

Andrik Drumm stared coldly at the men felling the trees and taking the lumber into his flagship. It was truly a shame that he was not allowed more longships under his command. If more ships were under his command, he could've secured more lumber to be transported to the Iron Islands. Wood was the most expensive commodity in the Iron Islands, which made the great houses of the isles fiercely protective of their forest lands. The unintended consequence being it became so much more expensive to build the Iron Fleet. So, Andrik was forced to secure lumber while the Iron Fleet was reaving across the western shores of the North.

However, Andrik was aware it was practically impossible to transport the required lumber for rebuilding the Iron Fleet with their current meagre number of ships. Therefore, he had asked the men to safely store some of the lumber in a hidden spot along the shoreline. In time, he hoped to sail into Sea Dragon Point and have the rest of the wood transported to the Iron Islands. If the Drowned god blessed them with good fortune, the North would fall under Ironborn control. It'd take months for the Northern lords to find this site; by then, he could transport enough lumber for a few ships back home.

"Move faster, you lazy fools. The Northerners will march their entire army to torch our ships much faster than you lazy bums move my timber." Andrik shouted at the men. "Move faster, you lazy whores. Move!"

Andrik could only shake his head as the men rushed to move the lumber faster.

"It's a good thing the North has a vast shoreline. It'll take time for those tree huggers to find us." said Torwold.

Andrik grunted, eyeing the brown-haired man out of the corner of his eyes. He didn't remind the man of the last time they met the Northerners in battle near a fishing village. It was by luck that they managed to escape with their ships intact. He also distinctly remembered Torwold Browntooth running away from the fight rather than fighting the Northerners.

'Coward.' Andrik thought, turning away from the spineless Ironborn.

While Torwold was a shoddy fighter, he had to admit that the man was a good sailor. After all, Torwold was the one who found this spot, and Andrik saw the opportunity to take a good chunk of the wood from the forest.

"It's a shame, however. If we had more ships, we could transport more wood for the new Iron Fleet." said Torwold.

"Have you secured the timber inside the ships?" Andrik asked.

"Yes. We've taken aboard as much as we can."

“Are they bound safely with ropes? I don’t want the logs to come undone and crush the men while we’re sailing home.” Andrik asked.

“I made sure the logs are bound properly. There’s nothing to worry about.” Torwold promised.

“Captain!”

A sudden shout from one of his ships made Andrik Drumm switch his attention from overseeing the transportation of lumber to the crow’s nest on the main mast of his ship.

“Why’s the lookout pointing northeast? There’s nothing but trees and hills in that direction.” Tolwold commented.

Andrik was also similarly confused.

‘Maybe the lookout noticed smoke from a nearby camp?’ Andrik thought.

“Demon... Storm god...Ship...flying.” The lookout cried from the crow’s nest.

Andrik stared at the man sitting atop the main mast making wild gestures and shouting inaudible nonsense as the winds howled in his ears. Suddenly a huge shadow fell on top of him, covering a large area.

“Look up!” the lookout screamed, pointing wildly at the sky.

Andrik noticed a beast floating high in the sky, blocking the sun. He could not help but stare at the huge demonic beast in the sky. Andrik just froze and couldn’t move for a moment, just like everyone else. Then he heard someone scream, bringing him back out of the stupor.

“Archers! Arm yourselves.” Andrik cried, keeping his eyes on the giant demonic being in the sky.

“Could... could it be the Stark boy’s flying ship?” Torwold asked fearfully.

“Those are just rumours of drunkards and women folk.” Andrik said dismissively.

“Are you fucking blind?” Torwold asked incredulously.

Andrik wanted to punch the man, but his attention was captivated by the fact that an opening had formed over the side of the floating object.

‘A door. So, it’s a ship of some sort and not a dragon or a flying demon in the service of the Storm god.’ Andrik thought.

Andrik squinted his eyes as he saw what he assumed was a woman brandishing a bow from the flying ship. He watched as an arrow released by the woman pierced through the air. He lost sight of the arrow for a moment and was forced to look around him to see whether any

of his men were hit. No one was hit, and he found a lone arrow with red tailfeathers sticking out on the sand near some of his men.

