

Jon Arryn found no pleasure in doing this but he had no other choice. The Spider was many things but the Essosi eunuch was not incompetent in his job. The winds of change in Dragonstone cannot be ignored especially when he had sent many ravens to Stannis asking for the man's immediate return to the capital. In return, he was treated with silent treatment by the Master of Ships. He had to intervene before Stannis made a fool of himself and alienate the Narrow Sea lords. It had taken them years of hard work and backroom deals to keep the former Targaryen loyalists in line. He considered it one of his better achievements in the political arena to shear off the loyalists one by one. Stannis has also been instrumental in keeping the Narrow Sea lords loyal to the new Baratheon dynasty and right now the Lord of Dragonstone was about to squander it away.

He had tried to inform Robert of the danger that lies ahead of Stannis' decision to abandon the Faith. But Robert refused to see the danger that it holds for his royal dynasty. No prince of Westeros has spurned the Faith and not suffered any consequences. Maegor Targaryen was a towering example of what happens when going up against the Faith.

Jon feared once the recent changes in Dragonstone become public knowledge their enemies might use the situation to their advantage. Any goodwill that they've built with the lords of the Narrow Sea can be eroded in a fortnight. As he and his guards closed in on the castle of Dragonstone, he could see there was a welcoming party at the open gates waiting to greet them. He immediately recognized Ser Axell Florent, the Castellan of Dragonstone. The Florent knight was a short muscular man with the prominent large foxy ears for which House Florent is known. The onyx eyes of the Florent knight carried no hint of warmth or friendliness. He supposed that has to be expected. House Florent joined the rebellion on Robert's side on the understanding that they'll be elevated over House Tyrell when the Baratheon dynasty took over the Iron Throne. Even with Selyse Florent's marriage to Stannis, the Florents were not particularly happy to remain subservient to House Tyrell.

Nonetheless, Lord Alester Florent had accompanied him when he summoned the old fox of Brightwater to King's Landing. He was hoping Lord Alester could speak some sense into Lady Selyse and abandon this mad quest to abandon the Faith thereby putting Robert's reign in jeopardy.

"Lord Alester, Lord Arryn. On behalf of Lord Stannis and Lady Selyse, I bid you welcome to Dragonstone."

"Well met, Ser. If it's possible I'd like to speak with Lord Stannis promptly." Jon cut straight to the chase not wanting to waste any time on empty platitudes.

"Yes, Axell. I also want to have a word with Selyse. There are matters of great importance that need to be discussed. Matters that affect the whole family." Lord Alester said, his tone eerily soft.

That was something Jon disliked about the Lord of Brightwater. The man could speak with more sound but choose not to. Sometimes, it was hard to hear Lord Florent with his old ears.

"If that be your wish, my lords. Lord Stannis and Lady Selyse have gone to Dragonmont."

"The Dragonmont?" Jon asked curiously, having heard the reports from Varys he was well aware the old volcano was the epicentre of this troublesome affair.

"Yes, Lord Arryn. There has been some trouble brewing lately thanks to...well, you'll understand when you see it." Ser Axell said, speaking nothing of the matter further which gave Jon a very bad feeling.

He learned that the bad feeling he felt was not without its merit. When he and Lord Alester reached the base of Dragonmont there was a huge crowd gathered there mostly comprising of the smallfolk.

But to his growing dread, septons and septas were leading the smallfolk from the forefront shouting out slogans and praising the Seven. His eyes strayed to the gigantic Weirwood trees, all five of them.

Oh, how he wished he was not seeing those trees. But those trees were hardly going to go away and cutting them down would also unleash another problem. Not since the Conquest and unification of the Seven Kingdoms has anyone dared to cut down Weirwood trees. Not that there were many left to cut down, to begin with in the first place. But the principle was what mattered.

“Disperse these miscreants immediately. A good thrashing should teach them a valuable lesson in obeying the laws of the land.”

Jon heard Stannis order the men making his eyes widen. The men under Stannis’ command rushed to obey resulting in a full-scale melee happening right in front of him. He shared a look of worry with Lord Alester before they both rushed toward Stannis’ side. The Arryn and Florent men at arms by their side made way for them pushing away the rebelling smallfolk and faithful.

“Stannis, you must stop this madness. We should not escalate matters and make an enemy out of the Faith.” Jon shouted over the screaming and fighting men steadily making their way forward.

By some stroke of luck, Jon managed to reach Stannis and Lady Selyse. A moment later he was joined by Lord Alester.

“Uncle you are here. Have you come to learn the truth about the Great Old Gods?” Selyse asked, a disturbing smile on her face despite the perilous situation that was developing around them.

“Selyse stop this madness. This’ll bring nothing but misery to you, your daughter and our house.” Lord Alester said, his eyes alight with worry looking around at the frenzied crowd emboldened by the poisonous words of the septons.

“You do not understand uncle because you cannot see or hear them. The Old Ones have spoken to me. They’re nearly here.” Selyse screamed, a wild look in her eyes.

“Nearly here for what?” Lord Alester asked back heatedly.

