

Mace Tyrell was a happy man these days. There were no wars he had to worry about and he was far away from all the politicking in the South. He never realized how much time he spent worrying over detail after detail while acting as the Lord of Highgarden until he visited the North. He didn't have to plaster a smile on his face from sunrise to sunset while in the North. Unlike the Reach, the people here never cared for small offences. But most importantly his mother's watchful eyes were taken off his back and was busy pursuing the Dornish party or the Starks.

In the Reach, he'd have never been able to enjoy a moment of peace because he was constantly looking over his shoulder. He knew the judgmental eyes of his mother, the knights, the lords and even those godforsaken servants were on him when he was not looking. He knew they were watching him like hawks just as they did his poor father. His mother has always articulated and implied that his father was a simple-minded man who threw away his life in pursuit of simpler things. Mace never believed such slander against his father. His father Luthor Tyrell was a kind man and a loving father. This left him free to do as he pleased and it was a pleasant feeling.

For once, he was bereft of most responsibilities and could enjoy his time to the fullest with his family. And there were ample reasons to be merry as his eldest son Willas was no longer a cripple being a prominent one. He was always guilty of the injury that happened to his eldest son in the tilts. Oh, he blamed the accursed Dornish Prince and wished the Red Viper would suffer great torments in the seven hells but he knew he was just as guilty. It was his obsession to see his sons as great warriors and not suffer the same stigma he and his poor father had suffered that pushed him to prod Willas far early into tourneys. Poor Willas had suffered for his obsession and Mace had never felt so guiltier at that moment.

But now his son was healthy as a horse and that was a cause for celebration. Not to mention House Tyrell was finally going to own a Valyrian steel sword. No longer will any Tyrell look diminished before their vassals in the Reach.

'A thousand years from now, his descendants would learn they came to possess a Valyria steel sword because of Lord Mace Tyrell.' he thought giddily.

His son was hale and he was getting a priceless sword that could only increase the prestige of his family. He was over the moon with happiness. His only regret was his father was not here to see this wonderful moment. He knew his father would have been pleased to be a part of this moment.

"Here it is Lord Tyrell. A valyrian steel sword as you requested."

Mace blinked owlshly at the sword that was presented to him by the young gifted smith of House Stark. The sword was sheathed in a green sheath and he was tempted to unravel it before the watchful eyes of everyone in the castle. But he could feel those judging eyes of his mother and all his confidence melted away. He wiped his brow with the back of his hand and it came wet.

"Willas. Come here my son." he called for his eldest.

"Father you should take the sword."

'The Seven have truly blessed me with a kind and dutiful son. No doubt, all the credit goes to my Alerie.' he thought.

"No son. I'm but an old man. I might be the Lord of Highgarden for now but you will carry on my name and blood. You should take the sword as is the right of the future Lord Tyrell. This is my wish." Mace said, gently pushing his son towards the sword.

He watched on proudly as Willas unsheathed the sword made by Harrion Stark. It was every bit as beautiful as he had dreamed while journeying to the North after winning the bid in Braavos.

The sword was made of gleaming silver that looked light it was made of moonlight. Lines and ripples marred the steel surface of the sword except for one small part near the handle where a golden rose could be seen brightly shining. He had never seen anything so beautiful in his entire life except for his children. Nothing could triumph over his brave Willas, chubby Garlan, vibrant Loras and beautiful Margery in his eyes. Not even this Valyrian sword which he was about to spend a fortune to obtain. Seeing the sword with his own eyes he was willing to set aside the worry of paying up more than three million gold dragons to the Iron Bank. The prestige of owning something so expensive would no doubt triumph over the fact that he just committed a significant amount of wealth of Highgarden on a single sword. With the kind of gold he spent on the sword, he could have hired all the mercenary companies of Essos twice over.

"Lord Tyrell. If you would name the sword. A sword like this should not be left without a name for long." said Harrion Stark.

