

Londoner 70

Chapter 70. New Ideas

A few hours later, around noon, when Kivamus was talking with others, a servant entered the manor hall.

"Milord, the unloading of wagons has been completed," the servant announced excitedly. "We are going to load coal into the wagons now."

"That's very good, well done!" Kivamus said.

"Thank you, milord!" the servant said happily. "Also, the carpenter Taniok is here to talk about something."

"Let him inside," Kivamus ordered.

Taniok entered inside the hall, and stood near Kivamus with an anxious face.

"Take a seat, Taniok. What did you want to talk about?"

Taniok nervously took a seat near the fireplace as well, and kept gazing downwards. When he didn't say anything for a few minutes, Kivamus asked, "What is it?"

The balding carpenter suddenly looked at him with a surprised face, as if he had forgotten the baron was sitting here. He seemed to be gathering his courage for a moment, before he hesitatingly spoke, "I would like to report something. Please forgive me for saying this, milord."

Kivamus could guess that the carpenter was not habitual of talking to nobles, but his nervousness seemed to extend beyond just the usual hesitation of others, and it was not the first time he had noticed it in Taniok. "It is okay, Taniok. Whatever it is, we will find a way to deal with it. You can tell me about it."

Taniok looked at his face for a moment, as if thinking something from his past, then took a deep breath and started speaking. "Forgive me for saying this, milord, but at the current pace we... we might not get enough planks to make even a single longhouse before the snowfall. I had already anticipated this when you were telling me about the longhouses for the first time, but I couldn't gather the courage to mention it at that time." Looking at Kivamus' surprised expression, he nervously added with a bow of his head, "Please forgive me, milord."

Today was not a good day for them, Kivamus thought with disappointment. Firstly he got the news that Pydas was barely able to bring any iron nails, and now the carpenter told him that they can't even make enough planks for the longhouses...

It was already going to be difficult to think of a way to make the longhouses without iron nails, but without even planks? How was he going to provide housing to the villagers for the coming winter like this? For a moment he didn't know how to reply to this unwelcome news, but he took a deep breath and exhaled loudly. It was hardly the first challenge he had been given after arriving in this world. He would just have to find some way to deal with it, like he said earlier.

He observed the carpenter, who seemed to be looking at him apprehensively with fear in his eyes. Finally, Kivamus said, "There is no need to ask for forgiveness, Taniok. But this is the kind of information that I need to be told immediately, and not after we have already made further plans based on the earlier estimates." He asked, "Why didn't you say anything when I was talking about building the longhouses using planks?"

Taniok looked down and mumbled, "All the manor's buildings are made of double-planked walls, and I... I thought you'd want the same for the longhouses as well."

"But you should still have mentioned it, Taniok! And if you thought you couldn't cut enough planks in time, you should have told me that at the very beginning."

Taniok gazed at his face for a moment, judging his expression, then said in a low voice, "I can't just say no to the baron when I am ordered to do something... If I am told to make longhouses with planks, then it is my duty to follow the orders of the baron. I can't just disobey the baron's orders... I had... I had said no to the previous baron once, and I still have the scars to show for the whipping I got that day..." He looked downwards again. "Forgive me milord, but I just couldn't bring myself to speak out in front of you that day."

Once again, Kivamus didn't know what to say to that. This wasn't even the first time he had found out that the previous baron used to beat people for barely any reason. How was the barony even standing to this day, if that kind of a person was leading it... Although, it could certainly be said that barony was barely surviving before he came here, with the mines shut and the villagers nearly starving. He took a deep breath to calm his mind, and looked at the carpenter who had gone through so much in his life because of that bastard who was leading this barony before him, and now he was too scared to even give his opinions.

"Taniok, look at me," he ordered. Once the carpenter looked up, he began, "Like I said earlier, you don't need to ask for forgiveness, but you do need to be more frank with me from now on. I give you my word that you will never be punished for speaking your mind. The village is barely standing right now, and I cannot make any plans to improve the life of the villagers if I don't get the correct estimates from you and others."

It took a minute for Taniok to realize that he was serious about it, before he finally gave an uncertain nod. "Thank you, milord. I'll... I'll try to do that from now on." He added, "I had hoped that day that I might still be able to cut enough planks, especially with the new tools coming in every day, but after I got the new orders to build the two log-movers, I had to give many days to complete those in time. And today I made a new estimate with my apprentice about how many planks would be required, and based on the current pace of making new planks, I just had to tell you about this."

