the past, even if they were hungry or homeless. But it seemed like things were finally changing for them now, since they weren't really orphans anymore, were they? It still felt weird for her to think of that, but perhaps good things could really happen to people like her and Timmy in this village...

As they exited the gates and turned towards the village to go to their home - to her home - she looked back at the huge building, and couldn't stop tears from falling from her eyes again. This place had been her home for less than an hour, but it was always going to be one of her most favorite places in the village, no matter where she lived.

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This was where she had found her new parents, after all.

~ Kivamus ~

~ Baron's manor ~

It was late evening now, and it had been two days since the longhouse block had been completed. Thankfully the shifting of villagers had gone without any major incident yesterday. There were still a few scuffles about the choice of bunks, as well as the decision about who would have to stay on the floor, but Duvas had been able to resolve it by himself. They had also transferred a decent amount of grain and coal to the storeroom of the block, as an advance on the weekly grain quota they were giving the laborers.

This meant that apart from a few exceptions, they also wouldn't have to pay any extra grain to those who had been acting as temporary innkeepers by taking in the previously homeless people. The amount of food that the maids had to cook had also gone down significantly, with the meals of the majority of the elderly and children being prepared in the kitchen of the longhouse block from yesterday.

Earlier today, the jail room had also been completed by Taniok and a few other laborers with the help of the log-mover. It was a simple enough room made of logs, with wooden bars on its only window, and a way to securely lock the doors from the outside, so any prisoners wouldn't be able to escape this time. Hopefully, Feroy would be able to find the culprit of Sejkil's death soon, and the jail wouldn't have to stay empty for too long.

He took a deep breath. The completion of the longhouse block was a good start for all the construction he wanted to do in the village. But it was only a start. There was still a lot to do.

As he gazed at the others sitting inside the manor hall with a satisfactory smile on everyone's faces, he remembered something. He wanted to see a line of factories running in this village in the future, but that simply won't work if basically every single worker was illiterate. Even if it might not be feasible to make them as knowledgeable as an employable college graduate on Earth, the villagers still needed to know a lot more than what they did currently.

He looked at others. "Duvas, I have been thinking about something for a while, and I think now we have a good opportunity to act on it."

"What is it, my Lord?" the majordomo asked.

Gorsazo and Feroy looked at him curiously as well.

"How many people would you say are literate in the village?" Kivamus asked.

Duvas thought about it for a moment. "I haven't personally asked every villager about this, but I don't think there are more than a handful of them - mainly the merchants and shopkeepers - who can do some basic reading and writing. Apart from them, the rest of the villagers won't be able to even write their own name."

"That's mostly what I expected," Kivamus muttered. He gazed at everyone. "But this is something that I want to change from now. I want to start a part-time school..." Seeing the confused look on the faces of Feroy and Duvas, he elaborated, "uh, a place where everyone will be taught about reading and writing in the longhouse block. It wasn't feasible earlier, but now we have a place where a lot of villagers will be gathered together, so this will be a good chance for us to start educating them." He added, "And I don't mean educating just the children. I also want the adults to get educated, no matter how old they are."

"But... why?" Duvas asked with a frown. "What would the villagers even do with that knowledge? Shouldn't they be using that time to work and earn for their families? And only noble's children get educated anyway. What use would a commoner have for such knowledge anyway? They don't need to be able to read to cut a tree or do any farming work."

"I agree with him, milord," Feroy commented. He added with a snort, "I can't differentiate my own written name from a bear's scratch marks on a fedarus bark, but that hasn't stopped me from slitting a bandit's throat whenever I've needed to, you know?" Then he scoffed, "And why would anyone choose to get educated? I wouldn't want to stare at a Goddess' damned parchment for hours if my life depended on it!"

Gorsazo remained quiet, but he was looking at Kivamus with a knowing glance. While his old teacher still barely knew anything about life on earth, he was always curious to learn more from him, and Kivamus kept telling him stories about the kind of wonders which people took for granted on earth. And he had always emphasized to Gorsazo that more and more people getting educated had been one of the major catalysts of all the inventions and improvements on Earth.

It was certainly true that only a very small percentage of people had been the ones who had invented the majority of things in the very beginning of the Earth's industrial revolution, but you could never know who would turn out to be that kind of genius. For any of that to happen, they needed at least the very basics of knowledge and education. And that's what he wanted to provide here. So he knew that he could count on Gorsazo's support in this for certain.

He explained, "I don't want this village to be dependent just on selling coal in the future. It is simply not a very reliable source of income, not to mention it is barely profitable, seeing the state of the village when I arrived here."

Duvas nodded on hearing about the low profitability of coal mining, but didn't say anything.

Kivamus continued, "And I have a lot of plans to change that in the future after we have managed to grow our own grain from next year. But for that, I will need a much better educated workforce, or at least one where the workers are not completely illiterate."

Seeing that the majordomo still looked unconvinced, he asked, "Tell me Duvas, how did you become the majordomo of this manor?"

Chapter 164 Duvas

"Uh... what do you mean?" Duvas asked with confusion. "How is that relevant here?"

"Just humor me," Kivamus insisted.

Duvas took a deep breath. "I didn't really have a choice in that. I was born as the fifth son of a minor noble in the City of Risalis, in the far north of the kingdom."

Kivamus thought about it from the memories he had inherited. "Yeah, that's one of the four major cities of this kingdom including Ulriga and the capital Dorastiz."

Gorsazo nodded at him, probably feeling proud that he had managed to remember it.

Duvas continued, "Indeed, the last one being Plumron, which is famous for its luxury soaps made by its soap guilds. But I digress. As you can guess, the oldest son would go on to become the next baron after our father died, while the others wouldn't get any land or title. We were expected to either join the temple or train to become a knight. But I was never very strong physically, so becoming a knight was never an option for me, and it didn't interest me anyway."

He elaborated, "I joined a temple of the Goddess in Risalis as a priest or rather, as a disciple - which I remained for many decades. Later on, I migrated to the south of the kingdom in the process of spreading the Goddess' words to people, and eventually to Cinran. However, reading the books available in various temples interested me a lot more than providing blessings to the people who visited there."

Duvas added, "The previous baron of this village used to visit the temple in Cinran, where I got introduced to him. And when coal mines were discovered in the south and he was appointed as the first Baron of Tiranat, he invited me to come with him, since he needed someone educated and trustworthy who could take care of his accounts, while also acting as a conduit to the Goddess for him."

"Probably to forgive his long list of sins..." Feroy muttered.

Duvas glared at the ex-mercenary but didn't say anything to him. Looking back towards Kivamus, he added, "And that's how I became the majordomo of this manor."

Kivamus nodded slowly, thinking about it, then asked, "Now tell me, what would have happened if you weren't educated?"

Duvas hesitated before replying. "Uh... I am not really sure, my Lord. As a son of a noble - no matter how minor - I was always going to get basic education anyway, just like my brothers."

"Yeah, that's one of the privileges of being born in a noble's family," Kivamus remarked. "But still, try to imagine if you weren't educated for some reason. Then where would you be today?"

Duvas gazed into the distance. "If I wasn't educated... which would probably have meant that I didn't have any interest in reading books, then I wouldn't have tried to join a temple of the goddess. In that case, I guess I would have tried to become a knight." But he immediately shook his head, and added, "No, that would never have worked with how frail I used to be as a child. Then..." The majordomo gave a sigh. "I guess I would have wandered here and there, looking for work. Perhaps as a laborer, or maybe even as a coal miner..."

"Now you must be getting what I mean," Kivamus said. "You couldn't have known as a child that you would become a majordomo after thirty or forty years in the future, so there was no real reason for you to get educated at that time, was it?"

