

Harry levitated the rubble out of the way, blocking a corridor. The roof had collapsed on the corridor, probably by the siege engines of Goblins. He could see a massive stone inscribed with runes among the rubble. The rock looked like it had come out of a scorching furnace. Most of the runes inscribed were blackened out after breaching the wards surrounding Hogwarts. He became curious about the runes used by the Goblins. While the runes were burned out, a chunk of the stone was missing, and he used his sensory abilities to get a feel for ambient magic in the runes.

Unfortunately, he received mixed results. The magic lingering on the stone gave him only vague intent to grind, shield and pierce. He could've pieced that together without even looking at the rock.

"The barriers surrounding Hogwarts are empowered to burn away foreign hostile magic. Rarely anything survives once it comes in contact with the barriers."

Harry looked over his shoulder to see Rowena Ravenclaw, dressed in fine blue silk, strutting towards him with her staff in hand.

"I thought you were asked to take bed rest by Lady Hufflepuff." said Harry.

"And you believe yourself to be far too clever than everyone else, don't you?" said Rowena, her eyes sharpened as she scrutinised him.

"Why would you think so?" Harry asked, taken back by the suspicious look the Hogwarts Founder was throwing at him.

"I've been carefully analysing everything that happened since I met you in the forest, and two things stood out."

"Is that so? Let's hear it then," said Harry, forcing his body to relax a little bit, but his magic was spreading out of his body, looking for any threats around him.

"You have so far avoided saying anything about your homeland despite repeated inquiries, which means you're probably on the run or a spy. Second, you've shown you're terribly misinformed about Goblins, which does not happen to wizards and witches in the isle. So, you're from a distant land with little to no exposure to Goblins or a spy sent by the Goblins."

"Or maybe, I come from a place where Goblins are nasty little buggers but don't wage war on wizards and witches." Harry retorted.

"And what place is that, Hadrian Targaryen? Rome? Because I've been to Rome and never heard of a wizarding family named Targaryen." Rowena said, scowling at him while keeping her staff at the ready.

Harry knew he was in a bind as he had not considered a specific area as his homeland. He thought he could wing it by passively projecting himself as a Roman or Greek, but that idea was now useless. Under pressure, he spouted out the first name of a place that came to his mind.

"Valyria."

"What?" Rowena asked, staring at him with a raised eyebrow.

Harry felt like palming his face but resisted the urge by sheer will.

'No choice but to roll with it.' Harry thought.

“Valyria is my homeland. It’s an island city near Greece’s western coast. It’s a city made by fourteen great sorcerers five centuries ago. To this day, those fourteen families administer the city, forming the Dragon Council of Valyrian Freehold.” Harry made up a backstory, heavily drawing from a fictional book on the spot.

“Name these fourteen families.” Rowena demanded sharply, still eyeing him suspiciously.

“Balerion, Vhagar, Meraxes, Vermithor, Syrax, Caraxes, Tessarion, Meleys, Tyraxes, Arrax, Sunfyre and Targaryen. You happy now?”

Harry thanked his lucky stars he was obsessed with House Targaryen and their dragons in the past. Otherwise, he’d have floundered for names. The dragon names of House Targaryen were the perfect cover for the lie he was spinning. However, he also understood he was weaving a web of lies, and sooner or later, he would get caught up in it if he was not careful enough. But for now, he had no choice but to proceed.

‘In for a penny, in for a pound.’ Harry thought.

“I’ve never heard of this place before,” Rowena said suspiciously, but Harry noticed her stance relaxed slightly.

“I’d be surprised if you’ve heard of it. Valyrian Freehold is a city exclusively for magical beings. Our ancestors built the city to avoid getting embroiled in muggle wars exacerbated by the rapid expansion of the Roman Empire.” said Harry, turning his focus back to repairing the damage inflicted on the roof.

Harry unleashed his magical power and let it blanket the whole area before he applied the repairing charm. The wide area effect of the charm started a chain reaction that reassembled the broken roof from all the rubble lying around. Within half a minute, the collapsed roof reassembled itself in pristine condition.

“That’s impossible. No magic could shield an entire island from the eyes of muggles.” Rowena argued.

At this point, Harry realised the Founders had most probably not developed muggle-repelling wards or even Unplottable wards that secured magical communities inside muggle settlements. In History of Magic taught at Hogwarts, he had learned the Founders created the muggle-repelling wards and other illusion charms that kept Hogwarts as a run-down old castle to the muggle eyes. There were also some popular questions about why the Founders built a school for children so close to the Forbidden Forest filled with dangerous creatures. Harry now understood why.

