

“So, this Magister Vaegon Niharys is bankrolling the sellsails and pirates in the Three Sisters?” Harry asked, an angry frown on his face as he read the list of mercenary companies that were showing their presence in the Narrow Sea.

“Aye, my lord. Gold and silver have been pouring into the Three Sisters for hosting the Myrish sellsails that harries Manderly ships.” said Crayat.

“Hmm.” Harry grunted. “Is there anything else from Daro?”

“Only that the Magisters of Myr are seeking help from the sorcerers as far as the Shadow Lands to kill you, my lord.”

Harry looked up from the parchment he was reading to stare at the olive-skinned sorcerer he had taken into his service. While Daro Ohadras was away gathering intel about his enemies in Myr, Crayat was handling Harry’s budding spy network from the North.

“Perhaps it’s time that we strike back at Myr, my lord.” Anya said eagerly, fiery like the element of fire she wields.

“While attacking these Essosi slavers halfway around the world is a difficult task, I must agree with my sister’s suggestion. If these magisters are determined to harm Lord Harrion’s interests despite the show of power in the Westerlands, I believe drastic actions must be taken.” said Kyla.

Harry turned his attention to the last of the Valkyrie sisters for her opinion.

“I concur. But instead of attacking these magisters with brute force, why don’t we attack them at their most precious source of power.” said Adela, pausing for dramatic effect. “We can steal their wealth, their artisans and their slaves.”

“That’s impossible.” said Anya, shaking her head.

“It’ll be difficult, yes. But Adela’s suggestion is not without its merit.” said Harry, frowning thoughtfully.

“It is said there are three slaves for every free man in most Free Cities of Essos. How are we going to steal their slaves? And even if we did, where would we take them? The North would never accept foreigners in large numbers.” said Anya.

You’re right, of course. Which is why we’ll be doing the more efficient retribution.” Harry mused aloud before turning his sights on Crayat.

“Tell me, Crayat. Do you think you can procure me more information about the Myrish banks?” Harry inquired.

“It can be done, my lord.” Crayat hesitantly said. “What sort of information do you require?”

“I want to know who are their major investors. I want their names, and I want a list of all properties they own in the city. I also want any information you can find about their bank’s strong rooms.”

“Strong rooms, my lord?” Crayat asked confusedly.

“I want to know where they store their gold and silver. I want to know everything worth knowing about their banks.”

“It’ll be done, my lord.” Crayat bowed.

“Dismissed.” Harry said, watching the warlock walk out of his throne room with nary a whisper.

Once the doors of the throne room closed shut behind the warlock, Harry stared at the ceiling thoughtfully. His spy network was not as deeply entrenched as he liked, but it was coming along nicely. Daro had started recruiting spies in the Free Cities ever since the former warlock of the House of Undying was 'rehabilitated'. While funding the spy network was not a problem, the real impediment came in the form of recruitment, communication and transportation. The Free Cities were too far away, so travel time was an issue which wholly depended on the climate in the Narrow Sea. Due to such long distances, large communication gaps were also to be expected. Both of those factors also hampered recruitment, at least for a short time. Over time, Harry was confident he could increase the number of spies in his employ.

But Harry knew transportation and communication were vital to augmenting a spy network. This led him to the thought of accelerating his plans for setting up portkey networks across both continents.

“What is the status of the rune snitches?” Harry asked.

“We have not completed the project, my lord. We'll need more time for the carving to finish.”

“How long?” Harry stared at Adela, who flushed under his scrutiny.

“Three weeks.” Adela said hesitantly.

Harry wanted to ask them to speed up the process, but he held that back. He knew the difficulties faced by his rune carvers. He wanted the map tracking done near the Bite to give an edge to the Manderly fleet. But he supposed he ought to wait for three weeks and take his time to perfect the map. It was imperative to get a close eye on the sea lanes close to White Harbour and the Three Sisters.

“Maester Marwyn. Has there been any word from the Braavosi?” Harry inquired, looking at the old maester.

“I'm afraid not, my lord.”

Harry was expecting that. While the Braavosi fleet could deter pirates and sellsails in the Narrow Sea, they could not enter the waters surrounding the Three Sisters willy-nilly. It'd bring them in direct conflict with the Vale and the Iron Throne. The best thing that he could do right now was to plant the wards and charms encompassing the Bite to grace out the map. That way, they could track the pirate ships and destroy them all where they anchor. That was the least costly solution. Right now, escorts were provided by the Manderly fleet to merchant ships coming in and out of White Harbour.

