

Oleanna still found it difficult to digest most of what she has seen in Avalon even after her week-long stay in the castle. The castle was supposedly built in a single day by magic and by the looks of it some Valyrian sorcery was used seeing as the castle resembles Valyrian architecture. Many of the rooms and halls inside the castle were far larger on the inside while looking smaller on the outside. The only explanation she received for this strange phenomenon was, magic.

As if that one word made all sense in the world.

If anything, the sheer scale of magic she witnessed challenged the very notion that Harrion Stark was a normal child. She was sure either the boy was a demon in disguise or the Gods themselves have come down from the heavens in flesh. She didn't see any other way that could explain away all the magical nuances she has seen so far in Avalon. Even the fanciful tales of Garth Gardner or other First Men kings of the Age of Heroes could hold a candle to the versatile magic that was on full display in Avalon. Everywhere she looked she could find a fountain that was spraying water high into the air in intricate designs. The smallfolk were free to just take the water and use it for their daily needs. There was even warm water made available to the smallfolk in public fountains that could be found across the settlements that have sprung up surrounding the castle free of charge. There was no doubt in her mind that the smallfolk of Sea Dragon Point were living a life of luxury that most knights or lords in the south were unable to afford all thanks to magic.

It was not just the innumerable fountains that took her by surprise. There were public bathhouses scattered across the land maintained and operated under the oversight of House Stark of Avalon. Farmlands were given on leases for long periods of time with the option of buying them out from the Starks at a reasonable price. That was an unprecedented move as far as she was aware. Yes, lords tend to give land leases to merchants but allowing them ownership of farmlands was never done in most parts of Westeros. Inns and taverns were granted that privilege but never farmlands. Giving ownership of farmlands to the smallfolk was something unthinkable to someone from the Reach. It was akin to the Lannisters selling off their mines to some commoner. Or the Forresters giving portions of their Ironwood forests to the smallfolk.

It just was not done.

The most that could happen was giving land grants to minor lords or knights. The North might lack knights but they certainly have no shortage of minor lords. Instead, the Stark boy was forming guilds comprised of smallfolk and the odd thing was no one trying to put a stop to it. It was as if all the adults in this castle have collectively lost any sense in them. Only large cities or old settlements housed guilds and even they were just powerless entities working under the whims of the lords of Westeros.

While she marvelled at the stupidity of the Starks and those who advised them she was also grateful to the Stark boy.

"How're you feeling Willas?" she asked eagerly.

"Like I can run all the way to Highgarden." Willas said, his awe clearly visible on his face as he walked, twisted and twirled on his two feet without any impediments. His crippled leg was now hale and hearty.

"Well, I certainly hope you don't make any such attempts young man." said Archmaester Marwyn, who entered the healing ward unannounced startling Oleanna and Willas. "You'll not strain your leg for the next seven months and you'll strictly follow the instructions of Lord Harrion. You'll be applying this oil on the seventh day of each month without fail."

“What is it?” Oleanna looked at the seven glass bottles filled to the brim with a yellow viscous fluid.

“An oil extracted from grapeseeds teeming with magic blessed under the light of a full moon. While Lord Harrion’s magic has no doubt yielded promising results he recommends that you apply the oil as instructed in this chart to make sure there are no unforeseen complications.” said Marwyn handing over the bottles and a lengthy parchment with instructions.

Willas nodded in understanding and began reading through the instructions on the parchment.

Oleanna on the other hand was looking at the bottled oil or more specifically the fancy glass bottle that was housing the magical oil.

‘No doubt it’s the glass made by the glassmakers of Avalon.’ she thought.

The snarling wolf head on the outer periphery of the bottle all but screamed the origins of the glass. This was no Myrish glass and that alone was enough to shake her up about what was in store in the future. The sheer wealth that the Starks could generate if they manage to provide stiff competition to the Myrish glassmakers was enormous. The North was also in a comfortable location to supply their glass to the Seven Kingdoms. The only hindrance she could see came from the Ironborn that could pose issues in sea trade. But that little issue could be dealt with if the Starks raise a fleet to protect their interests. The works in progress along the shoreline she saw while entering the castle let her in on the fact that the Starks were thinking along those same lines.

