

The Northern Tyrant [Game of Thrones] Chapter 57 - The Lord's Incompetence, The Dornish Intent & Journey to the South.

A/N: Sergeant is an actual rank in ASOIAF.

[New Main Quest - The Northern Tyrant

Description - As the body requires food, an empire requires resources. Self-reliance is the key to a tyrant's mighty rule.

Goal - Lay claim to the entire North beyond the wall.

Reward - Global Sea Route Map, New Title, Cold Immunity]

Wylis silently stared at those words floating before him. It was a Main Quest, and from the looks of it, it was going to take some time to finish it. Lying claim to the North beyond the wall was more than just declaring it. The wildlings and the Houses of the North would have to agree. Not to mention, the White Walkers.

But it'll be worth it.

Seeing the sheer amount of natural resources there made it all worth it. And the quest reward itself was sweet. New Title and Cold Immunity would help. And the Global Sea Route Map would make his naval fleet first-rate. However, he didn't know how this map would work with the 'Art of Naval War' unfinished Main Quest related to the Ironborn sinking his ships. It would reward him with the Navigation God Skill.

I suppose the map will help my fleet, while the latter will help me personally navigate around.

Once again, he focused on the reward of Mine! Mine! Only Mine! Quest. Goldsmithing was a skill he now knew, and he reckoned he'd make some fine jewelry for all the ladies in his castle. As for the Resource Map, he focused only on the North, specifically his immediate neighborhood.

With vengeful greed, he eyed the map of Bolton's land. The Weeping Water River had a bit of gold in it. The lands also held limestone he'd need for agriculture, metallurgy, and masonry. There was also brimstone, also called sulfur, which could help him and Qyburn make chemicals, fertilizers, and other processing. Then there was bog iron, pine wood tar, and pitch for seals, coating ship hulls.

In simple words, taking over the lands of House Bolton wouldn't make him incredibly rich. There was no big gold and silver mine. But the practical things that existed there were the very things his growing city needed to grow even faster.

Knock! Knock!

Wylis quickly stopped overthinking and straightened his back on the seat.

"Enter!"

The door creaked open, and draped in loose, light-grey robes, Qyburn entered, with nervousness written all over his face.

"M-My lord. I have erred most grievously. I did not know the Maester was committing such a foll—"

"Take a seat, Qyburn," Wylis said sharply, his voice stripped of its usual calm. It seemed his kindness had earned too little respect. "Answer me this. Am I not frightening enough?"

Qyburn's eyes nervously looked down from the Northern lord's icy gaze. "You are the greatest knight in this realm, my lord."

"And yet, it seems none fear me. Is it because I've shown too much mercy? Is it because I treat every man as a man? Or is it because I was once a stableboy?"

"No! No, my lord! I will oversee things better."

Wylis shook his head. "This wasn't your fault, Qyburn. You're a man of learning. Having you oversee them is a waste. I should have named a harder man. One who does not fear drawing steel, who can sniff out lies and thievery. A man whose only charge is to watch every coin spent here and every book moved. Perhaps a woman."

Qyburn jolted in his seat. "Indeed, my lord. Lady Wenda would serve well as the overseer. Her... colorful past should help keep these maesters in line. They must not forget this place is no Citadel. Here, the laws are the same for al—"

"That Maester who forced Bolga." Wylis glanced at the sleeping boy. "He shall hang in the town square for all to see. It is not only his crime that is grave, but the example it sets. The charge is forcing a young boy into slavery. I see it no differently. Had I not come, this child would have died before my return, by your incompetence."

Qyburn lowered his gaze once more. "I... Maester Barth is Lord Bettley's third son, from the Westerlands. That must be the reason behind his impudence."

"My ruling will not change, lord or not. Let this serve as a lesson to every maester and every man growing fat on this city's wealth. The law is above all. Neither noble blood nor gold will spare you. Let them remember whose lands they feast upon and whose patience they test."

Wylis stood up from his seat, a look of annoyance still on his face.

"Your duty now is only to see to what they learn, and how they learn it. We shall not take every maester who comes to our gates. There will be a measure of competence, a test to prove they are worthy of this knowledge. This is an opportunity, not a charity."

Finally, he strode around his table and came to Bolga, shaking the settee to wake him up. "This child has a sharp mind. This school should be a refuge for them. Ramsgate should be where their heart is. While I head south, you'd best see to it Bolga and others like him feel at home here."

"You have my word, my lord. I will be most careful from now on."

Nodding, Wylis strode to the door. "Come then. Let us see who else dares think me a fool."

By then, Bolga was awake and getting up.

"Walk with me, Bolga."

"Aye, my lord!"

Wylis left the solar and went to the large hall in the building. It was meant for gatherings where the best minds could share their ideas or findings. It was like an indoor auditorium. As he neared the place, he saw more and more Ramsgate guards arriving, donning light armor, helmets, and their weapons.

Some were shoving maesters into the hall.

Dacey was standing outside the hall's gate, ordering the men sternly.

"My lord."

As Wylis arrived, he gave them a nod and walked inside the hall. Everyone was there, from the maesters to the students he had picked, and the cleaning and kitchen staff as well. They all had faces of confusion.

He stopped once he was on the stage and looked at the gathered crowd. The first thing he noticed was the difference in the clothing of maesters and other students. The maesters wore loose robes and chains.

