

Jon Arryn never thought he'd see the day Stannis Baratheon sat on the Golden throne of House Lannister in Casterly Rock. The massive lion head on the throne towered over everyone in the hall as it stared down at everyone from some fifteen feet. The throne shined an ethereal glow because of all the gold used on the throne.

When he had begun his travel from King's Landing, he had hoped to see Robert sitting on the throne of Lannisters as he passed judgment on Tywin and the rest of the Lannisters. Instead, he witnessed Robert Baratheon's younger brother walking down the gilded halls of Lannisters and ascending the Golden throne of Casterly Rock. The Red and gold banners of House Lannister were noticeably absent from the throne room of the Rock. Instead, they were replaced by the royal regalia of House Baratheon. The black and gold banners decorated the ancient throne room of House Lannister, with the crowned golden stag adorning the banners.

'Perhaps I should commission a portrait of Robert sitting on the throne of House Lannister. It'd be a good tribute to Robert's memory.' Jon mused, mourning the untimely passing of his foster son.

The Lords of Westerlands were present, and he could see some were relieved to see Stannis Baratheon sit on the golden throne of the Rock. There were those keeping a guarded expression while others openly glared at the Baratheon Prince. Chief among those glaring at Stannis was Lord Damon Marbrand of Ashemark, kneeling before the throne like the rest of his colleagues. It was quite understandable for Lord Marbrand to hold a grudge against Stannis. After all, Stannis had the man's heir hanged for raiding the Reach. While this act gained an eternal enemy in Lord Damon, the Lords of the Reach were quite impressed with the decisive action taken by Stannis. It also had the added benefit of keeping the Westerland nobility in line, as they knew what would happen if they stepped one toe out of line.

"Bring forth the prisoners." Jon ordered once the Kingsguard knights settled on all corners close to the throne in a protective barrier.

Baratheon men dressed in fine chainmail escorted Tywin Lannister and Balon Greyjoy into the throne room. Despite being cuffed with chains, Tywin Lannister maintained his head high and without a hint of nervousness in his eyes. But Jon saw the man's green eyes being trained on the side where the Northerners stood. He felt the Old Lion was trying to intimidate young Harrion Stark, and his wife's nephew braved the stare of Lord Lannister with a raised eyebrow. Jon couldn't help but smile at how the young lad handled the situation. Of course, he shouldn't have been surprised. The people were calling the lad the Bane of Krakens. There was even a tale spreading amongst the men that Harrion Stark battled a Kraken while he assaulted the Iron Islands.

Jon couldn't help but shake his head at the lengths to which people make up stories. Truth be told, that wouldn't be the strangest thing happening if the rumours were true. After all, he had seen trees coming alive and sucking the lifeblood out of the septons at Dragonstone with his own eyes. In his mind, nothing could triumph over that incident.

He kept his musing aside as Tywin Lannister and Balon Greyjoy were forced to their knees before Stannis Baratheon.

“Lord Tywin Lannister, Lord Balon Greyjoy. The Iron Throne finds you guilty of treason. Not only have you rebelled yourself, but you have forced your fellow lords and knights of the Westerlands and the Iron Islands to rebel against the Iron Throne. If you two have anything to say, now will be the time.” said Stannis, staring dispassionately at the two bound men on their knees.

“This war was not my doing. Your late brother, with the aid of the barbarians of the North, started this war. My daughter and grandchildren were unjustly accused of cuckolding Robert Baratheon and illegitimacy based on the witchcraft of this demon child!” Tywin snarled, staring coldly at the Stark family.

There was a massive uproar from the Northern lords as they called for the head of Tywin Lannister to be taken immediately for the insult.

“Your grace, may I speak?” Harrion Stark’s voice cut through all the muttering and demands being made in court by the Northerners to take the head of Tywin Lannister for the insult thrown their way.

Jon knew letting the young lad speak would be a bad idea. He could see Tywin’s intentions were to goad a reaction out of the Starks to stoke hatred and divisions in court. But before he could warn Stannis, the Prince of Dragonstone gave his leave for young Harrion’s voice to be heard in the court.

“If I’m a demon child as you accuse me, Lord Tywin, I find you to be a man with no sense at all. No man with commonsense would insult an all-powerful evil demon to its face. This lack of sense from you is frankly disappointing, just like your performance in this war against the brave men of the Reach, the Vale, the Riverlands, the Crownlands, the Stormlands, Dorne and the North.” said Harrion Stark, and the men in the court roared out their approval.

Jon’s reservations about Harrion Stark speaking before the court flew away in that instant as he saw the lords of the Seven Kingdoms puffed up in pride after they were reminded of besting the unbeatable Tywin Lannister in the field.

