

The Dread Lord of Essos

Chapter 48

“Hurry, My Lord! The savages are almost here!”

Macy Tyrell ignored his servant and quickly scooped up all of the papers strewn across his desk and stuffed them into a trunk. “Have that placed on the wagon!” Mace called out, grabbing a bottle of sweet wine from the table. Two more servants grabbed the heavily laden chest on both sides and groaned as they lifted it. They slowly carried it outside of the tent.

“Please, My Lord ... We must ...”

“Flee ... yes, yes,” Mace said, looking around to make sure nothing important was forgotten. Robb Stark’s army had ambushed them in a surprise attack.

As the temperature steadily dropped, the flowery armies of the Reach found themselves a bit lackadaisical when it came to things like manual labor and keeping watch throughout the cold nights. It wasn’t all their fault though. They were not provided with appropriate clothing or boots. Their hands and feet were in a constant state of being numb. There wasn’t a man in the Tyrell army who didn’t know someone who had had some fingers or toes amputated due to frostbite. The medical tents were overflowing with men suffering from ailments such as influenza, bronchitis, and pneumonia. The worst part was the moral, however. Their clothes were thin and did little to protect them from the biting wind or snow. Their boots were full of holes, and even those with fresh boots had to walk around with wet feet after snow would find its way in and melt. Mucus poured from their noses and froze in their mustaches and beards. Their lips were dried, cracked, and swollen from the cold. Even the whores that used to come by to earn some coin had stopped. They were too afraid to catch one of the dozens of sicknesses and diseases that had been spreading through camp. The worst of which was dysentery. It wasn’t a pleasant sight to see men walking around with frozen diarrhea staining the seats of their trousers. Thankfully, those men usually died not long after, and they were dragged off to be burned. They could no longer bury their men. The ground was too frozen for that. At least the burning bodies provided a bit of heat to the men.

The Northern Army had no such problems, or at least they had them in much lower quantities. They were used to the cold after all. What they were dealing with was nothing to them. So it wasn’t shocking that they would decide to attack the moment Tyrell’s army was at its lowest point. It wasn’t difficult for them to sneak up. The watchmen had likely been asleep, sick, and wrapped up in their tattered cloaks for any amount of warmth that they could muster. They had been the first to be killed ... shot with arrows or silently ran through with frozen blades. It didn’t take long before they were spotted going from tent to tent, stabbing their enemies, or slitting their throats. When the alarm went out, that’s when the real fun started.

Mace threw his winter cloak over his shoulders and walked toward the tent's flap. His servant's face broke out in a relieved expression. He dutifully opened the flap for his Lord and waited for him to walk his fat arse through.

"Seven Hells!" Mace shivered. As he cursed, a massive cloud of frost billowed from his mouth and rose up into the air before dissipating into nothingness. He was layered thickly, and still, he could feel the cold right down to his bones. His body shivered, and he pulled his thick, winter cloak tighter around his rotund form. As he stepped out, Mace stopped short. His cowardly servant cried out in that pathetic, whining voice that annoyed him so. Just short of the wagon, his two other servants were dead. One had a long arrow shaft sticking out of the side of his head. His mouth was open in a twisted but silent scream of pain. The other was flat on his back, his fishy, glazed-over eyes were open and unstarling. He had two arrows lodged firmly in his chest, one up near the neck, and the other was a direct hit in the heart. Next to them was his trunk. It was lying on its side with its lid open. His private letters, battle plans, military orders, and reports from the Reach were being carried off by the violent wind. One piece of expensive, masterfully crafted paper flew toward him and got caught against his leg. Looking down, he could see the familiar handwriting of the woman that had bewitched his heart. Mace could see the lipstick imprint where his beloved Melisandre had kissed the paper. His heart lurched in pain, and just as he bent down to pick it up, it slowly slid to one side of his leg before it too was carried away by the wind. "NO!" he cried out, looking on in horror. Dozens of love letters from his scarlet-haired temptress were gone, never to be seen again. As if to mock him, one of the letters looped high into the air and performed a spectacular feat of aerobatics before nosediving directly into a burning pile of supplies.

"The chest! Get the fucking chest!" Mace bellowed, glaring daggers at his sniveling servant.

