

## The Northern Tyrant [Game of Thrones] Chapter 45 - Lioness' Roar, Magnus' Folly, Industrial Revolution & More Red Dots

Genna Lannister didn't rejoice when her new, comfortable carriage, gifted by Lord Kaiser, rolled into the Casterly Rock. Her children were by her side, her most recent son from Lord Kaiser was in her arms, and another child was in her womb.

The only figure missing was her husband, Emmon Frey.

But more than that, she was angered by her brother's actions. She had spent such a long time in the North. While her time at Ramsgate was one of joy, her brother's refusal to accept Lord Kaiser's deal hurt her.

She knew exactly what her brother was doing. Lord Kaiser was a new lord with no great armies to command, no wealth to flaunt, and only personal achievements to speak of, a nobody before the great House Lannister. Her brother was doing what he always did, holding onto the Lannister pride.

But Genna had felt it firsthand. This time, the situation was different. It made sense to befriend the man who won Robert the throne and ended the Targaryen dynasty, for most exposed eyes, that was.

And now the strange rumor of grand walls rising out of the earth. The smallfolk murmured that it was the gods' gift to Lord Kaiser. While it was laughable, she, for one, did not consider them rumors.

Her annoyance was in the fact that she couldn't be there to see them. Or the rise of a grand city in the North. She knew it, Lord Kaiser would do it. She wasn't a fool to be blind in her desire and longing. She saw the man for who he was, powerful and capable, exactly what made her so devoted to him.

"Take them to their play chamber," Genna ordered the servants and stormed into the castle in long strides, walking towards her brother's solar.

She was heavy with a child, but also strong physically. She had followed Lord Kaiser's advice on how to keep herself in a feminine shape while not starving herself. Besides, she rather liked the physical aspect of the training; wielding a shortsword was new for her, but she saw the charm of it.

Once she arrived in front of the solar, she told the guards to announce her arrival. Moments later, the door opened, and she walked inside. As usual, Tywin was in his seat, and Kevan was standing near the window carved in the rock, overlooking the sea.

"You're here."

She nodded to her brother, showing her coldness from the beginning. She took a seat without asking and looked at Tywin's face. "I am."

"What is the condition of the Twins?"

Genna nearly frowned. That was the first thing he asked? Twins? Not Ramsgate? Did Tywin put House Frey above Ramsgate in his mind?

"In ruins, of course. Lord Walder lies abed, and his sons claw at each other, scheming for his seat. The bridge is gone entirely, and rebuilding it would take decades and thousands of gold dragons. New fords have been found to cross the river. House Frey earns less than even our most minor bannermen."

She watched Tywin's reaction. The man simply nodded. Clearly, her brother already knew those things. Lannisters had spies everywhere, and their gold kept that web growing. Even the most insignificant men and women would come to them to sell whatever word they knew.

"What of Ramsgate?"

At last, she drew herself up, a faint stiffness in her spine. "I know you won't heed me, but I will repeat it anyway. Make a friend of Lord Kaiser, whatever it takes. You saw his ice trade. He began it as no more than a quick remedy to steady his coffers, nothing grand in his eyes. It earns him coin, yes, but he doesn't think it important. He has larger ambitions, and he has both the will and the wits to see them done. He... mentioned he may soon turn to producing steel in great quantity, and more besides. What he lacks is skilled craftsmen."

As expected, Tywin eyed her with a raised brow.

"You think highly of him?"

*Why would I not? He's given me the most beautiful child of our House!*

Genna gave a small nod. "You may have seen him in battle, my lord. I saw more than that. He's not nearly as simple as you take him for. I would stake a great deal that what he did during the rebellion was of his own design. Harrenhal was the beginning of it, a step he chose for himself to start climbing higher. The realm is so dazzled by his victories with a sword that it cannot be bothered to look at anything else."

The truth was, Tywin hadn't seen Lord Kaiser in true battle. The only time Tywin had seen him fight was at Casterly Rock, against the Mountain.

Taking a step further, Genna continued. "I truly don't understand why you refused his offer. All he asked for was fifty ships and mining rights for himself and ten of his men. What could he have done with that? In return, we would have found more mines, enough to keep our house wealthy for tens of generations more."

"It's not about the offer, Genna," Kevan voiced. "We are already wealthy, and the Rock has plenty of gold to last us many generations. We aren't desperate for more mines. But the fact that a minor lord like him believes he can gain access to Lannister gold, that must never happen. Lord Kaiser may be as wise as you believe, and his skills with blade is well known, but he remains a minor lord sitting in the desolate North. There can be no comparison between House Lannister and him."