"You're all gathered here because one maester among you thought to try my patience. Thought he could make a fool of me. He enslaved a young boy, a student I chose myself. Left the lad hungry for days and scrubbing chamber pots when there were privies enough. Set him to labor and write like a servant. Tell me, do you take this for a school, or a common inn?"

Loud murmurs grew amongst the small crowd. Besides the cooks, the rest were intelligent men; they understood what Wylis was implying, and why his accusation meant for them.

"Dacey?" Wylis called for his second squire.

Quickly, the tall, armed woman strode onto the stage and whispered into his ear. Wylis' face hardened in response, and his eyes glared down at the crowd.

"Maester Chass, Maester Kevan, and Maester Aden. Step forward," Wylis called. "You three are no better than Maester Barth. You forced a learner here into your service as well. Your only mercy is that you treated them with some decency. You did not starve them, and you truly tried to teach them. Even so, you had them write for you and carry your books and tools. That is unacceptable!"

"Forgive us, my lord! We—"

"Silence! What you've done breaks the laws I laid down for Ramsgate Hall of Higher Education. There are no maesters or nobles within these walls. You are all seekers of knowledge. There are no servants here, nor ever shall there be. Even the teachers may not claim one, save an acknowledged assistant for study.

"From this moment, every maester will remove his chain and robes and dress as this place requires. Maester Barth will hang for this outrage, and you three will suffer ten lashes. If you cannot stomach it, you may leave."

Wylis waited for someone to say something.

Maesters were proud creatures, especially the learned ones. However, these were mostly wandering maesters with no connections. And as expected, none of them spoke.

"And now the kitchen hands. What should have fed every soul beneath this roof without favor became a cesspit instead. Bolga was denied bread, and for that, Maester Barth bears less blame than you. I pay your wages, yet you betrayed me, your lord. The head cook, the server who turned him away, and the kitchen maid he first begged. You shall hang as well. For corruption, stealing from your lord, helping enslave a child, and aiding the starving of one."

"My lord! Please!"

The three kitchen hands fell to their knees first and then ran towards Wylis, begging. But the guards quickly stopped and seized them.

Wylis turned to leave, giving them his last remark in a cold voice.

"Do not mistake my kindness for an excuse to test my patience. I have slain hundreds, and adding you to them means little. Remember that, and never break the laws I've set. Bolga, come. The execution is to be carried out at once."

With that, Wylis left the Ramsgate Hall of Higher Education. He mounted Caliburn, bringing Bolga with him, while Chett followed behind. The preparations had already been made, and the prisoners were being brought at the same time.

To Wylis personally, execution seemed a little too harsh as a punishment for what they had done. However, he had no delusions about what kind of world this was. This was expected; this

was what the smallfolk and above followed. Being too kind was not a long-term way to rule a fief and a growing city.

I need to find the perfect balance between fear and kindness.

It didn't take long before he rode out of the administrative district and entered the common part of the town. He went to the middle of the new town square, around which many large buildings were under construction.

For now, a wooden stage had been set there with trapdoors and a thick beam above to tie the rope on. Wylis had also introduced the practice of putting a sack on the heads of the convicted. Hanging wasn't an instant punishment; it often took minutes to die. In that time, they would frantically move, gasp for air, and make all sorts of faces. It was not a pretty sight for anyone.

Quickly, the Maester was brought to the stage, and a gag was placed in his mouth to stop him from screaming. Finally, the rope was placed around the neck, and then the sack. The tree, two men, and a woman from the kitchen were next.

"Today, on the..."

The executioner soon arrived, wearing dark hooded robes. There was no sword, however, as those sorts of executions were messy, bloody, and hard to clean. They were reserved for the gravest of offenses. Now, the executioner's only job was to read the crimes.

By then, a significant crowd had gathered, mostly the smallfolk working on construction nearby. They listened to everything. Slavery was a taboo in Westeros, so the Maester being accused of it shocked many. Then there were other crimes of theft from the Lord, same for the kitchen hands.

"Keep an eye on them, Bolga." Wylis gave the thirteen-year-old a pat on the shoulder. He did not wish for the boy to return to King's Landing. "I want Ramsgate to be known for wise minds and honest folk. I will not ignore injustice, whether against a lord, a merchant, or you. Had you gone to the guards and told them—"

"I-I did, m'lord," Bolga muttered through sniffles. "T-told the guard at school. But... he wouldn't hear me."

"Ah, so I'm the incompetent one after all." Wylis frowned, glaring at Chett, the man meant to teach the garrison men their laws and proper conduct. "Should I go hang myself, Chett?"

Chett's eyes were bloodshot red. "I will execute this outlaw and present you his head, my lord."

"Don't kill him. At this rate, I'll be forced to execute half the garrison. Take him to the castle's outer courtyard. I'll deal with him myself. Bring every sergeant as well. You have an hour."

At his command, Chett rushed away.

Wylis stayed behind until the four were hanged, and then checked to ensure they were truly dead. The Maester had no family there, but the three kitchen hands had. The head cook had a wife and an of-age son, the server was an unmarried man looking for a wife, and the kitchen maid was a woman in her forties with two sons already married off. In the end, it was their greed, as they sold the rations they had saved outside. Bolga wasn't the only one not getting enough food there.

Afterwards, Wylis took Bolga back to the school and into his solar there.

For the next hour, he personally taught Bolga physics, the thing the boy loved the most. He tried his best to calm him and help him regain confidence. He even called in Dacey and told Bolga to directly reach out to her if he faced injustice or saw it around him.

