

Lord of Winter: Beginning with Daily Intelligence

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: Slave Market

The eastern marketplace of Frost Halberd City, where the cold wind howled.

The air was filled with the stench of animal hides, the aroma of roasting meat, and the crisp sound of metal clashing.

The stalls lining the streets were extremely rudimentary, mostly just a few wooden poles propping up a shed, with goods casually displayed.

Originally, this was just a small trading market, occasionally visited by farmers and hunters to exchange for grain and daily necessities.

But since the Northern Territory Pioneer Order was issued, many merchants smelled the scent of gold coins and flocked here like ravenous wolves.

Forcibly transforming this small market into a bustling trade center.

At the easternmost side of the market, a rough wooden fence enclosed an open space, inside of which stood a group of ragged slaves.

Most of them shrank their bodies, with heads lowered, as if accustomed to becoming someone else's commodity.

Occasionally, a defiant look of anger could be seen.

But whenever the slave merchant's whip cracked down ten times in a row, all rebellious spirit would instantly be quenched.

Although the slave market was a grey area within the Empire, in the chaotic Northern Territory, it was practically an open secret.

Whether pioneer lords or smugglers, everyone knew what was most lacking here — manpower.

"Come and see! Young and robust laborers! Skilled in mining, logging, brick carrying, and cotton picking, more capable than oxen!"

"These are captives from the Snow Country, though not fully tamed yet, they're cheap! Buy them back and train them for a few months, they'll surely be obedient!"

"Looking for smarter slaves? These are literate and can even help manage accounts.

Various hawkers' cries rang out endlessly as the slave merchants expertly promoted their wares.

To them, these slaves were essentially no different from horses and goods.

A slave merchant noticed Louis and his entourage and immediately put on a flattering smile and greeted them:

"Sirs! Come take a look! These are the best laborers in the Northern Territory, guaranteed to work hard, withstand cold and hunger, and absolutely affordable!"

The official accompanying Louis frowned and reminded the slave merchant, "This is Baron Calvin, weigh your actions carefully, don't get any wrong ideas."

"Of course not!" The slave merchant waved his hands repeatedly, smiling even more warmly, "My business is fair to all, young and old alike, and the prices are quite reasonable.

These slaves, each is a hard worker, adept at farming, chopping wood, building houses, and picking cotton, there's nothing they can't do!"

He waved his big hand, signaling for the slaves behind him to stand straight. Some slaves reflexively straightened their backs, but more just stood numbly, lifeless.

"Look at these, strong and muscular young men, they have the strength of two oxen!"

The slave merchant walked to a few dark-skinned slaves and patted their shoulders:

"Though they seem skinny, they eat little and do much! Just give them a mouthful to eat, and they'll work for you till dusk without a word of complaint!"

He lowered his voice, revealing a suggestive smile, "Of course, if you have other interests... we can also provide higher-quality goods here.

From the South, fair-skinned, all meticulously trained, guaranteed to satisfy you."

Louis's eyebrows twitched slightly with a frown: "Not needed."

The slave merchant, seeing this, immediately switched back to a professional smile, nodding repeatedly, "You're indeed a man of vision.

Now is the time to make use of people in the Northern Territory's expansion, these rough serfs are the most practical trades.

Rest assured, these slaves of mine are not only hardworking but also obedient, they won't cause you trouble!"

Louis scanned the slaves before him.

These people were in tattered clothes, with pale skin, many with faces full of numbness.

Although the slave merchant boasted they were strong and capable.

In reality, most were malnourished, and some could barely stand due to weak legs.

However, among slaves, their appearance was indeed considered relatively good.

His gaze slowly swept over the group of slaves and finally settled on a small, thin boy.

The boy was tightly curled in a woman's arms, his frail body trembling like a scared little animal.

But in Louis's eyes, his status was far from an ordinary slave.

This was a system-indicated target, Weir, with the potential of a Peak Knight.

This timid demeanor makes it hard to imagine that without the intelligence system's prompt, this boy might grow into a Peak Knight and become a key player in a future war.

Elsewhere in the slave group, a man thinner than the rest was hunched slightly, seemingly trying to disappear entirely into the crowd.

His face was hidden under disheveled gray hair, his eyes darting, always deliberately avoiding the gaze of the people around him.

He looked completely unremarkable, even more downtrodden than the other slaves.

For an ordinary person, he might seem like nothing more than a pitiable wretch close to collapse.

But Louis knew, this was Hillco, the alchemy apprentice who fled north after being hunted for theft.

The slave merchant, noticing Louis's growing interest, patted his chest in assurance: "Sir, if you buy them, I guarantee you won't be disappointed!"

Louis didn't rush his decision and instead asked, "How much for one slave?"

"Men are eight silver coins, women and children four silver coins." The slave merchant said with a smile.

Louis nodded.

The prices of these slaves weren't low, but not exorbitant either, it seemed the slave merchant was wary of the official beside him and didn't dare to go too far.

"How many people do you have here?"

"There are over three hundred and eighty here, and we can bring in more from outside if needed."

"These will do." Louis decisively commanded.

He then went to several other slave merchants, gradually purchasing 120 more people.

In total, he gathered 500 slaves, spending 380 gold coins in all.

This single transaction nearly halved his assets.

(Currency System: 10 Iron Coins = 1 Copper Coin, 10 Copper Coins = 1 Silver Coin, 10 Silver Coins = 1 Gold Coin)

Next, Louis purchased large quantities of grain, seeds, farm tools, weapons, and other necessities for pioneering his territory.

The prices in the Northern Territory were at least twice as high as in the South, further tightening his financial situation.

After completing all the purchases, he counted his remaining assets and found only 68 gold coins left.

Broke.

During the two days in Frost Halberd City, Louis not only busied himself with procuring supplies but also met a few noble lords sent for expansion, like himself.

After brief interactions, he lost interest in these so-called nobles.

Some spent their days drowning in taverns, escaping reality.

Others wore dismal expressions, filled with despair about the future.

In front of Louis, they'd curse the emperor's incompetence, denounce their parents' heartlessness, wishing they could flee back south immediately.

Louis merely smiled noncommittally at this and stopped engaging with these people.

Two days later, outside the gates of Frost Halberd City, a nearly thousand-strong contingent was fully prepared.

Louis mounted his horse and gazed into the distance.

There lay Red Tide Territory, his domain.

"Set off!"

With a command, the procession began its grand journey, heading towards the Northeastern part of the Northern Territory, to the Red Tide Territory.