

Londoner 81

Chapter 81. Village Walls

"I'm not certain, since they were killed by the baron's guards," Levalas replied, "but they were very likely mercenaries sent by someone."

Zoricus frowned. "Are you sure they weren't just local bandits? Those forests are full of them these days."

"I don't know who sent them, but they weren't just bandits." Levalas added, "I saw the leader of those mercenaries pointing directly at Baron Kivamus before telling the other mercenaries to target him first."

Zoricus gave a slow nod. "That's very interesting... It means someone else is already trying to kill him." He gave a booming laugh. "It seems the Goddess is on my side after all! Who knows, Baron Kivamus might die soon enough even though you failed to kill him, and I wouldn't even have to get my hands dirty." He looked at Levalas Again. "Alright, you can leave now."

Levalas thought this was a good opportunity to ask for his rewards. "But what about my payment? You promised me a hundred gold crowns for this."

Zoricus looked at him for a moment and laughed loudly again. "A hundred gold? Are you insane? That was if you were successful. And even then, did you really think that I would give you a hundred gold crowns just like that? If you can't do a task you wouldn't even get a copper from me. Now get out of my sight!"

And then Zoricus dug into his mound of food again.

Levalas simmered inside as he walked back to the doors, while thinking he should have expected it. All the nobles were like this. What did he even expect from this greedy bastard?

He had lived all his life under the thumb of Count Ebirtas and Baron Zoricus, after those two colluded to rob him of his destiny. He had been saving up for a long time to get out of Cinran and buy a new life under a new name somewhere else, and getting a hundred gold from this job would have allowed him to leave his pitiful life behind and finally move on to someplace else. That was why he had even thought of taking such a huge risk to try to assassinate a noble.

But as he walked back outside, the same thought which had kept swirling in his mind for the past week took over again. Why did Baron Kivamus spare his life? As much as he thought about it, he couldn't find an answer to it. No noble was that forgiving. And if a noble found out that you were trying to kill them, they would have executed him on the spot. But why did the baron spare his life?

~ Kivamus ~

~ Baron's manor, Tiranat ~

The next day, late in the afternoon Kivamus was walking in the manor grounds with others. The weather was getting colder every day, while the sun was nowhere to be seen even in the afternoon. Although because of an absence of wind, the weather was still tolerable. Even so, those servants and maids in the manor who had to work outside were using a burning brazier next to them.

Gorsazo began, "Yesterday, Yeden had asked for our help in marking out the areas where the trees needed to be cut first so that all the trenches could be dug before the ground freezes. So Hudan and I had taken a few workers who carried a bunch of sticks, and then we walked around the village at a distance of around hundred yards and we planted those sticks in a straight line where the trenches needed to be dug. We also put a mark on those trees, which were in the way, so that they could be cut first. Of course, the trenches for the northern side of the walls are nearly completed already, but we still had to do it for the other sides."

"It was a good decision to put most of the workers to dig the trenches first," Hudan said. "It would only take a few more days to finish all the trenches at this rate, since nearly a hundred workers are doing that now."

Gorsazo added, "Yeden also told me to let you know that the new iron sheets which Taniok has wrapped and nailed around the axle have been very helpful. The first rope which he used after that is still working without any damage at all. That will really reduce the number of new ropes that he needs to use for them."

Kivamus nodded. "That's good to hear." he asked, "How's the progress in the south now?"

Duvas replied, "I met Pinoto in the morning today, and he told me that they have also cleared a decent sized area in the South by now. Burning the stumps has been helpful as well, since it has allowed the workers to continue cutting new trees. Now they also have a growing pile of logs, which they have been stacking up in a crisscrossed way, while leaving space between the logs to let them dry easily. Although the coming winter means that they won't really start drying until the spring, the summer months should be helpful to dry them well, and in a year we should start to get seasoned logs."

"Indeed," Kivamus said. "Although we will still have to use most of the logs to build the village walls first. But it's good to start thinking of the future from now itself."

"That reminds me to talk with you about the walls, my Lord," Hudan said. "Most of the stakes we have will be around two feet wide. But we still have to decide how tall those walls have to be."