Duvas nodded slowly. "If I wasn't born as a son of a noble, then yes, I might not have chosen to spend my time learning to read and write at that young age. Not that I could have afforded it anyway, since I would have had to work every day just to earn my meals." He exhaled. "Now I see what you mean. Getting educated created an opportunity for a comfortable life for me decades after that decision, and without that, I would probably either be working as a laborer today, or I might have become a slave if I couldn't have paid the debt that I would certainly have taken to feed myself. Or more likely, since I wouldn't be able to do any hard work at this age, I might even have starved to death at some point..."

Kivamus gave an understanding nod, recognizing the harsh realities of this world. "And tell me, when the previous baron chose you as his majordomo, did it matter whether you were born as a noble?"

"Not really, my Lord, though it certainly didn't hurt my prospects," Duvas replied. "He just wanted an educated man to keep his books, and someone who would be honest enough, which any disciple of the Goddess' temple is expected to be. I have known other disciples in the past who were from a commoner's background but they had still been chosen to become a majordomo or a bookkeeper by other nobles."

Kivamus smiled. "And that's exactly the reason why I want to give an opportunity to everyone in this village to become educated."

Thinking about the writing system of this kingdom, he already knew that while the alphabet used here was quite different from those used for English, it was still a similar language which used only twenty-nine characters and didn't use any pictures or logos as symbols for its letters. The number system used was also a decimal one with base-ten, which meant that once people had the basics of the language well-understood, it wouldn't be difficult to build upon it to teach them advanced concepts in the future, just like it was done in English on Earth. However, that would be far in the future. For now, they had to start from the very basics.

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He began, "I have many plans for the future which will require a better educated workforce. But even if all they can learn is to write their name and do very basic addition and subtraction, it would still allow the villagers to prevent themselves from getting cheated by a swindling merchant. And who knows, maybe one of them would get an opportunity to become a majordomo to another noble in the future."

At this point even Feroy looked thoughtful.

Gorsazo nodded. "I support this idea. I was born as a commoner with nearly nothing to my name, but I was able to teach the son of a Duke only because I got a rare opportunity to become educated and I took it."

Duvas seemed lost in thoughts for a while, then he nodded as well, while looking at Kivamus. "Alright, I agree with you too. Although I don't know where you even get such weird ideas anyway. I would never have thought of trying to educate commoners when they could be working to feed their families."

Kivamus glanced at the majordomo and shrugged, trying to deflect the question. "My mind works in different ways from others, you already know that."

Duvas gave a nod and thankfully, he didn't pursue it further. The majordomo asked, "While I understand your reasoning now, I still don't know if the villagers would want to do it in the first place. Like I said, they all would prefer to work more so they can earn more for their families. Nobody would choose to skip a day of work to sit in a... school."

"That could be a problem..." Kivamus muttered with a frown.

Gorsazo spoke up again. "Then why don't we make it conditional?" At everyone's confused look, he elaborated, "We are providing a place to live to the villagers who are staying in the longhouse block, and we are also providing free meals for most of them. We can just make one of those things conditional on attending those classes regularly."

Kivamus nodded slowly. "That could work. Even so, it would be better if the classes are held at a time when the majority of villagers are already gathered there without it disturbing their work hours. So it can't be during the day, and they have to leave early in the morning for work. So evening seems to be the only feasible time for this. We can make it such that the condition for getting to live without rent in that longhouse block is attending those classes in the evening. And if they don't want to attend those classes, they are free to leave the longhouse block." He shrugged. "But nobody is really going to do that, so attending those classes will basically become mandatory for them."

Duvas nodded. "That should take care of it. But who will even teach there? Even for a single longhouse block it will take at least an hour if we want to meaningfully teach them anything. And I simply don't have that much time to do it." He added, "Even if I somehow manage to do it for now, but when the second longhouse block is completed, and maybe even more of them as you have planned, then it will simply become unfeasible for me."

Kivamus thought about it and even considered doing it himself. However, while he was easily the person with the most modern knowledge here, he had absolutely no experience of teaching anyone, not to mention the people would basically be at kindergarten level in terms of education, so he wouldn't even know where to start teaching them. More importantly, as important as it was to make his villagers literate, his time was likely better used to find practical implementation of his knowledge, to make the village self-reliant, as well as to make it strong enough to defend from any bandits or nefarious plans of other greedy nobles.

He gazed at the occupants of the room and snorted when he tried to imagine Feroy as a school teacher. The children would run away from him for sure. Or perhaps they won't... since the guy did know how to blend in. Either way, that only left Gorsazo, who was probably the best option for them anyway with his experience. But before he said anything, his former teacher looked at him.

"Why don't I do this?" Gorsazo asked. "I have worked as a teacher for a long time, even if I was only teaching a single person in the past." He added with a smirk, "Also, I don't have those uh... otherworldly blueprints in my mind to spend my time on - like you keep drawing on those parchments - nor do I have other supervisory responsibilities in the manor like Duvas. So it's not like there is any other feasible way to teach them other than me, if you really want to do this."

Kivamus was still trying to calm his rapidly beating heart when he thought that Gorsazo was going to spill the beans a moment ago. He nodded, glaring at his former teacher. "Okay then. You will be the teacher for the long house block in the evenings. Start from the very basics and..." He paused. "Actually, you know far better than me about what to teach and how to do it. So I'll leave it up to you."

Gorsazo nodded, still smirking at his play of words earlier. "Of course."

Duvas asked, "But that's only a small part of the village living in that block. What about the rest of them?"

"Let's take it one step at a time," Kivamus answered. "The news about free education would spread in the village soon enough, and any other children who are curious can join the classes inside the first longhouse block. For the remaining adults, we will have to wait until the second block is constructed. Then we can provide another class there." He added, looking at his former teacher, "And in the future, if it reaches a stage where it is getting difficult for you to manage your time between different blocks, we can think of another solution at that time."

"That will work for now," Gorsazo agreed. "I'll start the classes from tomorrow, if Duvas spreads the word by then that getting to live there for free means everyone has to attend the classes."

Duvas gave a nod. "I'll do it myself tomorrow morning before the workers leave for work from the block."

Kivamus looked at the ex-mercenary and smirked. "You wouldn't be interested in joining as a student too, would you?"

Chapter 165 Divine-Stone

"Not on my life, milord!" Feroy exclaimed with a grin. He seemed to be thinking for a moment before he added, "But you know, maybe I'll visit that school, after all. Just to keep an eye on everyone there, you know? I want to make sure nobody causes any trouble for our only teacher."

"Of course," Kivamus smirked, easily guessing the real reason.

At that moment, the outer door of the hall opened and a guard walked inside. "Milord, the two guards we had sent to escort Pydaso to Cinran have just returned back," he reported.

"Oh, that's really good to know," Kivamus said, and waved off the guard so he could return to his duties. He looked at others. "They will ease up the workload on our guards until Hudan and the others are back from the quarry."

"I wonder how that is going," Gorsazo mused.

"There isn't any need to worry about Hudan, you know?" Feroy remarked. "He can easily take care of any bandits there, especially since Nokozal wouldn't have reached there yet while walking on foot. I'd say the guards must be on their way back now."

"Let's hope so," Kivamus said. How he wished there was some way for him to contact Hudan immediately, just like on earth. Alas, nothing could be done about that here.

Thinking about Earth made him remember meat and all kinds of meat dishes which he liked eating. But these days they were barely getting any meat in their meals. He asked the majordomo, "Are the hunters still not able to find enough animals to hunt out there?"

"For the first few days they were getting successful in catching small game like rabbits and such, since they weren't going too far," Duvas replied. "But now that they have started going further to hunt for bigger game, it hasn't been very productive. One of the major reasons which I have heard from them is that they keep getting lost in the forests, since even this light snowfall has been enough to cover the ground there, and with the heavy clouds obscuring the sun most of these days and everything looking white on the ground, it is hard to find any natural markers, so they keep losing track of their location."

He added, "There is no real shortage of animals out there, but these days the hunting groups spend most of their time just finding their way instead of actually hunting."

