

The Dread Lord of Essos

Chapter 39

Deep in the bowels of a gleaming white castle, the torturous screams of a man in agony reverberated off of the thick, stone walls. The man cried out pathetically.

“NO!” he yelled. “Not again ... PLEASE!” the man begged. Hovering above him was a scorpion being held by the tail. Its eight legs were wiggling back and forth wildly, as though the little beast was filled with excitement. The two pincers in the front were clicking away in anger at being manhandled. The scorpion was lowered closer and closer to his bare chest. The man thrashed wildly, but his chains and manacles were unyielding. The large plank of wood that he was chained to wouldn't even budge as he violently thrashed.

On his chest was a collection of angry, red bumps that were beginning to ooze pus. His body was growing feverish, and his blood felt as though it were beginning to boil.

“Just tell me your name and who sent you,” the honeyed voice of the Dread Lord filled his ears. “And I will show mercy on you.”

The man swallowed hard. If he confessed, his family would surely pay for his failure ... possibly the entire city of Meereen. He closed his mouth resolutely, even though his lips were quivering. He whimpered as the little wiggling legs of the scorpion tickled his sweaty stomach. “You are admirably tough,” the Dread Lord complimented him.

“Spotted Scorpions from Dorne are small to be sure, but their venom packs a punch. The venom is necrotic and will continue breaking down the flesh around the sting. That, however, is a long-term effect. The worst part is the itching. Men have been driven mad by the unending itch, and yet, somehow you are managing. Do you not feel it?”

He could feel it. It was driving him insane. All he wanted to do was get his hands free so that he could dig his nails into his flesh around the stings and relieve the cursed itch.

“Can you feel how it makes your skin crawl,” the Dread Lord teased, dropping the scorpion on his belly. Once, twice, three times it stung. The man bowed his back and screamed before the scorpion was picked up once again. Through blurry vision, he watched as the Dread Lord took the little creature and placed him in a glass case filled with sand. “I use their venom in potions, but they did come in handy today,” the Dread Lord said happily.

Suddenly, in his hand was a very sharp-looking knife. Its metal blade was curved and cruel. It glinted in the dull candlelight that illuminated the room. “You are quite stubborn,” the Dread Lord told him. “Seeing as you are fighting so hard to avoid confessing, it tells me that you are protecting someone you care about. Possibly family?”

The man flinched hard, and the Dread Lord began chuckling. "Of course," he finished chuckling. "Now I just need your name," he said as he moved closer to his side.

His body was already going into shock from being stung by the scorpion so many times. As such, he only felt moderate pain along with a pinching sensation before the Dread Lord lifted up one of his severed fingers. "Name?" he asked nicely, tossing the detached finger over his shoulder. "Come on now. You've got plenty more where that came from," he warned, tapping the blade against his naked thigh.

Now that he had seen what the Dread Lord was doing, a sickening feeling welled up in his belly, and his hand flared with sudden, intense pain. He screamed loudly as he began to panic. His skin was tearing against the metal cuffs that were holding his wrists and ankles to the large sheet of wood. "Suit yourself," the Dread Lord said, grabbing another finger.

The next hour or so was a blur to him. He was continuously moving in and out of consciousness. He was surprised that he hadn't bled out yet with how many fingers had been removed. He was sure that one hand was only a fingerless stump by that point.

Harry dropped the removed eyeball onto the ground with disgust. Sure, he could have just used his powers to take the information from the man's mind, but that would have been letting him off easy. It was the principle of the thing. If someone was actively working against his city, Harry wanted to make them pay. The man, however, was as tough as nails. Harry slapped the guy in the face to wake him back up. He had been feeding the man his powers to keep him from dying. When his one good eye fluttered open, Harry immediately saw terror in it. Harry was starting to get annoyed. If physical pain wasn't going to work, perhaps he needed to try some psychological torture. Taking a quick peek into his mind to find out what terrified him, Harry pulled out and smiled. With a snap of his fingers, the man was suddenly freed. Sadly for him, he was in such bad shape that he couldn't even lift his head. Harry reached down, grabbed him by the neck, and lifted him up. Suddenly, they were gone.