“To rise and take their true place. The binding of those accursed Valyrian demons has weakened. The Old Gods will rise again from beneath this earth and wipe clean of these false gods and their weakling followers just like they did in Valyria. The Starks have always been right. Winter is Coming!”

Jon shook his head at the sheer madness the Lady of Dragonstone was shouting at the top of her lungs.

“Stannis, are you hearing all this? This is madness. You’ll weaken your brother’s hold on the throne by making an enemy of the faith.” Jon said, hoping to appeal to the sense of duty that remains strong in Stannis.

But to his surprise, Stannis laughed, a distinctly familiar laugh that was accompanied by the skies of Dragonstone rumbling with thunder.

“It is amusing that I become Robert’s brother only when he needs something from me. All the other times he treats me like the plague he should distance himself from. My precious brother did not even send a raven inquiring about my daughter’s health when she was on her deathbed. I suppose he was busy whoring and drinking himself to take notice of the suffering of his niece.” Stannis let out a nasty mirthless chuckle. “Does he even know that he has a niece?”

“My lord, the septons! They are lighting fires. Give the order and we’ll cut a path towards them and stop them before they harm the trees.” one knight said.

Jon turned to look in the direction where the knight was pointing. Sure enough, the septons were lighting fires no doubt to burn the Weirwood trees.

“Leave them be Ser Eustace. Let them try their best and reap the consequences of going against the True Gods. Let the people see the true might of the Old Gods as they emerge from their slumber.” Lady Selyse shouted for all to hear.

Jon was powerless to stop what came next. He watched on in horror as the septons set the Weirwood trees on fire. The fighting ceased as the fire spread across the five Weirwood trees making the Septons and their faithful followers jubilant.

“See for yourself the falseness of these fake tree gods. They can’t even defend themselves from...”

The septon never got to finish his gloating as the fire began to get sucked into the Weirwood trees in a vortex right into the five-pointed star carved on its wood. Jon was not the only one to gape openly at the miracle that happened before his eyes. He blinked a few times and shook his head to make sure he was not suffering from delusion.

Before his watchful eyes and of hundreds of others the star glowed an ominous red as did the five-pointed leaves of the Weirwood trees. The ground began to rumble all of a sudden making Jon and all the gathered men struggle to find their footing. The horses began to neigh and shake off their riders before taking off in four directions. Large flocks of birds began to take to the skies and began to circle above their heads crying repeatedly as if they were giving a warning about what was about to follow. But no amount of warning was enough for what came next.

Jon felt a shiver crawl up his back and froze as he watched the large roots and vines of the five large Weirwood trees seemingly come alive. His mouth fell open in shock and horror as these roots and vines snatched the septons and septas into their grasp making the smallfolk scream and run for their lives. With the smallfolk now keeping a distance from the site his guards and that of Dragonstone could properly keep a secured perimeter around the Weirwood trees. But that was for nought as the septons and septas screamed in pain as the roots and vines began to dig into their flesh. It was a horrendous sight to see as the roots and vines began to crawl through beneath the skin breaking bones and tearing muscles apart.

The periodic cracking and crushing sounds of bones getting torn apart made Jon shiver with fright. The guards and knights surrounding barely managed to hold their ground but they all were slowly moving back not to get ensnared by the tree’s roots or vines. Not a drop of blood spilt from the captured septons or septas. For nearly half an hour the septons and septas screamed their throats out before falling silent, their eyes vacant with the light of life. The vines and roots stopped moving beneath their skin and then he watched with further disbelief as red five-pointed leaves began to grow out of the corpses. Within minutes new Weirwood trees began to take root and grow from the corpses of the septons and septas. Some of the knights and guards emptied their stomachs watching branches and vines growing out of the ears, mouths and eyes of the corpses.

When it was all done, there were not five but nearly thirteen huge Weirwood trees towering over everyone at the base of Dragonmont. The silence that followed the rise of new Weirwood trees was broken by the jubilant laugh of Lady Selyse and her cohorts, most of them women.

“The Old Gods have risen at last after the passing of many millennia. The false gods and their followers will be swept away. Now is the time for you to repent for the sins of your ancestors. The Old Gods are wise and, in their wisdom, they offer you mercy no matter the crimes of your ancestors upon them and their followers. Bow before the Great Old Ones and pray for forgiveness. Confess your weaknesses and sins to the Wise Ones for they are all powerful but merciful. Cast down the false idols in your hearts and embrace the Old Gods. Their kingdom shall be forged once more and the false sinners have no place in them.”

Jon watched the ravings of Selyse Baratheon with a composed look but he was anything but composed on the inside. He was even more shocked to see Lord Alester Florent also join Lady Selyse albeit reluctantly. Watching more and more smallfolk and knights fall to their knees and seemingly pray before the Weirwood trees only reinforced the feeling of failure. Seeing all this only one thing was going through his mind.

‘I’ve failed.’

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Harry was suitably impressed to see that it wasn’t a waste of time in setting up a budding glass-making industry before his departure. It was still a single unit of glass production but still, the workers in the production unit picked up on the working process fairly quickly. They managed to produce thirteen caskets of glass products, mostly wine glass as that was the only mould he had set up. Some of the earlier products were slightly defective as the workers were getting familiar with the process. But there has been a marked improvement in quality as he inspected the recent products made.