‘The Founders used the dangerous creatures in the forest as a buffer against muggles. They must have created the muggle-repelling wards after Hogwarts was built.’ Harry mused.

“There are charms that can shield entire tracts of land from muggles. The Freehold uses it most extensively. My family had developed even a charm to ward off the Freehold from even foreign magical creatures and wizards.” Harry claimed.

“Is that true? Is there magic capable of hiding lands under wards even from wizards and magical creatures?” Rowena asked excitedly.

“Of course. I’ll be happy to share it with you to protect Hogwarts.” said Harry.

And that offer clinched Rowena Ravenclaw, smashing through the doubts plaguing her mind. At least, Harry hoped that was the case because he was winging it with his backstory, and now he was in uncharted territory. He also felt the Founders would not be of much help in solving his crisis. Still, he hoped to use the Founders and their knowledge to his advantage to get back to his time without disclosing his true identity. He just had to come up with a good story.

Harry had spent the rest of the night helping the inhabitants of Hogwarts and cleaning up the wreckage from the siege. For some reason, the Goblins had stopped their attacks against Hogwarts. Whatever the reason behind the abrupt stopping of the siege, the people huddled inside Hogwarts were immensely thankful, as was Harry. With everything falling quiet for the night, Harry had the opportunity to observe the refugees inside Hogwarts properly. There were some thirty-odd wizarding families taking refuge in the castle. Of those thirty families, only ten wizards and witches pitched in to help with the castle's defence. The sad fact was that most of them were too young and some of the first students of the Founders.

So they were not as knowledgeable.

“Aguamenti.”

A jet of water blasted out of the tip of his wand, dousing the flames burning the window. Harry transfigured a stray piece of wood into a metallic square plate the exact size of the window. Using the sticking charm, he fixed the plate on the window to close off a potential place the enemy could infiltrate in the worst-case scenario.

“You’re so fast at casting spells, Lord Targaryen.” said Ciaran, with stars in his eyes.

“Hmm.” Harry grunted, moving ahead to look for any other damage to the castle.

Ciaran Flanagan was a boy of twelve who took a fancy to hang around him, and due to the lies he spun with Rowena, he became a lord within the span of an hour.

‘I guess rumours spreading like wildfire is a tradition that started from the Founders’ era.’ Harry reflected with some amusement that made him grin.

Or he was not giving Rowena the benefit of the doubt. His well-dressed attire might’ve given a ‘noble’ or ‘lordly’ impression to the wizards and witches dressed in rags and animal skin. Harry was fortunate to have dressed in dragonhide boots, a basilisk skin cloak and jacket, a cotton shirt and dark pants. Of course, there was trouble waiting for him as he had not carried anything on his person that translates to wealth in the time he found himself in. He was sure that would bring trouble upon his head, but he possessed a small pouch of gold and silver.

However, the coins were few, not enough to cover an extended stay.

“They say you slew goblins by summoning lightning from the sky. Is it true?” Ciaran asked, keeping up pace with Harry’s long strides.

‘The kid is persistent. I’ll give him that.’ Harry mused, eyeing the young brown-haired wizard out of the corner of his eyes.

“Summoning lightning from the sky is beyond me. But yes, I used a lightning spell to dispatch some Goblin warriors.” Harry answered, knowing the kid would not give him peace of mind if he remained mute for too long.

“That’s so wonderful. I’d have loved to watch that, but my mother refuses to let me help in the war effort.” Ciaran complained, his eyes darkened suddenly. “Even after what they did to my father... she won’t let me.”

“A mother’s love for her children is the most powerful force in the world and, therefore, the most revered even by magic. Great feats of magic have been done by those who loved fiercely. So, do not despair for what you have, Ciaran. Its value is incalculable.” said Harry.

“I suppose.” Ciaran said morosely. “But I want to fight.”

“And you will, in time. There will be many wars to fight in your lifetime. I guarantee you that. First, learn to harness the magic within you. You have to learn to walk before you can run.”

“Then, will you teach me?” Ciaran asked eagerly.

“Aren’t you a student of Hogwarts? Why would you need my tutelage when you have four of the finest teachers in these lands?” Harry asked with a raised eyebrow.

“They don’t teach us anything of war. Lady Hufflepuff taught us how to heal injuries, grow plants and brew potions. How’s any of that useful when the Goblins attack? I want to protect my mother.”