‘Perhaps, I should have a word with Paxter. No doubt he could offer his help to the Starks and that should be a nice gesture for healing her grandson. Not to mention, it could be useful to have a stake in the glass trade.’ Oleanna thought.

“I shall express my sincerest gratitude to Lord Harrion. When do you think he returns from his... sky voyage?” Willas asked the Archmaester who just shrugged his shoulders.

Oleanna was sure she’d never forget the sight of a giant but strange-looking wooden construct taking to the skies with the ease of a raven. She had of course heard the tales of the infamous airship that supposedly sails the clouds faster than a dragon. However, seeing the gigantic airship with her own eyes was entirely another experience. Her only regret was that she didn’t get to sail inside the airship among the clouds. The sheer power and awe she felt when she saw the airship and the Stark boy’s magic in action made her quite satisfied with the fact that she had the presence of mind to send Garlan to Winterfell. It was now more than clear to her that the coming century was not going to be known for the rise of House Baratheon or House Lannister but of House Stark.

She could see it clearly now. The Lannisters are going to exhaust their resources and Tywin’s brand of greed to devour the crowned stag and sink his claws firmly into the Iron Throne. That mad daughter of his was going to piss off more and more of Robert Baratheon’s allies. Jon Arryn can only shield the Iron Throne so far from Cersei Lannister’s stupidity or Tywin Lannister’s greed. This wouldn’t have been a problem if not for the total apathy and disinterest Robert Baratheon was showing in ruling the Seven Kingdoms. The stag was quite content to spend his royal days fucking and drinking from the first light to the hour of the wolf.

Without Jon Arryn and Tywin Lannister House Baratheon was bound to fail in holding the Iron Throne. The Martells were waiting patiently for the right opportunity to strike and if history has proven anything it was to never underestimate the resilience of the Dornishmen. In addition, there was the Targaryen prince and princess to consider. If those dragon hatchlings were even half as competent as their famed ancestors, then they’d end up fighting it out with the Baratheons and

Lannisters for the Iron Throne. Considering all this, the royal court was not exactly the place for the Tyrells to play their games. King's Landing was far too dangerous for a Tyrell these days. Even if they were to try their luck in planting new roots in the capital, they'd be ill-received by almost everyone. The Reach houses have been shunned from the royal court on the account of being loyalists except for House Florent. In such a situation, the Starks were looking to be a stable political entity to get close to considering their closer ties with King Robert and Jon Arryn.

There were also other reasons she was personally interested in pursuing more closer ties with the Starks. Should the Baratheons, Lannisters and Targaryens muck things up in King's Landing then the Starks were also a viable replacement to ascend the Iron Throne. It was most likely not going to happen but the Starks do have a blood right on the Iron Throne according to some sources from the Citadel. The current Stark bloodline can trace their ancestry to Jacaerys Targaryen, the eldest son of Queen Rhaenyra Targaryen. There were conflicting records in the Citadel about the alleged marriage between Sara Snow and Jacaerys Targaryen and the Starks themselves have never publicised their blood ties to the Realm's Delight. Perhaps, some of those records she found in the Citadel were wrong as many Maesters like Gyldayn and Munkun claims.

"I do not know when Lord Harrion might return but a raven came from Winterfell. It'd seem Lord Tyrell has arrived at the castle with his escort. I suspect Lord Tyrell will make his way to Avalon after a brief stay in Winterfell." said Marwyn.

"Truly? Will Lord Stark accompany my son?" Oleanna asked, a calculating look on her face.

"Frankly speaking, I do not know. But it is more than possible that Lord Stark might visit under the unfortunate events that have befallen the capital."

"What unfortunate events?" Oleanna asked, sitting up straight with her interest piqued.