“Perhaps you could ask Lord Stark to petition the Iron Throne to interfere with the Sistermen. The harvest feast is in two weeks, and all the lords of the North will be assembled in Winterfell. A strongly worded request ought to bring the Small Council to act when the taxes are counted in the capital.” Maester Marwyn suggested.

Harry couldn't help but snort in derision at Maester Marwyn's advice.

“You think Jon Arryn hasn't tried?” Harry asked with a chuckle. “Lord Arryn is many things, but he is not one to turn a blind eye. He tried his best to rein in the idiots at the Three Sisters in his capacity as the Warden of the East. Unfortunately for him and us, the Sistermen have always been rebellious.”

“You think the Sistermen are rebelling against the authority of Lord Jon Arryn?” Maester Marwyn asked with wide eyes.

“They’re ignoring his direct orders, aren’t they? Those idiots are blinded by greed and the promise of easy wealth. They provide sanctuary to Myrish sellsails and pirates while earning a portion of the bounty without committing much.” Harry said, his face darkening as he narrowed his eyes at the painted floor.

He stood up from his throne and stood over the painted map of Westeros, looking at the three islands that were giving ships from the North’s sole port city grief in the seas.

“Send a raven to the Arbour. Impress upon them the need to deliver the ships as fast as possible. I believe the Sistermen are at a place where words are wind. They’ll only understand blood and death.” Harry muttered.

“Harrion. You asked for me.”

Harry looked up from his work of carving runes into a small stone to see Jon standing near the door of his office.

“Take a seat, Jon.” Harry said.

As Jon dropped into a chair across from his table, Harry finished carving the runes and gave a last inspection of his work. Finding no fault, he placed the runestone inside a metal ball and dumped it into a safe where all the finished snitches were stored safely. Once the numbers were satisfactory, Harry was supposed to deploy them on the Bite without anyone’s knowledge.

“Maester Marwyn tells me that you’ve been diligent in your studies and training.”

“I have. I mastered the spells that you wanted me to learn, and I’ve been training hard in the yard.” Jon said immediately.

“I know. Maester Marwyn said that you were now capable of creating magical shields. Is that true?” Harry asked.

“Yes. I can use the Protego charm.” Jon said happily.

“That was not a charm I told you to learn,” Harry said blandly, bringing a pause to Jon’s joy.

“Yes, but...” Jon spluttered, searching for words.

“You took the initiative and searched for more spells from the books in the library. You found magic more interesting instead of solely focusing on swordplay.” Harry commented, raising a curious eyebrow when Jon didn’t respond.

“Well, yes. You were away for too long, and I didn’t have a good training partner other than Josera.” Jon muttered.

“Good. I was starting to think you were turning into another Robb who put too much emphasis on swordplay.” Harry said, climbing to his feet with a faint smile. “Come. Let me see how much you’ve improved with magic.”

Harry led Jon into a hall that was warded from top to bottom and closed the door behind him with a flick of his wrist.

“Defend yourself,” Harry said before a tongue of flame shot out of the palm of his hand.

The power ring on Jon's hand pulsed with power. A blue shield materialised around him in an instant, capable of withstanding the flames Harry produced. Harry raised an eyebrow, seeing the dense magical power that he could feel emanating from the power ring.

‘Hmm. His growth is impressive.’ Harry mused.

Harry followed the fire spell with a couple of stunners, and Jon managed to maintain the integrity of the shield spell until it broke off against the fifth stunner.

“Impressive. You’ve developed far beyond my imagination in a short time.” said Harry, acknowledging Jon’s effort and skill in display.

Harry was not even saying that to make Jon feel better. Jon was only twelve years old, and already, he was capable of producing a robust magical shield. Considering the fact that all the wands he had made to date had refused to bond with Jon, it was a pleasant surprise to see his brother was performing well.

‘Maybe I did something wrong with the wands. Unicorn hair might not be the best core for Jon.’ Harry thought.

