

## The Dread Lord of Essos

### Chapter 31

Harry and Melisandre stood on his private dock and waited as the gangplank was lowered. Nearly as soon as the long, wooden board touched the pier, his Uncle Tyrion quickly scampered down, looking a bit worse for wear. Harry's eyes shifted to the open seas. The normally clear, blue skies were gray and dreary, and the normally pleasant seas were filled with white caps as the water churned. There was a storm coming, and he guessed that his uncle didn't have his sea legs.

"Uncle!" Harry cried out happily as his green-faced dwarf of an uncle waddled over to him. Harry slapped him on the back in greeting.

"HUUUMMMMPH!" he gagged before leaning over the side of the pier and vomiting into the water.

"Pleasant trip?" Harry asked, smiling. Melisandre rolled her eyes and smacked him on the chest.

"Come now, My Lord. It appears that he's suffered enough," she smiled sweetly at Harry.

"Of course, you're right. Come along Uncle! We have a banquet fit for a king waiting for you. There's pickled sea trout, minced liver, and boiled blobfish ..."

"BLEEEEEEEEEERHHHG!" he vomited more into the water. Once he was done, he looked up at his nephew with contempt. "I'll pass on the blobfish. A jug of wine and a bed is all I need." Harry chuckled as he led him to the castle.

"It's a shame you arrived on such a dreary day. Normally, the sight of the castle from the sea is quite spectacular," Harry told him as they slowly walked down the pier.

"Hopefully, I'll be feeling better by tomorrow, and you can show me around," Tyrion said as his stomach churned and bubbled.

"I'm sure you will be. Now let me introduce my advisor, Melisandre," Harry said, placing his hand on her lower back. "She's the Priestess of the city's Red Temple. If you have any questions about Essos, she's the one to ask. Melisandre, this is my Uncle Tyrion Lannister. If you have any questions about wine or whores, he's the one to ask," Harry said, teasing his uncle.

"I believe that I'm knowledgeable in a few subjects other than wine and whores ... Though I have studied those two subjects extensively," he admitted as he eyed Melisandre's curvy body.

"Well, study them less from now on. Remember that I'm placing a great deal of faith in you Uncle. I've told everyone that you're more than capable of ruling a city as grand as Volantis.

Now it's your responsibility to prove me right," Harry told him. He couldn't have a drunken whoremonger as a ruler of one of his cities. Look what happened to the Seven Kingdoms under Robert. Still, he knew that Tyrion had more sense than that, and Harry believed in him when others didn't.

"You need not worry about that, Nephew. I'm determined to prove you right and Father wrong. I've been working almost nonstop since I saw you last. I've been drafting laws, reading books about subjects like import duties and tariffs, studying military tactics to protect the city ..." Harry smiled as he went on. It was good to see him taking this seriously.

"I take it that my dear sister was none too pleased when she found out?" Tyrion asked. Harry chuckled.

"She had a few choice words that I wouldn't repeat in polite company," Harry smiled as his eyes twinkled. He loved seeing Cersei pissed off. In fact, he enjoyed making her angry. She always looked sexier when she was riled up and angry-sex with her was amazing.

"I'll bet," Tyrion snorted. Harry patted his shoulder.

"Don't worry about her. You only have to put up with her annoyances for the next week, then I'll take you to Volantis where you can begin your new life."

"I'm actually a bit worried," Tyrion suddenly admitted.

"This is a very big responsibility. What if I'm not up to the task?" he asked, looking worried.

"I don't expect you to be perfect. All I ask is that you try your best. If you need help, all you need to do is call on me and I'll be there within the day," Harry reassured him. "I'm certainly not the perfect ruler, but the people love me because I put them first. I actually care about their well-being. I want them to live better and happier lives. If you can do that while still putting money in the city's coffers, then you'll be a success, and you'll be loved by them," Harry smiled. Tyrion smiled back.

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"WILL YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP! I'M TRYING TO SLEEP ... WRETCHED FILTH!" Joffrey shouted out of his window into the dark night. Across King's Landing, fires burned. Many of those fires were effigies of their "beloved" King. Thankfully, no one saw fit to inform Joffrey of this. They worried what the unhinged boy-king would do with such information.