Eventually, Bolga made the decision to stay.

"Please forgive me, my lord, for all this trouble. I... I didn't know what to do. He said he was a noble, so..."

Wylis patted his shoulder. "I understand, Bolga. Nobles can be frightening, but remember this. As maesters, they are no more than men. Hold your head high and earn your victories in this school. Your duty is to study well and serve Ramsgate. Mine is to see you safe, fed, and clothed."

"Thank you, my lord."

"Good. Now get to your chambers and rest. Eat all you need from the kitchens. On the morrow, you begin your studies in earnest."

Bolga thanked again and quickly left the solar.

Wylis got up, nearing the time to return to the castle. "Dacey, see that my promise to him is kept. Wenda shall oversee the school's affairs. She will keep the coin and the rest in order. But that alone won't suffice. We lack enough eyes and ears in the city to keep corruption at bay. Have my father and grandfather meet me at the castle before supper."

"I will, my lord," Dacey said, falling into step behind him. "But... are you truly set on taking Chett over me? I would serve you well as your squire... and in other ways."

Wylis glanced back with a roll of his eyes. "Not now, Dacey. Chett is my first squire, and he has earned this. You've seen more of this realm than he has. I'll have him gain some experience this time. You, I'll teach when I return."

"But..." Dacey quickened her stride to fall in beside him. "You'll be gone near a year. Who's to train me then?"

"Brandon is an almost honest man, and a damn fine swordsman."

"And what if I wish to learn from a different sort of sword?"

Wylis just stared at her pretty face as she hid her smirk well.

"Oh, I'm only trying to lift your spirits, my lord," Dacey replied.

Pa!

But Wylis suddenly slapped her behind, on the leather armor she wore. "You have the tools."

"The real thing cannot be replaced, my lord."

"Then I suppose you have two days to take all you can of it and carve it into your thoughts," Wylis smirked back.

Soon, they arrived outside the school. Dacey wasn't to come with him as she had other duties in the city.

"I'll remember that, my lord. I hope you won't come to regret such an open invitation."

Wylis climbed onto Caliburn's back and looked at the woman. "Says the one who struggles to walk each time afterwards."

Dacey just giggled and rode away. Wylis, as well, took a different turn and entered the castle. As Caliburn rode into the outer courtyard, a line of men had gathered there, standing without their armor, stern and nervous. Only one man was on his knees, beside whom Chett stood, looking furious.

The Ramsgate garrison had grown and was nearing two hundred. Because of Tyrant's Squire, this was also a standing army. And aiming for one guard for every fifty people, his city of ten thousand needed two hundred guards. However, only slightly over a hundred were currently able to work, as the rest were going through standardised training and study of the law. They were all picked and vetted by Wylis, having used his Eye of the Judge ability.

Wylis steeled his expression and got off Caliburn. The big, four-legged boy needed no stableboy, and on his own trotted into the reserved stable.

"Truly, I'm proud of you all," Wylis said as he strode before the ten sergeants, each charged with ten men. "I give you a little responsibility, a little taste of power, and the first thing you do is run headlong toward your own ruin."

Finally, Wylis halted before the kneeling man. The guard dared not look up at him, nor plead or cry, too scared to defy Chett standing right behind him.

"To guard this city and keep its order, those are your duties. Yet you turned a deaf ear to a young child's desperate pleas and left them to be forced into servitude."

"M'lord!" The sergeant stepped forward. "He was one o' mine. The blame's mine. I'll answer for this mistake and take punish—"

"What good is that? Had I not, that child would have starved to death. Can you raise the dead, sergeant?" Wylis peered at the sergeant. "You men bear my name upon your backs. Every mistake you make is a stain upon me. Every sin you commit is done in my name."

"Mercy, m'lord," the sergeant dropped to both knees. "We'll see the men trained proper. This won't happen again."

Wylis sighed, seriously pondering what punishment to give them. He didn't want to escalate this anymore. But he feared his upcoming year-long absence.

"I ride south for the Reach soon. The journey will take months. In my absence, if any of you dare repeat this, I shall give Brandon Stark leave to execute you where you stand. This is your last chance to prove your worth to me. Fail, and you will remember why I have never lost a battle."

"And you!" Wylis eyed the guard who had ignored Bolga.

"For the next year, the garrison will be your whole world. You'll clean it, polish armor, sharpen blades, and ready arrows. Dacey Mormont and Benjen Stark will see to you men themselves while I am away. Is that understood?"

"Aye, my lord!"

The ten sergeants replied loudly in unison. They were trained like that, to be soldiers of an army. As for the kneeling guard, he didn't even move. Investigation into him wasn't done yet. It was yet to be known what he received in return for ignoring Bolga. If there was nothing, the punishment would end at a year-long garrison labour. If corruption was found, another body would face the gallows.

"Chett, follow me."

Wylis entered the main castle afterwards, taking deep breaths and washing away his anger and annoyance. He had initially planned to spend this time planning his journey, but now he had something much more important to deal with first.

As he arrived at the ground-floor solar, to his surprise, he once again found Elia seated on the large, luxurious settee by the unlit fireplace, reading a book with concentration. Little Aegon was sleeping right beside her.