He blinked, and in the next moment, flames were everywhere. Bright yellow and red flames consumed his men whole as if a storm of fire materialised right in the middle of the shore. The heat of the flames was such that Andrik ran back a few paces just to be safe. Screams of his men assaulted his ear, and the smell of burnt flesh took over his nose. He could only watch in horror as the Ironborn, consumed by fire, ran for the sea to put out the fire, eating away their flesh. Some managed to jump into the sea's embrace, but most fell to the ground as the hellish flames claimed their lives. Those that managed to throw themselves at the mercy of the sea continued to scream their hearts out as salt water burned their wounds.

"The ships! Take the ships into the sea." Andrik screamed, pushing his men to have the ships set sail.

Arrows continued to rain down from the sky, claiming more and more lives of his men. In his rush to climb aboard his ship, Andrik fell flat on his face on the floorboard. At that moment, he saw an arrow with white feathers sticking out of the main mast of his ship. Andrik climbed to his feet, preparing to run away, but the arrow he saw exploded with a bang the next moment. His ears rang as splintered wood shot out everywhere. The main mast of his ship groaned as it could no longer stand upright. His eyes widened as the enormous wooden mast slowly tilted towards his direction.

Andrik didn't wait around to find out what would happen. He ran straight for the railings and jumped over the starboard side. He fell straight into the sea, but he managed to escape death by a hair's breadth. The main mast was now broken, and managed to crush a few of his men to death. He could only watch helplessly as the rest of his ships were blown to pieces or consumed by unnatural flames. With no hopes left, Andrik swam to the shores, and that was when an arrow fell before him. He just stood there and didn't move as he felt helplessness enter his mind. The arrow exploded, and he was consumed by darkness.

When he regained his bearings, Andrik found he could barely move his limbs. His ears picked up the clinking of chains whenever he tried to move his arms and legs. His vision remained blurry for a moment before he regained a semblance of clarity. The first thing he saw was the wooden floor on which he was sitting and the chains that bound his limbs. Andrik shook his head to get a semblance of normalcy to his senses.

"Oh, you are awake, pirate."

Andrik heard someone say as he felt a kick on his legs. He could practically feel the sneer in the voice.

"Adela, play nice. We don't want our guests to feel unwelcome on our ship."

Andrik looked towards the direction from which the sound came. He saw a young boy with black hair staring down at him.

“I’m Harrion Stark. What’s your name?”

Andrik remained silent and merely stared back at the Stark boy impassively while his heart was beating faster. He could not see any overt signs of sorcery on the boy, but he was on guard.

“I saw the sigil of a white bone hand on your cloak and armour. You are a Drumm, aren’t you?” Harrion Stark asked, looking into Andrik’s eyes.

Still, Andrik chose to remain silent. A fist smashed into his right cheek with force when the silence stretched on.

“Speak when my lord asks you a question, pirate.”

Andrik heard someone snarl.

“Calm down, Celos. It’s only natural for the pirate to lack any decorum. But I’m sure the pirate can learn some manners. Isn’t that right, pirate?” the Stark boy asked with a mocking tone.

“We’re no pirates, boy. We’re Ironborn.”

Andrik heard someone snarl back. His eyes immediately found a fellow Ironborn bound in chains five feet to his right side.

“I see. This one talked out of turn, which is so rude. Throw him away.” Harrion Stark casually ordered.

Andrik gasped in fear as a section of wooden floorboards folded away, revealing the trees and hills underneath at a great distance away. Andrik watched on with apprehension as one of his men was forced up to his feet and thrown down through the open hatch. The Ironborn screamed as he fell to his death. The sound continued to haunt him, but with each passing moment, the scream became distant until only the howling winds remained in his ears.

“So, are you ready to talk, pirate? Tell me your name. What is the plan of attack Victarian Greyjoy concocted? How many ships are there in your Iron Fleet? Where are the rest of the ships?” Harrion Stark asked, grey eyes glowing eerily.

But Andrik maintained his silence, refusing to budge. He stared straight into the grey eyes of the Stark boy fearlessly.