Joffrey was at his wit's end. All night long, all he could hear were chants of HAROLD, HAROLD, HAROLD as they demanded his bastard cousin return to them. He'd sooner burn every last one of those peasants before he let his cousin back into his city. Joffrey screamed and pulled his hair. His blonde hair was just growing in and was now long enough that he could finally get a

good grip on it. Unfortunately, his front teeth would never grow back. It was just one of many parting gifts the bastard had left him. What truly angered Joffrey was that he had no chance to pay him back. He couldn't kill him ... He couldn't torture him ... He couldn't even beat him within an inch of his life. The only thing he could do to get back at the bastard was to take his anger out on those he seemed to cherish ... the miserable vermin that desperately called out for their precious King Harold. And oh how he loved making them pay. It was only that very morning that he upped his Food Tax. He was now taking ninety percent of the free food that was being imported. The best and tastiest portions were going to him and the upper class of the city. The majority was going to feed his army which was holding back the various forces that were plotting against him. His army needed to be well-fed with fresh and nutritious food after all. They couldn't be expected to keep him in power with empty bellies. Whatever scraps were left went to the scum of the city.

Of course, they whined about it. 'Those idiots whine about everything,' Joffrey sneered as he stared out into the night, almost mesmerized by the sight of hundreds of little fires spread out through the blackness. They would deal with it or he would cut them off completely, and they could go hungry. On top of raising the Food Tax, he also raised the normal taxes by fifty percent under the guise of a war tax. The Small Council had tried to warn him away from this course of action, but Joffrey was steadfast in his conviction. The smallfolk would turn out their pockets, and the wealthier citizens would be expected to dig deeper into their coffers as well. The war wasn't going as well as he had hoped, and some of his debtors were beginning to call. When he had discovered that his debts to the Iron Bank had been cleared, he immediately demanded that Baelish take out another monstrous loan. Of course, the Iron Bank was only too happy to drop a couple of million into his lap. He was King Joffrey, the First of his Name, and he demanded respect from those filthy foreigners.

Taking the money was the easy part. Paying it back was a bit more difficult. Now the bank was poking their noses into his business, asking for their monthly installment. Unfortunately, he had no money to spare. When Grandmaester Pycelle of the Small Council suggested that he call on his cousin and ask for a loan, Joffrey took it as a personal insult to him. It was no better than a slap in the face, and to do so right in front of the rest of the Council was akin to cutting his balls off. It was an insult that Joffrey couldn't let pass.

He turned from the window and walked to the wall on his left. Shackled to the wall, completely nude, was Grandmaester Pycelle himself. His dirty underwear was stuffed in his mouth, and his arms were stretched to their limit. The manacles were chained high up on the wall so that it was impossible for him to sit down. His body hung limp with all of his weight being carried by his shoulders. His body was covered in bruises and lacerations. Sweat dripped from his half-unconscious face. Joffrey harshly snatched the gag from his mouth, hoping to hear the old man beg again.

"P-Please, Your Grace ... Please ..." he gasped with difficulty. Just hearing him beg brought a smile to Joffrey's face. Grabbing a short whip from a side table, Joffrey unfurled it in front of the old man, showing him what to expect.

“Please ... Not again,” he choked as he struggled to get his feet underneath him. Joffrey swung the whip hard, slashing Pycelle across the chest. His skin welted from the blow. He pulled his arm back again and swung it forward with all the strength that he possessed. The whip cracked across his bald, spotted head. Pycelle threw his head back and screamed as the skin tore open. Joffrey whipped the old man, over and over until his long, snowy-white beard was stained with blood. Once Pycelle passed out, Joffrey stuffed his mouth again and threw the whip aside before laying down on his large, soft bed.

Unbeknownst to him, one Maester who was loyal to Pycelle had heard of his Grandmaester's arrest during the Small Council session. Very few actions could be kept a secret in the Red Keep. Whether rich or poor, weak or powerful, everyone loved to talk. Without asking for permission, the Maester quickly wrote a letter and sent it via raven to the Citadel. He knew that technically what he was doing was treason, and he could be executed for it. To him, it mattered not. He took an oath of loyalty to the Citadel, and loyal he remained over the years. He only hoped the Citadel would actually do something.

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The ship rocked hard and the wood creaked and groaned. The bow suddenly lifted high into the air before it came down nearly vertically over a massive wave. Catelyn Stark was thrown across the room while Sansa had barely been able to hang on to the bed that was attached to the wooden floor. She screamed in fright as everything not nailed down was sent flying this way and that. The port hole cover was ripped clean off and nearly hit her mother in the head as it shot across the room.