That day, she was dressed differently, like a true Dornish princess. Her attire was an airy gown of sandy-golden color, tight around her slender midriff, sleeveless. The neckline was wide and revealing, her pale-dusky skin as smooth as marble. Her dark brown hair was freely falling over her shoulders, with faint curls in it. But what stood out was the jewelry she wore. A gold

necklace with a red ruby, dangling golden earrings, and a chain-like, ornate golden ferrennière on her head.

As soon as he and Chett entered, she began to stir, ready to leave.

"No need, Myra. Be seated." Wylis waved, using her false name. He just walked to his table and let Chett stand before him.

Quickly, he began writing names on a large piece of paper. At the same time, he used Fief Map and the Talent Hunter ability. He marked the best hidden talents for professions such as sailors, ship captains, blacksmiths, investigators, swordplay, studies, and other high-quality professions. In his year-long absence, he wanted all these men and women to get trained for what suited them the most.

Slowly, a list started to form.

Somewhere in the middle, Chett sat down and just watched Wylis write like a madman. Page after page of names, professions, with Major and Minor beside them. He didn't bother explaining, and he knew Chett wouldn't ask either. Though he knew Elia was watching.

Finally, three hours later, he was done. He did check all ten thousand men, women, and children. But he didn't write everyone's name. Not everyone had a hidden talent. But still, the current haul was something.

[Blacksmiths - 197

Sailors - 998

Ship Captain - 46

Hunting - 56

Investigator - 13

Bookkeeping - 3

Commerce - 76

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Goldsmithing - 6

Doctor (Medicine) - 23

Doctor (Surgery) - 9

Animal Husbandry - 198

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Mathematics - 7]

He had ignored most of the children unless they had something like Bolga. For now, he wanted the children to just study regular things, as talents were bound to come out after a certain time.

Other than that, he was satisfied. The blacksmiths alone had excited him, as amongst those one hundred and ninety-seven, two were extreme talents. Even amongst bookkeeping, one was extreme.

This was it, the real treasure of Ramsgate. Not the people, but his ability to draw out the true potential of his people. If not for him, most of them would have wasted their life doing simple labor somewhere.

"Take this, Chett. Have the press make five copies of this. Give one to Qyburn, one to Wenda, one to my wife, and one to Brandon. Keep the last with the records. Find them in the order I've written. I'll tell Wenda, Brandon, and my wife how they're to be trained."

"Understood, my lord." Chett quickly took the sheets of paper and left after a quick salute.

Finally, finding some peace, he relaxed back and glanced at Elia on the settee. From the cover, it seemed she was reading yet another book about economics he'd written. This one was about monopolies.

Soon, as invited, Wenda, Brandon, and Lyanna arrived there. For a moment, he saw mischief in Lyanna's eyes as his noble wife noticed Elia, and then winked at him.

This woman.

Wylis shook his head to tell her that nothing was going on, but all he received back was a smirk. He just sighed and waited for them to sit down first.

"I heard some fools got hanged. What, no invitation for me?" Brandon said, half-laughing.
"Must've been one hell of a festival!"

"They committed a crime. You three are here to settle that matter, and to hear how Ramsgate is to be run while I'm away. Wenda, we'll begin with you. You will serve as overseer of..."

For the next hour, Wylis explained to them what had happened and why he needed Wenda. It was not a complex job; she didn't need to maintain books or count numbers. All she needed to do was keep an eye on what was happening, oversee where money was being spent, and ensure punishment was justly handed out to those breaking the rules. The education-related matters were Qyburn's to handle.

Then he informed Lyanna and Brandon about the list he had made and how they were to be trained. It couldn't be done all at the same time, so they made a priority list. Sailors were immediately needed, as were blacksmiths. All those with scholarly talents were also to be immediately admitted.

By the time their gathering ended, the sun was setting. However, even after the three left, Wylis had more work. By then, even Elia was gone as Aegon had woken up and was hungry. And soon enough, his father and grandfather entered his solar.

"You look tired, my son."

Wylis smiled at his father, Garteh, and then eyed Jarak, his grandfather. "Did you think being a lord is easy?"

Old Jarak let out a chuckle. "Don't think it means keepin' so many lovers. Still, what've I to grumble about? I've got so many great-grandchildren to play with now."

Wylis didn't mind him talking like that. Only Old-Nan, his father, and grandfather knew about his harem situation. After their initial shock, they were filled with a strange sense of pride. Well, he did have a child with the realm's queen. He didn't know about his grand-uncles and aunts, but these two, he trusted them.

"I love them dearly," Wylis replied, then turned to the matter at hand. "I need both your help. The city grows, and so does corruption. I'd like to build a quiet web of informants. Nothing elaborate, only smallfolk who hear and see, then pass word along. I want you both between them and me. Keep watch for corruption, crime, and incompetence."

"Us? Spies?" Garteh exclaimed. "My son, we are the lowest of the lowest amongst smallfolks. Hunters, horse tenders. What do we know of spying? You must have better men."

"I do, and I don't trust them. But you are my blood. And besides, what you consider weakness is your strength. The smallfolk don't trust a man with a smooth tongue and heavy pockets. They ramble their heart out to men like you, strong, kind, and simple."

His father and grandfather looked at each other for a long moment, as if silently talking to each other. But eventually, they nodded.

"If it'll help you, my son, I'll do it," his father said.

"Gods, this be nothing. If you need anything more, send for us whenever."

"Thank you. I'll be riding south for Lord Stannis Baratheon's wedding. I trust this web of informants will be spun by then," Wylis said as he finally rose. "Come, it's time for supper. Both of you, join us."