That infuriated Genna. "If that is so, then what of House Frey? Why was I bartered to that wretched place against my will?"

"That was the folly of our father," Tywin interrupted.

Genna shook her head. "Then I will see it set right. I'm ending my marriage to Emmon, and I want no further ties to House Frey. Those miserable, toll-squeezing animals fall short of even Lord Kaiser in wealth, power, and coin."

"Genna—"

Before Tywin could speak, Genna got up. "If you're like our father and care nothing for my happiness, then I will leave this family and this name myself. I have had enough of being treated like an object to be passed along."

"No, I don't oppose you ending the marriage," Tywin firmly voiced. "What I ask is simple. Who do you mean to marry once it is done?"

"..."

Genna nearly blasted like a volcano. Her brother was already planning to sell her off to the highest bidder, which meant whoever brought the most gains to House Lannister.

"You disgust me," she said. She had never spoken to Tywin that way before, but she found the strength now. "Still plotting to sell me off for your gains. Your grandson is set to rule the realm one day, and yet that isn't enough for you. That pride of yours... It's blinding you. Set it right before it's too late, my lord brother."

*What am I doing? I shouldn't have said that!*

Genna gulped, a little nervous now. But she maintained a proud facade and walked out of the solar.

*I'll simply go to Wylis if it becomes unbearable.*

Perhaps that was why she found strength to speak that way, Genna reckoned.

She now had someone to rely on if the worst came upon her. And that meant a lot.

####

Ramsgate,

Ting!

**[Updated Chain Quest(2/15) - Tyrant of the Lands**

**Description - A Tyrant's reach has no limit. Gather a permanent standing army of 100 armed men.**

**Reward - Army Command Skill (Tier 2)]**

Wylis sat in the tower's top-floor solar as he stared at the update. His garrison had finally surpassed a hundred, and that gave him the Army Command Skill's tier two. In his mind, he knew what it was: better command control, better landscape judgment, better decision making in how many men to send and where.

The navy command skill had also been updated to tier two long ago when he'd surpassed twenty ships. Now, he needed two hundred men and forty ships to reach tier three. But that was the easy part. Managing and funding all of that was the real issue.

At the moment, he was looking at some reports that Chett had made. They were the names and assessments of some of the garrison's men. Wylis wanted to find the most talented ones, to train them as future commanders, and give them special leadership training. Knowing his massive army would grow to one day, he had to start planning now.

*Dumb, every single one of them.*

At the moment, all of the names suggested had failed the field test. The test was conducted in groups, putting ten men together, and then tasking each man to take turns leading and ordering their team to cross through a plotted hurdle while finding a suitable way to cross it.

The exercise required leadership and reasoning. There were also group discussions, where Wylis had personally asked them questions and told them to discuss them. The questions ranged from the state of the realm, the importance of laws, and the role of the crown.

Sadly, since all of the men came from smallfolk, they lacked the knowledge to make decisions. Their arguments were basic, based on rumors and tales they'd heard growing up.

*I lucked out with Chett, I guess.*

Tired, he tore all the parchments and put them in a dustbin beside his table. He reclined back in his cushioned chair and looked towards the window. The sun was bright that day, and the distant sound of the town breathing was audible.

At the time, the economy was surviving on the construction boom he'd forced. But eventually, he knew he'd have to transition into other industries.

Silently, he summoned the Tyrant's Squire to look at the unfinished quests, his titles, the women, and the shop. As he looked at the quest that told him the location of the dragon eggs and Valyrian steel, he thought of the locations.

One marked location was in the ruins of Summerhall.

*Probably eggs there.*

Knowing the history of that place, eggs made the most sense to him. Aegon V tried to hatch them there, after all.

Then there were some locations marked in Dorne. He believed they were related to the wars the Crown had fought to bring Dorne into the realm. There could be Valyrian steel, he believed. As for the Reach, he knew Hightowers were close to the Crown, so the possibility of more steel was there.

And finally, there were half a dozen markers on Dragonstone. The possibility of them both being eggs and Valyrian steel was very high. Too bad, last time he was there, he was in a hurry to escape. And now it was Stannis' fief.