Kivamus looked at the walls of the manor nearby. "How tall are those walls?"

Duvas replied, "Those stakes are around ten feet high above the ground."

Hudan spoke after a moment, "I would suggest making the village walls higher, maybe around fifteen feet high above the ground."

"Well, we certainly have long enough logs to make taller walls," Kivamus observed, "and that seems like a good height to deter any bandits who want to raid the village. Fifteen feet high above the ground... that means we will need to dig around five feet into the ground for those stakes to be stable."

"That was my guess as well," Hudan said. "That's why I had already told Yeden to tell the workers to dig around five feet deep trenches, although I still had to confirm it with you."

"Don't worry, that's a good depth," Kivamus commended. "It should keep the walls strong enough."

Hudan nodded. "Certainly, my Lord. Of course, we will add more defensive measures in the future, like digging a shallow trench outside the walls and filling it with small sharpened sticks - but that is something we should do only after the walls have been completed."

Kivamus gave a nod in reply. "When all the trenches are completed and we start the actual wall construction, we should try to complete one side of the walls first, instead of constructing the walls all around the village at the same time. Let's say, we can complete the northern side of the walls first, since that's where most of the workers are working anyway, and it will help to protect the longhouses in the north. The workers can work simultaneously on the northern walls at a few different places, which will allow the walls to be completed faster."

"That's good thinking, my lord," Hudan said. "If we have even one side of the walls completed, that will give me one less side to worry about when defending the village in case of an attack. But what about the gates? Should we make a gate in the north as well? And where should they be located?"

Kivamus didn't reply for a minute as he thought about it. "While it's true that making fewer gates would make it easier for a smaller number of guards to be put on duty there, we don't know where an attack might come from. So it is always a good idea to have other gates to exit from, in case we need to evacuate the villagers while guards deal with an attack. And we do need a gate in the north for the northern road, and in the west for the road going to Kirnos. We also need to keep a gate in the South so that the farmers wouldn't have to walk too far to reach the farms. That just leaves the east, where a new training ground will be built in the future just inside the village walls. We should keep a gate there as well, so that those guards can easily exit the village walls from there in case they need to flank any attackers in the west or on other sides."

"It does make sense." Duvas added, "That means four gates, one on each side of the village walls."

Kivamus nodded. "But there is another thing I was thinking about. It would be a good idea to make a few watchtowers as well, just inside the walls. It's a different fact that we will be short on guards to man all the watchtowers, as well as all the gates, even if we put them on longer shifts, but that is something we can deal with in the future. But we need to plan thoroughly in advance. Although I am not yet sure how many watchtowers we will need." He looked at Duvas, "How long are the new walls going to be on each side? From what I understand, the shape of the new village walls would be like a rectangle, with longer sides on the north and the south."

Duvas replied, "That shape is correct, my lord. As for the lengths, I can't tell you about that myself. But Gorsazo, couldn't you give an estimate, since you and Hudan went around the village to mark the locations for the trenches yesterday?"

"It's not like I had a way to measure the lengths of the trenches," Gorsazo answered, "but I can still give an estimate for sure." He gazed into the distance for a moment as he thought about it. "I'd say... the walls should be somewhere between two hundred fifty and three hundred meters long on the shorter sides. That is, on the eastern and the western sides."

"As for the north and south," he continued, "I think those are maybe a third longer. So perhaps around three hundred and fifty meters on the northern and southern sides. It's only an estimate though."

"That's alright, it still gives us a basic idea," Kivamus said. A sudden gust of wind made him shiver, and he missed the warmth of the manor hall. "Let's return inside first, shall we? It's getting cold here."

"I was going to suggest the same, my lord," Duvas said with his arms around himself. "These old bones cannot tolerate cold too much."

As they turned back towards the manor hall, Kivamus looked at the majordomo, who must be pushing sixty years now. He certainly would be feeling the cold much more than him. Well, at least the fireplace would be burning inside the hall.

He looked at the guard captain. "How many watchtowers do you think we need to cover the whole wall?"