"Lord Harrion speaks true. Name the sword, father." said Willas, an excited gleam in his eyes.

Mace was suddenly taken aback as he became the focus of many pairs of eyes. His only consolation was that it was not those same judgemental eyes he often saw in the Reach comparing him to his father. Not that he was embarrassed about his father but thanks to his mother his poor father have a reputation for being simple-minded.

"Me? Maybe it is better if you..."

"No father. You made it possible for House Tyrell to possess a valyrian steel sword. You should be the one to name it." Willas said firmly.

"Well..." Mace sneaked a peek at his mother who looked on neutrally which made him sweat a little.

"How about Sharpthorn?" he asked sweating a little under the judging eyes of his lady mother.

"Well, I suppose it is a good name as any I suppose." Oleanna said, rolling her eyes.

Mace gulped down some much-needed air thanking the Seven in his mind for their blessing. His mother certainly didn't compliment him but he'd take that over her sharp insults any time of the day. At least, the happy grin on Willas' face and the merry look on Margaery's and Garlan's was enough to settle him for the day. House

Tyrell was now the proud owner of a valyrian steel sword even though they were going to pay several shiploads of gold in return. Seven bless them all.

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"It seems the Tyrells have departed on happier terms. They've even offered the aid of House Redwyne and Hightower if we so wish in developing a port and a fleet in Avalon." said Harry, once he was safely inside his solar in his father's company and Archmaester Marwyn.

"I know." said Eddard, nodding slowly but not making his opinion on the matter known. "What do you make of it?"

"You're asking me?" Harry asked incredulously.

"Maester Luwin thinks you are far smarter for your own age. Why do you think I've let you run Avalon without much interference in the first place?"

"I don't run Avalon. Most of the stuff is done by Lord Poole." Harry shrugged.

"I doubt that is the case, Harrion." Eddard said doubtfully.

"Anyway, this is not something that I should decide on my own. It is one thing to depend on the lords of the North but it is quite another to involve the Great Houses of the Reach in our internal matters." said Harry.

"Yet you're quite comfortable with having the Martells in your castle despite my wishes otherwise. You went behind my back and used your mother to get what you want without paying any heed to the reservations that I have about the Martells."

"I like Oberyn. He is more honest than you might think." Harry defended.

"It is not about honesty son. Dornismen have no sense of honour. Their words are wind." Said Eddard, feeling tired that he was coming back to the same argument all over again. "Nonetheless, you've managed to hold on to the Red Viper as per your wish. There is no point in revisiting this argument."

"While I'd advise caution against any aid from the Hightowers or the Redwynes it has to be said they do have resources that can speed up the construction of the fleet." said Marwyn.

Harry looked curiously at the Archmaester.

"I'm sure House Manderly's and House Glover's aid are crucial but we could use the shipyards of Redwynes and Hightowers to construct our fleet. After their construction, they could set sail to our port once the port is finished. I'd have suggested the same with Braavos but those ships will have to sail around Dorne which brings them close to the pirates of Stepstones." Marwyn explained.

"An excellent idea Maester Marwyn. I was thinking the same. The Redwynes have the largest fleet in Westeros. They have built ships from the time of the Gardner kings. They have the resources and the ability to build us ships and we have the gold to pay them." said Eddard.

Harry thought about it but it did not sit well with him.

"I was rather hoping the ships could be built in the North. It'll take time but our people will get all the jobs and more people will get skilled in shipbuilding which should be an advantage in the future."

"We could do that but also leave some of the ships to be built in other shipyards." Eddard voiced his opinion.

Harry frowned at his father who was a staunch isolationist but was now behaving far differently.

"There is something else causing you to pitch cooperation with southern houses. If you don't mind, I'd like to know the reason." said Harry leaning forward in his seat.

"We need allies. You said so yourself that the cold winds are rising beyond the Wall. I think we'll be better off if we establish good trade ties with the southern kingdoms to brave the storm."

