

The Dread Lord of Essos

Chapter 50

"My Lord! Breakfast!" the young servant called out for the fifth time. He was hesitant to enter the young Lord's tent without express permission. Still, he couldn't just leave his food outside. It would freeze solid in half an hour. Taking a deep breath, he turned to his side and slid through the tent flap, shoulder first. As he turned around, his heart jumped into his throat. The tray he carried slipped from his grasp and tumbled to the floor. A loud bang of the metal tray hitting the ground was followed by the sound of pottery shattering as the clay bowl broke into a hundred pieces. The young servant took a step backward until he was leaning against the thick fabric of the tent wall. The scene before him would haunt his dreams for years to come.

Blood was everywhere. Droplets stained the walls and ceiling, and a massive pool was situated at the side of the bed. The bed itself was the stuff of nightmares. Not a speck of white was left on the usually clean, linen sheets. It was completely red and dripping with blood, like a battlefield tourniquet that had been discarded for a new one. The blanket was off to the side, shredded so that its goose-down feathers spilled across the bed and floor. They too were caked in blood. Tangled in his blood-soaked sheets was the mangled body of Garlan Tyrell, the former Lord's second son. His body was twisted and broken. His mouth was frozen agape with his final horror-filled scream. Eyes that once shown brightly were now wide open in shock and dread, faded and fishy, glossy and dead. His belly was split open like a hog being slaughtered. His entrails spilled out of his body and hung over the side of the bed where they formed a grotesque pile. Another organ, perhaps his liver, was resting next to his head, also torn and ripped. Garlan's neck was opened in a jagged tear, almost like he had been attacked by a rabid dog or a wolf. Unable to take being in there for another second, the servant left the tent and vomited his morning stew. His head was swimming, and his stomach was churning. Strangely enough, for a few moments, his mind was almost a total blank. It was a few minutes later when he snapped himself out of it and ran for help.

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Randyll Tarly had seen more than his fair share of horrors in his storied life, but the sight of Garlan's disfigured body made him turn his head in disgust. "Mother have mercy," he said, barely keeping down his food.

"What could have done this?" one of his men behind him asked in shock. Outside the tent, he could hear at least two others retching and heaving.

"I've spoken to the night watchmen, My Lord. None of them heard screaming or anything out of the ordinary," another man spoke up.

Randyll rubbed his coarse hand over his face and sighed. Things were not going well for the Reach. Because of Mace's buffoonery, they were forced to pull the Reach's army all the way

back to Tumbleton until Willas Tyrell formally took over as Lord of the Reach. What happened with the army after that was up to him. This would only complicate things further. Answers would be demanded, and he had none to give.

“MY LORD!” another voice shouted from outside. “SER LORAS ... DEAD!”

This certainly captured Randyll’s attention. He quickly pushed past his men and exited the tent. A wave of coldness struck his face, and the frosty grass crunched under the soles of his leather boots. He walked three tents down where the entrance was surrounded by men. “Out of the way!” he grumbled loudly. The men jumped aside, not wanting to get on his bad side. Randyll Tarly was a very harsh man. Some would even call him hateful. Threatening to murder his own son if he refused to join the Night’s Watch tended to color people’s opinions of him. Not that he cared what others thought. He only cared about his family’s line and legacy. His son, Samwell, was a fat, little nothing that sat around all day and read books. He couldn’t put his family’s future into hands like that. Unfortunately, he wasn’t sure that his family would *have* a future if he didn’t find out what the fuck was going on. He entered the warm tent and found a similar scene as the one before.

Handsome Loras Tyrell, the Knight of Flowers and the third son of Mace Tyrell was naked in bed, his limbs twisted around that of another nude man. The word man, when it came to describing the second victim, was used loosely. In reality, he probably wasn’t a day past fifteen namedays old. Both men were locked in a lover’s embrace. Both men were torn to shreds. Blood covered every surface, and like before, their insides were now outsides. The unknown lad had half of his scalp ripped off. Laying on the ground by the opposite wall was the chunk of flesh with the shock of long, golden hair that had been so violently wrenched from his head. Staining the bright blonde hair looked to be greasy, black oil.