“I see. Your name is Andrik Drumm. Ralf Kenning has ten longships under his command with orders to capture or burn the ships of Houses Glover and Mormont. Fifteen ships are under Victarian Greyjoy’s command. Five ships were given to Andrik here, making the total strength of the Iron Fleet thirty longships.”

Andrik did a double take and stared in horror at the Stark boy.

“How?” Andrik asked hoarsely.

“How did I know about your little plans? That’s quite simple. The answers were in your mind, and I simply sought them out.” Harrion Stark said with a wide smile.

Andrik could only feel revulsion and anger as the Stark boy openly practised sorcery on him. He tried to attack the Stark boy, but he was held back by the chains.

“Defiant even when facing an enemy with overwhelming power. How brave of you.” Harrion said, standing up from the chair and coming in level with Andrik’s eyes.

“I lack enough competent sailors. Should you pledge your undying loyalty to me, I shall offer you a path that leads to a better life than the one that stares at you right now.”

Andrik couldn’t help but scoff at the idiotic boy.

“We are Ironborn. We’ll not follow a measly mutt like you, boy.” Andrik snarled.

“I see. At first, I thought it’d be a good idea to wipe you miserable Ironborn from your equally miserable islands. But then, a thought came to my mind.” said Harrion, snapping his fingers while looking at Andrik and the rest of the Ironborn prisoners. “Why waste years training a bunch of sailors when I could just take you all under my command?”

“You are delusional, boy. No self-respecting Ironborn would submit to a sorcerer like you.” Andrik claimed with confidence.

“Pride, like all emotions, revolve around the individual identity someone takes on. In your case, you and your people pride yourselves in your identity as one of the Ironborn, born and raised in the Iron Isles. You take pride in reaving the world. But identities can be destroyed. The key is to destroy the memories that enshrine the identity.”

Andrik found himself looking at the pointy end of a strange stick.

“Fortunately, there is a spell to make that possible.”

Andrik flinched as he saw a green glow on the tip of the stick.

*“Obliviate.”*

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“Good work, Anya.” said Harry, looking at the fine work of his first student from the airship.

“Thank you, my lord.” Anya bowed, her long black hair now wrapped in a bun behind her head.

The Ironborn longships continued to burn while the sea worked tediously to drown the broken parts of the ships. The survivors were now bereft of their memories as he had taken his time to wipe out their identity sans their memories with regards to sailing. For the time, he had essentially moulded them into a bunch of mindless sailors. But he was confident they’d slowly build a new life in Avalon. He’d be giving them the vaunted ‘second chance’ Dumbledore used to harp on about. It was only that Harry enforced this ‘second chance’ in his design with no room for conscious choice. Also, he did it out of self-interest rather than a genuine desire to reform some good-for-nothing pirates.

He’d have killed them all, but he desperately needed a skilled workforce to build ships and sail them. It was quite fortunate that the Ironborn fell into his grasp like this. It was only when he calmed down enough to think it through that he realised Balon Greyjoy had actually given him a precious resource by invading the North. Not only did the Lord of Pyke enforce the belief in the Northern lords for the need of a fleet, but he also gave Harry the opportunity to poach the skilled sailors from the Iron Islands. If he was lucky enough, he could perhaps buy out the Iron Islands from King Robert. Maybe, he could even manipulate King Robert and claim Paramountcy over the Iron Islands.

But before such plans could be set in motion, House Greyjoy needed to be culled and therein lay a huge problem in the form of Theon Greyjoy. Even if Harry were to kill all Greyjoys in the Iron Islands, Theon would inherit Pyke. Unfortunately, he didn’t have the heart to kill Theon over the ownership of the Iron Islands. Therefore, he was going for the next best thing. Harry was going to steal all the best sailors and warriors of the Iron Islands under the guise of war.

“Was this really necessary, my lord?” Anya asked, looking uncomfortably at the unconscious Ironborn inside the airship.

“Desperate times require desperate measures. While we may face such mundane enemies...” Harry nodded in the direction of the Ironborn. “...we must never forget our greatest enemy lies beyond the Wall. Morality won’t deliver you victory when death is your enemy.”

“My lord.” Anya bowed her head, properly chastised.

“What shall we do next, my lord? Shall we wait for Victarian Greyjoy’s ships? No doubt, he’ll come looking for Drumm and his men.” Celos Poole asked.

