

“Word has come from Lord Royce. Deep Den has surrendered. The Goldroad is now open for the Knights of the Vale. The Knights of the Vale have joined Prince Stannis, and they march on Casterly Rock as we speak.” Jon Arryn declared.

The relief in the Small Council chambers was quite palpable. With the forces of the Vale capturing the Goldroad, they could directly reach Casterly Rock. It also meant Stannis’ host and the Vale host could merge with the King’s host, leaving Lord Tywin in an unenviable position.

“I’ve also received word from Sarsfield. Ser Brynden and Ser Edmure forced the Lannister host at the castle into small skirmishes until Lord Stark marched right behind Ser Stafford Lannister’s host from the shores. Lord Sarsfield had Ser Stafford Lannister taken prisoner and surrendered to Ser Brynden in exchange for forgiveness from the Iron Throne.” Varys reported.

“Very good. This is good news to hear, Lord Varys.” Jon nodded at the Master of Whispers with a relieved smile.

“This should be the end of the war. We should ask for Lord Tywin’s surrender.” Lord Horton Redfort suggested.

“If the Old Lion has refused to surrender this far, he will not surrender now. His pride cannot allow him to concede defeat.” Lord Baelish commented, shrugging his shoulders dismissively.

“While I do hope Lord Tywin would come to his senses and stop this bloodshed, I’m afraid I’ve to agree with Lord Baelish’s assessment. This war won’t end until Lord Tywin dies. So long as lord Lannister breathes, he’ll pursue this war like a zealot.” said Lord Varys.

“I’m afraid I’ll have to concur, Lord Hand. Lord Lannister had ample time to seek terms. He has refused to do so even after the fall of Lannisport.” Gormon Tyrell spoke up, making Jon look at the newly appointed Grand Maester after the unfortunate demise of Pycelle in the Black Cells.

Jon had thought the Citadel would’ve been furious with the nature of the demise of Pycelle, but they were pretty quick to elect Gormon Tyrell to the spot.

‘I guess the Tyrells were eager to get the chance to gain a seat in the Small Council. I’ll have to keep my eye on this one.’ Jon thought while nodding curtly at the Grand Maester.

“Lord Tywin may decline peace, but we, the council of King Robert, are committed to maintaining peace in his name. We’ll extend the offer of peace one last time.” Jon said firmly.

“Does Lord Hand intend to change the terms?” Lord Varys asked, making Jon ponder for a moment.

“No. There cannot be any change from our side.” Jon shook his head, knowing it’d be disastrous to retract the terms offered last time.

If anything, Jon had half a mind to demand Tywin’s head.

"I doubt Lord Tywin had a change of heart about spending the rest of his natural life at the Wall." Varys said, leaning back into his seat while audibly letting out a disappointed sigh.

"Mayhaps he might consider it if we were to threaten him more directly." Lord Baelish made his thoughts heard, making Jon frown at his fellow Valeman.

"What do you mean?" Jon asked warily.

"We ought to send a clear message. I suggest we send Joffrey Waters' head to Casterly Rock. It'll end the threat posed by the bastard and make sure Lord Lannister knows we'll be firm with House Lannister should he not yield the Rock to his grace."

Jon could not help but stare at Petyr Baelish with a horrified look.

"I concur with Lord Baelish's suggestion. The boy Joffrey is a threat to his grace's reign. So long as he exists, the Lannisters will have a cause to pursue. Killing the boy and ending any possible bloodline that could lay claim to the Iron Throne would naturally threaten King Robert's bloodline in the future. By acting now, we can forestall any unnecessary conflict." Grand Maester Gormon voiced his approval.

"You are talking about having a child executed. While Cersei Lannister has committed a grave crime and besmirched the good name of House Baratheon, the child is not guilty of any crimes.

"Save for being the product of adultery of the former Queen and the Queen's family insists on the boy being the natural heir to King Robert." Lord Baelish smoothly interjected.

"Surely, Lord Hand, you understand the threat we face from Viserys Targaryen. Do you not see the same could happen if we allow Joffrey Waters to survive?" Grand Maester Gormon asked, looking imploringly at Jon.

"We'll not be executing a child who has not even achieved majority, no matter the reason. The boy could join the Faith or even serve at the Wall." Jon said fiercely, stopping all talks of sending Joffrey's head to the Rock.

