

## Londoner 84

### Chapter 84. Better Than A Bow

"Let's think about it," Kivamus said. He looked at the guard captain. "What is your opinion about this? Once we have the village walls ready, we can afford to keep only a small number of guards in the manor, while the rest of our current guards can be put on duty at the village gates and the watchtowers. Since most of the off-duty guards also stay in the manor in their free time, we would still have enough guards in the manor in case of an emergency."

Hudan thought about it for a while before he answered. "Like you said earlier, my Lord, if we put just two men, or even women, at each watchtower and each gate, we'll still need fourteen men for each shift, or forty-two in total. And in any case, even if the off duty guards would stay here in the manor, we would still need a few guards here on active duty in each shift, but that would add up to too high a number."

He continued, "What we can do here to reduce the number is that, since three of the watchtowers would be built right next to the gates, we can put just one man on each watch tower in each shift, while the gates would still have two guards. Usually, it wouldn't be safe to keep just two men at each gate, but since there would be someone keeping an eye on the surroundings from the height of the watchtower, they should be able to notify the manor quickly in case of an attack, especially if they are provided some sort of horn to signal emergencies like a bandit raid or an attack by some wild beast."

Duvas said, "We do have a few old animal horns in the manor, even though we rarely used them. We can provide them to the guards in those watchtowers, so that they can sound an alarm in case of such an attack."

"That will be very helpful," Hudan said. He continued, "The fourth watchtower in the north-west would still need to have two men in all shifts though, just in case an attacker shoots the guard there with an arrow from a distance. This way the other guard would still be able to notify the manor of an imminent attack. That would add up to..."

"Eleven men in each shift," Kivamus answered, "or a total of thirty three men. That's not including those in the manor, so it's still too high." He added, "For now, until we are able to properly man every gate, we can just keep the gate in the south-east barred permanently from inside, so that the villagers can use the gates in the north-east and the south-west, which would still allow easy enough access to the workplaces outside the walls. However, that watchtower would still have a guard there in each shift, to keep an eye outside in that direction."

He continued, "Ideally, we should have put two guards in the southeastern watchtower as well, just like the one in the northwest - because there wouldn't be any gate guards there, but we can make do with only a single guard in the south-eastern watchtower for now, since it is close to the manor itself, where all the off duty guards will be resting, which means we can immediately respond to an attack from that direction. That leads us to two guards at those two village-gates each, and one guard at all the watchtowers except the one in the Northwest - which will have two guards. That adds up to nine guards in each shift, or a total of twenty-seven guards in total." He nodded to himself, "That's doable, I think."

"It seems so," Hudan agreed. "Since Feroy and I will be here in the manor most of the time anyway along with the off-duty guards, we can get by with just two guards on active duty at each of the two manor gates, which is a total of twelve guards for all three shifts. That means we need thirty-nine guards to be able to man all the gates and the watchtower, along with the gates of the manor. Since we have twenty-four guards right now, we would need to hire fifteen more men or women."

"Right," Kivamus nodded. "Since we can put the women on guard duty at the watchtowers, we need five women in each shift, for a total of fifteen. That adds up nicely with the number of new guards we need to recruit." He looked at Duvas, "That means you need to try to recruit fifteen women in total. Let them know that they would get the same wages as the male guards. Of course, the payment will be in grain and coal for now, and coins in the future."

"I will do my best to recruit them, my Lord," Duvas nodded. "I don't know if we would be able to get that many women to work as guards though."

"Just give it a try," Kivamus said, "you never know. And if we are unable to get enough women as guards, we will think of something else in the future."

Duvas nodded. "But do we need to pay them the same wages as the men? Usually women are only paid a smaller amount than men, even when they were working as laborers in the mines, since they couldn't do as much physical work as a man."

Kivamus grimaced. Of course the orthodox thinking in the medieval ages would include blatant discrimination like that. He answered, "They are risking their lives just as much as men by working as guards, and unless you value their lives less than men, I see no reason to pay them a smaller amount. So let them know that their wages would be the same as male guards."

"As you say, my Lord," Duvas grumbled.

"However," Hudan began, "all that would work out only if the women could be just as good guards as men. So, even if we only plan to use the women as archers and not swordsmen, I am still curious about how we can make them shoot arrows just as well as trained male archers. Usually they need years of practice, and excellent muscle strength."

"I was getting to that," Kivamus said with a smile. "Have you ever heard of something called crossbows? I read about that in a book in the Uliga palace, and those could be very helpful to us here."

"Cross...bows...?" Hudan muttered. "What does that even mean?" He raised his eyebrows. "Two bows which are built crossed to each other?"

Kivamus laughed. "No, no, nothing like that." He looked at others. "Have none of you heard about it?"

Duvas just shrugged, and didn't say anything, while Gorsazo seemed to be looking far into the distance, as if lost in thought.

