

The city of Pentos was one of the most prominent trade partners of the North after Braavos. Northern ships usually depended on Pentos for spices, scented oils, dyes and other fancy items that could only be afforded by the nobles. It was also one of the friendliest free cities in Essos as far as the North was concerned. The trade between the North and Pentos rapidly expanded as the North grew more affluent.

According to some of the reports his father received, Harry knew the spices brought into the North had exceeded almost triple than the previous year. Harry also knew most Avalonian glass was sold in Pentos after Braavos. Harry attributed that to the high density of the population in Braavos and the number of affluent people. Being a free society, Braavos enjoyed a significantly higher percentage of the populace with affluence.

Pentos was not lagging that far behind. On paper, Pentos had also stopped practising slavery, but they still engaged in the slave trade. At least, that was the rumours implied. The strenuous relations between Pentos and Myr had worked fantastically in his favour. Avalonian Glass found a massive market in Pentos overnight once the merchants started to expand out of the Braavosi market. Thanks to the cheap labour in the North and readily available essential elements for glassmaking, Harry had been making a killing by flooding Essos with his cheap glass.

It was one of the reasons why the Myrish magisters were cross with him. In their desperation, they had even sent a couple of assassins, which Harry was all too thankful to welcome into his service.

Harry firmly believed in the saying, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Going by the welcome he received in Pentos upon arrival, he was sure the Pentoshi also felt the same.

“That’s a lot of people.” Robb whispered, looking down from the walls of their mansion.

Harry couldn’t agree more. The streets outside their manse were lined with a huge crowd, all eager to get a glimpse of the airship. Their arrival had started a sort of rave in the city. He supposed having a giant floating ship ought to be the most exciting thing that happened to attract the collective attention of the Pentoshi people after they hosted Vhagar and Caraxes.

“They won’t break into the manse, right?” Jon asked worriedly.

“We assure you, my lords. No one shall enter the manse without your permission. Magister Matadar has seen to your privacy and safety by posting some of the best Unsullied guards all over the manse. You’ll have nothing to worry about.” Captain Baemar said with a deferential bow.

“Of course. Magister Matadar has our thanks, Captain.”

“I shall convey your thanks to the good Magister. Have a pleasant evening, my lords.” the captain nodded before taking his leave.

“Interesting fella, isn’t he?” Harry said, eyeing the captain as he disappeared into the stairs.

“He’s a sellsword, isn’t he?” Elsera asked.

“You’ve got keen eyes.” Harry said.

“How did you...?” Robb started.

“The way he carried himself and Maester Luwin told me the Free Cities don’t keep use their native population in their armies. They buy their guards and armies.” Elsera answered.

“Exactly. So, keep your wits around these foreign men. Their loyalty is not to the Magisters of Pentos but to the silver they earn.” Harry cautioned.

Harry stopped talking, however, when a gaggle of servants came into their manse escorted by three Unsullied guards. The curious thing, however, was that these servants were all women dressed boldly for Westerosi sensibilities. Most of them even looked comely enough.

“What is this?” Robb asked with a look of confusion.

“Compliments from the good Magisters of Pentos, my lords.” The Unsullied bowed and left.

“Compliments?” Robb looked at the woman with utter bewilderment before turning to Harry. “Do you understand what’s going on?”

“My lords. How may we serve?” the women bowed at the waist.

Harry quickly scanned the minds of the women who were conveniently giving them a peek down their neckline with that over-enthusiastic bow. Once he determined they were women of pleasure houses with no specific ill intention towards his family, Harry let his vigilance drop a little bit.

“Harry? Are you going to say anything?” Jon asked in a whisper.

“You are the elder. I leave this most important matter to your discretion.” Harry said with a straight face to Robb, who only looked more lost than he already was.

Harry left Robb and Jon a stuttering mess before the women as he retired to his room. He had better things to do than hold their hands through every little incident. Besides, some things were better learned through experience.

Once Harry was in his room, he immediately went to work carving new runestones for a wide area scanner. If he wanted a navigational map to be ready, he supposed he ought to finish the work before they journey into Valyria. He was planning a return journey that'd touch up on all the major settlements of Essos on their return journey. He immersed himself in the work as time flew by. Perhaps nearly half an hour later, a knock on the door made him look up from his work.

With a simple flex of his magic, the door swung open. It was none other than Anya at his door.

"Come in."

"Are the runestones for the new map?" Anya asked once her eyes fell on the runestones on the floor.

"Yes, they are. I'm hoping to finish it before we enter the Valyrian peninsula."

"Would you be in need of assistance, my lord?" Anya asked.

"It's better to have more skilled hands." Harry said, eyeing his first student in this world.

Anya closed the door behind her and joined him on the floor.

"Here is the script." Harry gave one of the pieces of parchment to Anya. "You'll be carving the portion for storing the images captured as an impulse in the nodes beneath the runestone. I've already inserted the node metal at the base."

"Aren't you the least bit bothered about those...promiscuous women spending time with your brothers, my lord?" Anya suddenly asked.

Harry stared at her for a long moment, making Anya sweat a little.

"I apologise, my lord. I was out of line." Anya kept her eyes on the floor.

Harry sighed before turning back to focus on his work.

"I sensed no hostility in those women. If I send them away from my misplaced morality, they'll probably displease their employers, which would be unfortunate in their line of work." Harry explained.

"Are you saying the women would be punished if they don't share a bed with our men?" Anya asked incredulously.

"Maybe. These women were bought to Pentos from the pleasure houses of Lys, going by their silver hair. If we say we had a good time, it must be enough to allow them to return safely." Harry said with a shrug.

