

Londoner 91

Chapter 91. Status

~ Kivamus ~

~ Baron's Manor, Tiranat ~

In the morning, Kivamus was sitting with others in the manor hall near the fireplace, after they were done with their breakfast. It was a simple meal of fresh bread, a couple of eggs along with some cheese that Madam Nerida had made a while ago from the small amount of milk that they got from the two cows remaining in the manor, and yet it felt quite fulfilling in the current times.

"That was nice..." Hudan breathed. "Thank you for regularly including us in the meals as well, my lord. It has been awhile since I ate good food like that."

Kivamus waved him away. "Think nothing of it. We still can't afford to feed eggs and cheese to everyone in the manor after all. We have a lot of work left to do."

Since he had started training with the guards for the past three days - even though it was only for a short duration, he was starting to feel the effects of it, and his whole body was still aching. He couldn't possibly keep up with other guards or Hudan, but at least he had started trying to become more fit.

Looking at Gorsazo he smiled internally. His conversation with him two days ago had gone much better than he had expected, and even though Gorsazo knew a lot about him by now - including how he had the knowledge of such unheard-of things - he had seemed fine after it, unlike how distant he had seemed before that conversation.

As Syryne started to pick up their wooden plates, he asked, "Any luck with trying to preserve Losuvil leaves after plucking them from that vine?"

"Not yet, my Lord," she answered. "I have been trying every day, but without access to more Losuvil leaves for experimenting on them, it would be difficult anyway. That vine we had found only had a few leaves left anyway, and I already used half of them. Unless we find more Losuvil vines, that is our only source, so I have left the remaining leaves there."

Kivamus nodded. "I'll see what can be done about that soon. We do need to locate more sources of Losuvil vines."

"That will help a lot," she said, before taking the plates to the kitchen of the manor house.

Duvas began, "It has been around a week since the caravan has been out. If everything goes well, they should return by this evening."

Gorsazo nodded. "Looking at the weather outside, it doesn't seem like we would be able to send the caravan for a third trip."

"Seems like it," Hudan said. "Although I did see the sun peeking from behind clouds early in the morning today, even though we haven't seen the sun for nearly a week now. Eh... doesn't really mean anything, since the clouds covered the sky completely soon after that."

"What is the progress with the work in the north?" Kivamus asked.

Duvas replied, "Yeden had reported in the evening yesterday that all the trenches in the village have been dug completely by now. That includes those for the walls, and for the foundations for the three longhouse blocks. It was a good idea to do that for three of them, since it gives us the option to continue the construction even in the winter."

Kivamus nodded. "What about the trenches for the drains in the north of the village?"

"Those too have been completed," Duvas said. "Yeden has dug the drains around the location of the three longhouse blocks, and then he has connected them to a bigger drain which passes from the west of the village to the southern area. Of course, since the pond still hasn't been dug, that drain ends abruptly in the South for now. But Pinoto should be starting the digging of that pond soon."

"That's good to hear." Kivamus asked, "What about the village walls? What is their progress?"

Hudan replied this time. "Since all the trenches have been dug by yesterday, Yeden has told me that he will put some workers to start cutting the logs into stakes of twenty feet length from today. I have also

told him to put a few workers to sharpen one end of those logs, so that those stakes will be pointed at the top end before we start to put them into the trenches to make the walls." He added, "Also, unlike the logs we are using in the walls of the longhouses, we are not removing the bark from the stakes for the village walls, so that will save some time as well."

"That's true." Thinking about the cold weather, Kivamus said to the majordomo, "Although we have provided enough braziers to the workers by now, you should tell them to build a temporary shed in the northern area where they are working and also in the south. They can put a brazier inside that, so that the workers can occasionally go and sit inside it to warm up their bodies." He added after a moment, "You know what, make that shed a little bigger in the northern area, so that Taniok doesn't have to work in the open. He is the only carpenter we have, and cutting logs into planks can be done just as well inside those sheds."

Duvas gave a nod. "I'll let them know, my Lord. Putting up such a temporary shed doesn't take long. The workers can put it up in a few hours. However, Taniok has now started overseeing the workers to build the walls of the longhouse, so he has stopped cutting more planks for now."

