

The Dread Lord of Essos

Chapter 86

Tywin Lannister stared out at the city with a stomach full of hate and a chest full of envy. The ship's prow, which was carved into the shape of a busty sea-witch, split the harbor foam with more grace than any ship he'd ever commanded. He could smell the salt in the air, but beneath it was the unsettling sweetness of lilac and orange blossoms. The scent drifted from the pale garden terraces bordering the city's docks. When he had left the docks of King's Landing, all he could smell was shit from the raw sewage being drained into Blackwater Bay. There was none of that here. Even the port was beautiful, which infuriated him more than he cared to admit.

Behind him, Cersei toyed with the pearl buttons on her fur-trimmed jacket. The damn thing clung to her like a second skin, and the white silk underneath was somehow even tighter. There was a slit in the skirt that ran from hip to heel, and when the first breeze caught it, it bared both legs ... and damn near everything else. If she had had any sense of shame, it had been surgically removed by the bastard he called "grandson." Tywin ground his teeth and refused to look at her.

Instead, he looked at the city in front of him. Its white marble walls stretched high into the sky, every roof was beautifully tiled, and the gleaming white castle knifed upward in a collection of delicate turrets and domes. The thing had not existed five years ago, and now it looked as though it had been crowning the coast for centuries. It made the Red Keep look like an outhouse.

He'd been told stories of this place by his sycophantic cronies, and the stories were all lies. The city was not a den of depravity. It was a personal insult constructed in cream and gold. Every street that spilled down from the keep was lined with flowering trees and fluted columns, and even the gutters gleamed with cleanliness. There was not a beggar in sight, nor a crippled child, nor a dog with its ribs poking through. It was unnaturally beautiful, and Tywin hated it.

On the crossing, he had tried to enforce some kind of discipline among his traveling retinue. He'd failed. The guards drank and gambled on deck. The handmaidens spent hours painting their lips and practicing the crude, foreign dances that were all the rage in Essos. And Cersei ... she paraded herself in front of them with her hair down and her neckline past her belly button. She dared Tywin to object, but the only thing he could do was sneer. No one respected him ... not even his own treacherous men. Now, they were looking longingly at the city in front of them, no doubt realizing that he was the king of a rubbish pit.

They made landfall as the city bell chimed. Dockhands in matching uniforms guided the ship in with ropes of blue and gold. Tywin watched the men work. He thought it strange that they all looked so similar, but he quickly put it from his mind. He had more important things to worry about.

A crowd waited on the dock. Tywin recognized the so-called Dread Lord instantly. The boy had grown into a man since he had last set eyes on him. Harold stood at the center of his group, flanked by women who looked more like expensive courtesans than dignitaries. Each of them stood proud and confident, and each was dressed scantily enough to make a whore blush.

At Harold's right arm was a woman with hair redder than fresh blood. Her skin was pale and flawless, and her dress was so thin that Tywin could see everything underneath. Her nipples were as hard and bright as berries, and she wore a look of utmost authority. Melisandre, Tywin guessed. She was the one they called the Red Priestess ... at least according to his spies. Beside her was a woman in an equally scandalous red dress. Her hair was dark and wavy, and her lovely face had an exotic quality to it. Tywin guessed that she was also a Red Priestess. On the other side was a woman with light brown skin and a gold circlet in her hair. Her dress was nearly as thin, but it covered a bit more, and her face was cool and unreadable. The third was a bit younger than the others, with hair like spun silver and a mouth that looked permanently amused. She wore nothing but a blue silk wrap that looked designed to fall off the moment anyone so much as breathed on it.

Behind them stood Myrcella, and Tywin's mood soured even further. She wore her hair unbound, and her dress was cut from the same pale silk as Cersei's, though with more skin exposed. Tywin wanted to turn away, but he could not. She was his last hope of restoring order to the family. Now she looked like a prop in some Essosi whorehouse. He said nothing. He would say nothing. The time for yelling had passed.

The gangplank was laid, and the dockworkers retreated in perfect silence. Tywin walked down first, making sure his boots landed on dry, unsoiled wood. It would not do to slip and make a fool of himself. The dock had been swept clean. There was not a speck of rubbish to be seen. He was keenly aware of every pair of eyes on him, and he returned their gaze with the cold, unblinking look that had broken dozens of lords.

At the base of the gangplank, Harold waited. The boy was taller than Tywin remembered. His shoulders had broadened, and his face was handsome and arrogant. His brilliant green eyes were confident, and his smile was more of a smirk. He wore a black tunic with gold piping and a white cloak that fell almost to the ground. His boots looked expensive. In fact, everything the welcoming party wore looked expensive.

