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Chapter 82. Unconventional Ideas - Part I

Hudan gave it a minute of thought before he replied. "I'd say we need one watchtower at each corner for sure. Although, in the future, maybe we can add another watchtower in the middle of each of the longer sides, and if we are able to muster enough guards to man all the watchtower properly, we could even make a watchtower at every hundred meters, but we can't possibly man that many watchtowers at this point."

"So we need a minimum of four watchtowers then," Kivamus said. "Let's keep it at that number for now, and we can consider adding more in the future. I was also thinking about making the gates next to the watchtowers, so that the gates will be well covered by the archers from the watchtowers. That's why instead of making the gates right in the middle of the walls spanning from one corner to another, we should keep the gates at the corners of the walls. For example, the northern gate can actually be at the northeastern corner of the village wall." He added after a moment of thought, "Actually, that idea would allow us to get by with just three gates."

He explained, "The first gate will be at the north-eastern corner, facing north, and the second gate will be at the south-eastern corner, facing south. That will allow easy access to the northern road, as well as to the farms in the south from their respective gates, and unless we are sieged by an attacking army from all sides, which is highly unlikely anyway, those opposite gates will allow the guards to flank any bandits who are attacking any of the other gates. And finally, the third gate will be in the western walls, near the southwestern corner, which will allow easy access to the road going southwest towards Kirnos as well."

Slowly, they reached the manor house and entered inside, and took seats on the comfortable armchairs near the fireplace, welcoming the warmth of the burning fire.

"Hmm..." Hudan muttered as he put his hands near the fire to warm them. "It should work, I think. Having one fewer gate to worry about would certainly make it easier to man them, especially since all the gates will be close to a watchtower as well."

"indeed," Kivamus said. "Now, as for the height of the watchtowers, we need to make them high enough that it would allow the guards to keep an eye on a good amount of distance. We have decided the walls to be fifteen feet high, which is nearly five meters. So... the towers should be at least double of that height, shouldn't they?"

Hudan gave a slow nod. "Ten meters high watchtowers should be good enough, although I would have preferred them to be taller, since the guards don't just have to keep an eye on the walls. We are clearing five hundred yards of ground all around the village, so the towers should be high enough that the guards can easily keep an eye that far. Even so, keeping in mind our other limitations of manpower, a height of ten meters would do for now."

"Alright then," Kivamus said. "Ten meters it is. We will also need a lot more bows and arrows to arm the guards in the future, but that is something we can think about only after the immediate concerns are taken care of." He continued, "Also, we will only start the construction of the watchtowers after all the walls and the gates have been completed. Let Yeden know that the trenches for the stakes should be five feet deep, like you have told him earlier, and the stakes themselves should be cut at length of twenty feet, so that they will be fifteen feet high above the ground. Once all the trenches have been dug, he should put a dozen or so workers to start sharpening one side of those stakes so that the top of the walls will be sharp."

"I'll let him know, my Lord," Hudan nodded.

Kivamus thought about the limitation of guards which would prevent them from manning all the watchtowers and the gates properly. It was true that they really did have a shortage of manpower, since they needed the able-bodied men to keep working as laborers, for all the things that needed to be done in the village. They couldn't afford to take one or even two dozen more men out of the workforce to keep them as guards, which wouldn't be productive for the village. However... While it was true that this was the medieval era, and the people here were habitual in thinking in orthodox ways, he wasn't bound by such limitations himself. Even though they were short of able-bodied men by now, they weren't short of working age women at all.

While it was true that women still did have to work in this world, including a few who were working as manual laborers in the village, but those were the exceptions, and they were mainly those women who didn't have anyone else they could depend on. Without any education and with the only jobs available in this era being those which required physical power had easily outcasted most of the women from the workforce, since they couldn't carry logs or push carts full of coal as well as men could. That had relegated them to jobs like sewing, cooking and taking care of the children, which didn't require as much physical prowess as a coal miner or a logger did. However, there were still many more things which they could be taught to do in this world, even without access to any modern machines like tractors or cars, which anyone could drive with proper instruction.