His servant squeaked in fright and quickly tilted the chest until it was right-side up. As he did, the lid acted as a sail in the fierce wind and slammed shut right on the young man's fingers. "AAAAAARRRGH!" his servant yelled, holding his hand to his chest protectively. If one could see them, they would see several fingers bent the wrong way. It mattered little, however, because as the young man danced around in pain, an errant arrow drove itself right into his belly with a hollow THUNK! He fell to the ground and grabbed the arrow shaft with his one remaining good hand. He groaned in pain and looked toward his Lord for help, desperation in his cool, blue eyes. Now Mace was scared.

"Almighty Mother, have mercy on me. Brave Warrior, give me the strength and courage to do what is right and just," Mace prayed to his God. He waddled in the direction of the dying young man.

The servant looked at his Lord in a new light. He always thought him a braggart and a buffoon, but now, as arrows whizzed by him, he could see that he wasn't just a blowhard with nothing but false tales to his name. He was the man from the stories that he so often shared during the many feasts that were held, strong, mighty, and brave. The servant looked up at his Lord with

complete adoration and hero worship. His Lord bent down and was about to lift him into his big, strong arms and ... He grabbed the chest. His Lord grabbed the fucking chest!

"UUUGGGMF!" he squealed as Mace accidentally stepped on his arm while carrying the heavy chest over to the wagon and loading it onto the back. Once it was safely loaded with the rest of his prized possessions, Mace ran past his downed servant and jumped onto the front of the wagon.

"HEEYA!" Mace cried out, snapping the reins and causing the horses to start trotting. Mace thought he heard someone calling him a fucking prick, but he couldn't be bothered to make sure. There was no time for such silly things. His tent being situated in the middle of the encampment, for safety reasons, meant that he had a ways to go before he could break through the back lines and make his way to freedom. Just as that thought came to mind, a stone probably twice as heavy as he was slammed into the tent of one of his commanders. An explosion of dirt and debris blew out in every direction, some of it getting into his mouth and eyes. Mace sputtered and wiped at his eyes with the back of his hand while the wagon continued forward. To his right, he saw a group of men clashing swords, and this nearly made him lose control of his bowels. He hadn't realized that Stark's troops had penetrated so deep into his defenses. He saw one of his men fall to their knees before being hacked to death by two Northern attackers. Mace snapped the reins and urged the horses to move faster.

Along with regular arrows, flaming arrows were also falling all around him. Many of the tents that he passed were already on fire. Before him was a dark, smokey beast, twisting in the wind. Mace cracked the reins harder, forcing his horses to run even faster. He drove his wagon right through a horizontal column of black smoke that was being bent on its side by the wind. Mace's eyes stung, and he coughed and choked after breathing in a lungful of the foul-smelling smoke. As his wagon exited the other side of the column, he gasped for breath, breathing in the frosty, cold air. However, this did nothing for his eyes. With his vision blurry, he didn't see the spooked horse run right out in front of him. At the last second, his eyes widened in fear, and he pulled back on the reins hard. This couldn't stop his horses from slamming into the other, knocking it over. Time seemed to slow to a crawl for Mace. He saw his horses fall forward and trip over the downed horse. The downed horse quickly slid underneath his wagon where it collided with the front wheels. The next moment, Mace was flying.

It was such a strange sensation, Mace thought as he weightlessly tumbled through the air, head over heels. Oddly, he felt no fear in that moment. Had his prayer been answered? Had the Warrior given him unbridled courage to face the onslaught of Northern fury? He didn't know. Mortal men weren't meant to know such things. Mace Tyrell closed his eyes, and at that moment, he knew peace. Only a moment later, his back slammed into the ground while his overloaded trunk came down on his legs and broke open, scattering his possessions all over the battlefield. Mace didn't hear his bones snap, but he certainly felt it. His body rolled across the cold, snow-spattered ground and finally came to a stop some twenty feet away from the mangled wreck of his wagon.