Harry was taken aback by the resolve shining in the boy’s eyes. It was almost like seeing a reflection of himself in that moment, which made Harry give in.

“All right. I’ll give you some tutelage.” Harry said to the excitement of Ciaran Flanagan.

Harry was not blindly jumping into any commitment out of a spur-of-the-moment decision. It was all but sure that his stay at this time would get extended a bit. While he was here, it behoved him to share some of his knowledge with Hogwarts so that the Founders would not be reluctant to share theirs.

‘After all, a bridge has to be used from both sides.’ Harry thought.

Harry spent the rest of the short time he had to instruct his new student in casting the Stunning charm in between cleaning up the northern parts of the castle. When he was finally done, Harry was relieved there was no trace of the enemy or hostile magical creatures unleashed by the Goblins hiding in the northern parts of the castle. When he finally returned to the hall where the families were camping, it was time for dinner, and the four Founders were also there.

Dinner was a silent affair, which Harry was not used to in Hogwarts. The Great Hall was usually brimming with the excited murmurings and jokes of students from all four houses. To sit in the Great Hall and not experience the sensory overload of hundreds of teenagers was disconcerting for Harry. Not to mention, the food was abhorrent.

Harry was used to rich, spicy food in Hogwarts, especially some smoked beef, mashed potatoes, or even some tasty chicken soup. Whatever soup was currently on his plate was something he could not identify. But he couldn’t complain as everyone was eating the same food.

‘Right. Scotland’s cuisine during this time can’t be expected to come close to 20th-century Scottish cuisine.’ Harry mused, taking a spoonful of ‘soup’ into his mouth.

“Lord Hadrian...”

“I'm not really a lord.” Harry interrupted Salazar Slytherin.

“I was told your family was a noble family from a distant island ruled by fourteen noble families.” Salazar looked at him with an unimpressed look.

“My family is what your people would call a noble house, but I'm not a lord. My father Aegon holds the title, and after his time, my eldest sister Visenya shall inherit the title as per Valyrian custom.” Harry carefully said, neatly following the backstory he had painstakingly crafted after much internal debate.

Painting himself as a spare heir also had the added advantage of explaining his long journey away from his ‘home island’. Without the responsibility associated as the ‘heir’, he was free to roam the world, giving him the perfect cover. It also neatly disassociated from any formal nonsense that could rear its head in the future.

“Hmm.” Slytherin grunted but didn't say anything else but observe Harry closely.

“It's fascinating that wizards came together to build a city. Most of our people never see eye to eye on any matter.” Godric commented.

“I imagine it was no easy task. But the Fourteen were convinced to take as many magical families away from the constant war of muggles. Since then, we've had five centuries of peace on our island while Europe bleeds under Roman greed for power.”

“How did your people keep yourself unseen all these years?” Helga Hufflepuff asked curiously.

“Our people realised early on the Roman fleet could find our island as it's located between Rome and Greece. So, our ancestors designed a ward that turned the whole island unplotable for muggles and magicals alike. Then, there is the Muggle-repelling charm that encompasses the island's shores for added protection, making it inaccessible for ships to access our waters.” Harry explained.

“Muggle repelling charm?” Salazar asked with renewed interest, steepling his fingers as he stared at Harry with unbridled curiosity.

“It's a charm that specifically targets the minds of muggles to ignore an area warded by the charm. It'll make them unable to see the warded area and deflect the attention of their mind.”

“That's an impressive piece of magic. I've been thinking of a spell that could be something along those lines. Can you share this spell with us for Hogwarts' protection?” Salazar asked eagerly.

“We, of course, understand if it's a secret of your people...” Godric started to say, but Harry cut off the man.

“I'll be happy to share the spells with you. Your efforts to safeguard wizards and witches and empower them through knowledge is commendable. I'll be happy to help in any way I can to safeguard Hogwarts.” Harry readily offered.

“This is heartening to hear. You've our heartfelt gratitude, Hadrian.” Helga Hufflepuff graced him with a radiant smile.

Harry nodded at the older witch with a smile.

“Your spells are far different than I assumed,” Salazar said, staring at the rising sun from the top of a tower.

“Our spells were designed with wands in mind. Our people have abandoned using staves,” said Harry, joining Slytherin in watching the sunset.

“\$\$ How many in your home island speak the noble tongue of serpents?\$\$” Salazar asked in parseltongue.