*At least the Maester training is going well.*

There was only one Wylis with Tyrant's Squire, after all. Wylis knew that to spread his knowledge and skills, he needed to build schools, train the first batch himself, and then expand from there. Qyburn was doing that at the moment, much to the mad doctor's annoyance.

Creak!

"Dad! Dad!"

Suddenly, the door to his solar was pushed open, and in came running Magnus. Big for his age, the boy was cute and chubby. But at the moment, his eyes were filled with tears, and fear on his face.

"Hide me, Dad! Hide me!"

Without asking, Magnus ran to his side and crawled underneath his table to hide.

Bam!

Just then, Lyanna appeared, kicking his door open. She was panting from all that climbing, her hands on her hips, eyes narrow in anger. "Where is he?"

*What's this now?*

Wylis didn't rat his son out just yet. "What happened?"

"Your son nearly killed Aegon," Lyanna nearly roared in anger. "I found him playing with my sword, Wylis. My sword. A real one. He forced Aegon to take up a dummy blade and fight him. He would have killed him if Rhaenys hadn't struck him and torn the sword from his hands. And even then, he turned on her, trying to take it back, and hurt Rhaenys."

At that point, Wylis grabbed his son's collar by the nape under his table and pulled him up like a cub. He dangled Magnus in the air over his table. "Boy, did you do all that?"

"I-I... I just... Dad, I just wanted—"

Magnus couldn't even finish explaining as he broke out into tears and loud sniffles, face messy and nose runny.

Wylis sighed. This was a part of parenting. And Magnus needed it the most. The boy was gifted in too many ways. While he could teach, how Magnus would turn out in terms of personality was all fate's decision.

"You want to be a sword-slinging warrior?" Wylis got up suddenly, and held Magnus under his right arm by his chest. "Lyanna, shut the ledgers and lock them away. I'll give him his lesson."

Suddenly, Lyanna grew worried. No matter how angry, she was a mother. "What will you—"

"He's my son as well, Lyanna. And he's not so afraid of you if he came running here. I may dote on them, but I know when to be firm. Fear not, I've no mind to beat him senseless. That only breeds fear. I want him proud and just, and for that, he must learn the weight behind a blade's swing."

Lyanna nodded in the end, saying nothing.

Wylis walked out of his solar, down the stairs of the tower. Magnus was still crying and sniffing. He said nothing on the way, knowing how much the children fear silence more than words.

Finally, he arrived in the small armory within the castle where his personal armor was stored. There, he placed Magnus on the ground and locked the door behind him.

"Wipe away the tears," Wylis ordered, looking down at the four-year-old, who looked tall enough to be called six or seven years old. But there was still a lot of innocence behind those blue eyes. "You want to swing blades? Very well, I'll let you. Go and grab a sword."

Magnus looked up, scared and crying. "S-Sorry, Dad... I'm sorry."

"No. When you make mistakes, you own up to them. Sorry does nothing when blood is spilled," Wylis declared and personally grabbed a light, real, sharp short-sword and forced it into Magnus' hands. "You will fight me now."

Wylis grabbed a simple training sword and struck right away. He let Magnus feel the weight behind the clash. Wylis, of course, held back immensely, but for a child, it was still a lot. Magnus instantly fell back on his ass.

*I'm sorry, Magnus. But you must learn this lesson early. You're too strong for a child.*

"Get up!" Wylis ordered, much louder now. "Use that damn blade! That's what you wanted, isn't it? Swing it!"

"S-Sorry..."

Pat!

Wylis smacked the flat side of his training sword on Magnus' shoulder, knocking him to one side. It didn't hurt much, but it had to sting.

Pat!

He repeated that, hitting Magnus' shoulders, then on his back. Each time he pushed Magnus around, sometimes throwing him to the floor. It bruised the boy; it made him grumble and cry. But Magnus got up each time and held onto the sword.

Clash!

Once again, Wylis clashed the blades and sent Magnus tumbling back. He had to be careful so the boy wouldn't mistakenly injure himself with his own sword. And it was tough on Wylis; he loved Magnus, as he loved all else.

With a clenched jaw, he continued. Magnus was someone Wylis had to give more attention to. The boy had too much potential, but if he turned out like Joffrey Baratheon, then the damage would be far too much.

"Dad! Sorry!"

Thud!

Wylis clashed the blade and sent Magnus falling again. With tears and a runny nose, Magnus was panting. Yet, surprisingly, there was no rage in those childish eyes. Just fear and sadness. The tears were real.