Jon couldn't help but pinch his nose as he felt a headache coming. He knew that once Robert returned from the war, he'd have an uphill battle to keep Joffrey safe from getting the block or a noose. He hoped to convince Robert to leave the boy alone with Eddard's aid. He was adamant about keeping Robert's hands clean as history would judge them poorly should more children die under their watch. The dastardly fate that befell Elia Martell and her children resulted in the butchery happening in Lannisport under the Dornish army. By all the accounts he received from Lord Varys, Prince Oberyn was killing all Lannisters he could get his hands on. Public hangings, beheadings, public lashings and Lannister men being thrown into fighting pits to fight Dornish warriors. There were many horrifying tales coming about from the fallen city, and he was powerless to stop it. He could do nothing but turn a blind eye to what the Dornish army was doing.

But he could control what was happening in King's Landing to a certain extent. And Jon promised to himself that no children would get executed by the Iron Throne so long as he served as the Hand.

"I have some pleasant news to share, my lords." Varys said suddenly, breaking the uncomfortable silence in the Small Council chambers. "My little birds have tracked Cersei Lannister and little Myrcella. They've safely arrived at Tyrosh. They've also taken refuge at the palace of a local Magister."

"This is good to hear. How did she get into the city? Who helped her?" Jon asked eagerly.

He knew capturing Cersei Lannister was paramount to restoring the honour of the Iron Throne and House Baratheon. The actions of Cersei Lannister have aggrieved both. Having the former queen stand trial for her crimes would undoubtedly go a long way in restoring the confidence of the lords of Westeros in the authority of the Iron Throne. Jon was also reminded of the fact that they had to prove the illegitimacy of Joffrey and Myrcella by establishing that Cersei committed adultery.

"A pirate captain named Rowello who is no more among the living. The rumour is that Captain Rowello might have displeased our former queen." Varys commented, hiding a titter behind his sleeve.

"Mayhaps this pirate captain was her secret lover all along. She must have killed the man for keeping it a secret." Petyr suddenly suggested.

Jon sighed as the Small Council devolved into inventing new insults at Cersei Lannister instead of doing something productive. At least he was now aware of Cersei Lannister's location. The next step was to bring the former queen to Westeros somehow and make her stand trial before the Iron Throne. There was another matter the council had to discuss, and that was Harrion Stark. Lord Varys had informed him about the North attacking the Iron Islands under the command of Harrion Stark. News travelled slowly on what was happening in the Iron Islands, but Varys had informed him that the Stark boy had struck a deal with Prince Oberyn. The Dornish fleet had departed from Far Isle to invade Pyke, and the Master of Whispers was certain the Stark fleet was planning to attack the Iron Isles. It was now only a matter of where and when.

'I suppose the Spider will sniff out all the details soon.' Jon thought.

Truth be told, Jon was slightly surprised that a boy two and ten managed to take command of the Northern lords. He knew from experience that the lords of the North were difficult to manage even with a Stark around. He had seen that firsthand during the Rebellion. Even with Eddard around, it was quite difficult to keep the Northmen together. That meant Harrion Stark was not just a sorcerer of great skill but a credit to the Stark name because the boy had successfully taken command of the Northern army and was possibly leading an invasion into the iron islands.

There were other lords and princes who had done great deeds during their youth. Daeron the Young Dragon, who launched the invasion of Dorne when he was four and ten and became its king one year later, came to mind.

‘Perhaps I should meet the boy once the war is over. Having Harrion Stark join the Small Council after a few years would neatly tether the North to the Iron Throne if Eddard refuses the offer yet again.’ Jon mused.

Harry stared down from his airship as his fleet made short work of the harbour that hosted the modest fleet of House Drumm. His first act at old Wyk was to burn down all the ports and ships under House Goodbrother and Shatterstone. They were the weakest houses on the small island, and after he had dealt with them, Harry turned his sights on House Drumm.

House Drumm once ruled the Ironborn as their king if his memory served him right. While House Drumm of this era was not as powerful as it used to be, they were capable of raising a modest fleet of ships given enough time. Ser Barristan Selmy had dealt a heavy blow to their power during their failed rebellion, and he was making sure any progress in raising themselves up since then would end in ashes.

Therefore, Harry was content to see the entire harbour burn to ashes, but he was not done. He wanted these Ironborn to feel the actual consequence of messing with him. Just having their ships burned down would not be a proper lesson. There were enough shipbuilders in their islands, and he was sure they could rebuild given enough time.

‘But they won’t be building anything if they don’t have wood to build their ships.’ Harry thought.