‘So, the lad knows to handle a crowd well. Impressive.’ Jon noted, feeling quite impressed.

He couldn’t help but glance at Ned with a touch of pride a father would feel for a son.

‘You’ve raised your children well, Ned. Rickard would be proud.’ Jon thought, remembering his old friend.

“You called my people, the people of the North, barbarians. Maybe we are.” Harrion started slowly as the court quieted down.

“But we Northerners are not barbarous enough to kill babies sleeping soundly in a crib!” Harrion Stark’s voice thundered across the throne room.

“We are not barbarous enough to send men to stab a little defenceless girl to stab half a hundred times to death! We are not barbarous enough to send men to rape and kill an unarmed woman of noble birth in her husband’s home! We are not barbarous enough to invade a nearby kingdom for no reason, burn their fields, hunt the men and children for sport and rape their women. If you want to

see a barbarian Lord Tywin, I suggest you look into a mirror. You'll find all the barbarians in the world would pale compared to the face in the mirror."

The silence that followed in the wake of the fiery speech made by Harrion Stark was broken by Lord Umber.

"And that's the Black Wolf for you, southern cunt." Lord Umber crowed, glowering at Lord Tywin with a raised fist.

Following that, the court descended into clamours for Tywin's immediate execution. Jon had to admit that he was probably seeing a rare event in the making. It was perhaps the first time in centuries that most lords of Westeros called for taking the head of one of the Lords Paramount. Strangely enough, the Dornish lords were behaving with restraint compared to the other kingdoms. Jon couldn't help but wonder why this was so. If anyone should be happy with the court's popular decisions, it should be the Dornish. And yet, Prince Oberyn and his cohorts were restrained in their engagement within the court.

"Enough!" Stannis Baratheon thundered, quieting down the court. "The court has heard Lord Tywin Lannister. Now, we'll hear Lord Balon Greyjoy."

"I make no excuses for what I did. I'm an Ironborn, and we follow the Old Ways. But I'm not ready to depart this world, meekly bowing my head at the block. If I'm to die, I'll die with a sword in hand. Therefore, I shall take the Black." said Balon Greyjoy.

Jon was sure he was not the only one surprised by the declaration by the Lord of Pyke. Balon Greyjoy asking to atone his sins by joining the Night's Watch was not something he foresaw. In fact, he was counting on Tywin to go that route and create problems for the North. Instead, the stubborn lord of Pyke asked to become a black brother at the Wall. For a moment, Jon looked between Lord Lannister and Lord Greyjoy, finding it weird that both men were behaving so oddly before he chalked it up to the effects of war.

"Very well. Since both Lords have spoken, the Iron Throne's judgment is clear. Tywin Lannister is hereby sentenced to death by beheading. Balon Greyjoy has voluntarily chosen the Black for his crimes. As such, he'll be escorted to the Wall to take his vows. Both sentences will be carried out on the morrow." Stannis declared.

"Take these prisoners away. The Prince of Dragonstone shall judge the rest of the Westermen for their involvement in this failed rebellion." Jon loudly proclaimed before shuffling the parchments in his hand to get the name of the next lord to be judged. "The Iron Throne calls Stafford Lannister."

There was a long list of lords and knights who deserved to be punished in the Westerlands. Never mind the many that were bunkering down in the Iron Islands. The Starks only brought Balon Greyjoy to be judged, but Jon was unsure whether leaving the rest without punishment was wise. Not that the punishments Robert enforced on the Ironborn had any effect, as they had ended up rebelling again. Perhaps there was more room for discussion on what was to be done to curb the Iron Fleet from becoming a threat again.

“You cannot possibly expect the Iron Throne to hand over three islands to the North.”

Harry stared unbothered at the Hand of the King, who looked incredulously at him after he made his demands known.

“The Iron Throne doesn’t need to hand over anything. I already have Harlaw and Blacktyde in my control. I can have Fair Isle captured easily.” Harry said with a shrug of his shoulders.

“That’s not the point.” Jon Arryn said in frustration.

“Then what’s the point? The Ironborn attack on the North’s shores cannot be tolerated. We are building up our fleet, and we can’t afford to have another attack on our western shores to distract us. Vows will not bind the Ironborn, and your attempts at intimidating them are laughable. However, they understand the Old Ways. I’m using their own laws against them. I’ve won the islands in war, and I’m keeping them.” said Harry.

“But you’re not just asking for Balcktyde and Harlaw. You’re also asking for Fair Isle.”

“Because I have concerns about House Lannister. You’ve yet to decide their fate, isn’t that so? If they were to maintain control over Casterly Rock and Lannisport, they could rebuild their fleet given enough time and pose a threat against the western shores of the North. We need Fair Isle to combat such a hostile move from happening in the near future.” Harry explained.