Harry looked searchingly at his father but the man was very good at holding his composure. That doesn't mean he didn't detect his father was hiding something. Something must have spooked the Lord of Winterfell to deepen trade relations with the Reach of all places. After all, there were other Houses in the south along the shores of the Summer Sea capable of building ships. In the end, he just shrugged and accepted the suggestion to outsource some of the shipbuilding to the Redwynes or the Hightowers. It was not as if he was going to stand in the way of his father's wish especially when he was allowed to run Avalon to his liking to a certain extent.

'Probably it has something to do with what was happening at the capital.' Harry thought before he put that issue out of his mind.

There were better things to worry about like establishing trade routes for his Avalon-made glass. There were going to be two lines of glass products that he was hoping to release into the markets of the North and Braavos. One was the high-end quality product which was going to compete with Myrish glass and the less expensive product line which he was hoping to get some traction in the North before slowly expanding into the Vale and Riverlands.

No doubt, it was going to be some busy months ahead.

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"I should take your head for this you blonde-haired potatohead. Go, leave these chambers before I decide to crush your skull under Godsgrief." Robert roared.

Stannis sat back and watched Jaime Lannister leave the small council chambers red-faced. He had always thought the Lannister knight was an oathbreaker and a charlatan. Now, he knew better. The man was an idiot before anything else.

"Your grace, perhaps it was unwise to blame Ser Jaime..."

"Shut your trap you wrinkly old buffoon. That fool knew... knew there were tons of pots full of wildfire beneath major buildings of this city. For the seven hells, there are wildfire pots beneath this fucking castle right this moment!" Robert slammed his hand on the table making everyone flinch. "To this day that idiot refused to say a

word of what the Mad King had planned. Who else should be blamed for what has happened?"

"Your grace Ser Jaime is not the only one in this council who had served the Mad King. Surely, the Master of Whispers should share some blame." Said Petyr Baelish, a self-serving smile on the man's face.

Stannis didn't know why but the Valeman rubbed him the wrong way. Nonetheless, the Master of Coin raised a fair point. Varys also served the Mad King as Master of Whispers before the Essosi man came to serve in Robert's small council.

"Your grace, the Mad King was a paranoid man. He plotted and planned in his mad mind and as talented as I am, even I'm appalled to know of this wildfire plot. If there was but a whisper of this plot then I'd have informed Lord Eddard the moment the Lord of Winterfell marched the army loyal to his grace into the city." Varys simpered.

Stannis felt like gritting his teeth at the obvious ploy of the eunuch. All the man had to do was throw in the Stark name and distract Robert from the real issue.

"Ah, yes. Eddard! That Quiet Wolf had warned me to throw that Lannister cunt into the Black Cells and wring the truth of what he had done. I should've listened to the man then." Robert growled to himself.

"But that doesn't excuse you, Lord Varys. You were the Master of Whispers. I find it hard to believe the Mad King moved caches of Wildfire across the city while you remained blind to these movements." Stannis pitched in once again placing the attention on Varys making the bald eunuch's smile weaken a little.

"The Mad King charged me with watching his enemies, Lord Stannis. If I were to violate his orders and spy on those men working under the orders of the Mad King then I'm afraid I wouldn't be sitting here with you in this council." Varys said blandly. "Rather, I'd be a pile of ash at the foot of the Iron Throne when Lord Stark came to the rescue of the city. And I suspect everyone in the council will remember Lord Tywin's army was cutting a bloody swath through the city. I'm afraid I was busy trying to stay alive rather than sniffing out the new mad plans of the Mad King."