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That evening, it was a grand supper. The large table in the castle's great hall was prepared. It was now necessary to seat his entire family. However, only Old-Nan, his father, and grandfather were present from his side.

Beside him on his left sat Lyanna, and to his right was Brandon. On his lap was none other than Daenerys, now two years old, yet cute and tiny with big lilac eyes. Her head bobbed left and right as she munched on crispy chicken fries.

Wylis loved them all so much. Even Daenerys, unrelated by blood, he considered his own. Rhaella was his, after all. In fact, the ten-year-old Viserys, seated beside Rhaella, was the same to him. The boy had changed, no longer filled with uncontrolled anger and rage, but rather a calm demeanor. In comparison, his son Magnus was a wild thing. The boy was massive for his age, and was currently eating as if he'd never seen food in his life. Using both hands to shove messy food into his puffed-out mouth.

Isn't he meant to be highly intelligent?

Not delving too much, he looked at Rhaenys. He didn't play favorites with his children, but if he had to, Rhaenys would be his most cherished daughter. She was just a bundle of joy to him, always curious, always asking questions, and always so sweet. The girl was now six.

"Rhaenys, I'll pass through King's Landing on my return. I'll have a look for your cat, Balerion, in the Red Keep and bring him back with me."

"Really?!" Rhaenys chirped loudly, her spine straight. "I can't wait! I hope he's healthy, but if he's all fat, I'll make him run."

Laughter echoed across the table.

"For the rest of you, I will bring gifts. For the ladies, too, and the old foggies," Wylis added.

"Old? Bah, I'm still young as a spring hen, lad." Old Nan huffed from her seat. "My sons, now they're the fat ones. Put them to work, Rhaenys."

"Grandpas?" Rhaenys looked at the two old men. "Will you teach me to ride my pony more?"

"With pleasure, little princess," Jarak happily replied, Garteh nodding right beside him.

Wylis just ate, silently looking at the smiling faces. He knew his family was big, but that only meant more to love, and more who loved him back. Even the little girl on his lap.

"You, Daenerys? You want something from the South?"

Her face half covered with grease, she looked up, eyes big and lips smiling. "Ummm... chicken!"

"..."

"Oh, girl." Rhaella let out an embarrassed sigh from her seat. "She loves eating it, I believe."

Better than asking for a dragon, I'd say.

Wylis took a serviette and wiped Daenerys' face. "Very well, more chicken for you."

"Yes-shhh... nom..."

She got back to eating right away.

Right then, Wylis leaned sideways a little and whispered into Lyanna's ear. "I don't feel like going now. I'll miss this too much."

"But you must go." Lyanna turned to him with a faint smile and murmured in his ear. "Do not return until you've bred that damned queen."

"..."

Jesus, Lyanna. You hate Robert that much?

Wylis silently sat back straight in his chair, still unsure if breeding Cersei would be worth it. Between betraying his good friend and allowing a deranged fuck like Joffrey to take the throne, both seemed like wicked things.

He decided to stop thinking about it and focused on the women.

"Ashara, you'll depart on the morrow. Three ships and twenty guards will go with you. I'll make for the South as swiftly as I can and meet you at Starfall after the wedding. We'll sail back from there, with perhaps a brief stop at Sunspear."

Wylis didn't fail to notice the sudden movement from Elia right then, how she almost looked at him but stopped as he was already glancing at her.

"I want to deal with all the matters that need to be dealt with. Going south is a pain in the back; it's too far and takes too long."

"Aye, my brother," Brandon grumbled, raising a cup to toast. "That fucking ride back from King's Landing was a nightmare. I'd never set foot in that shithole again if the Gods themselves begged me. Good luck to you and your sorry riding arse."

Wylis raised his cup as well.

Supper that evening lasted longer than usual. With so many of them gathered, plenty of words were being exchanged. Wylis spoke now and then, but mostly listened. Common sense dictates that polygamy eventually turns sour. But seeing how Rhaella and Ros merrily talked, how Lyanna played with Daenerys, and how Anna was being scolded by Old Nan for not eating enough.

Probably the luckiest man in the realm, aren't I?

After supper, Wylis returned to his ground-floor solar and resumed writing plans for situations he expected most likely to arise. Since he wouldn't be there, he feared the Boltons growing cocky. There was also the possibility of a sudden influx of smallfolk, leading to a food shortage.

Anna will give birth in my absence. I should speak with Qyburn later.

Afterwards, he wrote a step-by-step guide to how the phases of city development should follow. While he had already handed out a detailed plan, he simplified things so the likes of Lyanna and Brandon could understand it.

Click!

Just then, the door of his solar opened. Yet again, in the same attire as before, Elia walked inside. She greeted him with a silent nod, lit up the fireplace, and sat down before it with the same book she was reading before.

And then there's her...

For some time, Wylis just stared. Elia of now was healthier than the woman he'd saved from King's Landing. His personalised diet plan for each woman in his castle included Elia as well. Although she remained a slender woman, she was no longer that frail.

In that silence, between the churning of firewood, he heard the ticking of the grandfather clock near his table. The time in it was nearing midnight, and common sense said she should be in bed with Aegon and Rhaenys. Yet, here she was, dressed like a Dornish princess.

Very well. Let's see who breaks first.

With a sigh, he focused back on the parchments and continued writing. This time, he planned to visit Stoney Sept first and plant the seed for a dozen or more babies there. He wanted to gather as much lifespan as possible before the Greyjoy rebellion.