Since Magnus had a much higher intelligence than normal children and was likely to remember this incident forever, Wylis had knowingly decided to teach him this lesson in private. He feared the public humiliation would only damage Magnus's self-confidence.

"Is that all you got, son? I thought you wanted to swing blades."

Thud!

He pushed Magnus again. He wanted the boy to lash out and show anger. But no matter what, Magnus kept apologizing constantly. At that point, it scared Wylis more that the boy may simply not have the ability to rage.

Thud!

“Ugh!”

*There it is.*

At last, he saw the signs. Not mindless rage, however. More like a cornered cub trying to growl.

Woosh!

“Haaaaa!”

Finally, Magnus shouted, raised the short sword, and made a clumsy swing. This time, however, there was no clash. Magnus saw his sword's edge land straight on Wylis' shin. It cut through the trousers and...

Clang!

"No! Dad!" Magnus let go of the sword immediately and zoomed over to Wylis' leg. He pushed the trousers up and cried harder. "Sorry!"

Magnus cried at the sight of blood coming off his father's leg. He tried to stop the bleeding with his little hands, pressing the wound. As his own hands became bloody, he panicked and looked up at the towering figure.

No longer whimpering, just crying silent tears. Fear of punishment turned into worry, pain of seeing his father hurt. But further, revealing how much more intelligent Magnus was for his age, he took off his little shirt and tried to press it on the wound.

"This is what happens when you strike a blade, Magnus." Wylis finally spoke, unable to hold back any longer. It wasn't easy seeing his son act so helpless and scared. But he held back as much as he could, but no more. He sat down on a knee, still towering.

Normally, one would avoid cuts and wounds in that era, as infections could kill. But he already had the remedy for wounds and infections, so this lesson was more important.

Wylis took his son's little hands in one hand and caressed his hair with the other, his thumb wiping away the tears from the chubby face. "A sword is not a toy. And Violence is not a source of joy. You draw steel only for an enemy, to guard the innocent, your rights, and your lands. I've never harmed those who did no wrong. Tell me, have you ever seen me raise my blade against your aunt Ashara, or Elia, or Rhaella?"

Magnus shook his head.

"Aye. Because there is no reason for me to turn my blade on them. Magnus, what you did to Aegon and Rhaenys might have taken their lives. You would have lost them for good. Tell me, do you not love them?"

"I love them, Dad! I love them lots!"

"Then why did you do it?"

"I want to... be like you. Viserys gets to train and—"

"Viserys is ten, and you are but four. Magnus, when you are older, I'll teach you all I know. But not yet. You aren't ready, and you will bring harm to those around you. Today it was Aegon. What if next time it is Arthria, or little Daenerys? Remember, they're your family, and if you one day find yourself raising a sword before them, it must be to protect them, not to hurt them."

Sniff!

Magnus nodded. "I'm sorry."

"Good. Now swear to me you'll never repeat this. You are strong, and you are my son, so be patient. I'll teach you all you must know. One day, you will be the greatest warrior in the world. But before that, you must be a good child. Obey your mother, show kindness, show love, and always be truthful."

"I-I will, Dad. I promise."

"Good, now let's go find Aegon and Rhaenys. You'll apologize to them."

"But your leg—"

"It'll heal soon. Don't worry." Wylis tied Magnus' shirt around his leg since it was already bloody. Then, he held his son in his arms and walked out of the armory. "Make sure you do something to make your brother and sister happy. You scared them today."

"I'll never scare them again. Ever!"

"Good."

From the armory, after washing Magnus' hands, Wylis took him to Elia's bedchamber, where Rhaenys and Aegon were present. Lyanna had already arrived inside there, her eyes filled with worry, staring at her son dangling in Wylis' arm on his side like a sack of grain.

Wylis walked over to the canopied bed where Rhaenys was lying under the quilt. Aegon was sitting beside her, while Elia was standing nearby. He didn't know how hurt Rhaenys was, so seeing her like that worried him a lot. His hold on his son strengthened.

"Magnus has something to say," Wylis said and placed the boy on the bed.

"I'm sorry!" Magnus erupted instantly, eyes bawling. Without realising, he jumped right at Rhaenys and hugged her. "I hurt you... I-I'm sorry... I didn't mean to. I promise. I... Baldie!"

Magnus then jumped on Aegon, the boy was a year older but the same size as Magnus.

"I'll never, never fight again. Never, really!"