“Have all three of them wrapped in blankets and placed outside,” Randyll stated with authority. He was now the one in charge there at the camp. He would have to look for any scrap of evidence before sending a Raven to Highgarden. He just hoped that he could find someone to place the blame on.

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The previous night, Willas limped up to his room and sat down on his bed. With tired hands, he removed his clothes and his knee brace, and he got ready for bed. Since his father’s death, he had been working fourteen hours a day to get things in order. He couldn’t wait for his mother and sister to return and hopefully help relieve him of a bit of the load. His two younger brothers were camped in the woods near Tumbleton along with the rest of his army. A decision on that would need to be made soon as well, he thought with some trepidation.

Wincing, he slowly walked toward the fireplace, his lame knee aching. It had begun hurting him more than normal since the weather had turned cold. Bending down, he grabbed two large pieces of firewood and tossed them into the flames. The night was cold, and he didn’t want the

fire to die too soon. As the pieces of wood hit the glowing red pile, hundreds of tiny embers lifted up into the air and danced around the room. Willas turned and stared at them for a moment, just as he had done when he was a small child. He used to love throwing rocks into the campfires and sending embers flying everywhere. He sighed tiredly and reached up to scratch his head. Before letting his arm drop, he stopped short. His shadow ... the arm of his shadow hadn't lifted when he raised his. He lowered his arm and lifted it again. Once again, his shadow just stood there. Willas suddenly felt incredibly uneasy. Dropping his arm, he stepped to the side. His shadow didn't move an inch. It just stood there against the wall, looking directly at the burning flames as though it had been painted on. Willas was about to take a step forward when the head of his shadow snapped in his direction. He gasped and stumbled backward. His knee twisted in torturous agony, and he fell to the cold, stone floor in a painful heap. Crying out, he grabbed his knee, all thought of the shadow forgotten. That was until the shadow began walking in his direction.

"What dark sorcery is this?!" he yelled out in fright, trying to scoot back. Every movement felt like a knife to the knee. "Stay back, foul creature!" he yelled again, his voice cracking in a frightened manner. As he watched and trembled, his shadow morphed into that of a small, misshapen child. It became more than just shadow as inky, black oil dripped from its clawed hands. Its mouth opened, revealing rows of rotten, razor-sharp teeth and a long, serpentine tongue that was coated in purplish pustules. The smell of its breath was rancid, and Willas gagged loudly. Wanting to get as far away from it as he could, Willas gathered every ounce of willpower and rolled over. The pain was excruciating. With his back to the creature, he pushed himself to his feet and was just about to run to the door when he felt it jump on his back. He then felt the razors tear the flesh off his back.

Willas screamed as his legs gave out. He tumbled forward, and his face landed right into the dancing flames. His hair caught fire, and he inhaled superheated gases from the fire. His mouth closed and he gasped out a pathetic gurgle as he rolled out of the fire. The skin of his face was already blistering, and his eyes had been blinded. He felt his stomach sliced open, and a clawed hand reached in, grabbing his insides. When the creature began pulling stuff out, Willas's body bucked and began going into shock. He was grateful that he was already nearly dead when the shadow beast began tossing his guts around the room. He didn't feel a thing. He didn't even feel it when the beast bit down on his neck and tore out his throat. His body wouldn't be found until around noon the following day.

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"What shall we do, old friend?" Varys asked his longtime friend, Illyrio Mopatis. They had just received news from what was left of his Westerosi spy network. Mace Tyrell was dead. How it had happened was still unknown to them, but that mattered little. Illyrio tapped his fat chin with an even fatter finger.