The storm raging outside was one of the worst that Sansa had ever witnessed. The North often got some really bad arctic storms blowing in from deep beyond the wall. Those could be very violent. She remembered being terrified of them when she was a small child. She could still remember the sound of tree trunks cracking as they fell. That didn't compare to trying to survive one while at sea. She caught a faceful of sea spray as a wave slammed into the side of the ship, sending water through the damaged port hole. As the ship righted itself momentarily, her mother gingerly pushed herself to her feet and stumbled over to the bed where she wrapped her arms around Sansa. Both women were breathing ragged with eyes as wide as silver stags.

“Trim the sail!” they heard the captain shout from outside their door. The storm hit suddenly, and it hit hard, giving the men little time to try and counteract it. Between waves, the men did their best to keep the ship in one piece. “Trim it further!” they heard him yell again. “Watch out!”

Before they could figure out what was going on out there, a massive jolt rocked the ship. Sounds of splintering wood momentarily overcame the sounds of thundering rain and gale-force winds. Both women were thrown into the air. They spun before hitting the mattress, falling onto the floor, and skidding across the room. “WHAT'S HAPPENING?!” Sansa shouted over the

roaring winds as the ship began to tip over. Within seconds, they were using the wall as the floor as the boat nearly completely capsized.

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“Harry!” Margaery giggled as she placed her hands on his shoulders and gave him a half-hearted push to get him away. “Control yourself ... I have a meeting that I cannot miss,” she giggled again as Harry had her pinned to the wall. His lips explored her soft, slim neck while his hands gripped her thin waist possessively. Margaery couldn’t help but moan softly as he sucked on her pulse point.

“We haven’t spent nearly enough time together lately,” Harry told her as he nipped at her jaw. Margaery’s eyes fluttered as his hands climbed further up her back until one hand was cupping the back of her neck. His lips lowered down her neck and onto her chest where he kissed her exposed cleavage. The scent of her body was addicting. It must have been some special floral perfume made exclusively in the Reach. Her scent was unique to her and her mother.

Margaery placed her hands on the side of his head and tilted it up. She leaned in and kissed him deeply. “Tonight ... I’ll come to your room,” she moaned into his mouth. “Make sure that you are alone,” she told him.

“I will be,” he promised as his hand moved down her back and cupped her bottom. He had just given it a squeeze when his old friend Death pinged him in his head.

‘Hey there, Loverboy,’ she chimed in. Harry could hear the amusement in her voice.

‘I haven’t heard from you in a while. You been busy?’ Harry asked her in his mind.

‘Not particularly. Same old, same old,’ she responded. ‘I’ve been having a grand time watching you. In fact, I’ve got a whole group of Reapers who often come over and have watch parties. We’re really impressed with what you’re building.’

‘Yeah, it’s been fun so far, but I imagine that you’ve got something important to tell me. I doubt you would be interrupting me in my current situation if you didn’t.’ Margaery’s tongue was doing wonderful things to his tongue while he happily groped her ass.

‘It seems that the Seven have decided to strike at you again,’ she told him. Harry focused for a moment.

‘I don’t hear anything.’

‘They’re not attacking you directly. They’re currently attacking a ship carrying the two Stark females,’ she informed him. Harry was confused.

'Why would they attack them if they are trying to strike at me?'

'You're gaining power in this backwater world, and they're frightened by your growing influence. They want to limit your reach into Westeros. Already you have the Tyrells in your grasp. I'm guessing they'd rather not let you have the Starks as well. Better to kill them, despite the fact that both Catelyn and Sansa worship the Seven.'

'I'd almost forgotten about the Seven Cunts,' Harry responded with more than a little amusement. 'The last time I had a run-in with them, they ran off with their tails between their legs. I haven't heard from them since.'

'They gathered their strength and are back at it I suppose,' she said. Harry used his otherworldly sight to see her lovely face smiling at him. He suddenly missed her quite a bit.

'I miss you too,' said Death with a soft and sweet smile on her face. Harry sighed internally.

'I suppose I best go see what the smelly cunts are up to. Where are they?'

'The ship is in the Narrow Sea, not far off from Claw Isle.'

'Alright. Thanks for informing me,' he said.

'Give 'em a kick in the ass for me!' she chirped and closed their connection. Harry broke the kiss he was sharing with Margaery.

"Remember ... Come see me tonight," he reminded her. Her beautiful face was flushed as she fixed her hair with her fingers.