*Huh? What do you mean 'never'?*

Wylis frowned, but said nothing. He watched the three kids settle their little matter, and he soon learned of Rhaenys' injury. She had sprained her ankle because Magnus was so heavy, and he'd jumped on her to snatch back the sword.

Wylis quickly checked her leg and made sure nothing was broken. Then, he sent a servant to Qyburn to bring some ointment for such injuries. Finally, he tied a strip of cloth to keep the area warm.

Before long, Magnus and Aegon started playing again, this time using only toys. The rule dictated that the small toys, unless specific gifts, belonged to all children. That way, no child felt left out without presents. Besides, Wylis always made them an equal number of toys.

He alone stood beside Rhaenys' pillow and passed his fingers through her brown hair. The girl giggled at his touch, enjoying the attention.

"You did well stopping them, Rhaenys."

"That means I get a reward?" Rhaenys cheekily grinned.

Wylis agreed right away. "What do you want?"

"A pony!"

"Fat little horses?" Wylis said, stroking his beard. "Well, I've no mind to refuse that. I'll even set Caliburn to train it proper. But hear me, Rhaenys. You'll start swinging practice swords and loosing arrows with me from this day on. I'll not have any child of mine unable to defend themselves."

"Really?!"

Somehow, Rhaenys was more excited to get to learn swords than the pony.

"I love you, papa!"

*Oh, I'm melting.*

Wylis failed to hide that big, proud, fatherly grin from his face, no matter how much he tried. He heard Lyanna and Elia giggle behind him and took a sigh of relief. He didn't want any friction between them because of the kids.

Finally, he turned to look at Elia as she stared back at him. For a few days now, he'd been feeling a strange tension in her whenever she was near him. She seemed lost in thought and too stiff, as if scared of saying or doing the wrong thing.

"My ladies. I'll return to my work."

"What happened to your leg, my lord?" Elia asked.

Wylis shrugged as he walked away. "Just a little folly."

####

King's Landing,

Chataya didn't have lovers, nor customers. She had left that life behind years ago. Yet, she never thought she'd find herself longing for a man. A very specific, tall man.

It had been over a year since Lord Kaiser's last visit to King's Landing. But still, it warmed her heart that she was in Lord Kaiser's thoughts. Her little establishment had grown in size because of the small loan Lord Kaiser gave her.

And now, her establishment received the ice at a highly discounted price, something she used to her advantage by luring more customers. Men and women visited her establishment not only for the pleasure of the bodies but also for the pleasure of the tongue.

A completely dedicated kitchen had to be set up for it, however. But it was an investment she happily made. Complete with an ice storage, they had quick ways to make iced refreshments to drink. Ice cream, however, remained a luxury that she had to purchase from House Kaiser's main shops in the city. Still, they came at a bargain for her.

Chataya was shocked when the first delivery arrived that time. No one knew of this new, strange trade of bringing ice down south, let alone all the food and drinks that came with it. She had received a handwritten letter first.

In it, Lord Kaiser asked her to make use of this luxury and expand her influence in the city and her business. She was confused at first, not very knowledgeable about making use of ice, as she was a Summer Islander.

But soon enough, she understood the sway it had. In the hot summer, it was a godsend. And in bedchambers, some men loved playing with little ice cubes. Some loved to rub them on women's bodies to get them to squeal. Some men loved to have it done on them.

Still, she hoped to meet Lord Kaiser soon.

*Perhaps I should write to him.*

Ting!

Once again, the bell of the door rang. She didn't stand at the reception; it was beneath her. But that day, she was there as this guest was special. The man was old and never asked for women or men in his chamber.

Rather, he would always ask for some cold refreshments and a place to sit. She always indulged him, taking him to her own living chamber and sitting with him to keep him company. It was enlightening to talk to him, as she would get to learn about the realm.

"Welcome, my lord."

"Oh, just Jon. That's who I am here. Now, I heard Wylis has created a nice ice-cream flavor?"

Yes, that was the Lord Hand, Jon Arryn's vice. Ice cream. And since she had them at the cheapest, her establishment was his favorite place to eat.

Not that she hated this.

*Thank you for yet another gift, Wylis.*

Being close to the Lord Hand was very helpful.

####

Ramsgate,

While the plan to visit Lord Hornwood progressed, Wylis spent his day working on his city. While the smallfolk worked on the planned administrative district, he worked alone in the industrial district, which was walled off in the northern region.