The sudden shift in temperature had the man curious. The cool air of his dungeon had turned hot and humid. He blinked with his one good eye. The sun was shining in his eye. All around him was nothing but trees and water. Looking down, he gasped. They were hundreds of feet in the air. Without a word, they were flying through the air before slipping through the trees. He wasn't sure how long it went on, but eventually, they stopped. He was spun around.

"Tell me your name or I'm tossing you in there," the Dread Lord threatened. His eye spotted something that made his stomach drop. Inside a deep pit in the ground were around a dozen of the largest spiders that he had ever seen. With what little strength he had left, he tried desperately to break free.

Harry laughed menacingly as the man tried to break his grip. He had brought him to a pit where Harry kept the male spiders that were a little too violent. They often fought and killed any smaller males that tried to breed with the females. While normally this would be a fine example

of natural selection at work, Harry didn't need quality ... He needed quantity. Because of this, he moved them to the pit to keep them away from the other spiders. While there, his drones would milk their venom until they ended up killing one another.

"Please," he begged, digging his heels in the dirt to avoid being thrown in. He had a terrible fear of spiders. When he was a child, he was woken up by a tickling sensation on his face. He wiped his face and quickly sat up, only to see a big, hairy spider crawling all over him. He screamed and wet the bed until finally, his mother came in to rescue him. Since then, just seeing them sent shivers down his spine.

"Well ... If you are not going to speak, then you are useless to me," Harry said, pushing him until he was right up to the edge.

"Hoxhoahr Pahl!" he yelled as loud as his damaged throat would allow.

"The Pahl family from Meereen?" Harry asked for clarification. He knew of only the richest families in Meereen, but he didn't know much more about them.

"Yes!" he cried. "They just wanted one ship, that's all! Now, please let me go!" he begged. Without another thought, Harry shoved him in the back. Hoxhoahr Pahl tipped forward and fell painfully into the pit. Before he could even get off the ground, the hungry spiders grabbed his arms and legs in their pincers. They pulled, and Harry watched his body stretch until his arm and a leg were ripped clean from their sockets. His horrific cries soon died down as the spiders ripped into his flesh, hungrily devouring everything but his bones.

"The Pahl family from Meereen," Harry smiled wickedly. "That's good to know."

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Harry ordered his armies at the ready. His ships were always ready to go, but now he was pulling them back to port. He just needed to have them stocked with supplies. There was a buzz around the city. People wondered who was unlucky enough to earn his ire. Harry was sure that many of the wealthy merchants were desperate for news. They had families in the various Free Cities around Essos, and they would like to know if they were going to be attacked. Harry, of course, always kept his plans tight-lipped and only told whoever needed to know. At the moment, he only told the Captain of the Unsullied forces. Not wanting to go in blind, Harry went to scout Meereen to find out more about the Pahl family.

Meereen was located at the northeasternmost point of Slaver's Bay, at the mouth of the Skahazadhan River. The city connected to Volantis through a long trade route called the Demon Road. To its left were the sandstone foothills of the Painted Mountains. To its right was the Khyzai Pass, the mountain path that connected the slave city with Lhazar. To the city's north was the great Dothraki Sea where the horselords roamed. Meereen was the largest city in Slaver's Bay and the most secure. The harbor was well-guarded by warships, and the city

hosted a fighting force of warriors that had been bred and trained in the famed fighting pits. Their warriors were tough to beat hand-to-hand. Only the strongest and most talented survived the pits.

Hearing the word pit, one might think of two dirty men knife-fighting down in a large, dugout hole in the ground while men hooted and hollered from above. This couldn't be farther from the truth. The largest and most popular of the fighting pits, Daznak's Pit was as large as the Roman Colosseum back on Earth. It was a perfect circle of descending-tiered, stone benches, each a different color. From high above, it would appear to be two rainbows connected to make a circle. Above the Gates of Fate where the names of all Gladiators who have died have been engraved, stood the massive, bronze statues of two warriors in the act of killing one another ... one with a sword and the other an axe. The fighting pits were a crucial part of the city's economy and brought many tourists.

The walls guarding the city were among the tallest and thickest in all of Essos. Bastions and defensive towers beaded the walls, and bronze harpy heads with open mouths were situated on the walls to allow boiling oil to be poured on its attackers. The walls would be near impenetrable for a normal army.