As the maester regaled the tale and scope of destruction that struck King's Landing she was partly horrified and elated in equal measure. Though unfortunate for the capital city's inhabitants, every piece of silver the Lannisters and Baratheons lose diminished their power, giving House Tyrell a distinct advantage. No doubt, the capital might require grain and other essential supplies all of which the Reach could provide.

"Might I trouble you for a raven Maester Marwyn? I need to make arrangements in Highgarden if what you say is true."

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"Hmm... Quite bold of the Valyrians." Harry muttered, feeling out the Valyrian glass candles with the aid of a plethora of sensory charms.

He was all alone in the chamber that houses the glass candle in Dragonstone. Lady Selyse was all too happy to provide him with the necessary time and facilities to study the glass candles at his leisure. But his presence at Dragonstone has another intention. When word reached him about what transpired in King's Landing he was immediately ticked off. He suspected there was more to the random quakes and tsunami that has devastated the capital city and he wanted to confirm his doubts by paying a visit to the Dragonmont. The sudden resurgence in magic, Spring's warning about the Old Gods rising from slumber and the sudden destruction of the Great Sept of Baelor were not

random events. At least, he liked to think that way. That was why he had rushed to Dragonstone under the cover of studying the glass candles.

After making sure the doors were magically locked, he channelled his magic into the glass candles and waited patiently. One after the other each of the candles lit up and suddenly he felt like being swept off his feet. He felt weightless and was drifting freely in the air.

‘It worked!’ Harry was suitably impressed with the ease at which the glass candles were functioning.

All he had to do was pump a sliver of magic into the glass candles and channel his intent thereby directing the astral projection towards his intended target. The only piece of astral projection Harry has ever known to work efficiently was the modified Patronus charm. There were some other magical artefacts capable of replicating a form of astral projection but such knowledge was either lost in time or collecting dust in a dusty old library of a Pureblood family.

‘The Valyrians seem to have mastered blood magic and soul magic to some great extent. No doubt having millions of slaves to experiment for thousands of years helped.’ Harry thought.

Even when partially separated from his physical body he could feel certain sensations like the wind rushing around him as his astral form approached the Dragonmont. The only problem however was that he could not feel his usual magical power in this astral form. There was some form of energy at his beck and call but it was not something he was familiar with. It almost felt like a thin film of water that was covering his astral body from head to toe. Exactly what it does or how he was supposed to use it remains to be seen. As the Dragonmont came into view, he urged to go through the first tunnel he saw and his astral body directed itself accordingly.

It was as if he was flying a broom.

According to Marwyn, the glass candles worked on the desires of the user’s heart. Marwyn had found him by wishing with all his heart to find the source of resurgent magic. Therefore, Harry chose to replicate the method.

‘I want to see the lair of the Old Gods.’

The astral form picked up speed and began traversing through the tunnels at a speed that made it difficult for Harry to follow. He abruptly came to a stop however as a white wall of energy suddenly sprang up out of nowhere on his path.

“Stop. Who are you?”

The voice was distorted with several echoes making it difficult to discern. However, Harry found it quite fascinating because the white wall of energy was pulsating every time the echoes came out.

‘Another form of astral projection?’ he wondered.

“My name is Harrion Stark of Winterfell.” he said.

“Stark? Winterfell?”

“Yes. I’m a friend of the Children of Forest.”

The white wall of light pulsed brightly before coalescing into a sphere of dense energy.

“Why are you here?”

Harry got a distinct impression that the voice wasn’t particularly happy to have this conversation.

"I seek an audience with the Old Gods." said Harry, testing the waters.

If the voice was coming from the Old Gods, then it made his work that much easier. The white sphere pulsed once before dimming down.

"For what purpose have you come Harrion Stark?"

"Am I to assume that I'm speaking with the Old Gods?"

"You..."

The voice trailed off as it began flickering with a pale blue hue.

"We shall speak again Harrion Stark. For now, return to your home and the next time do not dare to use this unnatural magic to desecrate this place."