He had multiple reasons to work alone. The first was that he planned to build some really advanced factories, at least compared to this era. They would still be powered by water mills, but the level of automation would increase production.

But for now, the first step was to build more canals in the industrial region to place those water mills. That was something he had to do alone. And since he was hidden by trees all around and the walls, there was no fear of being seen.

"Alright, the canal will go here."

He began marking the land for the canal. The plan was simple, but also complex. It was simple for him, but to any builder out there, this would be a miracle. Since the flow of the Broken Branch was intense, he wanted to build at least three straight canals that would curve into his lands.

As they flowed closer to the industrial district's western wall, the canal would go underground, passing through multiple large sewer passages, moving underneath the city, and also taking away all the sewer waste with it.

In the end, the waste would come out of the other side and fall directly into the sea, where the waves would do the rest of the work. The Shivering Sea wasn't gentle, after all.

Meanwhile, in the industrial districts, those canals would house multiple, perhaps dozens of water mills. They won't be the main factories, however. No, instead, each water mill would be connected with gears that would turn dozens of belt systems, which would travel to other buildings around the mill. That belt would then move the multiple simple but efficient machines.

Anything from trip hammers, drill presses, to power looms, oil presses, and bellows. They would supplement other places, reducing the time taken at each step. With blast furnaces, the entire industrial district was going to be the heart of the entire North, not just Ramsgate.

"Maybe I should hold a tourney for blacksmiths once the furnaces are made."

Wylis fell into thought. He wanted to attract talent, but they had no reason to come to the cold, harsh North. But one thing was certain: he was going to generate an insane level of employment, and that was without counting his army and navy.

*How the fuck will I pay them all? Eternal conquest? Make my own East India Company?*

Woosh!

Finally, finished with marking his canal, he began digging from the western wall side, where the canal was going to go underground. He planted his feet firmly into the ground, clapped both his hands, then dramatically parted them.

In response to his will, just as his hands parted, so did the ground, forming a perfect canal segment, five meters deep and eight meters wide.

Next, he waved his arms around, flattening the newly dug canal, giving it a firm shape, and then laying rocks at its bottom. Earthbending allowed him to put immense pressure on the dirt and make it solid.

Then, he moved a few steps further into the designated path and dug again. It was a job, simply rinse and repeat the same thing, again and again.

Ting!

"Oh?"

**[New Side Quest - An Empire Was Born**

**Description - Every journey begins with the first step. You have taken the first step to seize the world's wealth.**

**Goal - Establish ten factories.**

**Reward - Factory Worker Management Skill: Always know who goes where.]**

"..."

The title of the quest was immensely thought-provoking and exhausting. Every single time, the Tyrant's Squire reminded him of its endless appetite. But the reward was just as sweet, especially for something he was going to do anyway. Ten factories were already planned.

"Hmm, a five-year skill?" He checked the shop and found the skill's price. It was a skill with such a boring name that he'd have never noticed it if not for this quest. The description of it was exciting, however. He'd already lost the sailor talent finder after losing the Maidenpool's quest.

This time, he had no desire to lose it. By knowing the best role for each worker, he'd be able to maximize the efficiency of his factories.

*[Confusion.]*

Wylis stopped abruptly and looked back. Caliburn was standing there, staring at him, marking the ground with a big metal rod with a pointy top, leaving sticks in place as markers.

"Of course, you don't understand. All you know is to eat, run, and fuck these days."

*[Pride.]*

"Shameless." Wylis corrected. "Why're you here? Run around, play. This entire place is walled, just don't fall into the damn river."

*[Observe.]*

"Show what?"

*[Hostility.]*

Wylis felt Caliburn's emotions. That hostility wasn't directed at him, but someone else. He wasted no time and summoned the Tyrant's Fief map to find any intruders. And sure enough, he saw six red dots hiding in the heavily forested area in the soon-to-be-industrial district. The trees had not been cleared from there, and since the walls surrounded it, the guards didn't patrol it yet.

*But I checked the map this morning. They just arrived then?*

"Take me to them, Caliburn." Wylis mounted Caliburn's back. "No noise. I mean to take them alive."

"Neighehe!"

“I said quiet, boy!”

And quite Caliburn was. Despite the big size, Caliburn knew how to move by not tapping his hooves hard. And just as Wylis had expected, Caliburn took him towards the river’s shore. That was the only place intruders could enter.