Kivamus thought about it for a moment. It was true that without access to any modern gadgets like a GPS locator, which would also include the function of a compass, it would be quite difficult to find their way inside the forests in winter, especially since there weren't any roads there either.

Feroy snorted, "I'd say they are just not used to going into the forests. I'd never lose my way there."

Duvas shrugged. "Well they haven't lived in the forest for years, unlike you, and with the previous baron not sending them on any hunting trips, they don't have any real experience going into the forests. And our few skilled hunters have also barely entered the forests to put some traps there for small animals. Even they barely have any experience of going deep into these forests."

Kivamus nodded, "It's not their fault, but the result is the same. We still aren't getting enough meat to supplement our diets and ease the burden on our grain stores."

"In that case, I could also go along with them from now," Feroy suggested.

"It won't really help much," Kivamus replied, "since you can only be with a single hunting group at a time, and the other groups would still keep getting lost. And we need someone trusted here to oversee the guards. Maybe we can consider sending you with one of the groups later once Hudan is back."

He thought about whether there was any way for him to make it easier. If only he could make a compass here... He asked, "Do we have any magnets here?"

"Uh... a magnet?" Feroy asked in a confused voice.

"Something on which you can stick anything made of iron," Gorsazo replied.

Duvas muttered while stroking his mostly-white beard, "I think I know what you are talking about, but there is nothing like that here." He added, "I've seen some of the nobles keeping something similar as a trophy though. They show to their visitors that their divine-stone can be stuck to their swords or iron shields going against the power of the ground to pull everything down, and according to them, it proves their devotion to the Goddess as well as their rightful place as a noble."

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The majordomo shrugged, "But even after I saw it myself in Risalis a long time ago, I didn't believe that the Goddess had anything to do with such a stone, as weird as it was, but I had no better explanation either."

Kivamus gave a nod. So people here did know about magnets, which was probably obvious, but it wasn't common enough for him to get access to it easily.

He explained, "Yeah, that's exactly what a magnet is, but there are a lot of better uses for it apart from those nobles showing some petty tricks with it. And I can assure you that divine power has nothing to do with the effects of a magnet. It is often found in nature by the name of lodestone." He thought about how to explain the reason in simple words. "As for the reason it can attract iron, I have read in a book that there is a special alignment of iron particles inside it which gives it those powers. It is a little more complex than that, but you can easily recognise it when a piece of iron gets stuck to it."

Feroy seemed to be gazing into the distance. "I think... I know what you are talking about. I've been to a place somewhere in the Southern forests, where I had kept my sword on a small rock when resting, but when I went to lift it, it was very difficult to remove it from that rock. Some of the mercenaries along with me were thinking there was a ghost of someone they had killed hiding in that rock, who didn't want me to take the sword back from that rock as revenge. Did you mean something like that?"

Kivamus nodded excitedly. "That sounds exactly like a lodestone embedded in another rock! And there was no ghost there. Do you remember where it was? We could send someone to pick it up."

Feroy shook his head reluctantly. "It was years ago, milord..." He seemed to be thinking for a moment before he added, "I think we were somewhere near the Nisador mountain range in the South, probably closer to Girnalica. But it was just a small rock. There is no way I could find it again."

Kivamus sighed. He was getting excited for nothing then. How could he expect someone to remember the location of a piece of rock which couldn't be more than a foot big, if that. "Never mind then."

"But what would you have done with it anyway, if you had that... lodestone here?" Feroy asked curiously.

"I wanted to make a compass with it to help our hunters find the directions easily," Kivamus replied. "Do you know what that is?"

Feroy shook his head, probably having never heard of it as a commoner, but Gorsazo asked, "You mean like that costly thing sailors use to find direction on sea journeys? I've heard that they hang a small piece

of a special type of stone on a string, which helps them in finding out the directions. I think it is sold in the markets of Ulriga since it is a major port, but I don't know any more than that."

Kivamus nodded. "Yeah, that's a compass alright, although it sounds quite primitive if they are just hanging a lodestone directly on a string. I was thinking that if we had such a lodestone here, and if I could provide even a simple compass to our hunting groups, it would become much easier for them to find their way in the forests, no matter whether it was covered with snow or not."

"Well, we can't help it then," Duvas said with a shrug. "It's not like we can buy a lodestone from Ulriga right now, and that's if we even had the coin to afford it, which we certainly don't."

Kivamus gave a reluctant nod. It wasn't like he could create lodestones out of thin air.

Duvas changed the topic. "I also wanted to tell you that the first wooden wheelbarrow was completed by Taniok's apprentice today. A few servants have already tried it and it works well enough."

"That's really nice," Kivamus praised. "Tell him to keep making more of those, since the more wheelbarrows we have here, the faster the construction of everything will go."

Duvas nodded. "I'll let him know. Apart from that, we also received six repaired leather armors from Leah earlier today from the damaged ones which we had salvaged from the bandits. She had to use up two of them to patch up the remaining six armors. So that's certainly a loss for us."

Feroy interrupted, "Maybe, but getting even those six extra armors will likely be enough to outfit all of our two dozen guards with them. And we can only thank Nokozal for that."

Everyone laughed at that, before Feroy continued, "Earlier in the evening, we got three more women who wanted to work as manor guards. So after Sir Duvas verified that they were trustworthy, we hired them as well."

Duvas began, looking at Kivamus, "Your idea to use the women of the manor to give a speech in the market square seems to have worked, and now we have five women guards in total, though I am still not sure about how effective they will be in a real fight. Either way, I think we might get a few more applicants in the future, since a few more of them looked interested when I gave the speech last time."

Kivamus nodded in satisfaction. "The bandit attack might also have a hand in their willingness to join us as guards, since without any village walls around Tiranat, we were unable to prevent the bandits from reaching inside the village and everyone felt fearful that night. Also, since most of the women who are joining us are likely to be those who were living alone, the safety of living inside the manor would also have motivated them to join up as guards."

He continued, "Still, making crossbows is something I want to start as soon as I can, and today I already finished up a basic design of it, but we need Taniok to get more free time before we ask him to do this, since I don't think his apprentice can craft the intricate parts by himself. Although I think we can start giving orders to make the metal parts of the crossbows to Cedoron."

He thought for a moment, and looked at the majordomo. "Tomorrow morning, send a servant to him and ask him to come and meet me, so I can talk with him about this."

Duvas nodded. "I'll let him know." Then he frowned, "But how do you know that your design will work for sure?"

Chapter 166 A Hammer, A Rod and A Nail

Kivamus snorted, "I don't know that for sure. It's not like I have any experience in making real crossbows, even though I know the basic concept of how they are supposed to work. So it will certainly need some trial and error. But the earlier I start discussing it with the blacksmith, the sooner we can begin making them here after figuring out any problems in the design."

"Of course, that makes sense," Duvas replied before he gave a chuckle. "I can't wait to see the day when our female recruits will be able to go one on one against a trained guard."

The next morning, Kivamus was pacing in the manor hall, still thinking about what could be done to help the hunters. He had been thinking up ideas from Earth and then discarding them one by one, every time because constructing such an advanced thing wouldn't be feasible here.

Duvas had already told the blacksmith to come to the manor and now the majordomo was sitting near the fireplace along with Feroy, while Gorsazo had gone to visit the longhouse block, probably to start planning where and how he could teach the villagers. Lucem and Clarisa were sitting on the floor, on the

hide of a huge bear near the long dining table, while Lucem tried to build some kind of a miniature house from a few pieces of wood he had gathered from somewhere.

As Kivamus watched them while walking, Lucem picked up a piece of wood, and probably trying to imitate a carpenter, he struck on one end of it with another piece of wood. And all of a sudden, Kivamus remembered something which could still help them here.

"That's it!" he exclaimed, making everyone look at him. Since yesterday, he had felt that he had been forgetting something, and seeing the kid strike a piece of wood with another had reminded him of another way that a piece of iron could be magnetized easily, and with no special equipment needed for it.