Stannis gritted his teeth but chose not to point out the eunuch's cowardice. It'd be a useless gesture as he could already see the rest of the council happily swallowing the garbage Varys was throwing around. He strongly suspected the Master of Whispers knew more than he let on. Unfortunately, he didn't have any proof other than some vague accusations that the eunuch could easily slip away with his silver tongue. The blatant smug smile on Varys' face on the other hand was something he could not bear to see. It spoke of just how decadent this small council was turning into and how irresponsible Robert was in leaving traitors and charlatans free reign in the halls of power. His elder brother might be a skilled warrior but it was wasted on him thanks to a dull mind which allowed unscrupulous characters to take advantage.

"The Alchemists must be questioned, your grace. They should know more about this wildfire plot than they let on." Grandmaester Pycelle suggested, rubbing his white beard as if it took some deep thought to come up with that suggestion.

"Where are we with that Jon?" Robert asked, happily draining a glass full of wine the servant poured into his cup.

"Unfortunately, nowhere your grace. We lost our Master of Laws in the fall of the Great Sept of Baelor and lost the captain of the city watch when the wildfire took the rest. We are unfortunately severely undermanned with the city tumbling into anarchy. We lost a good portion of the city watch and guards when the wildfire ignited as they were helping move the debris." Jon Arryn sagged into himself tiredly. "It'll take us a lot of time to build back the city watch and properly assert ourselves in the city much less worry about the Alchemists."

"Perhaps it'd be prudent to ask for aid from the Crownland houses and bolster the city watch with their men." Baelish suggested.

"I have already sent ravens and riders out with that request. We'll soon know how they respond." said Jon Arryn.

"I'll bring forth the garrison of Dragonstone to aid the city." Stannis offered which was received gratefully by the Hand. "However, there is another important matter. His grace and his family cannot stay in the Red Keep or the city for that matter."

"Wha? What are you talking about brother?" Robert looked at him with his reddening eyes no doubt thanks to the massive amount of wine that was swirling in the man's belly.

"The city is not safe. You heard it from Jaime Lannister himself. The Mad King has hidden caches of wildfire all around the city underneath the many guild halls. The Red Keep and who knows where else. The Sept of Baelor has decimated a whole lot of people and who knows what will happen if the other caches of wildfire explode right beneath our feet tonight or tomorrow. We need to move the royal family far away from the city and remove the wildfire caches safely." Said Stannis.

"Are you out of your mind? I'll not be running away from..."

"Lord Stannis speaks true your grace." Jon Arryn interrupted with a pointed look at Robert. "This is not an enemy you can battle away with you hammer your grace. We need to think of your safety and that of the royal family first."

"Perhaps, his grace can move the court to his ancestral seat of Storm's End or Dragonstone." Ser Barristan spoke up surprising everyone. The old knight has been far too silent ever since Jaime Lannister's testimony.

"It'll be better if his grace holds court in the Stormlands. It'll be prudent for the royal family to be surrounded by loyal lords and no one is more loyal than the Stormlords." said Jon Arryn, his eyes quickly falling on Stannis briefly before slipping away.

Stannis knew at that moment Jon Arryn didn't want anyone to focus on what was happening in Dragonstone. He didn't particularly care either way.

The Old Gods have decided that it was his time to bring the storm as his ancestors have done in the past. All those who follow the path of injustice will get their due and only the righteous shall survive the coming storm. The voice of the Old Gods has

spoken and it was his duty to see it done for the Gods have shown him what awaits them all.

So, when the small council dispersed and all the attention was on the travel plans of the royal family She quietly withdrew into his quarters. There among his baggage was a small sapling that he was given by the Old Gods. He took the sapling with him neatly tucked it inside his sleeve and made his way to the godswood of the Red Keep. It only took him a few minutes to plant the sapling in the godswood. Like all godswoods in the south, the Red Keep lacked a Heart Tree as it was cut down by the Andals.

'Soon, that'll no longer be the case. The Old Gods will rise and with them, I shall rise to great heights.' Stannis thought, his eyes lingering on the Red Keep and saw the Iron Throne in his mind's eye with him sitting on it with a crown of weirwood on his brow.

'Soon.' Stannis smirked before taking his leave.