Mace sputtered and spat out a mouthful of blood. He coughed and let out a shuddered cry as he forced himself to roll over. As he did, he screamed in agony. Sitting up as far as he could, he was forced to stop by a mind-numbing pain coming from his chest. It was then that he got a look at his legs. One was twisted into a flat, meaty S. The other was bent at a right angle, and he could clearly see the blood-smeared, white bone sticking through the torn leg of his trousers. Mace actually began crying. Fat tears of pain and fear rolled down the cold skin of his cheek. He touched his chest and felt something hard sticking out from it. He was almost too afraid to look, but morbid curiosity got the better of him. A large shard of wood, likely from his smashed wagon, was almost completely buried in his chest. Only an inch or so was sticking out. Mace tried to pull it out, but it was no use. He couldn't get a good grip on the bloody end, and even if he could, he no longer had the strength. He noticed that his breathing was becoming shallow and wetter. He coughed up even more blood. If he didn't get help soon, he wasn't going to make it. Just then, he heard the sound of another wagon coming from the same direction that he had just come. Suddenly filled with hope, Mace held up one of his bloody, torn arms and waved. "Help!" he tried to call out, but he coughed up a mouthful of blood instead. As he did, the wagon went past him, never stopping. In the back of the wagon, his servant was leaning against some stacked bags of beans, the arrow still lodged in his belly. They locked eyes, and Mace felt joyous. He always thought that his servant was a little shit that couldn't do anything right, but now he was sure that the wonderful lad was going to yell for the wagon to stop, and they would pick him up and ... 'He flipped me the bird. That little shit flipped me the fucking bird!' Mace inwardly snarled as the wagon drove away.

Mace Tyrell's vision was starting to go black, and his body was growing numb. He felt his spirit's grip on this world slowly starting to slip away. Right before darkness claimed him, he opened his mouth and weakly spat, "You fucking prick."

The Dread Lord of Essos

Tywin Lannister smirked happily as he read his report. It seemed that Robb Stark had finally grown a pair and attacked Mace's men. Tywin didn't yet know the outcome because the fighting was still ongoing, but no matter how it ended, it was good news for him. In truth, he very much hoped that the Tyrell army would crush the Northern battalion. It wasn't that he liked Mace any more than the Stark boy. It was more about the worsening winter. The Northern army would no doubt be used to the frigid cold and would likely put up fierce resistance.

The perfect scenario would be if the Tyrell army destroyed the Starks. Then he could marry off Cersei to Mace or Tommen to Margaery. An alliance could certainly be made between the families if he could pull that off. The only problem was that Mace was still married to that ditz, Alerie Hightower. Not only that, but Margaery was in Essos cohoriting with his grandson. Tywin pulled a face thinking about his grandson. 'If only I could order the little brat to kill Mace's hag and send Lady Margaery over by ship.' Sadly for him, Harold was beyond taking orders.

He tapped his long, spindly fingers against his desk. He could not believe that he let the boy slip right through his fingers. He should have kept him at the Rock where he could be controlled.

Now he was halfway across the world with a sprawling empire that was growing by the day. Not only was Tywin unable to command the boy to do anything, but if he even tried, he ran the risk of offending him. If that were to happen, he might just cut off the vast abundance of food and supplies that he sent daily. What a world he lived in, Tywin thought. He, the Lion of the Rock, was at the mercy of a bastard. Tywin shook his head and rubbed the area between his eyes. A headache was beginning to form. In the end, all he could do was work with what he had, and what he had was an angry, bitchy daughter that annoyed him more and more every day.

He couldn't pair her with Mace Tyrell. Robb Stark didn't want to marry her. He already had negotiations regarding a marriage between her and the Lord of Winterfell. They went nowhere fast. What good was she? Perhaps he should look to Essos. There were plenty of armies there. There had to be some ruler who valued a marriage alliance between them and the Lannisters. Cersei was still fairly young and mostly beautiful. She could perhaps squeeze out another child before her womb became barren. He decided to study on this a bit more before acting.

The Dread Lord of Essos

Harry strolled down King's Garden and enjoyed the gentle sea breeze. As it had during the summer, his city magically controlled the climate to make living and working there much more pleasant. While the temperature was dropping everywhere else, his city remained the same. As if to prove this, two young Ladies of the Court walked by him, arm in arm. Much of their young, beautiful bodies were on display thanks to the fashion trends of his city. It would have been a shame if they were forced to cover them up with thick cloaks or furs. As they passed, they both stared at him and giggled when he smiled at them. Without a doubt, if he invited them to bed tonight, both would have eagerly shown up.

