

## Witch 16

### Chapter 16 Future route

The flames in the fireplace were in full bloom, dispersing the chill which penetrated through the doors and windows. Above the huge fireplace hung the skull of a deer with long horns. In the glow of the fire, the shadows reflections of the horns on the back wall appeared to be huge claws and teeth companions of skull.

Opposite of Roland stood a long deep-red wooden table laden with parchments and books. Most of the documents only needed his signature to the execute the order. Usually, Roland would only be here to handle official work, but since he had transformed the castle room into a three-room office he had grown to love working here.

Through the windows at the end of the floor he could see the town spreading out beneath his gaze, and in the horizon were the endless mountains. The mountains were almost impassable, they separated the Kingdom of Graycastle and the wild lands in two. The northern mountain slope was just a branching pass of the mountain range.

At the foot of the window he could see the wood-fenced garden, which Anna used to train. In order to provide a convenient place for afternoon tea, the brick pool was already transformed into a long table. If the weather was good he could go down and lie underneath the sun, or maybe even take a nap on top of the custom-made rocking chair.

Although it was small, it was nice to have your own personal garden as well. In his former life, if you wanted to sit on the stone steps of a real castle, it would be almost impossible. Just to look around, you had to spend money to buy a ticket. But now, he not only had his own castle, but a whole town as well.

“Your Highness, recently we spent a considerable amount of money from your treasury to recruit tradesmen and handymen. If this continues, I’m afraid our treasury won’t last until next year’s spring.” Barov handed the parchment with the recent reports of the financial situation to Roland.

Originally, Border Town had a very simple chart of income and expenditure. Their line of income came from ore mining and trade with precious stones. This line of income was in the hands of the Longsong Stronghold. The output of the North Slope Mine was directly exchanged for wheat or bread, without any taxes, and the exchange of resources was presided over by the stronghold. Described in simpler terms, the North Slope Mine was a joint-stock item of the Longsong Stronghold nobility. Those nobles stationed in the border town could be seen as the custodians of the shareholders, their fiefs were mostly in the east of the stronghold. They came here only for a limited time, and there would be different people each year.

In fact, Border Town had less than 30 years of history. Compared with the nearly two hundred years of Longsong Stronghold, it was simply a newborn baby. Duke Ryan had only intended to establish an outpost here to get an early warning in case an evil beast invasion began. He had never expected that the pioneers who discovered a mine rich with mineral resources in the Northern Mountain Slope would just settle there, practically making a small municipality, named Border Town.

In order to prevent stealing, the Duke did not accept manpower sent by the other nobles. Instead, he employed the local residents. Even criminals became miners, and food was prorated based on the output of ore each home provided.

The stronghold would just provide some food and commissioned employers throughout the year. The stronghold only paid a fixed amount of money, it wasn't based on the mining output. Of the two thousand inhabitants of Border Town, more than half of them were in the mining services.

Another line was the town's other industries – the blacksmith's shop, tavern, textile shop and so on. From them, Border Town usually received a modest amount of revenue throughout the year, but it was quite difficult to have money left over by the end of it. The appointed Lord didn't govern Border Town seriously, since Roland was sent there from Graycastle. Instead, he had decided to stay in the stronghold, without returning to Border Town.

As a result, when Roland wanted to hire someone to repair the walls, he could only pay them from his own pocket. If it was the fourth prince from before, he would have certainly never done it. But the current Roland, as long as he gained a firm foothold in this Border Town, even if he had to spend all his property, it would still be worth it. Anyway, after the ore trade would no longer be settled with food, the town's income would still be no more than a drizzle.

The only question was if Longsong Stronghold was willing to give up their monopoly of trade with Border Town – this would be similar to entering a tiger's den to seize food, but the inventory data provided by Barov indicated that the mining efficiency was low and the transportation of ore was inefficient and inconvenient. In fact, the value of the annual output of ore mining was more than 1000 gold royals, but for the entire stronghold that was only a drop of water in the bucket. The only ones benefiting from this were the partners of the investing aristocracy.