“The Royal Fleet will come to your aid should something like that happen, Harrion.” Jon Arryn promised.

“The Royal Fleet is moored at Dragonstone. By the time your fleet sails around Dorne, my people would’ve suffered enough casualties, and I won’t stand for it.” Harry shook his head.

“You won’t stand for it, you say? Last I checked, Eddard Stark is the Warden of the North...”

“And I’m the Lord of Avalon, the shield of the western seas. I command the North’s fleet, and I’ll not tolerate a threat to fester on our western shores from the Ironborn or House Lannister.” Harry said firmly, even though he was making up the titles as he spoke.

“Ned, surely you see how unreasonable these demands are.” Jon Arryn pleaded, looking at his foster son imploringly.

“I understand your concerns, but I’ve talked with the lords of the North. Houses Ryswell, Dustin, Tallhart, Glover, Mormont and many others are concerned about retaliatory raids on the shores of the North in the future. They have voiced their support for assimilating Blacktyde and Harlaw. Fair Isle, on the other hand, can be discussed.” Eddard said slowly and carefully.

“We’ll drop our demand for Fair Isle if House Farman agrees to basing rights for the North.” said Harry.

“Basing rights? I don’t understand.” Jon Arryn said confusedly, looking between Eddard and Harrion warily.

“The North seeks to build a port on Fair Isle where we can anchor a portion of our fleet to dissuade the Westermen or the Ironborn from taking any hostile action against the North.” said Harry.

“This is still not acceptable. You must understand that this has never happened in the history of the Seven Kingdoms.” Jon Arryn vehemently refused.

“Of course, it has happened.” Harry rolled his eyes at the apparent sweeping statement made by Jon Arryn to sweep his demands under the carpet. “Take House Baratheon, for example. King Robert reduced the lands held by House Connington for supporting the Targaryens during the Rebellion. He did the same to the Darry, Thorne, and many other Crownland Houses that supported the dragons. Even you, Lord Arryn, took land from Lord Grafton for siding with the dragons in the Rebellion.”

“House Connington was sworn to House Baratheon. When they broke their oaths, Robert was right to take lands away from them. The same goes for House Grafton. They are sworn to House Arryn. Does the North have such a relationship with Blacktyde, Harlaw and Fair Isle?”

“No, the North does not.” Harry agreed. “But House Baratheon have such a relationship. The Ironborn and Westermen rebelled against House Baratheon. So, the Iron Throne can act. But you prefer not to concede to our demands.”

“I’d prefer not to take such actions against the Ironborn or the Westermen.”

“Then you’ll be disappointed to know I won’t be ceding an inch of land I took from the Ironborn. You’ll also be forcing my hand to invade and occupy Fair Isle if you persist in denying our demands.” Harry said firmly, taking to his feet.

“Do you realise what you’re...

“Yes, I know what I’m doing, Lord Arryn. For twelve years, you have ruled as the Hand of the King. During this time, you’ve filled the Small Council with southerners, most of them Valemen. Your pirates in the Three Sisters attack our trade ships with impunity, and now you’re trying to stop securing the western shores of the North from our enemies. We’ll take more than a few islands if you deny us what we ask. You’ll have a rebellion in your hands, Lord Arryn.” Harry threatened coldly. “A northern rebellion for independence. And unlike those who failed, we will succeed. You have till sunrise to issue the orders.”

“Eddard! Do you have nothing to say after hearing all this?” Jon Arryn asked, looking hopefully at his foster son, sporting a defeated look.

“It’s only because of my father that the Northern lords have not openly revolted against the Baratheon rule,” Harry said coldly. “You’ve thrown the Northmen into two wars that had nothing to do with us, and not once you’ve rewarded us. You fill your Small Council with Andals and still proclaim you represent the king of the Andals and the First Men. You’ll give us equal representation in the Small Council or accede to our demands.”

“Either way, you have till sunrise, Lord Arryn. After that, we Northerners will take matters into our own hands.” Harry warned, holding the door open while looking pointedly at his father.

"I'm sorry, Jon." Eddard began with a sigh as he stood up from his seat across from his foster father. "If we don't do something now to appease the lords of the North, I'll not be able to control them in the near future. I see no other way to put down the festering resentment."

With that said, Eddard walked out of the room without turning back.

"Keep this in mind, Lord Arryn. You have till sunrise to decide." Harry warned before he followed his father out of the room.