Shaking his head, Kivamus explained to the guard captain, "What I mean is a device which is usually smaller than a bow, but instead of pulling a string to release the arrow - which requires a lot of physical power, it uses a mechanism which doesn't take too much effort, and it would allow even women to easily reload it. More importantly, unlike bows, you don't need to reload crossbows immediately before shooting them, since you can prepare them in advance, so that they would be ready to shoot immediately when needed. That allows the person using them to target and aim accurately, taking as much time as they need for that, unlike bows - where the archer needs immense physical power to hold a fully drawn bow even for a short time."

Hudan looked intrigued. "That... sounds incredible... my Lord." He scratched his head, and muttered, "Although it seems similar to something I have heard in the past, I'm not sure..."

He frowned for a moment, as if trying to remember something, then suddenly he said, "Right! Now I remember it. A while ago, when Fero was telling me about his time with mercenaries, he mentioned that in an attack somewhere in Girnalica, his group had seen something called... Right, an arbalest! That's what it was called. He told me that instead of normal arrows used in a bow, it used bolts, and while it took much longer to load it and shoot, it could be kept ready to shoot for a long while in case you already knew that you were going to need it."

He added, "However, from what I remember, Feroy told me that those arbalests were even bigger than bows, and took a lot of strength to reload. But on the bright side, the bolts which those arbalests shot were powerful enough to easily take down a charging warhorse."

Kivamus nodded, remembering reading something about it in his past life on earth, when he used to spend his free time reading all kinds of things on the internet. "Yes, crossbows use the same concept as them, but are smaller than them, and can be considered a more advanced version of that. Also, it's good to hear about arbalests, since it means there are artisans who can already build them in the kingdom. Do you think we might be able to buy a few of them from Cinran, or Kirnos?"

Hudan shook his head in reluctance. "There is basically no possibility of that, my Lord. From what Feroy told me, the only place in the whole kingdom where they are only built is in the capital Dorastiz. And from what I think, nobody would possess any arbalests outside the guards of the royal family in Dorastiz. Maybe the guards of the Dukes might have a few, but they are very rarely seen. I have never seen one of those myself in all my life."

Kivamus thought about it from the memories of the original Kivamus. "I don't think I ever saw something like that in the Ulriga Palace." He looked at Gorsazo, who was still lost and thought and asked, "What do you think?"

Gorsazo blinked, as if he had forgotten he was sitting here. "Uh... What did you ask, my Lord?"

Kivamus repeated his question.

"I don't think I've seen something like that either..." Gorsazo replied after a while. "Maybe the Duke's knights in Fort Aragosa might have a few of them, but I wouldn't know about that since I've never been there. Truthfully, I'm not even sure what this arbalest is, since I've never seen such a thing."

"That's alright." Kivamus continued, "But it still means that we can't easily buy them, if at all. However, we could still try to make them ourselves. I think I can sketch the design of it well enough."

Hudan looked surprised. "You can, my Lord?"

Kivamus smiled, "The concept isn't that difficult, and I can certainly describe the design of it to Taniok and Cedoron, but they would need to make the necessary parts for it very precisely. It is up to them whether they can successfully build it based on my designs. Of course, there is no point in telling them about it until the longhouse blocks and the village wall is completed. But I think we should still be able to build them after that."

Hudan said, "From what Feroy had described, it seemed like a very effective weapon if used properly. If we could even make a few of them here... it would really help in the defense of the village. And if we had enough of them to provide them to every guard, any attacking bandits wouldn't know what hit them!"

"True enough!" Kivamus explained, "In our case, if we put a few loaded crossbows on each watchtower, then in case of an attack, the women there can easily use those crossbows to shoot the bandits one by one, without needing to reload them again immediately. Of course, even then, those crossbows would need to be reloaded before they can be used again, but even those initial few bolts - which crossbows use in place of arrows, would allow even a single woman to take down three or four bandits just by herself, and without even getting injured."

He continued, "In the future, if we are able to put two or even three guards on each watchtower, then the guard who has better accuracy, can keep shooting the attacking bandits with those crossbows, while the others can use that time to reload them. This would allow them to keep shooting continuously as long as they have enough bolts. This is something which cannot be done with a bow and arrow, since the person who is shooting them is the one who has to load the arrow. However, having crossbows would allow a woman to keep shooting at the pace of three or four trained archers with others providing her with loaded crossbows, or even faster if more people are assisting her." He added with a smile. "It's a different fact that unlike a bow, it is much easier to use a crossbow, so it doesn't even need much training for even an untrained person to use them!"

"But it can't all be good, my Lord," Hudan said with a frown. "There have to be a few shortcomings of arbalests or even crossbows when compared to a bow and arrow, otherwise everyone would be using them in place of bows, isn't it so?"