The city skyline was dominated by the twenty or so pyramids that rose high into the air. The largest of which was the Great Pyramid which was located in the central plaza. All other pyramids were owned by the noble houses that ruled the city. Each was painted in the colors of the house that owned it. The Pahl's pyramid was the second largest in the city and was colored pink and white.

Harry invisibly soared through the air, tracing the perimeter of the city walls. Attacking from the Dothraki Sea would probably be the safest, Harry thought, but it just wasn't feasible. He would be bringing his armies by ship, and there were no harbors close enough where he could unload. Then the armies would have to march long distances without being spotted, which was impossible. No, Harry would have to attack from the bay. He would have to hit them hard and fast without giving them time to prepare. Harry soared high into the air and looked down at the city below him. He snapped his finger and created a detailed map of the city. Unfurling the large paper, he smiled at the accuracy of the map. He magically sent it back to his office. With that done, he flew into the city proper. As his feet hit the ground, he magically altered his appearance to resemble that of a respectable freeborn citizen. He became visible and walked out of the alley.

He walked down the main streets and the lanes and visited the brothels, inns, and taverns. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. There was no tension in the air. No one suspected that war was on the horizon. That was a good thing, in Harry's opinion. After a bit of investigating, he found that the Pahl family, like so many other wealthy families in the area, had amassed their fortune through the slave trade. Visiting their pyramid, he could see that they weren't kind masters either. Branded slave children ran around half-naked working in the hot sun. Their

sweaty backs were crisscrossed with welted scars darker than the skin around them. One older slave was skinning and gutting a dog. Cooked dog meat was a favorite dish in the city.

Disembowelment and crucifixion were among the favorite ways the Great Masters of the city liked to dish out punishment to the slaves. It was a very common sight to see someone nailed to a wooden post. If they were lucky, they would die fast. If unlucky, they would remain alive for days in abject misery. It was a sorry sight to see, Harry thought. Needless to say, Harry would not be taking it easy on any of the Great Masters or the rest of their families.

He spent the next few hours visiting strategic points in the city and taking notes on any defenses or fortifications. With that done, he faded back home.

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Harry smiled as he watched Dany and Myrcella joking around and laughing. Myrcella had been sad that her mother and brother had returned to King's Landing, but she was happy that she wasn't forced to follow them. She was quite happy that she didn't have to go back to that horrid place. Growing up, she didn't realize just how horrible the city truly was. It was only after coming to Seven Swords that she discovered the truth.

In King's Landing, the air was constantly permeated with the stench of human and animal waste along with the smells of dead and rotting animals. There was no way to avoid it. Even in the relatively clean Red Keep, the smell somehow lingered. She would be a happy young woman if she never had to smell a city's worth of shit ever again. That was a thought that most would agree with. There were other reasons why she didn't wish to return.

For one, King's Landing was just too dangerous. When her mother decided to return, her cousin sat her down and explained it to her. He told Myrcella that she could return with her if she truly wanted to, but he preferred to keep her there. The entire continent was still at war, and there were many that would love to get their hands on her. That thought made her shiver in fear. She almost immediately agreed to stay with him, earning her a handsome smile. She remembered how her cheeks reddened, and her face grew warm.

Another reason was that she actually had real friends there in Essos. As much as her mother had disliked it, she almost instantly struck up a friendship with Daenerys. There were many nights when they snuck into each other's rooms and gossiped about the goings-on of the city. One of their favorite topics was the handsome and gallant ruler of these lands. They loved lying in bed together and talking about him. Neither girl had any experience when it came to the opposite sex, and they knew for a fact that Harold had plenty of experience. She wasn't sure how things had started, but it wasn't long before she and Dany were sharing a kiss. They were only practicing in case Harold wanted to kiss them, they told themselves. Still, they couldn't deny how good it felt to have their warm bodies pressed tightly together as they rolled in the sheets.

Later that night, Melisandre came into Harry's office and smiled. "They are together again," she told him. There wasn't much that went on in his castle that Harry didn't know about. Harry, of course, knew about the girls fooling around. It wasn't anything to be alarmed about. They were just a couple of young women discovering their sexuality. He knew Cersei would have a different opinion if she were still here. Harry had done what he could to keep the information from her. Now that she was gone, it didn't matter anymore.