However, there was another issue.

If I keep at it, this side of the realm will be filled with my bastards. It's good that it's only lads, but down the line, blood will mix and...

Rubbing his stubble beard, he frowned. He didn't want his blood to eventually turn incestuous. No matter how far down the line, it could always lead to genetic issues. And last, he remembered, he was no Targaryen with magic in his blood. Tyrant's Squire was just an oddity exclusive to him.

Troubled, he shifted his chair back, screeching it on the floor. He ignored Elia's curious gaze and looked back at the wall, covered with the map of the known world he'd painted himself. It was marked with all the known cities, towns, and villages.

Stoney Sept's women are dementedly attracted to me and are loyal. That's not the case with the realm. Might be easy to sire bastards in King's Landing, even Old Town, but...

Slowly, his eyes moved across the sea. Cities like Braavos were far bigger, richer, and more populated than King's Landing or any Westerosi city. It was true for most Free Cities, even Slaver's Bay, but siring children with slaves was absolutely against his morals.

I should try the Free Cities after the rebellion. Maybe I'll find Shiera as well.

Staring at the map, he fell into a deep trance. He stared at the giant map of Essos, how small Westeros was against it. He eyed the lands beyond the River Rhoyne. The Dothraki Sea, Slaver's Bay, Valyria, the Red Waste, the tip of Sothoryos, Yi Ti, Leng, Shadow Lands, Ulthos, and who knows what else.

There's so much. So fucking much. Perhaps I can explore Valyria after finding Shiera and earning magic attack immunity...

Staring at that grand map, Wylis felt like a fish in a pond. Westeros was that pond. Endless riches lay right across the Narrow Sea, yet the nobles were all too busy infighting for patches of land that grew naught.

I'll have to carve a few new borders in Essos for my kids. There's too many of them already.

Looking at all the lands around the river Rhoyne, he could tell they were immensely fertile. If conquered and fully farmed, they would feed hundreds of millions, if not a billion.

The Dothraki, the pirates, and the remnant ancient magic will be an issue. But with my Earthbending, I can rebuild all these great, ancient cities. Worthy of my children inheriting.

And then his eyes fell back on the ruins of Valyria.

And I can bring back dragons.

Aslan had been born, a dark-haired boy with Targaryen and Kaiser blood, suitable to ride dragons. He believed he may be able to ride dragons personally as well with the ability he'd get. However, what he feared was what would happen after him.

As Wylis remembered his old life, he saw the dragons as nothing short of nukes. Whoever had them would eventually become arrogant. The one with the most would try to rule over others. His children may not fall for it, but what of his great-grandchildren?

Another silly dance of the dragons would happen.

"My lord?"

Wylis suddenly flinched as he felt a hand on his shoulder. He almost reacted defensively, but then recognised that voice and calmed himself. He looked to the side as Elia stood there, bent from the waist, staring at his face with concern.

"Ah, forgive me, I was lost in thought."

"I called your name again and again, my lord. I feared something might have happened to you. Forgive me, I didn't mean to interrupt your thoughts."

"No, I should thank you. I was wasting good time dwelling on things that can wait," Wylis said, his eyes drifting to the clock. It was midnight now. "Is there anything you wish to discuss, my lady?"

Elia straightened back, her hands pressed together over her belly, her fingers fidgeting. "I... do."

Wylis didn't quip in that moment, not wanting her to feel overwhelmed. So, he stood up and walked around her and the table, over to the settee by the hearth. "It's easier to speak here. Is this about Dorne, my lady? Would you have me speak with your brother?"

"No, no, my lord." Elia quickly took a seat beside him, never relaxing, however. Her back was straight, her body stiff as her expression. "I fear I'm more selfish than you believe. What good will come of revealing myself to my brothers? I bear no grand ambition, and I'm content with the safety and love you give to Aegon and Rhaenys."

Wylis smiled at her, lost in her dark eyes. Her lashes were beautiful, he realised, having never looked at her face with so much patience. Her lips were particularly thin and shapely, her complexion pale-sandy brown, like the warm beaches of Dorne. Her neck was long, her collarbones visible.

"Those two are as dear to me as Magnus and Ragnar. Rhaenys never fails to brighten my day, and Aegon's innocence is a joy to see. You've raised them well, Elia," he said, speaking her name instead of her title.

Elia blushed a little, eyes down, at her hands on her lap. "And it warms me that you allow them to call you father."

"Hah! I would be furious if they didn't after all this time. I can't say what the future brings, but they shall never suffer, whatever comes. I'll raise Aegon into a fine, sturdy lad with good sense. Rhaenys may choose her own path. If she takes a liking to a man, I'll see he's worthy. If it pleases her, she may remain here in Ramsgate for the rest of her days. The same for the others, even Viserys, though the boy has plenty yet to learn."

"My lord... do you not fear it? Too many illegitimate children broke the Targaryens."

Wylis laughed out loud and shifted closer to her side until their bodies were pressed side-by-side. Then, he gently held her chin and turned her face towards the large map. "Tell me, Elia. What do you notice first when you set Westeros beside Essos?"

"The size?"

"Aye, that's it." Wylis let go of her chin so she could meet his eyes. "The Targaryens didn't fall for bad blood, nor for their feuds, nor for bastard children. They fell because they grew content. Too pleased ruling this little Westeros with too many mouths and too little land worth sowing. A realm forever caught between hungry winters and bloody summers. Had they only turned their dragons and great fleet east instead... Ah, I've talked enough today. Too much on my mind."