"Lord Tywin," Harold said. His voice was somehow velvety soft and as hard as steel at the same time. "Welcome to Seven Swords."

Cersei came up beside Tywin, matching his stride. She did not bother to bow. Instead, she brushed the side of Harold's cheek with her lips, then did the same to the other. "You look healthy," she said, running her hands down his muscled biceps.

Harold's eyes flicked to her chest, then to her face. "It's the climate. You know that everything grows bigger here," he said, and they both smiled, as if sharing the same inside joke. Tywin did not care for this.

Tywin held his hand out. Harold took it, squeezed just a hair too hard, and let it go. There was an awkward beat. Tywin looked at the women standing behind his grandson and was not surprised when Harold began the introductions.

"You know our lovely Myrcella, of course," Harold said, gesturing to his left. "Beside her is the equally lovely Daenerys Targaryen."

The silver-haired girl nodded, and Tywin fought the urge to reach out and strangle the Targaryen whore. He already knew the girl was living in Harold's city, but seeing it firsthand made the rage bubble up. The girl was a direct threat to his kingdom's sovereignty. At any moment, she could decide that she is the rightful ruler of Westeros, and if she convinced Harold to help her, there was little Tywin could do about it. He would keep a close eye on her.

"And this is Melisandre, who has been an invaluable help to me." The Red Priestess inclined her head, and her eyes never left Tywin's face. "Kinvara, a dear friend and counselor." The other woman in the red dress bowed as well, her lips set in a sly half-smile. "And Missandei, who keeps my house in order and my days from ending in disaster."

Missandei smiled with professional politeness and said, "It is a pleasure to meet you, Lord Tywin." Her voice was light but perfectly measured, as if she'd been trained in the art of not offending anyone.

"And you," Tywin replied, forcing a smile. His eyes lingered on the dress, which left nothing to the imagination. "You keep a unique household, Harold."

Harold shrugged. "We do things differently here. Tradition is not a chain in Seven Swords, and if people do not like it, they are free to leave."

Tywin suppressed the urge to laugh. He wasn't here to win an argument. He was here to make sure that his kingdom survived the winter.

He turned to Myrcella. "You look healthy, girl," he said, and was relieved when she only smiled and dipped her head. "Is this what passes for formal attire now?"

She looked down at her own dress, then moved her eyes back to him. Her eyes shined with a kind of delighted malice. "It is, Grandfather. All the women dress like this here. If you like, I can have the tailor make you something similar."

The entourage laughed, even Cersei. Tywin did not. Instead, he looked at the city that was waiting to devour him. The crowd on the dock was growing, and the faces at the back were already whispering and pointing.

Harold's eyes flicked upward. "You're just in time," he said, and pointed at the sky. Tywin looked up, and his worldview changed.

A dragon as big as a galley soared over the harbor on wings that gleamed like sheets of black iron. Its body was the color of storm clouds, and its scales glinted in the sun. It circled several times, casting a shadow over the dock and the city beyond. The crowd froze as one, and Tywin's mouth went dry. A second dragon followed. This one was milky white with streaks of gold along its flanks. They moved together, not as wild beasts, but as perfectly trained warhorses. The air thrummed with the sound of their massive, flapping wings.

"They're smaller than I expected," Tywin lied. His hands were trembling, but he made sure to keep them behind his back.

Harold grinned a knowing smile, and Tywin hated him for it. "They're young still. They will grow larger in time."

Myrcella spoke up, her voice cutting the air with excitement. "Sometimes, Harold lets us ride them."

"Not today," Harold said, turning his gaze to Tywin. "Today is for introductions. Will you join us at the palace?" Tywin nodded, because there was nothing else to do. Harry hid his smirk as he decided to take his grandfather the long way, through King's Garden.

The walk up to the castle was agony. The city was alive with music, laughter, and the ceaseless babble of foreign tongues. Every woman they passed was dressed like a courtesan. Every man was either a bodyguard, a wealthy merchant, or a half-crazed artist shouting about his wares. Tywin saw a woman painting a nude portrait of her own reflection in a shop window, and the men around her clapped in appreciation. He saw a fruit seller juggling oranges with her breasts out. He even saw a group of men carrying a scantily clad woman on a velvet palanquin, as if she were some goddess come to life. Harold had a good chuckle at that.

And every fifty steps, someone bowed to Harold. Some called him "Your Grace", and others called him "Your Majesty". Most just stared in awe.