"I will," she said and quickly gave him one last kiss before walking off with innate grace and elegance. He took a moment to watch her hips sway back and forth before remembering what he was supposed to be doing. With only a thought, he was fully decked out in his black, Valyrian Steel armor and mounted on the back of Daemon. The dragon was already mid-flight when he appeared on his back. He focused on where he wanted to go and thrust his hand out. In front of Daemon, a large portal appeared. He quickly slipped right in, and within the blink of an eye, they exited only to be buffeted by torrential rain and howling winds. Harry reached out with his senses and felt the Gods' power further on. Daemon flapped his powerful wings and headed in the direction that Harry was leading him.

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As the ship began flipping on its side, Sansa and Catelyn scrambled on their hands and knees to their cabin's exit. Sansa reached up and unlatched the door. It immediately flew open with the help of gravity, and the two women were instantly drenched in rain. Sansa's eyes bulged when she saw a tentacle monstrous in size wrapped around the deck of the ship. The main mast was

snapped clean in half, and the sail was nowhere to be seen. She couldn't be sure, but through the lightning and rain, she thought she saw the stern of the second ship in their party lazily sink underneath the waves. A panicked cry made her look up as she hung halfway out of the doorframe. She immediately recognized one of the deckhands of the crew. She remembered him specifically because he was the only one close to her age. Sansa often caught him staring at her longingly. Instead of being annoyed by it, she found it flattering. It meant that she was now a desirable woman and no longer a child. She had been hoping that perhaps Harold might see her as more than just a child. Now it appeared that she might not live to see the sunrise. The young deckhand screamed as a tentacle waved him high in the air before dragging him down into the ocean's dark depths. "SANSA!" she heard her mother scream beside her. She turned to see her mother pointing above them. Through the darkness, she saw another massive tentacle high above and coming down right directly toward them. A bolt of lightning arched through the sky, lighting up the silhouette of a horrifying creature that should only live in someone's nightmares. Then suddenly, a burst of orange broke the night as a long stream of fire slammed into the creature's gargantuan, bulbous head. When the stream of fire hit, it splashed in every direction, setting the beast on fire. The pained cry from the beast sent chills down her spine and nearly popped her eardrums. The entire ship underneath them vibrated from the booming sound.

Her mother hugged her tightly, too afraid to let go, but neither of them could look away at what was happening far above their heads. Another jet of fire erupted, covering a tentacle that was trying to swat something from the sky. The tentacle directly above them suddenly began coming down right at them. Sansa screamed when a bolt of lightning streaked from the sky and hit something. When it hit, the area lit up and she swore she could see a warrior with his sword held high. The sword was glowing bright, and when he swung it, a bolt of lightning shot out of the tip and hit the descending tentacle. A booming thunder cracked the air as a section of the tentacle exploded. The rest dropped lifelessly down and hit the side of the ship. The women screamed as the boat shifted and they were tossed onto the deck of the ship and landed hard. Sansa looked up and wiped away the wet hair that was stuck to her face only to see a dragon land on the deck right in front of her. Her eyes blinked a few times as she tried to overcome the daze from hitting her head on the slippery deck. It wasn't until she was grabbed and pulled to her feet that she really came to.

"Come on!" a man's voice shouted.

"Harold?" she asked, clearly confused. He didn't answer. Instead, he yanked her by the arm and practically dragged her over to the dragon. She stood there swaying momentarily, barely able to stay on her feet from the ship moving this way and that. She saw her mother forced onto the back of the flying beast. Next, she was quickly manhandled and sat in front of her mother. Harold joined them right after, and they immediately took off. Sansa looked over the side with a hammering heart. A tentacle hit the ship again and ripped a section clean off. The ship tilted and began sinking beneath the waves. Instead of flying to safety, Harold swung around and dove straight for the sea beast. Sansa grabbed him and held him tightly around his armored waist. Too scared to look any further, she hid her face against his back. What she did see was a flash

of orange light before the creature screamed in violent pain. As their bodies shifted, she knew they had turned. Shivering and trembling, she took one last quick peek. She saw the octopus-like creature's head completely covered in flames as it dipped below the water's surface. Sansa held on tighter until she was able to look back at her mother. Like her, she looked like a dog caught out in the rain. Her hair hung limp and was stuck to her ghostly-white face. Her eyes were wide and terrified, and she was trembling from a combination of fright and cold. She suddenly wrapped her arms around her waist and squeezed tightly, just as she had done with Harold. All she wanted to do was close her eyes and go to sleep, but that was obviously a bad idea while on the back of a dragon. Instead, she closed her eyes and daydreamed about her and Harold sharing a soft, warm bed after a long, hot bath together.