

It was during that process of planning the roads that I noticed something about the eye's power.

What I knew about it then was that it was incredibly powerful. I could see key information about the environment around me, create tables, charts and maps that updated automatically, and place ghost structures to help me build the city. I thought there were few or no restrictions on this power, but that assumption proved to be false. As I approached the end of the stakes that my workers had put down, I flipped up my eyepatch and witnessed the appearance of a golden border. A border that sat directly between my land and Polemarch's.

When I stepped over that border, it disappeared - nor could I use my selective vision to see nearby resources.

I'd played my fair share of video games, so I figured it out pretty quickly. The eye only worked in areas I had control over. Celeste's Landing was neutral territory, or maybe Celeste herself had designated it as ours - but Polemarch's land was definitely not mine. I couldn't use the full extent of my powers there. There was still a lot more for me to discover. I found myself wishing that Celeste had included some instructions in my notebook.

After getting distracted by that, I did finally get around to inspecting the work that our men had done. Signs and stakes led from the borders of Polemarch's territory all the way to the outskirts of the town. A dirt path had already started to form between the farmer's fields, soon it would stretch from there to the top of the hills that I had spent the morning climbing.

The view was incredible, rocky cliffs hanging over roaring seas and stone-covered beaches. It reminded me of the Cliffs of Dover, which I'd never had the chance to go see for myself. Land like this wasn't suitable for building a village on top of, but it did provide a picturesque escape from town living for anyone tough enough to go hiking.

With my survey of the path completed, I turned back and started the long walk home. This would be a suitable route for carts big and small to follow with little difficulty. The grass would slow them down until the path was formed, but they could handle a few minutes delay in a journey lasting some two hours.

Now, for the *other* consequences of my actions.

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"He saw his first bloody chance and he took it! We've been played for fools."

It had become the hot topic around town, as I'd expected. My ascension into the noble books had cast a cloud of doubt over my decision making. All I needed to do was to talk down the main road of our now lively business street to hear what they thought about it. I tried not to stick my nose into their discussions. I wasn't a crazed tyrant trying to micro-manage his image.

But sometimes I was dragged into it, whether I wanted to discuss the matter or not. The man who had spoken, Barny, spotted me walking past and yelled at me, "I know you can hear me, Lord Blackwood." He spat the name with a venom that took me by surprise.

"I did."

"And what do you have to say about it?"

I sighed and approached the small group, "Nothing. I already explained my reasoning. It's up to you whether you accept it or not. As soon as the war ended, we'd have to content with the military strength of Lunarmar bearing down on us, and presumably a noble people find even less agreeable than me."

Barny didn't like it, "We should have fought for it. They're gonna' come down here and kick us Laddites off this land all over again."

"We don't even have weapons. I'll be damned before I send good people into a slaughter for no gain."

"You'll be damned anyway, those nobles are vicious, and soon enough you'll be a bloodsucker too."

One of the other men stepped in, "Barny, calm down. I understand that you didn't approve of the idea but... I have to agree with Shane. Most of the people here are women and children, and I've never once used a sword or spear. As long as we continue to have control over our new home, I'm happy to follow the Mayor's lead."

Barny grunted and crossed his arms. He wasn't the only one. There was a solid forty or so people who were opposed to the idea even now that it had gone through. Not enough to overturn the majority opinion, but I wanted as many people to be happy with things as possible.

"I'm not getting involved with any court politics. I'm here to help build this town."

"What about that Lomarc girl?" Barny asked, "I thought she was here to marry you or something?"

"No. She's not interested in that."

"I don't believe that for one second. That's the only thing those nobles think about."

"Will you believe me in a few months when I'm still single?"

"Pft. Unlikely."

His friend stepped in again, "I'm sorry about him. He gets stuck in his ways very easily."

"You don't need to apologize. I understand that a lot of people are worried about Lunarmar. I'll just have to show my stuff through actions and not words..."

I left them to finish their discussion and headed to the office, where Amelie was waiting for me with a piece of paper in her hands. I sat down in my comfortable chair and smiled, "Hello Amelie, what's the occasion?"

"I've been speaking with some of the business owners and farmers, and they've put together a list of things they'd like to import from the Black Cove."

"Okay."