With the ominous warning delivered the sphere broke apart into specks of light and Harry found himself falling on his back in the chamber before the glass candles.

"Well, that was a giant waste of time." Harry muttered before picking himself up from the floor.

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Eddard was in awe of the castle his son has magicked out of the hillside facing the Sunset Sea. It was a magnificent castle modelled out of Winterfell but with certain distinct touches from his son. Many of the keeps were modelled after Winterfell's Great Keep. He was sure because he could see many of the keeps taking after a similar design and the adjoining bridge that connects them to the armoury, glass gardens and library. He noted there were a lot of stone bridges and fountains. All of that was protected by a series of large towers and two layers of walls with Ironwood doors guarded by Stark men.

'Vayon Poole has done a splendid job in such a short time.' Eddard thought, observing the positioning and patrolling parties of guards all around the castle. 'There are a lot of guards but there is room for more.'

He made a mental note to bring up the matter with Vayon Poole. It was going to be costly to have more men armed and trained but they could afford it now. Besides, with everything that was going on in the capital, he got the feeling more men trained in arms were only going to be an asset in the future.

"I've been meaning to meet the man who laid low the Sword of the Morning."

Eddard eyed the old woman who was escorted by the eldest Tyrell boy. "Is that why Lord Mace sent Garlan to Winterfell? Then I'm sorry to disappoint you, my lady. Ser Arthur Dayne could best me any day in a straight fight."

"And yet he fell before your sword my lord." said Willas Tyrell.

"I had help." said Eddard, remembering his trusted and loyal friends who lost their lives all for nothing in the end. No matter the sacrifices and blood spilt Lyanna was still lost to him just like his father and elder brother.

“So did Ser Arthur from two of the finest knights of the Seven Kingdoms.” said Oleanna.

“True. But I doubt this is the reason you have sought me out, my lady.”

“No, it’s not Lord Stark. I... we owe a debt to your son that cannot be easily repaid. My grandson had been crippled by an injury in a tourney thanks to the Red Viper. All the maesters of the Citadel and healers of good renown from distant lands have tried their best to heal his leg to no success. Yet your son fixed up Willas within a day and without asking anything in return.”

“My son has been blessed with gifts beyond my understanding thanks to the gods. I’m happy young Willas has recovered from his injury.” said Eddard.

“And that brings me to the matter at hand Lord Stark. I’m sure you’ve wondered why the High Septon woke up one morning and declared your son a heretic.”

Now that got his undivided attention. He had sent raven after raven asking Jon Arryn but the man has been evasive in all the replies. The only meaningful response he got from the Hand of the King was that the situation was being handled and the Old Falcon did keep his word in the end. The High Septon rescinded the declaration against his son and he had left the matter drop for the time being. Besides, Jon Arryn had promised him to fill in the details at a later date. They were even planning to meet at the Eyrie but the disaster that struck the capital city ruined those plans.

Lady Oleanna’s eyes suddenly gained a gleam and Eddard realized belatedly that he was not successful in shielding his interest in the matter.

“The word in the Starry Sept is that our esteemed Queen paid a lengthy visit to the High Septon with many gifts and when she walked out of his office the High Septon was quite adamant to speak against your son.”

“Queen Cersei? Why?” Eddard asked, utterly baffled by the notion that his friend’s wife was behind the High Septon’s edict that gave him many sleepless nights.

He frowned at the older Tyrell doubting the woman’s words.

“Frankly, I’ve no idea, Lord Stark. Be careful my lord. For some reason, the Queen of the Seven Kingdoms seems to hold a grudge against your family.” said Oleanna.

He wanted to ask more but a huge shadow suddenly engulfed the castle and for the first time he saw the new airship his son had made hovering above the castle. He could only stare in awe despite knowing that he ought not to get surprised by Harrion’s abilities. His only consolation was he was not the only person constantly in awe of Harrion. His son was a walking talking bundle of wonder and mystery. He doubted anyone could understand Harrion entirely.