

## Londoner 58

### Chapter 58. Expansion

~ Kivamus ~

~ Baron's Manor, Tiranat ~

The next day, after Kivamus and others had finished the breakfast of freshly baked bread along with eggs which they got from the small chicken coop inside the manor, Hudan entered the manor hall.

"My Lord, there is something I would like to talk with you about," the guard captain said.

"Take a seat," Kivamus said, while moving to the more comfortable armchairs near the fire. "What is it?"

Hudan took a seat as well, next to Duvas and Gorsazo. "I had gone to the northern area, where the workers are clearing the forest, to give a few of them suggestions on how to use the machetes in case they are forced to fight with it. While I was there, I saw that there was already a big pile of logs on one side, with more logs coming every hour."

"Hasn't Taniok already started cutting them into planks there?" Gorsazo asked.

"Yeah, he has, and everytime he gets a new saw from Cedoron, he also takes on another worker to help him in that," Hudan replied. "Even so, it is a slow process, and the logs are piling up much faster than he can cut them into planks. And in the coming days when Cedoron gives more axes to the woodcutters, the pace of cutting new trees will increase further, and we will get new logs at an even faster pace."

"Hmm... I think I should have expected it," Kivamus said. "Without an actual sawmill, even if it was powered by a water wheel, cutting logs into planks would take a lot of time." He asked, "So, what did you have in mind?"

"I was going to suggest making a palisade wall surrounding the whole village," Hudan replied. "It is true that all the new grain we are buying - which will be the primary target of any bandits who attack here, will be kept inside the walls of the manor, where it should be safe enough. However, the rest of the village will still be vulnerable to such an attack."

He continued, "We have already seen that the bandits won't shy away from putting the houses on fire to cover their retreat. But what if they do the same for the longhouses after they are built? It is already very difficult to house all the villagers, and if the longhouses or even other houses in the village are burned before the guards can respond to such an attack, the villagers won't have any place to live in the winter."

"That's true," Kivamus nodded. "We certainly cannot risk that."

Gorsazo asked, "But is it even feasible to surround the whole village with a palisade wall? I know we won't have any shortage of logs, but we will have to spend workers' time digging holes in the ground for those wooden stakes all around the village, apart from moving the logs there."

Duvas answered, "That is not a problem at all. We have more than enough workers who sit idle for nearly the whole day, because of a shortage of axes and saws." He looked at Kivamus. "Yeden told me earlier that the log mover has helped a lot in moving the logs faster in the northern area. If we can build another log mover or two, then moving the logs to the periphery of the village wouldn't be a problem either."

Kivamus thought about it for a minute. "But what about digging tools? Shovels or even pickaxes? Do we have enough of those?"

Duvas said, "Getting more tools forged would certainly help, but even now we should still have enough of those digging tools which have been sitting unused from the time the coal mines were closed." He explained, "Since our primary target was cutting trees, we don't have any spare axes or saws left anymore, but even though I did provide some digging tools to the workers earlier, many of them should still be left in the manor."

"That decides it. We will make a new palisade wall to surround the whole village," Kivamus said. "It will be very helpful to ensure the safety of the village in the coming future." He looked at Duvas. "Give all the remaining shovels and pickaxes to any workers who are still sitting idle, and send them to dig holes for the walls."

Hudan said, "We should also sharpen the top of the logs before we fix them into the ground as stakes, to make it difficult for any bandits to just climb over it."

"That's a good idea," Kivamus said. "Since we already told Cedoron to forge more axes instead of machetes, we can give some of those axes to the workers who will be sharpening the stakes. It is not a lot of work compared to cutting a tree, so giving even a few axes to some workers would be enough for sharpening the logs into stakes."

"But where will this wall be?" Gorsazo asked. "I mean, we are building the longhouses outside the current area of the village, so how far should we build these walls from the last houses?"

"That's a good question," Kivamus said. Thinking about it, he said, "While it is true that we only need a few longhouses right now to house the homeless villagers, we need to build even more longhouses after that to shift all the villagers who have a damaged house to the new longhouses as well. And those are not the last things which we need to build here."

He added, "We will certainly need more storage areas for the grain which we will be harvesting from the coming year, for which we talked about making new storage barns in the west of the village. Also, if we shift that many villagers to a different place from where they used to live, that means some of the shops in the marketplace might also need to be shifted to be closer to the longhouses. Or maybe the merchants might want to open new shops there altogether, while retaining the original location of their shops - all of which will need more land."