He quickly walked to the outer door, and after calling up a servant who looked to be barely twenty years old, he told him to bring a straight bar or a rod of iron from somewhere - the thinner the better - along with a hammer. He also asked to bring some small pieces of iron, but Lucem interrupted and asked if a few nails he had seen kept somewhere in the manor house would do. Kivamus grinned and sent them both to bring those things in the manor hall.

By this time Duvas also looked curious, but when he asked about it, Kivamus told him to wait until he was ready with everything here. As they kept waiting, Gorsazo also returned into the manor hall while rubbing his hands together after braving the cold weather outside.

And soon, the servant had brought a hammer and a short iron rod, which was around a foot long, while Lucem had returned with a bunch of small iron nails. After sending the servant back, he scattered those iron nails on the long table, and picked up the iron rod in one hand and the hammer in another. He looked at the curious audience, which had now grown to also include Madam Helga and Syryne, who had been called up by Lucem earlier, and then he started to explain.

"You see," he began, "our planet..." and he suddenly stopped before he said Earth. Thinking quickly from his old memories, he remembered that this planet was known as Eranityn. He continued, "I read in a book that our planet Eranityn has something called a magnetic field, which is what allows the compass of a sailor to work. So what I'm gonna try to do here is to make a temporary magnet by hitting one end of this iron rod with the hammer, which will realign the uh... small particles of iron inside the rod into the same direction, due to which this rod will start to act like a magnet."

Seeing that everyone looked lost by now, he said, "Let me demonstrate first." And just as he was going to hit it, he remembered something else. He couldn't just hold the iron rod in his hands and hit it to

make it a magnet. There was a reason why people didn't just do it here already, because they didn't know about another important requirement to do this - the iron rod had to be aligned in parallel with the planet's magnetic fields when he hit it or it just wouldn't work.

While he could guess that the magnetic dipole of this planet would likely be aligned in the north to south direction just like earth - mainly because sailors had already been using a primitive form of compass to navigate in this world - but the magnetic inclination, which was the angle of the planet's magnetic field line with the surface of the ground was just as important here. And that depended on their current latitude on this planet, which he wasn't sure about, since the original Kivamus had probably never really looked at a world map of Eranityn. Although he did know that they were located in the northern hemisphere of this world, he needed more accuracy than that.

He looked at Gorsazo. "You must have seen some kind of map of the world, right?" Once Gorsazo nodded, he asked, "Then can you give me a rough estimate of how far north we are?"

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"Uh... how am I supposed to do that?" Gorsazo asked with a frown.

"Hmm..." Thinking quickly, Kivamus clenched his left hand into a fist, and pointing to the top he said, "Imagine this is our planet Eranityn, which means this has to be in the north pole, and the opposite direction would be the south pole, with a circular line in the middle being the equator. So where are we? I need to know how far north Cilaria is located on this planet before I try to do this."

Gorsazo gave a slow nod. "I'm not sure how it would be helpful, and it's been many years since I saw a map - not that it was any more than a rough outline of the land masses made by some adventurous sailor in the past."

"I don't need the exact location," Kivamus said urgently. "All I need to know is roughly how far north we are in comparison to the equator and the north pole."

Gorsazo seemed to be thinking about it for a minute. Finally, he replied uncertainly, "If I remember correctly, I think we should be located maybe... somewhere in the middle of the equator and the poles? So uh... perhaps halfway between them?" He sighed. "I apologize, my Lord, but I really can't remember any better - and that is if those maps were accurate at all, which I don't believe they were."

Kivamus sighed. What was he expecting here, a real-time satellite map? But having some idea was still better than nothing. He thought about what it meant about the magnetic inclination.

The magnetic field lines would be parallel to the ground at the equator... which meant a zero degree angle between them and the ground. And there should be a ninety degree angle between the ground and the field lines at the poles, so if Cilaria was in the middle of it... probably at the latitude of northern Europe, then the magnetic inclination should be around forty-five degrees here. It was far from accurate, but he should be able to do this with some trial and error.

Taking a deep breath, he held the rod in his left hand and facing towards the west of the manor, so that the rod would be aligned in a north to south direction, he tilted his left hand until it made roughly around a forty-five degree angle with the ground, and started hitting one end of it with the hammer.

Others kept watching him dubiously, until he decided he was done, and he took that rod near the iron nails expecting them to be attracted by it. And... nothing.

"Did it work, milord?" Duvas asked dubiously.

Kivamus sighed and instead of replying, he turned around towards the west again, and this time tilted the rod a little less than the previous time, and repeated the process. And after he was done, he went to the table again to check if the rod had been magnetized. And yet, there was no attraction between the rod and the nails.

Giving a sigh, he took a seat on an empty chair, putting his arms down to give them a little rest.

Madam Helga and Syryne still looked uncertain about what he was trying to do, while Feroy had crossed his arms and was sitting comfortably, probably not believing that it was even possible.

However, Gorsazo tried to console him, without making it obvious to others that he knew Kivamus was trying to use his memories from earth for this. "Perhaps, you aren't doing the... process correctly? You should try it once again."

Kivamus nodded with a sigh. Then he took a deep breath and stood up again, facing the west. And this time he tilted the rod a little more than the first time, and began hitting it again with the hammer on the higher side.

His arms were already getting tired, so as soon as he thought he had hit it enough times, he took the rod close to the iron nails again, and this time, the closest iron nail slowly started to roll on the table before it reached closer to the rod and then it gently stuck to it.

Kivamus pumped his fist with a grin. It was certainly a very weak magnet, but it worked! It really worked!

"Woow..." Clarisa whispered with wonder, and began clapping immediately, with Lucem following her with a victorious yell.

"That's... frankly amazing, my lord," Duvas exclaimed as he stood up and moved a little closer to look at the rod, with Feroy following him with a frown.

Gorsazo walked near him and patted him on his back. "I knew you could do it."

Kivamus wiped his forehead with his sleeves, since he hadn't noticed that he had started to sweat even in this weather after using the hammer so many times and grinned. "It's only a start, Gorsazo, but with this, I might just be able to make a compass for our hunters!"

Duvas took the rod in his own hands, and used it to pick up another iron nail which remained stuck to it even after he moved the rod up from the table. And suddenly, he started to laugh and said, "If only the previous baron had seen this..." He shook his head in amusement. "I'm sure he would have called up the whole court of Count Cinran here to brag about having a magnet in his manor."

Kivamus chuckled, realizing by now that even such a simple thing seemed so exceptional to everyone here. Oh, the things he could make here to show them...

"Can I try it too?" Lucem asked uncertainly, while still gazing at the rod with wide eyes.

Duvas smiled and handed over the rod with a rare grin, "Of course you can."

Then Lucem pulled the iron nail away from the rod, and kept it on the table before trying to pick them up again with the rod, but this time it didn't work that well. The closest iron nail still rolled a little in the direction of the rod, before stopping halfway instead of sticking to it, making Lucem drop the rod on the table. He looked at Kivamus nervously. "I didn't break it, milord! It was already broken!"

Chapter 167 Parchment Print

Kivamus laughed. "Don't worry, you didn't break anything. I knew it wasn't gonna last too long and you dropping it would certainly have removed any magnetism it had left. But we can hit it again with a hammer, and it should start to work once more."

"Really?" Lucem asked with wonder.

Kivamus smiled and nodded at him.

"I didn't know you could even perform magic, my Lord," Sryne said with a chuckle.

Kivamus snorted. "It's hardly magic, but you already know that."

This time, Feroy, who had been standing a little away from others while frowning, moved closer and took the rod from the table, and picked up the hammer as well.

Kivamus walked closer and after checking that the same rusted side of the rod was on the top again, he tilted it until it was at roughly the same angle with the ground as earlier. "You have to remember to hit this same side every time you are trying to magnetize it, otherwise it won't work as well. Now give it a try."