A group of Qartheen women were shopping and politely chatting with his city's merchants. It was easy to tell that they were from Qarth. Their pale complexions and accents were enough to narrow down their ethnicity. It was their dresses, however, that made it unmistakable. Long, flowing dresses of silk adorned their tall, sensuous bodies and left one of their breasts bare. Behind them, holding their purchases were younger girls who were likely slaves. The girls also wore dresses that bared their breasts, but Harry had a feeling that the Qartheen women were trying to hide the fact that they were slaves. It seemed that Harry had a reputation for attacking slave cities. In truth, it had just turned out that way. All the cities that surrounded him were slave cities. Beside him, Melisandre squeezed his arm against her breasts. Harry smiled and let his hand fall from the small of her back. It slid down over the swell of her perfect ass. Once he had a handful of her backside, he gave it a squeeze. Melisandre smiled as well. She didn't mind being groped in public. She wanted to be known as his property. She was just weird like that, Harry thought.

Harry had been blocking out his connections to his drones that morning. On occasion, he liked to cut everything off and just enjoy a simple walk through his city. After all, what was the point of acquiring something if you're never going to take the time to enjoy it? Unfortunately, he had picked a hell of a day to take a walk. As such, one of his drones scampered over to him and

whispered something in his ear. Harry raised an eyebrow as the drone quickly left. Harry immediately re-established a connection with his drone army.

"Is something troubling you, My Lord?" Melisandre asked in her silky voice.

"Mace Tyrell was killed in a battle with Stark's army. Highgarden is momentarily leaderless," he told her. Melisandre instantly perked up.

"Really?" she asked. Harry nodded. "That's a shame. I put so much time into wrapping the imbecile around my finger. What a waste," she lamented. Harry chuckled.

"I'm sure that soon enough, you'll find another sycophant ready to surrender everything for the chance of claiming your lovely body," Harry joked. Melisandre giggled. She hoped that he was right.

"Perhaps you can use the opportunity, My Lord," she told him.

"To move against Westeros?" Harry asked her. She nodded.

Harry thought about it for a moment while they leisurely strolled down the street, waving away offers of free treats. He had never really planned on taking the Iron Throne for himself. There was never really a need to. He had the whole world to choose from, and he didn't want to bog himself down in any one place. Besides, he loved his city. Harry had created Seven Swords from the ground up, and it was still a work in progress. However, he had come across a bit of a problem. His bed was practically a carousel of ambitious women. He had Margaery, Dany, Myrcella, Sansa, Alerie, and Catelyn all scheming against each other. He wasn't convinced that Dany would continue to be happy all the way in Meereen, and he was certain that Myrcella wouldn't want to stay there for the rest of her life. He had no place for Margaery or Sansa. Maybe he *should* quietly take over the Seven Kingdoms. The girls could rule in his absence, or perhaps he could install one of the girls as Queen while the other girls each ruled their respective Kingdoms. It was something to consider.

While he could just charge in and kill everyone, he didn't think that way of going about it would endear him to many people. Harry didn't need to go about it that way. He could do things quietly. There was a list of people that would need to be taken care of. The male Starks for instance. He would have to find Sansa's wayward sister and bring her into the fold. Margaery's brothers were next in line to rule the Reach. They would need to be handled. Harry talked about this with his lovely, Red Priestess. She looked as though Christmas had come early.

"I can help you, My Lord! There are magics that I can invoke ... things that I can summon. Please allow me to help you, My Lord!" she begged, her eyes pleading. Harry tickled her under her chin and kissed her deeply.

“Of course, you may serve your King,” he told her, gently caressing the soft skin of her neck. Melisandre shuddered and began to tingle between her legs. Unbeknownst to him, a bead of arousal dripped down the inside of her luscious, thick thigh. Inwardly, Melisandre’s heart exploded with joy. She so rarely got to help her Lord. She was already making plans to spite any person who dared to hinder his conquest of Westeros.