Elia was silent for a long time. She looked back at the large map on the wall and just kept watching it, as if imagining an army conquering the vast lands. It painted a beautiful sight, but a bloody one as well. Essos was a beast Westeros couldn't take on. Even with dragons, it would have been a tough battle.

Yet, she chose not to speak about it. She looked back at the man, so tall he was much more than a head taller, even seated beside her. His broad frame made her feel diminutive, but those broad arms and shoulders were the very source of comfort and safety for her and her children.

"My lord..." Elia muttered and moved. Her face was red; she felt ashamed to meet his eyes, but she did it. She stood up, turned to him, and quickly straddled his lap, letting her knees part wide under the gown until she fully settled on him. Still, she had to look up to meet his gaze.

Wylis was silent the entire time. He didn't even move his hands to hold her and allowed her to speak her mind first.

"For a few years now, I have watched you, Wylis." Elia took his name, right as her slender right hand came up and traced his jaw. "You blessed so many of them with motherhood."

Wylis took a deep breath. He could feel himself growing hard under the warm weight of her bottom on his lap. But he kept his arms away.

"It comforts me to hear Rhaenys and Aegon call you father. But after so many years... I cannot help but feel I've wasted precious time. I... I've watched you, and never once did you press me or ask for more than I wished to give. Even so, I found myself drawn to you.

"Rhaegar and I shared warmth once, though my love was never returned. I bore him two children, yet prophecy led him elsewhere. I think I was in love with the thought of him, with his name and the throne that followed him. Only now do I see how empty that love truly was."

Wylis finally stirred and allowed his hands to rest on her slender waist, his palms akin to a giant's, his spread fingers covering most of the breadth of her back. "I don't mean to demean him, but if I were Rhaegar..."

He let his hands slowly slide down, over the curve of her pert hips, and finally cupped them each in spread palms. He pressed slightly, feeling the doughiness of her flesh. Her face, he saw only an embarrassed blush.

"If I were Rhaegar, you'd have to plead with me to stop cherishing you. In life and in bed alike. You gave him two children, his father cast you into chains, and still he rode after some hollow prophecy instead of coming for you. The Gods placed a treasure in a fool's hands, Elia, and the fool knew only how to cast it aside."

"Hah!" Elia warmly giggled, her face neared his as his hands grew firm on her bottom. She combed her fingers through his hair. "I fear I have no words against that."

Wylis had grown full mast, and he could bet she felt it too. That gown was too thin to begin with. So, he clenched her cheeks harder and pulled her in, letting her chest heat against his, her face just an inch from his.

"Wylis... I think I'm ready to begin again. To know motherhood once more, to feel a child grow within me. And... I cannot hide how deeply I'm drawn to you. I would cherish it if you would bless me with the same precious gift you've given Her Grace and Ashara," she spoke softly, her warm hands resting against the sides of his face.

Wylis had almost seen this coming, but still, hearing it from her lips was different. He quickly responded by moving one hand up on her back and pulling her further in. He let her lips fall on his, and she responded just as warmly.

The moment he felt her soft, thin lips, she parted them, and her smooth tongue probed him; her desire was overflowing. He let her do that for some time, kissing her with his lips shut. His hand on her bottom became frantic, rubbing through the cleft. The one on her back rubbed everywhere.

Finally, when he heard her exhale, he engaged. He countered and overwhelmed her with his tongue. He tasted the Dornish princess intimately, and she no longer tasted of spice, but Northern freshness.

He embraced her warmly, flat against his body, mouths working each other in wet noises. But her lungs couldn't compete with his.

"Ah..." Elia panted, pulled her face back, her raven eyes moist. "Will you, Wylis?"

"No," he replied, "Birthing Aegon nearly killed you, Elia. And mine will be bigger babes, still. I won't lose you and leave Rhaenys and Aegon without a mother. Rhaella nearly died and..."

"My heart still longs for another child." Elia's eyes shimmered with tears.

Wylis still shook his head. "And die birthing it? If it's warmth you desire, I'm here; I don't demand a child."

"It is my own wish to have one, my lord. I believe... then I shall have truly left my past behind. I... I know it is selfish... I beg—"

"Very well." Wylis cut her off. "But not today. We'll see to it once I return from my journey south. Until then, you'll do as I bid. You're much improved, but you've still strength to gain. We'll see that changed."

"I'll do that, Wylis. I will follow your bidding," Elia replied, tears streaming down her face.

"Come here." Wylis pulled her against his chest again, letting her face fall on his shoulder. He, as well, pressed a kiss on her neck and whispered. "Can you feel it?"

Elia hummed, nodding on his shoulder. Her bottom pressed harder on his loins.

"It won't be easy, Elia. I must warn you."

"Lyanna is no bigger than I am." Elia leaned back awkwardly, looking at him with shy resolve. "Don't make light of Dornish blood, my lord. It burns every bit as fiercely as the Northern ice runs cold."

Wylis smiled. "We'll see about that, Elia."

He pulled her back into a warm embrace, and for some time, they remained like that. Warm, aroused, but in control.

Nothing more happened; now was not the time for intimacy.

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The next day, Wylis helped Ashara prepare for her journey and then set her away.