Feroy nodded, and after repeating the same process of hitting the rod for a while, he took the rod to check its magnetism again, and it was working once more. Lucem and Clarisa were still looking at it in wonder.

Once the ex-mercenary was satisfied with trying the newly magnetized rod to pick up nails, he handed them to the kids so they could do it themselves.

Duvas looked at Kivamus with raised eyebrows. "I have to say, I didn't really believe you could do it. I haven't ever seen a compass, but I understand what it does. But you really did it, milord, just like a magician on the streets of Ulriga..."

Kivamus laughed loudly. "Like I said, this is no magic. It's just... science."

Before he thought of explaining what that word meant, Feroy interrupted him with a frown, and asked, "But how is it supposed to show us the direction? That's what a compass is supposed to do, right? Or am I still not getting it right?"

Kivamus explained, "This is not a compass. All I've done is to make a temporary magnet. I will still have to think of how I can use it to magnetize a needle, and how to mount it in a frame so it can work as an actual compass. I only hit it a few times when I did it, which is why it didn't last very long, but I think it should last up to an hour or maybe even longer by hitting it more. But yes, this was the difficult part. I should be able to do the rest with the help of Cedoron."

Feroy nodded his head in acceptance. "As much of an expert I am in finding paths through the forest, even I did get lost on occasion in the past. If I had something which could show me where the north is... Oh, how much time I would have saved!"

"Well, we can't change what has already happened," Kivamus said, "but if we are able to make even simple compasses, we can still save quite a lot of time of the hunters, who would be able to return back sooner with more and more meat, instead of just trying to find their way through the forests. It would also mean they would be able to go on more trips per week than now."

After some time, Feroy had gone to do something about organizing the guards in the manor, while Duvas had again gone to visit the longhouse block to confirm that the supervisors were doing everything properly.

And soon, Cedoron arrived in the manor hall.

Kivamus stood up to demonstrate how to magnetize that iron rod to the surprise of the Blacksmith. Then he ordered Cedoron to deliver a dozen iron needles, each around half a centimeter long, on which the compass needles would be supported. Apart from that, he also ordered him to make the same number of needles in an elongated rhombus shape, and these would be flat needles, with a small bump in the centre of them - these would become the actual compass needles. He did have to draw the required shape on a piece of parchment for Cedoron to understand it fully, and then he also gave him that parchment so he could refer to it later on.

"Apart from those," Kivamus continued, "I think you will also need to make some thin iron rods." He pointed at the rod he had used for the demonstration. "This one is quite thick at nearly an inch in diameter, so it is difficult to magnetize it. I want you to make a dozen rods of similar shape, but around half a centimeter in diameter. Their length should be around, let's say, thirty centimeters, or around a foot. That should make it easy enough to carry it. Also, make these rods tapered on one end - just the last one inch or so - so that we can easily recognize which side is which. Can you do it?"

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"Of course," Cedoron replied. "The rods should be easy enough, and I'll tell my apprentices to make them after I've verified that they can do it properly. The needles are the tricky part. But I think I should be able to deliver at least a few of them by evening, since I have other pending orders too. But I'll work on them myself to make sure they are built correctly."

"Good!" Kivamus said with a nod.

Earlier, he had also told Duvas to give an order to Taniok's apprentice to cut up some small pieces of square shaped wood from a thin part of a plank, which would become the base of the compass, along with an open wooden box in which that square shaped base could be fitted inwardly for safekeeping of the compass. Making it as a circular box would probably be a better idea, but that would take longer, and he wanted to get this built as soon as possible. It was a simple enough task, so he should be getting them by evening. If everything went well, they might just be able to equip a few hunters with primitive compasses from tomorrow.

Then he showed the blacksmith the blueprints he had made of the crossbow. Cedoron looked surprised on hearing its purpose, having never heard of it, but was curious to understand everything. Once Kivamus had explained how it was supposed to work, he pointed out those parts which needed to be made from iron in each of the designs. These would be small and complex, but they wouldn't be durable enough if made from wood. He had also made separate blueprints of those parts in larger size so it would be easy enough for the blacksmith to forge them. But he snorted. It might be better to call it a

parchment-print rather than an actual blue-print, but it was good enough to explain how it was supposed to be made.

Cedoron looked uncertain. "These parts are going to take some time, since I also have to work on your other orders, including the needles and the iron parts of the wheelbarrows. The needles would already be tricky enough to make, but I haven't made something as intricate as the parts for the crossbow in my life." Then he seemed to think about it before he nodded. "It might take a few tries for me to get it right, but it will be a good challenge for me to test my skills. You said you want two sets of each iron part?"

Kivamus nodded. "Yeah, so that we wouldn't have to wait for you to make another one when testing them, in case it breaks or doesn't work as expected. And if those parts don't work at all, you can just reuse that iron anyway." He explained, "I would like to make at least two crossbows of different designs made at the same time so that we can compare which design would work better. Of course, I still have to get the wooden frame and the other parts made from the carpenter, but that will have to wait until he gets more time."

He continued, "That means the crossbow parts are only a side project for now. You should do it in your free time but they are not our first priority at the moment. I need you to finish those needles and the rods first, along with your other orders. The crossbow parts won't be useful until I can get the other wooden parts made as well."

"I understand, milord," Cedoron replied with a nod. "I'll try to deliver at least a few needles and the thin rods by evening. As for the crossbow parts, I'll keep trying to make them in my free time, and hopefully I'll be able to make them too. Thank you for trusting me with such a complex project."

"I have seen a sword which you had made for the previous baron along with the intricate carvings it had," Kivamus remarked thinking about a decorative sword which he had found in the manor, which was probably for the previous baron's personal use. Or more like, it was made for him to show off instead of actually fighting. He continued, "So don't worry, I know you have the skills for this. Good luck!"

And with that, the blacksmith gave a quick bow, and exited the manor hall.

It was early evening now, and Kivamus and his advisors were sitting inside the manor hall. Gorsazo would have to start teaching in the longhouse block soon, since it was nearly time for the workers to start coming back.

Earlier in the day, he had asked how was Gorsazo going to make the students practice their writing, since they couldn't afford to give parchments to everyone, unlike when he taught him in the Ulriga Palace, where there was no shortage of it. After some deliberation, they had settled on giving small charred wooden sticks for everyone to write with, along with small square boards of wood, which would be cut up from a thin plank. It was far from ideal, but at least it would allow the villagers to try to copy the alphabets which Gorsazo would show them on a bigger plank, which they had already fixed to one wall of the longhouse block.

Making those charcoal sticks and boards would take another day, but Taniok's apprentice had been told to do that by tomorrow, since it was simple enough. For today, Gorsazo had told him that he was only going to give them an introduction anyway.

Soon, a servant knocked on the outer door of the manor hall and the huge blacksmith entered inside along with Feroy, who had also brought a spear on Kivamus' request.

Cedoron looked at him and held up a small cloth pouch towards him. "Here are the four pieces of both types of needles you had ordered." He reached into one of his pockets on the side of the apron he was wearing, and pulled out a bunch of thin iron rods. "And these are a dozen rods as well. I was done with my tasks for today, and I was really curious to see what you had planned to do with them, so I hope it's okay that I came as well."

Kivamus took the pouch and smiled at the curiosity of the blacksmith. "Of course, it's not a problem at all."

He stood up and walked towards the long table, where the small wooden boxes were already kept on one side. He frowned for a moment and looked at Cedoron, "We'll need a smaller hammer for this. Did you bring it by any chance?"

Chapter 168 Witchcraft

Cedoron grinned and reached into another side pocket of his apron. "Of course. What kind of a blacksmith would I be if I reported to the baron without any of my tools on me?"

Kivamus chuckled and told him to move closer to the long table. Feroy had kept the spear in a corner of the hall, and was watching them from the side, along with others. Madam Helga's family and Clarisa had also gathered there in curiosity.