“\$\$ Only those with Targaryen blood.\$\$” Harry answered.

Slytherin showed no reaction to his parseltongue ability, which Rowena or Godric mentioned to the man at some point.

“If Valyria is a secure island, why have you left its safety?” Salazar asked.

“Because Hadrian is adventurous like me. Isn’t that so, friend?” Godric laughed boisterously, clapping Harry on his shoulder.

“I wish that were the case, Godric.” said Harry, sticking to the made-up story he had prepared beforehand. “Truth be told, I wouldn’t have ventured out of the island for an adventure. Our people are facing an unprecedented threat, and I was assured the answer to our problem lies in the British Isles.”

“What do you seek? Perhaps we can help you.” Rowena offered.

“I seek knowledge of time magic,” Harry answered.

He was not surprised to see the total bewilderment on the faces of the four Founders. But he was disappointed because he had hoped they’d show some familiarity with the subject.

“Time magic? What’s that?” Godric asked curiously.

“It’s the magic that exerts power over time and perhaps space. Theoretically, time magic could bend space and time. It could reverse an event after it happened or empower a wizard to move backwards or forward in time.” Harry explained, gaining only fascinating looks from the Founders.

“That’s... I had never thought of such a magic.” Salazar muttered, looking at Harry with intrigue.

“Why do you want the power to control time? What sort of threat does your home island face that you require dominance over time?” Rowena asked.

“That’s a long tale, and one I don’t think most would readily believe,” said Harry.

“Then that tale will have to wait. Our enemy is getting ready to attack.” said Salazar, capturing everyone’s attention.

Harry was a little relieved for the distraction as he didn’t want to lay out all his backstory in one go. That was a classic way to fuck things up down the road. It was better to treat everyone with doses of his backstory for authenticity.

‘Or maybe I’m over-planning this whole stuff. They look like they are eating out of the palm of my hand.’ Harry thought, bucking up a little as he dosed himself with some self-confidence.

'I'm good at making up stuff. I got this.' Harry said to himself in the confines of his mind.

But his attitude changed when he looked at the Goblin army arrayed against Hogwarts.

'Oh, I'm so fucked!' Harry thought, staring at the four massive dragons facing Hogwarts.

"Dragons!" Helga Hufflepuff breathed, staring at the battlefield with wide eyes.

"There are four of them, Salazar." Rowena said worriedly.

"I know. I can see the battlefield, Rowena." Salazar muttered, glaring at the dragons as if the man was willing them away with his eyes.

"Well, I say we slay them all. I could use some dragonhide armour." Godric said giddily, looking rather eager to battle the dragons compared to the others in the tower.

"Do you not see what Sabretooth is planning, Godric? That horrid creature wants to shift our attention to the dragons so that he can attack the barriers that protect Hogwarts in earnest." said Rowena.

"Ah, but Sabertooth is discounting our new friend here." Said Godric, placing his hand on Harry's shoulder. "While we confront the dragons, Hadrian can hold the wards together, protecting the castle."

Harry was somewhat stunned by the level of trust Godric was showing. Entrusting the keys to wards to someone was a sign of great trust. Trusting the wrong person with such an honour would also undo everything, like what happened to the Potters. He was not the only one stunned into silence by Godric Gryffindor's show of trust. The other Founders looked apprehensively at each other.

"Salazar. I trust in Godric's judgment." said Helga Hufflepuff.

Her easygoing attitude was nowhere to be seen as a mask of stoicism surrounded her.

"I concur. If we're free to focus on the dragons, our chances of victory increase twofold." Rowena quietly said, her green eyes staring piercingly into Harry's for a moment before being trained on Slytherin, who remained silent till now.

Suddenly, Harry was facing the full attention of Salazar Slytherin.

"\$\$Will you guard Hogwarts Hadrian Targaryen?\$\$" Slytherin asked, switching to parseltongue.

"\$\$No harm shall befall Hogwarts or her inhabitants under my watch. I swear it.\$\$" Harry hissed back in the noble tongue of serpents.

"Then the wards are yours to command Hadrian Targaryen." said Slytherin, raising his staff, which glowed an eerie white glow at the snake head on its top.

Harry raised his wand, pressing the tip of his wand against the snake-head when Slytherin extended his staff in his direction. The white glow slipped into the tip of his wand, and Harry could feel the wards encompassing the castle.

"All right, then. Let's give Sabertooth a warm welcome." said Godric, fishing a pointy hat out of nowhere and covering his head with it.