Harry stared coldly at the hills down below, holding trees in abundance.

“Anya. You’re up.” he nodded at his Valkyrie guard.

Anya nocked a fire arrow on her bow, took aim at the forest and let it loose. A decent-sized fire started once the arrow struck a tree. The alchemists dropped two jars of wildfire near the burning tree to spread the fire along. Harry knew that the Wildfire stash on his ships was dwindling fast due to extensive use of the substance on Blacktyde. He had the option of unleashing Fiendfyre, but he was holding out on that decision because he didn’t want to weaken himself in case the Drowned God made an early visit. The last thing he wanted was for a god of pirates to catch him off guard when he was wasting his magical power on burning down a forest.

While his forest-burning campaign consumed many forest areas in fire and covered most parts of Old Wyk in a blanket of smoke, Harry made sure to leave one place intact as it held something personally valuable. He had only read about this in books, but now he saw it with his own eyes.

“Fascinating.” Harry breathed, staring at the remains of a Sea Dragon on Nagga’s Hill.

It was the first time Harry had seen the remains of a Sea Dragon. He had not even seen the mythical beast in his home world either, as they were notorious for keeping to themselves in the depths of the seas. He had only read about the Sea Dragons in books. The wizarding world’s version of Sea Dragons was painted as majestic, noble and reclusive. They rarely even came to the sea’s surface, much less the land. If someone wanted to see a Sea Dragon, they’d have to find the deepest oceans and go to the rock bottom to meet them. It was also alleged that a Parselmouth could interact with Sea Dragons, which explains why the wizarding world called them Sea Serpents.

However, Westerosi description of the mythical creature painted a more aggressive picture. The Sea Dragons were supposedly a hostile race that hunted the high seas for its prey. It allegedly favoured devouring Krakens and men. At least, this was the Ironborn version of the creature. The Sea Dragons were also allegedly capable of spitting out fires that never die. The Ironborn called their flames the Living fire. The gist was that the life force of a Sea Dragon fueled the fire, and it supposedly even lasted after their deaths.

Harry reached out with his hand and touched the smooth pearl-white rib bone of the slain Sea Dragon on Nagga’s hill. His mind was immediately assaulted by visions of a beautiful green Sea Dragon that looked like a giant Basilisk with broad, expansive wings. Unlike normal dragons, the Sea Dragon in his vision lacked any legs or arms. Instead, its whole body looked like a giant snake except for the head, which had horns and spikes reminiscent of a dragon.

Harry stared, mesmerised, as the dragon in his vision jumped out of the sea and beat its wings, releasing gales of wind. The sea trembled under the power of its wings, blowing away tides into fine mist. An unholy magical aura pressed down on Harry’s shoulder as he stared into the bright white eyes of the Sea Dragon.

“Take me away, speaker. Take me back home.” the great dragon hissed in the tongue of serpents.

Harry was quite surprised to realise the ambient magic left in the bones of the Sea Dragon was expressing its intent even after thousands of years.

‘It’s almost like...’

The vision slipped from his mind, and Harry found himself standing inside the giant rib cage of the once mighty dragon. The Resurrection Stone had returned to his hand from the depths of his soul, shining bright blue like a newborn star.

‘I see. So, that’s why the soul of the dragon appeared.’ Harry mused.

Harry closed his eyes and breathed in the salty air. Letting loose, Harry unleashed his magical power, blanketing the ribcage of the Sea Dragon. Only the lull of the sea could be heard as Harry enshrined his will into his magic. With a sharp tug using the Elder Wand, Harry dislodged the bones from Nagga’s Hill. The hill cracked open as the fifteen-foot-tall ribs and the rest of the skeleton emerged from beneath the rocks. Harry had to take refuge on his flying carpet as the hill came undone at the seams. The natural constructs that had grown

over the bones and the few stone constructs built along the bones as pillars came undone as his magic pulled the skeleton safely out of the hill. When the whole skeleton lifted out of Nagga's Hill, the hill fell apart, and the ocean rushed in to lay claim to the rest.

Lightning split the sky, and thunder shook the earth. Then, all was quiet save for the crashing tides and whistling wind. Maintaining his hold on the skeleton, Harry willed it to shrink. The bones first resisted his magic, but slowly, he overpowered the natural protections on them, and it shrunk to a size that fits in his palm. He carefully levitated the shrink skeleton into his hand and then urged the carpet towards the airship.