Tywin counted seven statues of the Dread Lord in the first mile. Each was larger than the last, and each was more obscene in its artistry. The third statue showed Harold with a pair of naked women wrapped around him, one of whom looked suspiciously like Melisandre. Tywin tried not to look at the details.

The closer they got to the castle, the more Tywin noticed the inhuman perfection of it all. The streets were spotless. The flowers were blooming out of season. The air itself was warm and sweet, even in the dead of winter. He tried to find the rot, the poverty, and the places where the paint peeled. He found nothing.

The steps leading up to the castle were guarded by soldiers in matching black armor, and each was as tall as a Lannister and twice as broad. They stood at attention, and none of them so much as blinked as Tywin and his party passed.

The doors to the keep were thrown open. Inside, the floors were polished marble, and the walls were hung with tapestries depicting Harold's successful conquests. One was a tapestry of his family tree. Tywin saw his own likeness rendered in gold thread, standing to the side of a much larger image of Harold. He felt sick.

They walked into the reception hall. Cersei, Myrcella, and the Targaryen whore slipped away, arm in arm, and Tywin caught a glimpse of them chatting and giggling as they climbed the steps. Harold led the way to a table set for twenty, piled high with roast meats, sweets, and fruit from every corner of the world.

Tywin sat, hands folded, and waited. Melisandre sat to his left, close enough that her bare thigh touched his leg. Kinvara sat to his right, cool and unreadable. Missandei poured wine for everyone, and her breasts swayed under the thin silk.

Harold ate first, tearing a bite from a leg of lamb and washing it down with dark wine. Only when he had taken his fill did anyone else move. The women ate like wolves, but with the grace of nobility. Tywin nibbled at a bit of bread, trying to keep his rage in check.

"Do you like the city?" Melisandre asked, and there was no malice in her tone.

"It is ... orderly," Tywin admitted.

Kinvara smiled. "That is the highest compliment you could give."

Tywin said nothing. He was outnumbered and outgunned. He would say nothing and do nothing, not until he found the weakness in this perfect place. There was always a weakness. He only had to wait for it to reveal itself.

He glanced at Harold. The boy was laughing at something Missandei had said. He looked happy and untouchable. Tywin closed his eyes for a moment and pictured the Iron Throne and King's Landing as a whole. Compared to Seven Swords, his city was a pus-filled sore. He wondered if he'd ever see it again. After spending some time here, he wondered if he would even want to.

Then he opened his eyes, drank his wine, and waited.

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After getting his guest settled, Harry needed to handle another guest. He closed his eyes and looked through the eyes of his clone in Highgarden. He smiled deviously, and his eyes glistened with mischief. He faded away from his room and replaced his clone in Lady Margaery's personal chambers.

Margaery Tyrell sat at her mirrored vanity with one leg crossed over the other. Her entire naked body was on full display. She drew a silver brush through her shining brown hair in long, delicate strokes. The morning light made her skin look soft and pink, and her tits, which were round, perky, and capped by stiff, pink nipples, rose and fell with every deep, self-satisfied breath. There was an ease in her posture. She'd been blessed with an incredibly attractive body, and she knew it. The faint smile on her lips told Harry that she enjoyed being looked at.

He was, of course, already looking. He lay sprawled on the bed, completely nude and slightly lazy with morning contentment. His half-hard cock rested along one thigh, and his hands were folded behind his head. But the longer he watched her, the more he wanted her. He rolled off the bed and padded over to her. Margaery saw him in the mirror and smirked, but kept brushing her hair.

He leaned down and kissed the top of her head, then let his lips drift down to her ear. She shivered at the warmth of his breath and the weight of his hands as they came to rest on her bare shoulders. Margaery's eyes closed for just a second, and she let herself enjoy the pressure of his fingers. He kissed the crown of her head again, then let his lips trace a slow, teasing path along her jaw to her neck. She gave a pleased little hum.

Without thinking, Harry slid his palms down to cup both of her tits. They fit perfectly in his hands, and he kneaded them gently, pressing his thumbs over the hard, pink nipples. Margaery giggled out a warm, breathy sound, and she arched her back and thrust her tits harder into his hands.

"If you want me to stop, you'd better run," Harry said, nipping the lobe of her ear.

She tilted her head back, exposing the long, pale line of her throat. "If I wanted you to stop, I would use the dagger in the top drawer."

He laughed and bent down, kissing her mouth from above. Her lips were softer than silk, and when she parted them, he pushed his tongue in and tasted her. She reached up and held his jaw, keeping him close. Her eyes were half-lidded with desire.