He looked at others sitting near the fireplace before he broached this topic. While Duvas was educated well enough for the standards of this world, he had been living most of his life in the middle of nowhere, with the local customs deciding his mindset as well, not that people were any more progressive thinking

in the bigger cities. Hudan was born in a commoner's family and his values would be the same as others as well, and while Gorsazo was well educated and served as a teacher for a son of the duke, none of these people would be easily receptive to his unorthodox idea, but he still had to try.

He began, "Like you said earlier Hudan, we are short on manpower, and we can't easily man all the gates and the watchtowers. Even as a rough estimate, if we put just two men at each gate and each watchtower for eight hour shifts, we need a total of fourteen men for each shift, or forty-two men to cover all shifts. That doesn't include any guards which we will still need in the manor itself, not to mention any men who might be sick or injured and might not be able to pull guard duty temporarily. Even if we extended the shifts to twelve hours, which we might need to do anyway, we will still need twenty-eight men just to man all the gates and watchtowers - again, that doesn't include those we need in the manor. So as it stands right now, it wouldn't be feasible for us to man all the guard posts with our current complement of twenty-four guards."

Hudan gave a sigh. "I realize that, my Lord. I was already thinking about that problem. Feroy and I would have to pull guard shifts as well, which would give us two more men, but even then we would still be short of trained guards."

"Exactly," Kivamus nodded. "That is why I want to suggest something new." As others looked at him in curiosity, he added, "We are short on man-power, of course, but we aren't really short on woman-power, are we?"

While Gorsazo frowned at him, Duvas asked, "What do you mean by that, my Lord?"

"I mean, while it is true that we can't ask women to climb trees to cut the branches, or to carry the logs from place to place, we can recruit a few of them as guards, can't we?" Kivamus added, seeing the uncertain expressions on others' faces, "I know that they might not be able to fight hand to hand with a sword against a bandit, but we can still use them as archers, right? That way, they can be the ones to be stationed on the watchtowers, from where they can rain arrows on any enemy without needing to fight with them face-to-face where they might be easily overpowered by men."

While Gorsazo kept frowning at him, he didn't say anything at all. Hudan started to speak something, but the old majordomo interrupted him with an offended voice, "My lord, woman as guards? As warriors? That's... that's... shameful, my lord! With all due respect to you, it's completely disgraceful for you to even suggest something like that!"

Before Kivamus could reply, Duvas stood up from his chair in anger and continued speaking with an outraged voice, "If we have to let our women fight for us, we might as well submit to the bandits ourselves! What is the point of all this, if we can't even protect women, and have to ask them to fight in our place?"

Kivamus had expected that reaction, but for a moment he was so surprised with Duvas' wrath that he didn't know what to say. Once Duvas was done speaking, he sat down on his armchair again and stared at him with anger. Taking a deep breath, Kivamus began, "We are not asking women to fight in our place, Duvas. We are asking them to fight along with us! There is a difference in that."

"I might be getting old now, my Lord," Duvas huffed, "but my ears are working just fine. I heard exactly what you said earlier. It doesn't make what you suggested any more palatable." He looked at Gorsazo and asked, "What do you think? Do you support this outrageous proposal?"

Gorsazo stared at Kivamus for a while before he shook his head slowly. "Not really, Duvas. I know that some of the knights have a woman or two in their retinue when they go to fight, but they are usually for doing tasks like cooking and sewing, not for fighting. I don't think I have ever heard of any women being forced to fight as warriors anywhere."

Duvas snorted, and glared at Kivamus. "See, even Gorsazo doesn't agree to it, and he is from a big city! I don't mean any disrespect, but I just can't agree to it. You should stop thinking about such a half-witted idea, and the Goddess will make sure to protect us."

By this point, Kivamus was getting annoyed after hearing their orthodox but naive views, even when their own survival was at stake here. He stared back at Duvas and Gorsazo and asked, his tone dripping with sarcasm, "Really? Just like she protected the previous baron from that ambush? Or like she protected the village in the previous bandit raid? I don't want to criticize the Goddess, but I don't think any deity would protect someone who was acting as stupidly as you all!"