In consideration of the long-term development of Border Town, this line of income must be recovered. Roland's mind was clear on the fact that even if these people could fully recover their investment from the last ten years and longer, they would still not easily let it go. While mosquitoes were small, they were still meat. Besides, this was a seedling that could be useful to make money by reprehensible means. Previously, he was willing to give the investors certain benefits and compensation such as purchasing for half the price and such. However, the case of selling a full ship of ore for only half a ship of cereal, this kind of incident was not allowed to happen again.

While Roland was focused on pondering over the list of items, Barov was attentively watching him.

In these three months, or to be more exact, in the most recent month, some inexplicable changes had occurred to the fourth prince. Perhaps outsiders were still uncertain, but he was by the prince's side every day, so this kind of change could at most keep him for a short time in the dark.

During his time in Graycastle, Fourth Prince Roland Wimbledon was only known for his bad reputation. He would insist on his own way, behave unscrupulously, without any aristocratic demeanor... things like that. In short, no big mistakes were made, only unceasing small ones. Compared to his two brothers, his position differed greatly.

When His Majesty sent him to Border Town, he was filled with disappointment. If His Majesty hadn't promised him the position of an official finance minister after the fight for the throne, he would have quit and walked away long ago.

Early on, in his first two months in Border Town, the fourth prince always showed an extremely childish behavior. He managed to offend the local nobility over and over again. Fortunately, the town itself was of a very small scale, so even if all administrative positions were vacated and he had to fill those positions with a dozen civilians, they would still be able to go on.

But from now on, it would become something different.

"When had the change occurred?" he thought, "It was probably ..... it was after he saved the witch that the changes appeared."

Barov didn't doubt that the devil had the power to enter a body, or that the prince could be manipulated by a hidden witch. But this was extremely unlikely, if the devil and witches had the capability to control someone, why would they choose the fourth prince? Wouldn't it be better to directly control His Majesty or the pope? Another point which dispelled his doubts was that he had witnessed the prince holding the 'God Punishment Lock'.

This was the Church's trump card to handle the witches. The power of any demon would collapse in front of the 'God Punishment Lock', but Roland could hold it directly. In other words, in the case that he wasn't the fourth prince, when even God had no power about him, it was needless to fear the devil king, so was it necessary to expose him? To preserve one's own life was most important.

The Prince's style still continued in his own way, behaving unscrupulously, yet the feeling Barov got was that both styles were not at all the same. No, Barov thought, it should be the opposite. The biggest difference would be the purpose. He was aware of what Roland was planning to do, in order to achieve the goal, he had to employ some methods which were difficult to understand for ordinary people, like the time when he tried to persuade him to save the witch. Perhaps the planning was not very wise, but the prince really had planned in advance, and believed in the results firmly without any doubt.

This ability was the one that caused anyone to feel most puzzled. The title of king might be possible for any of Roland's brothers and sisters, but certainly not for the fourth prince himself. This thing was very clear, because how could he develop such a small place like Border Town? Even the gods couldn't do it! In the end, Roland came up with a crazy plan, the crazy plan to set up a defensive line outside of Border Town, so that they can develop better than the City of Golden Harvest. Was he really thoroughly convinced that this project would be successful?

If he was merely a madman, it would be bad enough. But for Roland, who vigorously built the city wall, that did not seem to be the case. He really planned to defend this place, merely with the help of the alchemical product 'cement', to build a wall, which is for the common sense, almost impossible.

Within Barov's family there was also an alchemist, but he had never heard of an alchemical workshop refining such a thing. The solution for the construction of the wall was based on something no one had seen before, in the end, was he only confident in himself, or was it just his reckless behavior?

"To what extent did Roland's plan go, and in the end how much do I know of Roland's scheme?"

Barov found himself interested in the approaching days.