He squeezed her tits harder and rolled the nipples between his fingers. Margaery broke the kiss and shivered, her eyes bright with delight. Harry bent and kissed her tits, taking each nipple into his mouth in turn and swirling his tongue around it until it was wet and shining. Her back arched, and she let out a little moan as Harry gently nipped her crinkled tip.

He picked her up and held her by her round ass, and she squealed but wrapped her legs around his hips. She nipped at his neck and tried to wriggle free, but he carried her to the bed and set her down with a soft thump. She bounced, and her tits jiggled. She then sprawled out, showing off her lean stomach and perfectly smooth mound. Her pussy was already damp, and she let her thighs fall open as she reclined.

Harry joined her on the mattress, but before he could settle in, Margaery swung one leg over his lap and straddled him. She pressed her bald, dewy slit against his cock and mashed it flat to his belly. She rocked her hips in slow circles, smearing her wetness up and down the length of him. Her wet inner lips easily glided over the skin.

He put his hands on her thighs, squeezed them, then dragged his fingers up to her hips. She ground her clit against his cock and let out a breathy moan that made him even harder. Margaery looked down at his face, and her eyes shined with need.

"I can see why all the girls in Highgarden are obsessed with you," she teased, leaning down to rub her tits across his chest. "Is it true that one of them lifted her dress and showed her whore cunt to you?"

"Two of them, actually," Harry said, and grinned. He reached up and cupped her face, then pulled her down for a kiss. Their tongues tangled, and she moaned against his lips.

She sat up, rolled her hips, and squeezed his cock between her thighs. "That doesn't surprise me. Highgarden is filled with backstabbers and cutthroats," she said, her voice thick with desire.

He pulled her close and buried his face in her tits. He nipped at the soft flesh and sucked each nipple into his mouth. She gasped and dug her nails into his shoulders. Her hips didn't stop moving. They rolled and rocked, and the sensation of her slippery lips dragging over his cock drove him wild.

He reached down, grabbed her ass, and kneaded her soft flesh. Harry then slid his hands up her bare back. She shivered under his touch and let him do whatever he wanted. There was a point of pride in her surrender, as if giving herself to him was an honor that only the worthy could receive.

She slowed her grinding and let his cock rest between her legs, pinned tight to his belly by her pussy lips. She hovered there, teasing both of them, and looked down at him through long, dark lashes. Her breathing was fast, and her face was flushed.

He reached up and brushed a thumb over her jaw. "A boat will arrive tomorrow to take us down the Mander," he told her, his voice low and a bit rough. "Have you and Lady Alerie packed?"

She snorted. "Everything is packed. We could leave today if you want." Her hips rolled, and she pressed her swollen clit to the head of his cock. She started to rub harder, and her face twisted with pleasure.

"Impatient," he said, grinning.

She nodded. "I always am."

He grabbed her waist, rolled her onto her back, and settled between her legs. She opened herself for him, spreading her thighs as wide as they would go. Her pussy glistened, and her lips were puffy and pink. He could see how wet she was.

He lined himself up and, with a single, slow push, he slid the head of his cock into her. She gasped, arched her back, and clutched at his shoulders. He buried himself deep, and the hot, slick pressure of her cunt was almost too much to handle. He leaned over and kissed her as he started to fuck her slowly and steadily.

She moaned into his mouth, her hands clawed at his back, and her legs wrapped around his waist. Her heels dug into his ass, pulling him in as deep as possible. She was tight, and her pussy clenched around his shaft with every thrust.

He broke the kiss and looked down at her. She was beautiful. Her eyes were glazed with pleasure, and her tits were bouncing in time with his thrusts. Sweat slicked her skin, and the flush of arousal made her look almost feverish.

Her pussy fluttered around him, squeezing and milking his cock. She was soaking wet, and each time he pushed into her, a perverse wet noise filled the room.

"Harold," she gasped, and her hands gripped his hair. "Don't pull out. I want you to spill your seed inside of me."

He kept fucking her, and the pleasure built with every stroke. He could feel her clenching and fluttering, and then she came. Her whole body tensed, and her pussy spasmed around his cock. She screamed loud enough that everyone close to her room heard it, and he fucked her through it, not stopping until he came himself. He emptied inside her, filling her with hot, thick spurts, and the sensation made her shudder and moan all over again.

He collapsed on top of her, both of them gasping for breath. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him softly, and then buried her face in his shoulder. When their breathing slowed, she leaned in and started peppering his skin with soft kisses. "I'm really looking forward to seeing your city again. It's been too long."

He smiled, kissed her hair, and said, "It'll be an event to remember. I promise you that." She giggled, curled up against him while Harry lovingly played with her soft, sexy body.