*Should wall it off as well. Ugh... another miracle, I guess.*

*[Revulsion.]*

Wylis looked through the tree lines ahead. Four men were dragging their boat out of the water. Two were setting up their little camp. The Tyrant’s Fief marked them red, which meant they were enemies, not mere travelers.

Instead of attacking, Wylis got off the horse and crouch-walked closer to the camp. With the help of his stealth skill, he knew exactly where to hide to remain unseen. And his goal was only to listen.

The forest was noisy, and because of the harsh river nearby, his steps weren’t noticeable even as the dried leaves were crushed underfoot. He held his metal spear, which he was using to mark the land, his main sword at home, only a bastard sword hung at his hip.

More than enough, however. The six were dead men, and it didn’t matter how he captured them.

“Nage, where’s the money?”

Wylis crouched behind the tree and listened carefully. All the men had gathered around but were ready to be lit. But they weren’t, likely waiting for the night.

*Looks well-armed.*

All six men had swords at their hips, simple leather armor, and shaved faces. They didn’t look like villagers, but not knight material either.

“Coin, is it? Already asking? You’ll have your silver when the work’s done,” the man, Nage, replied. He was small and round, very unremarkable. Yet, he seemed to be their leader.

“What’s the work? You didn’t tell us,” asked a third man, the tallest of them all, a battle axe on his back.

“Since we’re here, I’ll tell you,” Nage said, taking a look around first. “These walls. Folks say they rose from the earth itself. We’re here to see if it’s true. After, we slip into the town, bide with the folk, learn what we can of Ramsgate. I’ve heard no spy keeps his head there past a day.”

“Then why not head on into town, eh? What’re we standing out here for?” another asked.

“Guards search you at the gate, you fool. Look at us, blades on our hips clear as day. But don’t you worry, we won’t be going in as smallfolk. There’s armor coming, the same as Ramsgate’s guard wear. We’ll put it on and walk in bold as you please. Trust me, lads, see this through, and you’ll never go hungry again. Coin enough to marry a fine lady and still have a couple of wenches for sport.”

*We?*

Wylis frowned, though he didn’t take them seriously. Their plan was laughable. No guard was allowed inside his main keep in the first place. None other than Chett and Small Paul.

“Who’s paying us?”

“You need not know,” Nage barked.

“What if it’s all false talk? What if there’s no coin in it?”

“Lew, you thick bastard, you calling me a liar? You know who I answer to. If I say there’s a coin, then there is. Now—”

Crunch!

Wylis came out of hiding and walked straight towards their little camp. In one hand was his sword, and the other held the metal rod that was far too heavy to be a spear, but it was pointy.

“Did you say coin? I love coins. Which one is it? Silver or gold?”

“Fuck! It’s the giant!” Nage cursed and tried to stand up. “W-What? I can’t...”

Wylis didn’t step any closer. From a distance, he watched them panic while their bodies started to sink into the ground, which was now no different from quicksand.

“Nage! Help me!”

“I can’t move!”

“Hold onto Reek!”

“No, you bastards! I’m sinking too!”

Wylis watched in silence. They screamed, they cursed, they tried their best, which only made them sink faster. It took a while, however, but eventually only their heads were left sticking out.

“Now.” Wylis walked beside Nage’s head and gently tapped his sword on the top of the guy’s skull. “Give me truth, and you live. Give me drivel, and I leave. And you all go under.”

“My lord!” Lew cried. “I came for the gold!”

“ ... ”

*What gold?*

But before Wylis could ask that, it was Nage who questioned.

“What gold? What nonsense are you crying?”

“Me gold! My gold!” Lew cried with rage. “Lord Kaiser took it off me, he did. We was there that night, pulling plenty from the river. Me uncles, they drowned trying to flee. I want what’s mine returned!”

At that point, Wylis crossed his legs and sat down fully. “Well, I thank you for delivering yourself to me. But tell me, what was the plan? How did you mean to steal it, when you only just learned you’d sneak into my castle?”

“ ... ”

“You didn’t plan that far, did you?” Wylis asked. There were hints of madness on Lew’s face. Madness born out of immense greed.

“And you? Nage? How’s Lord Bolton treating you these days?”

“H-How did you know?!” Nage gasped.

Wylis chuckled, nearly breaking into laughter. “I didn’t. Just took a guess.”

“ ... ”

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*A/N: The next chapter will also be the Northern Tyrant. I will skip a few days and then show you the development of the industrial district through a map instead. If I write each part in detail, each chapter will feel like a filler.*