Since Arthria and the newborn were going with her, two maids also went along. The ship she would sail on was a three-masted carrack, altered to serve as Wylis' personal vessel for the time being. It had a large room with ample space for Ashara and Arthria not to get bored. A small library and a chessboard were there.

Once Ashara left, Wylis began making his own preparations as he was to travel by road. Instead of taking a carriage full of supplies, he'd decided to just ride horses and get himself a carriage and the necessary goods in Stoney Sept. The two most essential things he was taking along were two falcons, however. They would help him stay connected with Ramsgate.

Then, as the preparations were complete, he got busy doing other things, which involved visiting the fine ladies in their bedchambers. He couldn't spare too much time, but he did carve himself in them just to plant a memory. Wenda, Ros, Anna, he spent time with Rhaella also, but didn't do 'it' because her body was still recovering. As for Lyanna, she had him for the entire night.

But most of it was spent listening to her speech about the importance of securing the crown from incestuous bastards and the Lannister whore. That he was doing Robert a favor since the King was too damn incompetent to breed his own queen.

Wylis let her ramble, and then shut her up by splaying her beneath him. When morning came, he woke up to a dirty, reeking mess of sweat and other things. He ran to the hot spring right away and soaked in there like it was his life's last.

Rhaella and Wenda joined him there, being early birds. They talked, and he asked Rhaella if she wanted anything from the Red Keep, perhaps a hidden stash. But she knew nothing of that sort.

Eventually, he sat down in the small dining hall, ate six boiled eggs, half a roasted chicken, lots of fruit, and juice. It was a big meal for a big man. He knew Calliburn outside was likely feasting as well in preparation for heading out. Same for Chett and the ten other guards coming along.

By seven in the morning, he was ready to head out. One last time, he embraced everyone, showered the children with kisses, and listened to their requests. Rhaenys wanted her cat, Magnus wanted a sword, and Daenerys wanted chicken. But they were only going to get toys, mostly.

At last, Wylis walked out of the main castle and entered the courtyard where the garrison trained. The likes of Rhaella, Elia, and Lyanna didn't come out. Only Anna, Ros, and Wenda were there to see him off.

"Come here, boy!"

Wylis whistles loudly once. In moments, a big horse came trotting out of the stables, the saddle already tied, alongside large sacks of necessary supplies, including water, a tent, and food. As for armor, he decided to just wear some leather.

"Ready for adventure, Cali?" Wylis patted the big horse's face.

[Excitement!]

"Good." Wylis gave the women one last nod, waved to the children, and climbed into the saddle. "Take care, and try not to burn my city down."

As he trotted away, he could hear Wenda shouting from the back. Annoying her was always the easiest. And since she managed the school now, she felt responsible.

"M'lord!"

"My lord."

Wylis waved back at all the garrison men who saluted him.

"Safe travels, my lord."

"Take care and train hard, Dacey." Wylis winked at Dacey and finally crossed the threshold of his castle, moving over the drawbridge, then a second one, and entered the administration district.

Right there, ten men on horses stood in line, while Chett was in front of them, giving orders.

"Men! Take the riding formation!" Chett shouted like a drill instructor.

Without stopping, as Wylis rode towards the gate leading to the main city, the men took position. Four rode in front of him; the front two carried a pole and House Kaiser's flag. Six rode behind him, while Chett was on his right.

Riding out of the city, the smallfolk who saw him deeply bowed their heads or knelt down like praying to a god. But since the city was mostly just a construction site, there weren't that many. In no time, they were out of the city's main gates, into the open, riding towards White Harbor.

"Excited, Chett? First time going that far south? Dorne, all the way south, actually."

"I'm as eager as I am fearful for your safety, my lord," Chett said sternly. "You ought to wear better armor, and a helm besides, same as the rest of us."

Wylis shrugged. "Oh, let me feel the wind now, Chett."

"But what if we get attacked, my lord?"

"What if? Chett, we are going to be attacked, and I say it with absolute certainty. It will happen on Kingsroad somewhere near the Frey lands."

"My lord?" Chett exclaimed, frowning under the light helmet. "Then we must take a different route."

"No, we won't," Wylis replied with a smile. "I feel it in my bones. The Gods have marked the Freys for more punishment. Who am I to deny them? After the bridge, perhaps losing one of those two castles will do. It won't be called the Twins then. Hah! They'll have to change their bloody sigil."

"..."

Sensing Chett's silence, Wylis moved Calliburn closer and patted his squire's shoulder. "My squire, if I don't make you worthy of a knighthood in this journey, I'll change my name. Now move; we've the mandate of the Gods!"

Or the Tyrant's Squire.

Wylis nudged Caliburn, and the big, intelligent horse ordered the other horses to move faster. The big boy was the lord of the horses, it seemed.

But Wylis just stared into the blank space ahead of him, which in reality was a glowing string of words. A fun little side-quest meant to punish those he'd already punished once. He could see the game Tyrant's Squire wanted him to play. The lands of House Frey were highly fertile.

Ting!

[New Side Quest - The Lost Twin

Description - The spine is lost, yet the pride stands firm. A Tyrant does not tolerate

insolence twice.

Goal - Fell one of the Twins' keep.

Reward - 5X Earthbending boost in House Frey's fief.]

A fine bloody start to this adventure.

"Chett, have you ever thought of being Lord of the Crossing someday?"

"M'lord?!"

"Hah, only a jest, my friend. Come, pick up the pace, or Lord Manderly's feast will go cold waiting for us."