Exhaling once, Kivamus carefully spread the needles from that pouch on the table, in the light of the fireplace burning on one side, and a couple of braziers on the other. The light still didn't feel sufficient. He looked towards the windows on the west where the last rays of the sunlight were still shining on it. "Feroy, open those windows, will you?"

The ex-mercenary and the others looked at him like he had gone senile. Feroy asked with a raised eyebrow, "You sure, milord? It's not snowing right now, but it's plenty cold outside. Opening the windows would let the freezing air inside."

"I know that," Kivamus said with a laugh, "but we have to make sacrifices to achieve any kind of success. And we need some more light here. Do it."

Feroy nodded, and soon the windows were open with the light of the evening sun falling directly on the long dining table. Immediately, a freezing gust of air blew inside, making everyone shiver a little.

But despite the chill, Kivamus nodded. "This is better." He looked at the blacksmith. "Take a seat, Cedoron. It seems we'll need more of your help."

Once the blacksmith was seated, he told him how to fix the smaller needle in the centre of the flat piece of wooden square with the help of a small hammer. Cedoron nodded and without much difficulty, he fixed the needle where needed.

Then Kivamus picked up one of the rhombus shaped needles which were going to become the real compass needles, and slowly tried to balance it on the fixed needle, making sure to keep that bump of the rhombus needle right above the fixed needle. But as much as he tried to do it, it kept falling down on one side.

He picked it up, and looked carefully at it in the fading sunlight. "Oh, this one is a little lopsided." He snorted. Of course, these were handmade and such a thing was liable to happen. It's not like the blacksmith had modern machine tools like a metal punching machine here to make it with high precision.

Cedoron immediately began to apologise, but Kivamus stopped him with a raise of his hand. "Don't worry about it, we'll just try it with another one."

Then he picked up a second rhombus shaped needle, and this time, he was able to balance it easily on the needle. Then he gave a gentle push to one end of it, and the needle began to rotate slowly on its axis.

"Good! This will work." He looked at Feroy. "Now the difficult part. Bring that spear here. No, wait. Everyone, move a little back." Then he picked up one of those thin rods, and took it closer to the other side of the hall which had a lot more space, and beckoned Feroy to come there with the spear.

He looked at the blacksmith. "It's good you made these rods tapered on one end. That will make it easy to remember which side to hit."

Kivamus continued, "Feroy, you've already tried to magnetize such a rod yesterday with the help of a hammer, but this time I want to see if it can be done with the blade of the spear as well."

"Why not just use a hammer then?" Duvas asked from where he was sitting near the fireplace.

"That's certainly the last option if this doesn't work," Kivamus replied, "but I don't want to make the hunters carry any extra weight that they don't necessarily need to."

He turned towards the west, and holding the thin rod at a similar angle to what it was yesterday, he handed it over to Feroy. "Now hold it like this, making sure to keep the tapered side on the bottom every time you are trying to hit it in the future, and strike the upper end of the rod with the thicker part of the spear's blade. You already know how it is supposed to be done, having done it yesterday, but try to do the same thing today with this spear."

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Feroy looked at him dubiously for a moment, but then shrugged. "As you wish, milord."

And then for a few minutes there were only the sounds of the spear blade striking the thin iron rod, while everyone watched the ex-mercenary in curiosity. Once Kivamus thought it was done, he gestured to Feroy to stop, and took the small iron rod from him. He still didn't know if striking with the spear was going to work to magnetise the rod, but the concept was the same, so hopefully it would.

He walked to the long table, and gently brought the thin rod closer to one of the small needles which was lying on top of the table. And to everyone's surprise, it worked! The needle, which was thinner and lighter than yesterday's iron nails, easily jumped up and got stuck at one end of the iron rod, making the kids cheer loudly. He looked at everyone, and grinned.

Then he began to explain while making sure that everyone could see what he was doing properly. "Now this iron rod is already magnetised, just like yesterday. And as you saw, striking with a spear worked just as well as striking it with a hammer - which would probably be quicker than this, but for our purposes it is sufficient. Now, to make an actual compass, we just need to magnetise this rhombus shaped needle."

"But what's a rhombus?" Clarisa asked with confusion.

"That is what we called the shape of this needle," Kivamus explained while holding up that needle in one hand. "This iron rod is too heavy to work as a compass, which is why we need to magnetise this needle using it. And for that, what we are going to do is to rub this already magnetised iron rod on this needle. We need to do it at least forty to fifty times for it to work properly, and the rubbing motion has to be in the same direction every single time. You can't rub the iron rod in the opposite direction on the needle, or it just won't work."

He thought about it. "Actually, we will need to mark one end of this needle in some way, so it will be easier to remember which direction to magnetise it in. Anyway, here it goes." And then holding the iron rod and the needle in front of him, he began to do what he had said, while making sure everyone could see him.

Madam Helga's family and Cedoron were looking at him in curiosity, while Gorsazo just looked proud. Feroy had taken the spear back to a corner, and was watching him from nearby.

Before long, Kivamus was done with fifty counts, and he nodded to himself. "Now let's check if we really have made a compass here."

Then he handed over the iron rod to Feroy, and holding that rhombus needle, he carefully put it back on the smaller needle which was already fixed on the small wooden square. When it looked like it was balanced, he gently left it there, and to everyone's gasp of surprise, the needle immediately began rotating on its axis, without him doing anything to move it. And soon, it started to slow down, and after a few to and fro motions, it settled down in one direction. The north-south direction, to be precise.

Kivamus immediately began to grin in victory, while others were still staring at the compass in wonder. And in the light of the fading sunset, a new invention was born in the small village of Tiranat. Kivamus knew that it was only a small step, but it would go a long way to help them in so many ways.

He pointed towards the north direction. "You all already know that is the north, since the sun is setting on our backs. And as you can see, one end of the compass needle is pointing towards the north, with the other obviously pointing towards the south, so it matches accurately with the directions we already know here. That's how we find the directions with a compass!"

"What just happened, milord?" Duvas asked with confusion. "I don't get it. And neither do others, I believe."

Kivamus took a seat at the chair close to the compass, and pulled up an empty sheet of parchment closer to him. Then he took a quill and after dipping it in ink, he drew a circle on it, and bisected it with a straight line, which was slightly tilted to the side. That was only a guess from him, but it felt right to do that since this world did have seasons.

Then he explained while drawing a few lines connecting the north pole to the south, "Let's say this is our planet Eranityn. Now as I had told earlier, it has something called a magnetic field, which is an invisible force generated by magnets."

"Does that mean our planet is also a huge magnet?" Lucem asked with wonder. "Then why couldn't you just use the mud as a magnet?"

Kivamus chuckled. "No, the mud isn't a magnet, but the planet is. It is a little difficult to explain, but what it means is that the whole planet works as a giant, but weak magnet. And every magnet has two poles, north and south." He picked up the thin iron rod. "Now, what we have made here is also a magnet. But this rod is too heavy to rotate on its own. That's why I magnetised this rhombus shaped needle - which basically means that I also made it a magnet by rubbing it with the iron rod."

"Then, can I become a magnet too, if I rub that rod on my hand?" Lucem asked again in confusion.

Kivamus laughed at the innocent but still genuine question. "No, no, you are never going to become a magnet. Only iron, and a few other metals like that can become a magnet."

Suddenly, Feroy took a sharp breath and pointed at the needle. "We all can see that it is pointing in the north, but how could the needle possibly know where the north is? That's, that's... witchcraft!"

Chapter 169 Compass

Kivamus sighed and shook his head. "No, it's not. Let me explain it fully." He pointed at the compass. "Okay. So what I have done here is to allow the rhombus shaped needle to freely rotate on its stand, which is made from another needle. And since the rhombus shaped needle is magnetised now, it starts to rotate because of the planet's magnetic field, until it aligns itself in a north-south direction."