But, just as he touched down on the aft of his ship, he heard a loud, ghastly groan reach his ears. Harry immediately ran to the rails and looked down, searching for any tentacled monster, but his eyes found nothing except the turbulent sea.

"Hmm. As I thought, it'll take a little more to drag you out of your hiding place." Harry muttered.

He was almost sure the Drowned God was out there waiting and watching. He didn't know how, but he could feel a powerful being focusing its sight on him. But it was not enough to merely attract the attention of the Drowned God. The being would have to step out of the spirit realm and open itself to vulnerabilities. Even if he had the Hallows merged with him, his body could not enter the Spirit Realm. Even if he somehow found a way to safely travel into the Spirit Realm, he'd be unable to slay the Drowned God or any spirits. Inside the Spirit Realm, the gods would always hold the advantage. He'd be committing suicide if he chased after the Drowned God. The only option before him was to force the Drowned God to chase after him, and now that he had the attention of the entity, he knew what he had to do.

"Captain Celos. Our next destination is Pyke." Harry called out to the ship's captain while he stared down at the sea.

Balon Greyjoy could only lament at the site of his Ironborn warriors.

'Cowards! All of them are incompetent cowards!' Balon angrily thought.

"The Stark boy is burning our islands to ashes. There is a giant ash cloud that surrounds Blacktyde. Many of our people who could get their hands on boats fled the island in fear." said Dagmer Cleftjaw.

Balon gripped the arms of his throne as he could taste the fear in Dagmar's sound. He had thought his old friend would behave like a proper Ironborn, but even his master-at-arms was afraid of a stripling wolf pup.

"It's said the boy is the Storm God in the flesh. Sailors bring word from Lannisport of how the Stark boy summoned lightning from the sky to fell the city walls." said Victarian.

“Enough! Do you have nothing else to say but sing praises to our enemy, brother?” Balon snarled, forcing the assembled lords and captains into silence.

“You’ve failed to put down a stripling wolf, Victarian! And now, you come into my halls and sing praises for a Greenlander who is barely weaned off his mother’s teats!” Balon shouted, glaring down at his brother who had brought shame to the Greyjoy name.

He could see now that he was wrong to exile Euron from the Iron Islands. Euron would’ve never failed him in such a shameless manner.

“You know, I was going to leave you alone out of consideration for Theon, but that insult sealed your fate.”

Balon reared back in surprise as a boy with grey eyes appeared right in the middle of his hall as if a shimmering veil had fallen away.

“What is this? Kill this...”

“Langlock.”

Balon suddenly found his tongue sticking to the roof of his mouth, leaving him mute. He felt the control of his body slip away as he found himself floating in the air. His eyes widened as he realised it was not just him that was floating but the Seastone chair as well.

“Your Seastone Chair is made of a rare black stone imbued with a divine power. It represents the hold of your drowned God on this island. The dragons and the stags never dared to challenge your god, but I do. Defeating your pirates will not change anything. But killing your god will put an end to the long, bloody history of the Ironborn.”

Balon tried to scream, but only muffled voices came from his mouth. He looked at the lords and the many captains assembled in his hall, but they were all standing frozen, unable to move an inch. He soon found himself moving across his hall and floating away into a flying ship hovering above his castle. He tried to look around to see how he was moving, but all he could see was the sea and the sky with his head locked in place by some vile sorcery. His arms and legs found themselves bound by ropes, and he was quickly dragged out of the Seastone Chair by a pair of men.

“You sent your men to my home to rape, reave and pay the Iron price, right? Now, I will teach you a lesson you’ll never forget.” said Harry before turning the Elder Wand on the Seastone Chair.

“Bombarda.”

The moment the spell connected with a throne made of black marble stone, it blew apart, leaving nothing but dust and small shards of the black stone. Harry gave it a moment and smiled when he heard the grisly moan again. He could listen to the sea rage, and soon, he felt a powerful presence becoming known to his senses.

“Now it begins.” Harry said excitedly, raising his wand and erecting a barrier just when a giant tentacle tried to swipe at his ship.

The tentacle was repelled by the barrier, and Harry immediately followed it up by using a dark cutting curse that cleaved through the thick tentacle in one go. The cry he heard from down below was full of pain and anger.

“Captain. Take our ship further up and get ready. It’s time to kill a god.” said Harry, turning away from the gaping Balon Greyjoy to the giant Kraken that had shown up near Pyke.