"A single mistake could ruin all that we have worked for," he stated and Varys nodded in agreement. Things had been going poorly for their plans for a while now. The peasant revolt, the

death of Viserys, and the blatant abduction of Daenerys all had delayed their goal, and all of it could be placed at the feet of one man, Harold Hill. How a bastard from the Westerlands could achieve half of what he had done was beyond either of them. Had Varys had any inkling of what kind of a man he would grow up to be, he would have manipulated him onto his side. Either that or had his throat slit. Sadly, even the Spider wasn't all-knowing. Their only saving grace was that he seemed content to stay on his side of the Narrow Sea. Oh, how he wished that he could get better spies within Seven Swords. The few that he had told him next to nothing. Most went quiet after a few months of reporting.

"We may never get another chance," Varys told him. "The Seven Kingdoms are in complete disarray."

"It will take time," Illyrio told his friend, wiping the sweat from his forehead with a perfumed, silk handkerchief. "Close to a year," he calculated. Varys already knew this.

"I will attempt to stir up a bit of trouble. I still have a long reach and many of my little birds are still happy to chirp ... for the right price," he added. Illyrio chuckled causing his double and triple chins to jiggle. Gold was not something that they needed to worry about.

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Margaery curiously opened the door to her private quarters in Harold's luxuriously decorated ship. She couldn't believe the speed of the ship when she was told of how quickly they would arrive back home. However, she wasn't sure if there would be a delay or not. Less than an hour after setting sail, she was warned to stay inside of her room. A storm was brewing. Being safe and secure in her room, she didn't hear a thing going on outside. The boat wasn't even rocking that badly. She had experienced sailing through a storm before, and her face remained green long after it had passed. This didn't feel anything like a storm. She opened the door and looked into the hallway. It was abandoned. Slipping out of her room, she quietly crept to the door that led to the ship's deck. She opened it.

Before she knew what had happened, the door caught the wind like a sail and was thrown open. Her grip on the handle held firm, causing her body to be thrown onto the wet and icy deck. Her body skidded toward the mighty bow as the ship dipped low, riding a massive wave down. As the bow hit the trough, a massive spray of water and foam whipped across the deck. Margaery spat the hair from her mouth. Her elegant bun had been blown apart, and now her hair snapped wildly in the fierce winds. She wiped the hair from her eyes, and she saw what kind of a storm they were truly facing. As the ship rode the next wave up, her body began skidding backward. Hoping that she would somehow slide back into the safety of the cabins, she closed her eyes and hoped for a miracle. Instead, her back slammed into the hardened wood that made up the outer walls of the cabins. The air was knocked from her lungs, and she began wheezing and coughing. Shielding her eyes so that she could see, she spotted several of Harold's deckhands trimming the sails and securing the deck. Fluffs of snow shot by so fast that they looked like a

steady stream of whitish blurs. The deck was spotted with patches of discolored ice, and the wooden railings were coated in layers of ice, two fingers thick.

She tried to push herself to her feet to get back inside, but the smooth soles of her boots couldn't grip the slick surface of the deck. Her dress caught the wind and blew her forward, just as the ship rode the crest and began tipping downward again. Her body slid even faster this time, and as the ship banked left slightly, her body went along for the ride. The thick, frozen rail was coming up much faster than she would have liked, and when she slammed into it, she was going to be in a world of hurt. She cried out and closed her eyes. Suddenly, a hand snatched her bicep and yanked her to her feet. Margaery's eyes snapped open, and she saw Harold, her savior. He didn't say a word as he pulled her to the cabin and wrenched the door open. Margaery didn't need to be told what to do. She ran in, shivering harder than she ever had before. She heard the door slam shut as she blew rainwater from her sweet lips.

"I told you to stay inside," Harold told her. He didn't sound mad, but he didn't sound amused either, possibly because he was drenched from head to toe. Margaery looked down at her dress. It clung tightly to her feminine figure, and her hair was dripping wet. A puddle was forming underneath the pair.

"Sorry," she apologized, her teeth chattering. "I didn't think the s-storm was t-that bad."