“This looks promising quartermaster. Do you think you’ll be able to transfer the skill to more workers if I set up more production units?” Harry asked, eyeing the man in charge out of the corner of his eyes.

“Aye, milord Harrion. I just need more time to teach them properly. The process is no easy task. It’ll take several long hours of training a day to get them as good as this lot.”

Harry was happy to hear that. He like it when people made fanciful claims without thinking things through.

“Might I suggest that you take the best worker in this group and study the exact hand movements and practices the man does in his workstation? Write down every movement this best worker makes and teach it to the rest of the workers to increase their work quality.” Harry suggested.

“Ah, milord. My pa was a bricklayer, you see. I’m afraid I’m no good with the letters or numbers milord.” said the quartermaster, an embarrassing flush on his cheeks.

“Ah, my apologies.” Harry nodded at the man in understanding before turning to Archmaester Marwyn.

“I’ll be quite happy to have one of my acolytes perform the task, my lord. Or perhaps I might do it myself. It’ll be interesting to learn the intricacies behind glassmaking.” said Marwyn.

Harry nodded absently before going around the workspace observing the workers while his Valkyrie shadowed him everywhere.

The small setup he had created for glass making was not working on mundane technology. The forges were powered by runes which absorbed the ambient magic and converted it into the required fire. There was a plethora of charms involved inside the production unit that took care of keeping the temperature, lighting and the general ambience inside the workspace conducive. It kept the workers relaxed and performing at their peak efficiency. He was planning to build up more facilities like bathhouses, public freshwater sources and perhaps even some fountains as part of keeping the industrial vibe going in his lands. Maybe even some worker-friendly schemes like free food for workers and a special school or daycare for their children. There were many things that his muggle enemies had taught him and he'd use those lessons to the greatest effect.

Watching the workers work their hardest in manufacturing new glass products Harry thought he was seeing the first major steps in realizing his dream of magic coming alive to the forefront of everyday life. There was more to be done for sure but he was slowly getting there. People need to familiarize themselves and adapt to living around magic and magical creatures if Harry's dream was to come to fruition.

"Come see me today evening. I'll allocate more funds for you to recruit new workers. Two days from now you'll get a visit from the builders about the particulars of another facility." Harry promised the quartermaster before taking his leave back to the castle.

After managing some lordly business which was not many thanks to Vayon Poole managing most of the administrative tasks and spending some good time in the yard with Nymeria, he was resting a bit. He was however jolted awake when he felt a disturbance in the wards.

Harry frowned as he could feel no further disturbance in the wards. He could not even feel any warnings that should've come as part and parcel if the wards were breached seeing as a slew of monitoring charms were connected to his power ring.

'Maybe it was my imagination.' Harry thought, closing his eyes and going back to sleep only to jolt awake once more when he felt a flicker in the wards.

'Nope. There's definitely something going on.' he thought, hauling himself out of the bed.

Just as he reached his door there was a huge surge of magical power that shook the protective wards of Avalon. He looked out through his open window and he could see the vague outline of the magical dome that was protecting Avalon.

'The wards are becoming visible for all to see.' Harry thought, rushing out of his personal chambers and going straight for the wardstone.

When he finally reached the secret chamber that housed the wardstone he could feel the presence of a powerful magical source that was pushing against his wards.

"The Ley lines. They are trying to emerge all of a sudden." Harry whispered confusedly.

The Ley lines were nowhere near ready to emerge the last he checked. The wardstone he had left at the base of his castle had been slowly nurturing the Ley lines so that they may one day emerge safely and saturate the land with the natural magic that has been siphoned off for centuries. The fact that the Ley lines were now pushing against the enforced magical flow that he had designed was quite surprising.

'How the hell did the Ley line get revitalized all of a sudden?' Harry thought, even as he slowly removed several bindings on the wardstone to let the Ley line emerge.

There was no point in keeping the Ley line suppressed especially when it could potentially tear apart his precious wardstone and make a spectacle as it emerged with raw power. It was better to help it emerge so that it won't annihilate the restrictive wards or even see him as a hostile presence. One by one he took out the locks he had placed on the wardstone and he kept feeling the magic of the Ley line sing as it rise from strength to strength. When the last lock was done away a powerful surge of magic coalesced in the air leaving a distinct minty smell. His wards flickered for a brief moment before strengthening well beyond their present state.

He supposed the magic that was venting out through the Ley line did not judge the wards as hostile. He could even feel his power ring getting excited by the strong magical presence saturating the land and the air.

"Huh. What changed?" Harry wondered aloud scratching his head at this turnaround.

While Harry was struggling to come up with a reason for this sudden resurgence in magic changes were happening to Westeros and not all those changes were appreciated by the majority of the inhabitants of the vast continent. Whether they approved or not these changes were there to stay as the Old Gods of the Forest rose from their slumber all thanks to some brazen activity of a troublesome wizard.