"Did you have your ear to the door?" Harry teased his busty, redheaded confidant. Melisandre smiled and walked up to him from behind. Harry was still at his desk, even though it was late at night. The upcoming attack on Meereen was taking most of his time. Melisandre placed her soft hands on his shoulders and began massaging his aching muscles. Harry hummed and closed his eyes while trying to fight off the tiredness that he felt.

"Yes," she admitted while smiling. "I could hear them moaning and breathing heavily. I was tempted to join them," she said, teasing him this time. Harry smirked and reached behind him. He slipped his hands through the slits in her red, silk dress. His hands began caressing her soft, smooth skin. Melisandre's skin always felt warmer than the other women he fucked. He thought maybe it had something to do with her religion. She was a Red Priestess after all.

"I'll admit ... I am also tempted to join them," he responded. "They are quite lovely."

"Then why don't you?" Melisandre wondered. "They would not deny you their bodies."

"Soon," Harry answered, tickling her perfectly smooth skin. The girls were old enough to take lovers, and who better than him, he thought happily.

"Are you sure that it is wise to give the Targaryen girl Meereen once you have conquered it?" Melisandre asked, moving around him and dropping down on his lap. Harry placed his hand on her thigh and let it travel north.

"We will see. If she cannot handle it, I'll bring her back. I know that inside of her, there is still a deep-rooted desire to take back Westeros," Harry admitted. "She desires to rule."

"She may not wish to give up her friendship," Melisandre warned. Harry nodded. He already knew that she would likely want Myrcella to go with her.

Harry had thought about eventually giving Myrcella a city of her own, but the princess was just too sweet and kind-hearted to properly rule on this brutal world. She wouldn't be able to do what was necessary to keep control of her lands. Dany, on the other hand, was more than capable. Harry could see it in her eyes. She had the fiery Targaryen blood in her veins. He just hoped that she wouldn't eventually go too far. The Targaryens were well-known for their madness. He would visit often and keep a close eye on her. Hopefully, having sweet Myrcella with her would help keep her mentally grounded. Harry yawned and rubbed his tired eyes. Melisandre hopped

off of his lap and grabbed his hand. She pulled him out of his chair and led him back to her room where she would relieve his stress before letting him get some well-needed rest.

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While Harry owned plenty of blacksmith shops in Westeros and many in his city, he needed more than could be produced by them. His armies already had weapons, but they were getting old and had been used for training. If they were going to go to war, they needed better equipment. The best place to produce that amount in such a short time was in Sothoryos.

At his industrial-sized forges, he had hundreds of drones pounding away with their hammers. Sparks flew in every direction as their heavy, metal hammers clanked against the hardened steel of the anvils. When done, they dipped the searing blades into hot oil to temper them. The blades were then sent down the line where even more drones sharpened them to a razor's edge. Further down the line, the hilts were added. Hardened steel guards were first placed on before handles wrapped in auroch leather were added. To cap the hilt, steel pommels were screwed on. There was nothing overly fancy about them. They weren't decorated or engraved. They were simply high-quality swords that were to be used for one thing ... war.

There were other stations creating spears, shields, and light armor. Thin clothing made of spider silk would be given to his best troops, while the rest would have to do with cotton. He simply didn't have enough spiders to outfit a hundred thousand troops in such a short amount of time. That was fine, Harry thought. He didn't plan on the fight lasting too long.

Harry walked down the lines, examining his drones working harder than any man had ever worked. None of them broke a sweat in the hot and humid conditions even though they swung their hammers relentlessly. Winter was definitely nearing. The days were cooler than normal, but not by much. Snow would never fall on the dark continent, Harry was sure. It would continue to produce even while everyone else froze. Harry moved further down and picked up a finished sword from a crate. He tilted the blade and examined the shine in the beating rays of the sun. It was almost perfectly smooth ... almost no wobbles at all. Such a sword would fetch a high price at any high-end weapon shop. Harry placed it back in the crate where dozens more waited before one of his drones nailed the top on. He then lifted it up, a feat that no human would have been able to accomplish, and carried it down to the docks where it was to be loaded and shipped back home. Harry smiled. The time was near.