"Oh! It's good to know that he has already started the walls." Kivamus added, "Even so, he will still need to cut more planks for the other things like the door, the bunks and the roof. So it will still be a good idea to provide a shed for him to work inside."

Duvas replied, "He does have a good stack of planks by now to use in the first longhouse block. But you are right, he will still have to continue cutting more planks at some point. I will let the workers know to make the northern shed bigger."

"Good," Kivamus commended.

Talking with Syryne earlier about the Losuvil vines had reminded him about something else. He said, "While the guards would have to go deeper into the eastern hills to see if there are more Losuvil vines found there, I would like to take a look in that area today, at least till the coal mines, to see what the condition of flooding is inside them, as well as to the stream. I also need to know what is the slope of the ground from that stream to the area where we will build the pond - to see how feasible it is to transfer water between them."

"That will need me to bring along half a dozen guards at least," Hudan replied. "Unlike when we visited to the north of the village, which were still very close to the village, we would have to go much further to visit the stream and the coal mines, so I will have to take more guards this time. But we already have

a shortage of guards in the manor and if we take half a dozen guards for that visit - which will take a few hours at least, then it will only leave five or six guards to defend the manor as well as the whole village during that time. That is way too risky."

"Hmm... It does make sense," Kivamus said.

Hudan nodded. "I think it's a better idea to wait until the caravan has returned from its second trip. After that, we will have more than enough guards to spare a few for that visit. By that time, I will also have trained them even more, so that in case of an attack - even if by a wild beast, they wouldn't just run away at the first sign of danger, leaving you alone."

"Okay. Let's postpone it for now." Kivamus added, "But in that case, I still want to visit the northern area today."

"That is doable," Hudan replied while standing up. "Just give me a moment to gather a few guards to accompany us, and I will meet you at the gates of the manor."

"Alright then." Kivamus stood up as well. "Gorsazo you should come along as well, Duvas can stay back in the manor to keep an eye on everything here."

With a nod, Gorsazo got up as well and they left the manor house. Coming outside, Kivamus looked at the sky, but it was very cloudy again. It seemed that the slight clearing of the sky earlier in the morning was only a blip. He sighed. There was nothing they could do about it.

Reaching the gates of the manor, he saw that the guards on gate duty stood even straighter when they saw him coming there. He waited for a while, and soon Hudan returned with a few guards and they left for the north of the village. While walking there he remembered that the conditions of most of the houses were not good enough to keep the people inside safe from the freezing weather. It was a good idea to dig the foundations for more longhouse blocks, since it would allow them to shift most of the villagers into them - not just those who were homeless, which would be much warmer for them than these shabby houses.

Soon they reached the northern area where a lot of work was in progress. The first thing he realized was that the trees had been cleared for quite some distance now. Although, to be fair, the cleared area was only around a hundred meters at most, and that too only for a small width of land - but it still felt good

to see even that much progress. Without access to any modern machines, it would take quite a while until they could clear the planned five hundred meters of area all around the village, not to mention the land needed for the farms in the south, which had to be located ahead of that cleared land. He could also see that the trenches for the three longhouse blocks had been completed by now.

Looking at the location of the first longhouse block, he saw that the wall on one side of it was already in the process of being constructed using the unbarked logs. The workers were using a long and sturdy rope thrown around a horizontal branch of a tree which was still standing in the area which would become the courtyard of the block in the future, as a leverage to lift the logs into place. A couple of horses were also standing there to help the workers in that. It was a slow process, but finally the actual construction of the longhouse block had started.

When Taniok, who was overseeing that process, realized that he was there, he told the workers to continue working in the same way, and walked towards him.

When Kivamus looked closely at that tree - which was completely devoid of any leaves by now, he noticed that it looked different from the common fedarus trees here. For one thing, it wasn't nearly that tall, and it had more horizontal branches than were common on the fedarus trees. Its bark also looked a little different from them. As the carpenter reached closer, he asked, "Which tree is that? It doesn't look like a fedarus tree to me."