He continued, "Like I had told you all earlier, our planet has two poles - north and south, because it is a magnet. Similarly, every individual magnet also has two poles - again, north and south. And the reason for the compass working to align itself in a north-south direction is that similar poles always repel, while opposite poles attract each other. I could show you that as well if we had some stronger magnets here, but you'll just have to trust me for now." He added, "And that's why one end of this needle was attracted towards the north, while the other was attracted towards the south. And since its stand allows it to move freely on any level surface, you can use it anywhere, at any time to find the directions."

Feroy's eyes were wide in surprise. "But that's... It means..." He shook his head and took a breath before speaking again. "That means with this compass, a person would never get lost even in the forests, even in the dark! Ah... if only I had that in the past..."

Kivamus nodded. "Indeed, and this is what the sailors use at sea to find their directions, especially since they don't have any natural markers like mountains or rivers to find their orientations. I haven't seen their compass, but from what Gorsazo told us, they just hang a lodestone on a string. That will work just as well on the ground, but it would certainly make it very difficult if the seas are rough. But this design is something which will work nearly all the time."

"But all of this still sounds like witchcraft to me..." Duvas said with a frown. "Are you sure this... magnetism has nothing to do with that?"

Before Kivamus replied anything, Gorsazo stared at the majordomo and said, "You aren't really setting a good example here, Duvas. You are one of the only three fully educated people in the village, so you aren't supposed to be believing in such superstitions, are you? You already know that witchcraft doesn't exist."

Duvas exhaled loudly. "I know, Gorsazo, I know... But I am also old, much older than anyone else here. It's difficult for me to accept something so... so... futuristic! The compass works on an invisible power of magnetism for Goddess' sake!" The majordomo glanced at others in the manor hall, who were looking at him carefully and sighed. "But you are right, I can do better than this." He looked at Kivamus, "I apologise, my lord. I know you have studied a lot of books and you know a lot of things which the rest of us can't dream of, but sometimes it's not easy for me to adjust to new things. Forgive me for questioning your methods."

Kivamus smiled at him. "Don't worry about it, Duvas. It's alright. And I can assure you there is no witchcraft involved in anything I do. It's all just science - which at the very basic, requires you to question every single thing around you, and then after making a hypothesis about why something is happening, you do experiments to either prove or disprove your hypothesis. If you were proved right, you have a new law about the natural world, and if you were wrong, you just try again."

Most of the people around the table looked confused at that definition, although Syryne seemed to be thinking seriously about it.

Kivamus sighed. It's not like he would be able to make everyone understand about the scientific method in a single evening. The fact that they had even accepted that the compass was not working by using the powers of witchcraft was already a good progress for today.

"Wait a moment..." Syryne asked with a frown. "If the needle's North Pole is being repelled by our planet's North Pole, then why is it pointing to the north anyway? Shouldn't it be the opposite?"

Kivamus nodded. "Actually, it is indeed the opposite. The geographical north - that is the north direction on the ground - is the opposite of the magnetic north, which is actually located near the South Pole of the planet. What it means is that while the compass' North Pole is pointing towards the planet's geographical North Pole - which is what we need - it is actually pointing towards the magnetic South Pole of Eranityn."

"That is so confusing, milord..." Gorsazo muttered with a frown.

However, Feroy shrugged. "If the needle always tells us where the north is, who cares how it finds the directions."

Kivamus chuckled. "Perhaps... And that's why we need to keep it simple when we explain it to the hunters." He added, "Now I am going to magnetise the rest of the compasses as well, and then we will give it to the hunters so they can familiarize themselves with it tonight before they leave with it tomorrow."

"I have a question, milord," Cedoron asked. "If you have already uh... magnetised those needles, why did you need so many iron rods?"

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"The thing is," Kivamus explained, "that all these are temporary magnets. That means they don't last very long, unlike the lodestones which the sailors take with them - which will basically last forever. That's why the hunters will need to magnetize the needle again and again after it loses its effect. That's the reason why I wanted to test if we can magnetise the iron rod with the help of a spear - or even a sword - which the hunters will always be carrying with them. They might even be able to use their daggers to magnetise the compass needle in a pinch."

He continued, "This way, once the needle stops working - properly after a few hours or so - they will have to magnetise the iron rod again, which will last as a magnet for an even shorter time, and then they will need to magnetise the needle again using the rod, before trying to get a fix on their directions." He added with a sigh, "I know it's complicated and far from an ideal solution for the field, and in the future if we can get access to a lodestone, I will try to make it simpler, but this will have to do for now."

"Don't worry, milord," Feroy commented, "if this works every time just like you have said it would, our hunters are still going to become a lot more efficient than now."

"Indeed," Gorsazo agreed enthusiastically. "We can even say that it is... revolutionary!"

Lucem looked at his mother. "What does that word mean?"

"Uh..." Helga added after a pause, "It means something which didn't exist earlier."

Lucem nodded sagely. "So will we get more meat on our plates from now on? Since it didn't exist earlier?"

Everyone chuckled at that question. Helga patted his head. "Let's hope so, Lucem."

As a sudden gust of cold air made him shiver, Kivamus looked towards the window where the sun had gone under the houses of the village by now, and told Feroy to close the window.

"Is there anything we need to keep in mind to use this compass?" Feroy asked once he had closed the window. "The conditions aren't always this stable in the field, and the hunters won't be able to ask anything from you if they have any question."

Kivamus thought about it. "Hmm... The first thing is that if you drop either the needle or the iron rod, it will lose most of its magnetism, which means you will have to start over again. Apart from that, we don't have any glass here to seal the compass inside it, so every time the hunters are done with it, they will have to put the rhombus shaped needle inside the wooden box so that it wouldn't get lost. And when they need to find the directions again, they will also have to balance it again on the smaller needle after magnetizing it. The good thing is that the rods are small enough that they can easily keep it with their other stuff without it weighing them down unnecessarily, especially since they won't have to carry a hammer for this."

He continued, "I will demonstrate everything to the hunters myself later on so they can ask any questions they have." He tried to think if there was anything he was missing. "The process of magnetizing things will still remain the same, but you will need to hold the iron rod in a similar direction every time when you are trying to magnetise it by hitting it with another piece of metal. That means you already need to have an idea of the directions."

"Then what use is this compass if it only works when we already know the directions?" Feroy asked with a frown.

Kivamus took a deep breath. "Like I said earlier, this is far from a perfect compass - it is a primitive design at best. But the compass needle will still hold its magnetism for at least a few hours, and if you don't shake it around too much, it might last for even longer. That means, if you see the sun even once

during the day, you can guess the directions at that time and do the process of magnetising the rod and the needle. That way, even if the sun is covered by the clouds later, you will still be able to find your directions accurately throughout the day. Or, if you do it in the evening, you will be able to find directions for most of the night using the compass, in case you really did have to keep travelling at that time."

He continued, "It will be even more important when they are travelling under the dense canopy of the forest in the summer, since they can climb on a tall tree or a bluff, from where they can guess the rough position of the sun even on a mildly cloudy day and based on those directions, they can magnetise the needle at that time. That will allow them to keep track of the directions for hours - even after they have continued their journey under the dense canopy."

"I think I understand now..." Feroy muttered. "It will certainly take some effort to use it, but it's still better than having nothing when you get lost in those forests."

Kivamus nodded and looked back at the table. "Okay then. Now let's make a few more compasses! Cedoron, you fix the smaller needles at the centres of the wooden squares. Feroy, we have already checked that a spear will work just as well as a hammer, but using a hammer is still much easier. So put that spear in a corner, and start magnetising the iron rods with a hammer. Once that is done, I will use those rods to magnetise the compass needles, and then after checking that all of them are working properly we will show it to the hunters."

He looked at the curious faces of others. "Actually the rest of you can try it as well."