He continued, "I have a few other plans in my mind as well for the future. So we should leave some extra space to construct any other buildings in the future, without needing to expand the palisade wall for some time."

Duvas said after a moment, "That makes sense, my Lord." He continued, "Since the manor has already been built at the beginning of the plains area, we cannot really expand the village in the east side because the terrain starts to get hilly there."

"That's not entirely true," Hudan commented. "The thing is, I would like to get some empty land to make a dedicated training area for the guards, instead of just using the empty space in the eastern part of the manor, like we do now."

He added, "I have taken a look in the east of the manor, and there is still around a thousand yards of space in the east before the hills start. So I will suggest making the new village wall around a hundred yards away from the eastern walls of the manor. This way, once we clear the trees on that side, we will

still have around five hundred yards of clear space after the new village walls - which will give good visibility there, and I can make the new training ground in that space between the manor walls and the new village wall."

Kivamus liked that Hudan was already thinking of such things - that he needed to train the guards further. It made sense too, since Hudan's past training as a knight-trainee would have been a lot more extensive than that for the other guards for this poor barony in the middle of nowhere. "That's a good idea. You can even make an obstacle course there - which is a series of various obstacles kept one after the other - including a ditch, a wall and so on, where you can make the guards run, while trying to increase their speed and awareness." He could think of many such good ideas from his life on earth, mostly seen on documentaries and TV about such training courses, which Hudan wouldn't know about. He said, giving the same explanation again, "I had read a little about that in a book in Ulriga, so remind me when you start making the dedicated training area, and I can give you some good suggestions about it."

"That will be very helpful, my Lord," Hudan said with a nod.

"Okay, then let's do the same for all sides," Kivamus said. "That is, we should keep a distance of a hundred yards on all sides of the village, between the new walls and the last houses of the village. That will be more than enough space for any new buildings in the village. We certainly aren't going to have any shortage of logs for the new walls."

Gorsazo suggested, "Since winter is coming soon, we should focus on digging the holes for all the stakes first, since it would be much more difficult to do it once the ground freezes over. Fixing the stakes into them can be done even after that."

Kivamus nodded and said, "Dugas, after we finish this discussion, you and Hudan should go and measure a distance of a hundred yards from the village, and send the idle workers with the extra shovels and pickaxes to start digging the holes there. Tell them to start from the north and the south areas first, otherwise the location of the walls might be in the middle of the forest right now, since we haven't started clearing those areas yet. Once we get more axes, we can put a few workers to sharpen the logs on one side to convert them into stakes for the wall."

He added, "Also, tell Taniok to start building another log mover as well. I know it will slow him down further in cutting the planks, but building more log movers would increase the efficiency of all the tasks, and anything that improves the efficiency should always be prioritized. And since we have arranged for the homeless villagers to have a roof over their heads - even if it's temporary, so a delay of another few days in completing the longhouses shouldn't be a problem."

Duvas asked, "In that case, can't we just keep the homeless villagers with the other villagers for the winter?"

Kivamus shook his head. "That won't work, Duvas. Think about it. Before we offered free grain to the villagers who took in the homeless people, nearly no one had volunteered to do it. The villagers may be fine with the current arrangement since they know that the longhouses will be built soon and they can go back to their previous ways of living with their own family soon. But if they had to keep the other people in their own houses for all the winter or even longer, then it can easily lead to a rise of tension between them, even if they are people they have known their whole life. That can easily lead to fights breaking out between them, and I don't want anything to break the village's unity right now. We need everyone to work together for our survival over the winter."

Duvas gave a nod after hearing it, but didn't say anything.

Shifting his mind to the plans they were talking about, Kivamus remembered the narrow roads between the houses in the village when he had gone for a walk to the north of the village. It was a good opportunity to do something about that as well. He continued, "There is another thing that we should plan for - and that is the roads inside the village. The current narrow roads may be fine for the villagers walking on foot, but if we needed to move the log movers through the village, it simply wouldn't be feasible right now, and it isn't possible to widen those roads either since the houses have already been built there. We have an opportunity here to plan well and make wide roads for the future - each of them intersecting at right angles for ease of navigation."

Gorsazo gave a slow nod at that. "That is true enough. Since we still haven't started building the longhouses and the new barns, it would be good to plan for that in advance."

"It would have another benefit, my Lord," Hudan said with a smirk.