Once Harry was out of Jon Arryn's room, he was relieved to have convened a meeting of the Northern lords with his father present before meeting with Lord Arryn. When he raised the demands of the new land grants, the Northern lords were enthusiastic about their support. However, Harry felt they just wanted the lands to get something out of the bloody war they fought. Most of them were not even thinking of the long-term benefits of spreading out a sizeable fleet along the Sunset Sea and the obvious trade benefits that'd follow once the Ironborn were destroyed for good. Or maybe they were aware of the military implications of capturing these islands and using them to spread out the Northern fleet across the vast expanse of the Sunset Sea. Either way, the lords of the North were eager to expand the North's holdings, which was why Eddard Stark had no reason to hold firm before Jon Arryn. That and Harry shamelessly used the Imperius Curse on his father to make everything go smoothly.

Now, the ball was in Jon Arryn's court. Whether the Hand of the King would call his bluff or accede to his demands could be known tomorrow. For now, he accompanied his father and conveyed to the Northern lords about their conversation with Jon Arryn.

When the morning came, it was with another meeting with the Hand of the King. They remained firm on their demands, and Jon Arryn had no other option but to take the North's demands seriously enough. Together, they met with Stannis Baratheon to finalise the deal. While the Prince of Dragonstone was reluctant to hand over the islands for perpetuity, they were convincing enough for the need to keep the Ironborn and Lannisters in check in the Sunset Sea. Here, Harry shamelessly used Prince Stannis' dislike for the Redwyne fleet and the Reach, in general, to establish they were not dependable to keep the peace in the Sunset Sea. He successfully argued that an expanded Northern fleet could keep the Ironborn and the Westermen from rebelling against the Iron Throne and force the Ironborn to change their reaving ways.

After much debate, the North was given leave to assimilate Balcktyde and Harlaw into the mainland. In return, Harry had to drop the demand for Fair Isle, but he managed to negotiate basing rights on Fair Isle and Lannisport for fifty years. Confining the basing rights to five decades was Prince Stannis' suggestion, and Harry managed to sneak in a concession by extending the basing rights to Lannisport. However, an unforeseen consequence of this was Prince Stannis also became intrigued by the idea of using basing rights for a certain amount of time as a threat to contain any future expansion of the Lannister fleet. As a result, when Prince Stannis held the court that morning, not only did he declare the lands gained by the North, but Stannis also made it clear that the North and Iron Throne would have the right to anchor their fleets in Lannisport for the next fifty years.

That morning was also witness to the execution of Tywin Lannister. Stannis, however, developed a diplomatic bone overnight as he gave the honour of taking the head of Tywin Lannister to Prince Obery.

'Or there was some kind of agreement between the Iron Throne and House Martell that I was unaware of.' Harry mused.

A deal might have been made because Harry hadn't dug deeper into Prince Oberyn's mind the last time they met. Either way, it was a wasted effort from House Baratheon. The Martells were not going to stop with the blood of Tywin. They would come for the Iron Throne to stake the claim of Aegon Targaryen on that monstrous throne. He could clearly see the bloodbath that'd be unleashed in the next few years as lords high and low would take sides for another war over the Iron Throne. Harry theorised there'd be a long series of recurring wars over the Iron Throne so long as the Targaryens could never reclaim their dragons.

For a moment, Harry entertained the idea of propping up Jon as the king of the Seven Kingdoms. It was doable if Jon could bond with Cuddles at some point. But he abandoned the thought just as it came. While there were certain advantages in having Jon as the king of the Seven Kingdoms, it'd involve pulling the North into a needless war. It'd also open up a lot of unasked questions about Lyanna's relationship with Rhaegar. Even now, Rhaegar Targaryen was seen in a better light than Robert Baratheon in the south despite the Silver Prince becoming the catalyst to the Rebellion. He was sure the Andals would find some way to pin all the blame on his late aunt, and that was not something he thought House Stark wanted. He supposed he wanted some dignity to remain for the dead aunt he never met.

'I'll let Jon decide.' Harry decided. 'When the time is right, he'll know the truth, and he can decide what he should do.'

In the meantime, there was the wedding of his uncle Edmure to look forward to before he travelled back home. On that merry thought, Harry watched Prince Oberyn unsheathe a sword and savoured the moment as he placed its sharp edge against Tywin Lannister's neck. The Old Lion of the Rock did not look like an all-powerful Lord Paramount as the man was bent over with his head resting on a piece of wooden block.

"For Elia Martell, Rhaenys and Aegon." Prince Oberyn shouted before swinging the sword.

The blonde head of Tywin Lannister, the Lord Paramount of the Westerlands, rolled on the ground, separated from the rest of his body. Before the assembled crowd, Prince Oberyn picked up the severed head of Tywin Lannister by the hair and showed it off to everyone like a trophy. Even though Prince Oberyn was the owner of a fractious personality, Harry had to admit the man had style and guts.

Therefore, he had no qualms about what he would do to turn the plan the Martells were cooking up on its head.