Immediately, Lucem and Clarisa jumped from their seats with matching grins and walked closer to the table. So after handing them a rod each, Kivamus told Feroy to supervise them so they wouldn't hurt themselves. He picked up another rod and gave it to Gorsazo, who seemed like he wanted to try magnetising the rod as well, with the blacksmith watching curiously. They only had two hammers in the room right now, so others would have to wait for their turns, but everyone looked like they wanted to give it a try.

Kivamus smiled with satisfaction as everyone got busy either trying to magnetise something, or waiting for their turns while watching others enthusiastically. This was only a beginning, but it was certainly a good start for science in this world.

Chapter 170 Discovery

It had been three days since he had made the compasses, and their two hunting groups had taken it with them the next morning. And this time the hunters' plan was to keep looking for bigger animals to hunt before they returned, which could take a few days to even a week.

He had also allowed each group to take a horse if needed, based on the path they wanted to follow on their next trip, so that it would be helpful for them to carry their gear more easily, not to mention the horse would make it much easier to drag the hunted animals. The group which had been going towards the eastern hill had chosen not to take the horse, while the group going west into the forest had happily accepted the help. The stretchers they had been carrying with them would also be quite helpful if they really did get lucky and caught something big.

Gorsazo had just returned after today's classes. He had already started teaching the villagers in the longhouse block regularly after they returned from work every day. They had also distributed more than enough charcoal sticks and wooden boards for them to practice writing. Based on his mentor's report, while the adults still seemed hesitant to try such a new thing, mainly because they couldn't see what use it would be for them, the children had been more than happy to find something interesting to do.

After the news had spread in the village, nearly all of the children had started joining the classes there in the evening. It would take years until they were ready to do any tasks which required even basic literacy, but at least they were on the right path now.

Lucem and Clarisa had also been joining the classes everyday, while Syryne - who had grown up in Cinran while her parents worked at an inn there - already knew enough that she didn't need to join the beginners' classes. He had asked her about it, and found out that there was a regular patron of that inn - probably the son of a minor noble - who had taken a liking to her in the past, and had started teaching her the very basics of reading and writing. That meant she was already interested in learning more, but she never found the courage to ask Gorsazo to teach a commoner like her, even though she knew about his background as a teacher.

But once Syryne had found out about Kivamus' decision for everyone in the village to get educated, she had hesitatingly asked him that she wanted to learn more. But he was no teacher, and he mainly knew about engineering while her interests seemed to be more in studying about trees and nature, probably an effect of living at their isolated inn on the road to Cinran. So he had asked Gorsazo to teach her in his free time, and he had readily agreed so he would have something worthwhile to occupy his free time.

By today, Kivamus had also made many more compasses by now - even after giving two of them to each hunting group of four men, just in case they had to split up - so they could give it to other hunting

groups when they started sending more guards out after Hudan returned with others, not to mention they could give it to any other groups of guards like them going out of Tiranat in the future.

That made him think how it was going with the guard captain, since they had been expecting them to be back by now. If anything, they should have been back a day or two ago. Hopefully, it was only a temporary delay and they hadn't run into any serious problems.

It was nearing evening now, and he was sitting in the manor hall with the others after he was done with today's diagrams. He had been thinking that once he had made the blueprint for the things which were necessary for them in the near future, he should start trying to draw the blueprint for more advanced things, so that he wouldn't get out of touch with it. It had been more than two months since he had stopped going to his office in downtown London, after all.

Soon, the outer door opened and a servant walked inside.

"Milord, the eastern hunting group is back," the servant reported. "One of them is waiting outside to talk to you."

Kivamus raised his eyebrows. That was unusual. Usually they just gave their hunted animals to the kitchen in the servants hall, to cook or preserve as needed, and then they went to take a rest. He gave a nod to the servant. "Alright, send him inside then."

The servant exited the door, and soon a guard entered the hall hesitantly. That was Yufim, one of their new recruits. His long blonde hair had made it easy to recognise him even without his warbow. In the light of the fireplace burning on the other end of the hall, the young guard looked more than a little disheveled with bags under his eyes - likely the effect of not getting a proper sleep out there in the forests, with the sounds of who knew what kind of animals howling in the nights there. But the archer was still looking around the hall curiously, this probably being the first time he had entered inside, until his eyes went to Syryne, who was sitting nearby to keep an eye on the kids at this time.

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The young guard smiled while trying to fix his hair. "Oh, Miss Syryne, you are also here!"

Syryne looked at Yufim hesitatingly, and just nodded.

"Focus!" Feroy chided the archer. "What did you want to report?"

Yufim blinked, as if he had forgotten what he had come here for, and looked at Kivamus. "I uh... I'm sorry milord. I wanted to report that we caught a boar this time, and we've brought it with us."

Kivamus nodded with a frown. "Okay, that's good to hear, but is that all you came here to tell us?"

"Oh.. Uh right!" Yufim shook his head, his ponytail moving behind him. "No my lord. There is something else. Around two days ago, when we were somewhere in the middle of the eastern hills, we had gotten lost, and didn't know which direction we had to go under some heavy snowfall that day since our compass needle had stopped working by that time."

He added, pointing towards the east, "There were many tall hills in that area, and we had been travelling in the valleys between them trying to find a way out, when one of us suggested that we should climb to the top of one of those hills to get our orientation. That way we could also try to magnetise the compass needle again after looking at where the Arakin mountains are located, which would still be in our east."

Kivamus nodded. "Alright, carry on."

Yufim continued, "After we climbed on one of those hills, I noticed that there were vines around most of the trees there. Although there weren't many leaves left on most of the vines since it seemed like these vines started shedding their leaves when snowfall started, a few of them which had been growing under some really large trees still had some leaves remaining. That's when I noticed that they looked similar to the losuvil leaves that Miss Syryne had given to the injured guard to use after the bandit raid. So I plucked a few of them and brought them with me, so somebody could confirm if it really is the same plant."

"Oh! That's interesting," Kivamus remarked, and looked at Syryne who seemed to have been listening to them while the kids seemed busy trying to build a small wooden toy house again.

She got up from where she was sitting next to the kids, and walked closer to them. "Show it to me," she told the guard.

"Right. Uh..." Yufim reached into one of his side pockets and brought out a small bunch of long serrated leaves and passed it to Sryne. "I only brought a few of them, since I didn't want to carry too much of it in case it turned out to be useless."

Immediately, Sryne gave a grin. "Yes, these are all losuvil leaves! You said there were many such vines there?" she asked excitedly. "Can you tell me how many?"

"Uh... a lot," Yufim replied immediately. "When climbing down from that hill, I was keeping a close eye on my surroundings once I thought those could be losuvil leaves, and I saw that basically every single tree there had such vines climbing on it. There had to be hundreds of such vines there on that particular hill, and probably thousands if we count those on the nearby hills."

Kivamus' mind stopped working for a moment. Thousands of losuvil vines... That was more than they could ever use here.

"There are that many vines out there?" Duvas asked before sighing. "If only the previous baron had allowed me to send a few guards in that direction earlier, we could have helped the villagers so much when one of them got sick."

"Well, I'd rather not say anything about the previous baron," Kivamus commented, "but at least we know about it now."

Sryne looked at him enthusiastically. "Milord, we need to get all such available leaves from there as soon as possible! Otherwise the few leaves which are still remaining will also be shed by the plants in the coming days, since it has already started snowing heavily there."

Kivamus nodded. "That's true. Yufim, how far away are those hills from here?"

The archer hesitated. "Uh... I'm not really sure, milord. But if I had to give an estimate... I'd say those hills are around a full day journey from here."

Kivamus sighed. "That's too far away, isn't it? Even if you brought all of them, they won't be of any use by the time you reach here." He looked at Duvas. "That means it wouldn't really have helped you in the past either."

Sryne stared at him. "Not at all, milord. That's why I asked you to let the hunters bring those leaves in the first place."

Kivamus was confused now. "But I was told that the leaves lose their effect within a day or so after plucking them from their vines..."