"Asking them all to visit the township themselves would be inefficient, so we've been discussing sending some of our men over to do the shopping for them." She placed the list down onto the desk in front of me. I studied it. The people had listed several important items. The farmers wanted seeds for crops that we weren't currently in possession of – that would be important for our food security when the seasons changed.

Both sides of the economy also had a high demand for tools. We didn't have a blacksmith in town – which meant that any tools had to be maintained by amateurs and without significant repairs. Some

of the heavier equipment like ploughs had been lost during the journey here. Sending them over by boat was the most practical option. There were also some other, less important wants like furniture and specialized clothes.

“I’ll keep it in mind. But they don’t have the money to buy this stuff just yet. Not until the first ship arrives.”

“I know. We’ve also received some documents from Duke Polemarch himself. It’s a list of things that we can export to him. I was surprised to find that our surplus food is in such high demand.”

The Black Cove was a rocky, boggy location. It had always relied heavily on food imports to support its burgeoning population. Polemarch had been put into a bind with how many migrants were moving in to take advantage of his strong markets and sea access. He was downright excited to hear that we had extra food to send him. We did a handshake deal on the spot. His bakeries and food producers would pay for our raw yield.

“That’s perfect. The money from the farmers will hopefully run down through the economy and get things started.”

“He also said that his proclamation of supremacy over this territory would be issued to the people soon.”

A fancy way of saying that I was his new vassal. It would mean that Polemarch gave the people permission to travel between his territory and ours to do business without a permit. Not that there was much of anything stopping people from hopping the ‘border’ aside from strong language. The main purpose was to raise awareness of Celeste’s Landing. Profiteers or people looking for a new start would come in some numbers.

That begged the question of housing. Our houses were more expensive to build than the usual fare. I’d suggested some safety improvements to protect them from fire, combined with a downstairs toilet that fed into the *also* expensive state sewer system. That added up. Until now, they’d been built through community effort and will – but if money came into the equation, it would mean that the builders and material producers start to expect their cut.

I wanted to keep houses available for families both poor and wealthy, without compromising on those factors that made the houses more liveable. The farmers were fine digging their own refuse pits and using outhouses – they were far enough apart to make do without a sewer connection, but I wanted to keep the middle of town clean.

They’d never stopped building the sewer ditches. As soon as they came to me with news of their completion of one leg of the project, I immediately placed another set of housing zones and sent them off again. The houses that went on top hadn’t been built yet. Who was going to pay for them? Presumably people with the money to commission them.

Houses were expensive, but not quite as expensive as I knew from my old world. They didn’t have central heating, or double glazing – in fact, most houses didn’t even have windows at all. Glass was in short supply at a high price. They didn’t need wiring or running water or plaster. Brick and wood, stacked on top of each other over a timber frame.

“We also receive a petition from some of the townspeople to build a Laddite chapel.”

“Yeah, I have the perfect spot already picked out for that.”

“Oh, I’ll tell the builders – they’ll happily do that job for free.”

Laddites didn't need a priest in residence, thankfully. It would be easier to set up a small building for worship purposes and leave it to the community to maintain. I felt a small obligation to please Celeste, who was in my experience alive and very well - with some faith beamed into her godly form.

I put my hands together and made a decision, "Okay. If someone wants to move here, we're going to make them apply here at the town hall. Then we can show them what land is available for them, and tally up how much it'll cost to build." Everyone else had a home already. I'd also considered building some smaller domiciles for people who didn't have families, but couldn't settle on a design I liked.

"Tell the farmers that the first window for exports is arriving tomorrow. They'll have a day and a half to get their stuff down to the dock. Polemarch's guys are paying by volume, so make sure they know how much stuff they're bringing."

Amelie was taking notes... she'd defer some of these tasks to the other ministers.

"When they get paid, we're taking that money and heading over to buy the tools they need. Anything that's left can be used to pay for goods and services in town."

"And the taxes?"

Export taxes would be an easy way to fill our coffers for public projects and maintenance. We would have to broach the subject one day soon. I shook my head, "Not now. We need to come up with a collection method for that first..."

"I understand. I'll pass this on to the relevant people."

Taxes were going to be the worst thing to deal with...

It brought on much more than just asking people for money, but questions about authority, community participation, and local government. As of now, that government consisted of me and a few locals. There was no 'force' to project.

How far was I willing to push things to get the money we needed?