He didn't say anything. He just led her back into her room and closed the door behind them. The room was warm and comfortable, but her clothes were cold and wet. Harold fixed that when he started undoing her dress. Once undone, he peeled the clinging material down her body and waited for her to step out of it. When she was freed of the cold dress, he sat her down on the bed and removed the boots and socks from her feet. Nude and on the bed, she was hoping that maybe he would like to take advantage of the situation. Instead, he grabbed a big, fluffy towel and wrapped it around her quivering body. He then grabbed another and began drying her hair, not caring that he was likely cold and wet as well.

"The storm is very bad," he finally answered. "It's the first winter storm of the season and a particularly violent one. It's almost like the Gods don't want me coming to Westeros," he added. This time there was amusement in his voice. She looked up at him and blushed slightly. He looked quite handsome with his hair all messy and wet. Margaery stood up, letting the towel fall from her body. She was still shaking slightly, but she wasn't sure if her body was shivering from the cold or trembling from being so close to him. Her soft, smooth skin was goosebumped, and her nipples were erect, crinkled, and hard.

"We need to get your clothes off or you'll catch your death," she quickly told him. Harold didn't argue with her. He let her strip him down. When she finally pulled down his trousers, his magnificently long cock sprang out, hard and ready to go.

Harry held back a smile as Margaery pushed him onto her bed. He hadn't been lying when he said that the Gods might not want him in Westeros. There was little doubt in his mind that the

storm was the work of that seven-faced god or possibly the Drowned God. Westeros was their stronghold, and they didn't want him anywhere near it. Too bad for them, Harry thought to himself as Margaery straddled his waist. "I need to keep you warm," he heard her say. His hands found her hips as she ground herself against him. Those Westerosi gods better watch out, he thought. Harry Potter was on his way.

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The trip was a bit longer than expected due to the bad weather. They first made their way through the Stepstones and around the southern coast of Dorne. Harry stood on the deck of the ship as they passed the desert kingdom. He wasn't sure what to do about them just yet. He really hadn't had much contact with them. The only things that they bought from him in great quantities were firewood and ice. Perhaps things would change now that winter was taking hold of the continent.

They then sailed through the Redwyne Straits, up the west coast of Westeros, past the Whispering Sound, until they reached the Mouth of the Mander. They sailed his ship up the large river until Highgarden could be seen in the far distance. Once they were docked, the moment they left the ship they knew that something was wrong. The Tyrell women were met almost instantly by Highgarden's resident Septon. Waddling up in his white robes and seven-stranded belt, he did not have a pleasant expression on his old, grizzled face.

"My Ladies ..." he said, bowing his head. "I bring you tidings of the most grievous nature. Your son, Lord Willas ... He was found dead in his room, murdered."

Neither mother nor daughter could believe it. Alerie cried out, placing her hand over her chest while Margaery clutched at her mother's dress as though she were still a young child. She demanded to see her son's body and was quickly whisked away. As they left, the old Septon turned and shot Harry an unmistakable look of hatred and disgust. Melisandre was by Harry's side, hiding the smirk that was so desperate to spread across her ruby lips. Over her trademark red dress was a red cloak lined in white fur. "Would you like me to gut the little shit, My Lord?" she asked quietly, hugging his arm to her chest.

"Maybe later," he replied, amused by her antics. Only a moment later, the castle Maester walked up to him and bowed.

"Thank you for escorting them home, Your Grace. You are, of course, welcome here at Highgarden," he said graciously.

"Thank you for the warm welcome," Harry replied.

"I believe the welcome will be much warmer inside, Your Grace. May I show you and your Lady to your rooms?" he asked, shivering in the harsh wind.

“You may,” Harry replied with a small smile on his face. You had to watch out for Maesters. They were a tricky bunch that were only really in it for themselves. Especially the older ones. His grandfather had taught him early on to never fully trust them.

“Then right this way,” he said, extending his arm in a grandiose fashion. The three of them chatted as they made their way to the beautiful, picturesque castle while Harry’s drones unloaded hundreds of tons of supplies that were to be a gift to the people of Highgarden. It wouldn’t hurt to grease the wheels of the locals, he sneakily thought as the Maester sang praises of the castle’s rich history and beauty.