It was not like he had any other option for a core material. The Red Crowns he found in Skane refused to part with their feathers, and Harry wasn’t going to take it from them forcibly. The Unicorns, bless their soul, were happy to part with some hairs from their tails. It was the only reason he managed to make some wands. But a fat lot of good that did to him. He was left with a bunch of useless sticks because none of his wands made an impression on Jon and Robb. He held out hope that the wands would react to his sisters when they turned eleven. Otherwise, he’d have to find other prospective welders like Elsera Snow, who had more of a reaction to the wand he offered. Even none of his Valkyrie showed any affinity to the wands he created.

“I’ve worked diligently on learning spells as you asked,” said Jon.

“Um-hmm.” Harry hummed.

“I’ve never missed my lessons with Maester Marwyn, and I’ve been training in the yard every day.”

“Maester Marwyn told me. He was all praises for you.” Harry said, already knowing where Jon was leading him.

“Can you tell me more about my mother now? I promise I won’t tell anyone else if that’s what you’re worried about.”

Harry took one look at the pleading eyes of his brother, who was actually his cousin and caved almost immediately. Jon reminded him of his younger self, and he’d be a hypocrite to hold back such a piece of information from Jon for so long.

“All right. I’ll tell you after the harvest feast. I’ll have to inform our father that I’m telling you the truth. Perhaps it’ll be better to know your mother’s identity in Winterfell. Uncle Benjen will also be there. They know more about your mother than anyone else in the Seven Kingdoms.” said Harry.

The excitement of Jon upon hearing Harry's promise to reveal his mother's name was quite palpable. Harry even felt a touch sorry for Jon, who'd most likely be crushed upon hearing the circumstances behind his birth. But he supposed it was inevitable for Jon to learn about his mother and father at some point. Truth had a habit of emerging despite the many attempts to lock it away.

"Before we go to Winterfell, there is a funeral that we need to attend," said Harry.

"A funeral? Did someone die?" Jon asked confusedly.

"Hmm. You'll see." Harry muttered.

"That's a huge cliff!" said Jon, pointing a finger at the admittedly huge cliff that they were supposed to traverse.

"Don't be so melodramatic. The rest of us have eyes, brother." Harry patted him on the shoulder, starting the steep climb that was hampered by slippery boulders.

"That's not what I meant. Who's having a funeral on a cliff?" Jon muttered, his teeth chattering as the frigid air from the Sunset Sea blew into the land, carrying the salty scent of the sea.

"You'll see." Harry said enigmatically while continuing the trek without a pause.

After several minutes of hiking, they arrived at the top of the cliff. Harry heard the distinct gasp from Jon as well as his Valkyrie guards when they saw five Children of the Forest waiting for them under the shade of a giant Heart Tree. The tree was pearl white like the Heart Tree in Winterfell's godswood, with a face carved on its bark. Its leaves were vibrant and shined blood red under the sunlight.

"Spring." Harry nodded at the sole familiar face among the local druids.

"Stark." Spring nodded. "Shall we begin?"

"Begin what?" Jon whispered.

Harry was a bit amused by the impatience shown by his brother as it was masking the fear he was feeling. While Jon had grown out of his fear of ghosts, the Children brought some of that repressed fear to the forefront. After all, he had filled the head of his brother with all sorts of fake stories about the Children and how they were the ones to create ghosts that roamed Winterfell.

Harry fished out a small box from his pocket. Opening it, he summoned the contents of the box hidden inside the box. He could hear his companions gasp as a huge skeleton was dragged out of the small wooden box and allowed to float in the air above their heads. The huge ribcage consisting of forty-four long white rib bones created long shadows on the cliff as it towered over the highest branches of the Heart Tree.

"Is that the bones of a dragon?" Jon whispered in awe.

"Close. It's the remains of an ancient Sea Dragon. I liberated it from the Nagga's Hill in Old Wyk. The Ironborn used to conduct their Kingsmoot on the hill inside that ribcage." said Harry, moving the

skeleton over the edge of the cliff. “Now, they’ll never hold a kingsmoot because they’ll never have an Ironborn king.”

The Children whispered something into their fists before they let the weirwood leaves in their palms fly over the cliff. Seeing Spring nod in his direction, Harry cancelled the levitation spell and allowed the skeleton to fall into the sea. For a moment, nothing happened before dark clouds gathered in the sky. The winds gained strength and howled in their ears while Harry felt a tremendous gathering of magical power in the land.