He continued, "It also means that we wouldn't be able to add wooden floors inside the longhouse, since we already have a shortage of planks to even build the walls."

Duvas spoke up, "That's not the only problem, Taniok. Pydas was unable to buy enough iron nails from Cinran, and he can't buy any more in the next trip either. That means even if you had made enough planks, we still wouldn't have enough iron nails to connect the planks - whether for the walls or the floors."

Kivamus thought about what other solutions they had now. Maybe... if they had sheets of iron available here, they could even have made cut-nails from them, which would have served the purpose just as well as forged nails. But all they had here were ingots, and they couldn't afford to waste the blacksmith's time to firstly hammer out a sheet from those ingots and then to make cut-nails from them, which might take even longer than forging them directly. They needed Cedoron to spend all his time making new tools.

"You are right," he said, "without having enough planks, and with a shortage of iron nails as well, it's not feasible to make the longhouses in time."

For a while, nobody said anything as they thought about the implications of it. However, Hudan spoke up soon, "Why can't we use the logs themselves as the walls of the longhouses. I have seen some military camps made like that in the past. We will still need some planks for the internal divisions between the bunks and for the bunks themselves, along with the doors, but by making all the walls from the logs, we would save a lot of time. I would have suggested that in the first place, but I wasn't present for that discussion about making longhouses with planks."

Kivamus was so surprised to hear that suggestion, that he didn't know what to say for a moment. How could he have not thought of it himself? It was true that when living in the modern city of London, he certainly hadn't seen any primitive houses made from logs there, so the idea of using logs directly as the walls didn't come into his mind earlier. Apart from that, his first day here was very hectic, and he had to take care of a lot of other things that day, other than discussing the idea about longhouses. But he still should have thought of it...

Duvas muttered, "Using the logs themselves as the walls... The idea has merit, my Lord."

"That it certainly does," Kivamus said. "I should have thought of it myself." He looked at the carpenter, "What do you think about that? Can you make it?"

"I certainly can, milord, and it will take much less time as well," Taniok replied with a smile. "I've made such a building in the past as well before I arrived in Tiranat." He shook his head and continued, "I didn't suggest it myself because the previous baron had ordered me to use planks in all the buildings within the manor. He used to live in Cinran before this village was founded and as you know, none of the houses there are made using logs. So, he had told me that while his village may be located in the backwoods, his manor should still be of the same quality as the best houses in Cinran, and it should be made with planks so that it'd look good to anyone who visited him from Cinran."

He added, "I had heard that you are from Ulriga, which is an even bigger place than Cinran. So I thought you'd want the same for the longhouses, even though I realized that it would be difficult to make them from planks. I would have told you about it on that day itself, if only I had the courage for that..."

"That's okay, we can't do anything about the past," Kivamus reassured him. "And I am not so unreasonable a person that I'd focus on how something looks to any rare visitors from outside, instead of worrying about how to actually house the villagers before the winter. However, from now on, you should never hesitate to give me any new suggestions." He looked at others sitting there. "That goes for

all of you. If there is a better way to do something that we are planning to do, then you should tell me about it immediately."

Duvas and Hudan gave a nod, while Gorsazo just observed him quietly with appraising eyes.

Kivamus looked at the carpenter again. "Let's do it then. Using the logs themselves as the walls is the best idea for us right now. It will save a lot of time, and we might just be able to finish a longhouse before the snowfall. Although, now that we have managed to provide temporary housing to all the homeless villagers, we can afford to wait a few more days to complete the whole longhouse block before shifting them there, so that the villagers would have the facility to cook their food there as well."

He added, "There is also a safety factor in that. If we shift the villagers and their children to them, when only one side of that block is completed, then they would be at risk of attacks from wild beasts in the night, and with the longhouse blocks being located outside of the village, we wouldn't be able to respond in time. So let's focus on finishing a full longhouse block first, before we start shifting anyone there."

"As you say, milord," Taniok nodded.

Thinking about something he had read in the past on Earth, Kivamus asked, "Now that we have decided to build the longhouses with logs themselves, I have to ask you something Taniok, since you would know a lot more about this. The logs we have here are freshly cut green wood, so is it a good idea to construct anything from them?"