Harry looked south, where the sky and the sea became one. He could stay and wait for Victarian Greyjoy to show up. It’d be easy to have the Iron Fleet destroyed on this shore. But he was not in a hurry to have the Iron Fleet destroyed when he was after the human resource of the Iron Islands. Most of all, the Ironborn need to be made an example of what

happens to his enemies. That should send a proper message to the Essosi and his enemies in the south.

“No. Let Victarian Greyjoy run to his islands with his tail between his legs. We’ll focus on destroying the ten ships attacking Deepwood Motte and the Bear Islands.” said Harry, taking a look at the map of the North and placing a small wolf figure on the Bear Islands. “After that, we’ll pay a visit to Pyke.”

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Stannis was feeling a swell of disappointment as he stared at the open gates of Cornfield. He should’ve felt a sense of accomplishment for the surrender of House Swift, but he felt no thrill in this victory.

‘It’s my fault. I expected Ser Harrys Swift would hold out and remain defiant to the end.’ Stannis thought, letting out a sigh of disappointment.

Instead, the knight of Cornfield raised the white flag on his castle after two salvos of boulders were thrown at the walls of Cornfield from his siege engines. It was quite a disappointing sight to witness and a waste of time and resources as well. If House Swift had surrendered after seeing the army camped outside his walls, all the days spent building siege engines and sending scouts around the castle to look for its weakness could’ve been avoided. At the precipice of victory at Cornfield, Stannis only felt like he had wasted three weeks.

“My prince, look. We have riders inbound.” Ser Axell Florent said.

“Hmm.” Stannis grunted. “Lord Swann, Ser Axell. Accompany me.”

Stannis found two men riding their horses towards him bearing the white standard. He urged his horse forward into a trot but otherwise didn’t move farther away from the range of his archers. He knew enough to mistrust the westerners to try some underhanded tricks on the field, even if it was under the white flag. As far as he was concerned, the westerners were no better than the dornishmen.

“My lords. I’m Ser Harys Swift. This is my son and heir, Ser Steffon.” Ser Harys Swift introduced.

Stannis remained silent and merely observed the knight of Cornfield and his heir. Ser Harys was an older man with a small white beard and a bald head. His eyebrows were hardly visible, and the man had pale blue eyes. The knight wore a green doublet with a blue rooster stitched into a small patch of yellow near his chest. Ser Steffon, on the other hand, was young with black hair and brown eyes.

“My lords. House Swift is sworn to serve House Lannister, and my daughter and grandchildren remain in Lannisport. You must understand why I had to stand with Lord Tywin despite knowing the folly of his cause.” Ser Harys Swift said with bowed head.

“We were under the impression it was because of your daughter’s marriage to Ser Kevan Lannister, my lord. Nevertheless, I applaud your decision to surrender, but we have terms.” Stannis said sternly.

“I ask for nothing but the safety of my family, including my daughter and her children.” Ser Harys Swift said, looking nervously at everyone.

“You know as well as we do that Prince Stannis cannot speak for the safety of your daughter and her children, Ser. But we can make sure King Robert and his grace’s allies are informed of your surrender, and should we find your daughter and grandchildren, they shall be treated fairly.” Lord Gulian Swann promised.

“That is acceptable, my lord.” Ser Harys bowed his head, showing off his bald head.

“We’ll have two hostages from you, Ser Swift. Your son shall ride with me while your granddaughter shall serve as a lady in waiting for Lady Arwyn Oakheart at Old Oak for the duration of the war. You shall raise the Bartheon standard in your castle and swear allegiance to King Robert. Your men shall also join us in our campaign.” Stannis paused, staring at the two men. “I consider these terms reasonable. Do you accept them?”

He watched the father and son exchange a look before agreeing to the terms he offered.

Half an hour later, Stannis watched the banner of the crowned stag fluttering over Cornfield. It was just a start, but soon he’d see to it that the Baratheon banners fly over Silverhill and Deep Den. It was only a matter of time.

But he felt like the deciding battle would be the siege of Lannisport. He wondered how that was going for the Lannisters with House Martell and Redwyne placing the city under siege from the sea.