When he looked over the cliff, he saw the sea had turned bright green. A slight pressure built up against his mind, alerting Harry of an intrusion into his mind. He allowed the foreign energy to enter his mind, and he was shown an image of a giant Sea Dragon with green scales and broad wings that stretched out forever. Golden horns adorned its head, and gold were the claws. Its eyes were also bright gold. Unlike other dragons, this one had the body of a snake from its chest down. Harry felt the world around him shift on a dime, and in the next moment, he found himself standing on a rocky hill surrounded by green hills and a giant green sea dragon.

“You have my gratitude, wizard. You’ll find that the seas will bend to your will.” said the dragon before a green energy flared up around Harry briefly before dying down.

Harry blinked, and everything around him returned to normal. The giant green hills and the sea dragon were nowhere to be seen. A green aura was surrounding Harry, but it flickered out just as the green sheen in the sea below the cliff dissipated.

“You planned to have a school for magic for the young ones, didn’t you, Harrion Stark? There’ll be no place that’ll be better than this cliff. Build your school here, and the spirit of the sea dragon will guard this place till the end of times.” said Spring.

Tyrion stared at the parchment that was in his hands. His eyes went through the words once again to make sure he had read everything right. His hands were shaking, and it had nothing to do with the cold. His hands were shaking from the realisation that he had to sign the document that’d see House Lannister into puppets worth nothing to House Baratheon in perpetuity. It’d be the most humiliating agreement ever signed by a Lannister. He was sure many generations of Lannisters would curse his name, call him all sorts of names and blame him for everything that went wrong somehow.

But Tyrion had no choice but to sign the agreement if he was to take up the mantle of Lord Lannister and rule Casterly Rock. He’d be Lord Lannister in name only, and he’d have limited control over the castle due to the many commitments he’d be bound to oblige after he signed the document. Lannisport was now lost to House Lannister. All the revenue and lands around Lannisport were now in the Crown’s possession to be handed over to anyone they liked. As if that was not enough, he was obliged to pay the Iron Throne ten million gold dragons over a period of twenty years. All the debts the Iron Throne had with House Lannister were also wiped away. The Iron Throne also took house Lannister’s treasury as reimbursement for all the lords of the Reach who suffered under the attack of the Lannister armies. Even their recently acquired Valyrian Steel sword was lost to them.

Tyrion gritted his teeth, knowing that he’d be the laughingstock of the Westerlands and the Seven Kingdoms once he signed the agreement. The only thing he and his uncle had managed to negotiate

in their favour was the clause about capturing Cersei and Myrcella. They had to plead and grovel at the feet of Stannis Baratheon and Jon Arryn to avoid such a commitment.

Jon Arryn had promised the restrictions imposed on House Lannister could be lifted when the Iron Throne was confident of their loyalty.

'It's a roundabout way of saying no in a polite way.' Tyrion thought.

The only tangible way he could see in restoring House Lannister's power was through war. But not one they were capable of waging anytime soon. It'd have to be started by someone else, and then Tyrion could join if fortunes aligned and bring Stannis Baratheon low.

Tyrion let out a sigh as he looked at his uncle, who nodded grimly.

"These terms are acceptable to us, your grace." Tyrion softly said.

"Good. The copies of the agreement will be made, and we'll have it signed on the morrow." said Jon Arryn. "You made the right decision, Lord Lannister."

"May I ask what is to become of my uncle, Kevan Lannister?" Tyrion asked.

"His grace has decided to hold his execution on the morrow for his part in invading the Reach and burning countless villages and taking the lives of many innocent people." Jon Arryn said with an emotionless face.

"Kevan was merely following orders. Isn't it enough to take Tywin's head?" Gerion asked, a pleading look coming over his face. "I implore you to show mercy, Lord Arryn. Hasn't enough blood been spilt already?"

"I had advised his grace to sentence Ser Kevan to the Wall. Unfortunately, his grace is adamant in his decree. It doesn't help we'll be looking at one of the worst winters because your armies burned the ripe fields of the Reach and forced a costly war on the Seven Kingdoms. There is nothing that I can do to change his grace's mind."

Tyrion's and Gerion's faces fell at Lord Arryn's reply. They remained silent as Lord Arryn left them alone in the chamber.

"A Lannister always pays his debts. We'll have our day, uncle. I promise you that." Tyrion said firmly, glaring at the seat where Lord Arryn sat.