He saw the hesitant look on Anya's face out of the corner of his eyes.

“There are thousands and hundreds of thousands of women voluntarily and forcefully serving in the pleasure houses of Essos and Westeros. Do you plan on helping all of them, Anya?” Harry asked without looking up from the work he was doing.

“No, my lord.”

“Good. Then might I suggest you focus on the work instead of wasting your time thinking about impossible and irrelevant tasks?” Harry nodded, looking at the runestone in Anya’s hands for emphasis.

“Yes, my lord.”

They continued the work long into the night.

The next day, when Harry woke up, he was almost tempted to lie in bed and spend the rest of the day being idle. But he knew he had to be on his feet and meet with the Magisters to discuss the canal and have some serious trade talks. Pentos was one of the Free Cities that he desperately wanted on his side when the North inevitably declared independence from the Iron Throne.

Once the Iron Throne’s authority was dissolved, the threat of losing all trade with the southern kingdoms would loom over their heads. When that happens, there’d be a shock that’d pass through the North’s economy. Harry needed Braavos and Pentos in his corner to offset any short-term adverse effects. But Pentos was the most important Free City as it was the gateway to other eastern markets of Myr, Tyrosh, Lys and Volantis. He had to align Pentos’ interests with his own to let them ignore any overtures from the Iron Throne in the future.

He hoped the Iron Throne would dissolve as infighting would dismantle the southern kingdoms, but it was better to be prepared just in case.

However, when he left his room after freshening up, he saw a brown-haired woman leaving Robb’s chamber. Her state of undress was apparent as she was desperately trying to hold her dress together when he found her. But Harry remained silent and allowed the woman to walk past him as he remained inconspicuous to her senses.

‘I might’ve underestimated Robb.’ Harry mused.

Then, the doors to Jon’s room swung open, and a silver-haired woman walked out of the room, followed by Jon. He blinked in surprise when he saw the goofy look on Jon’s face, and the woman pressed a kiss to his lips.

‘Well, well, well... It looks like my brothers were having the time of their life while I was spending it carving rocks.’ Harry mused with a sigh.

When Harry checked in on Jon and Robb, he found both were back to sleep. He also found lots of wine by their bedside. Considering their inebriated state, Harry had Anya

stay back with them in the mansion. At the same time, he took Elsera and Josera along with an armed escort to meet the Prince of Pentos and other Magisters.

“Lord Harrion. Welcome...welcome to Pentos.” Magister Matadar Taentalor greeted warmly with a broad smile that stretched across his face.

Harry smiled at the well-off Magister. With just one look at the portly man, he knew the man was wealthy. The Magister had a lot of gold ornaments on his person with different gemstones that looked rare and costly. Even the braids on the Magister’s head were decorated with gold ornaments.

He supposed controlling most of the spice trade to the North would make anyone rich in these times. The rival glass trade in Avalon had made a petty enemy in Myr. This forced his merchants to stay clear of Myrish ports or seas beyond Pentos. Right now, the only safe supply port for Northern ships this far east was in Pentos. This also had a marked effect on their trade volume.

“Magister Matadar. You have a wonderful home, and your city is magnificent. You are very blessed.”

“Oh, thank you, my lord. My people tell me even the dragonlords of Valyria would be envious of Avalon.” Magister Matadar said with a chuckle. “I hope your travel was not too uncomfortable.”

“Ah, the travel was fine. The skies offer a peaceful medium for my ship to sail, unlike the turbulent seas.” Harry said with a smile.

“Of course. It must be a privilege to travel so close to the heavens. I hope the gifts I sent to the mansion for earthly pleasures were similarly exquisite.”

“Indeed Magister. Your gift was well thought out and pleasurable.” Harry said with a nod.

“Now, please, be seated.” Magister Matadar invited them in and offered them seats before sitting on a chair himself.

Harry nodded and sat on a couch across from the Magister while Elsera and Josera took seats nearby.

“These are my friends Elsera and Josera. They help me manage some of the day-to-day affairs of Avalon.”

“Ah, it’s a pleasure to meet you as well.” Magister Matadar nodded before clapping his hands and calling for refreshments.

While the servants started bringing different pitchers of wine and fruits, Harry started to get at the matter at hand.

“Our travel route goes through all the free cities of Essos on the west side of the Rhoyme. However, I have not merely visited your home for the sole pleasure of enjoying the sights of this great city. I’ve come to speak of trade.”

“Then, Lord Harrion, you came to the right place. Pentos was built on trade. Trade is the lifeblood of our city, and it’ll be for generations to come. Here in Pentos, blood matters so little. It is the coin that matters the most. I suspect that’s an alien concept to the Westerosi.”

“Blood and name have a pivotal role in Westeros. But coin is as equally important. A name and the right blood cannot provide sustenance, but coin can.”

“Well said, my lord. Well said.” Magister Matadar clapped jovially.

“As a man of trade, I know how valuable one’s time can be. So, I won’t take more of your time and present what I came here for.” He said before taking the map scroll of the Neck with the marking for the Sunset Canal.

“Ah, yes. The rumoured canal in the North. I thought it was just talk among the sailors.” Magister Matadar.

Harry was a bit surprised rumours were circulating Essos, but he didn’t show it on his face.

“Rumours, you say. I assume it’s from King’s Landing.”

It was a shot in the dark, but Harry was confident King’s Landing was the origin. When the Magister confirmed his suspicion, Harry knew his father had most likely informed the Small Council of their plans. He got the urge to facepalm, but he also understood someone in the small council likely leaked the information for nefarious purposes.

‘I think my visit to the free cities of Essos became a little more dangerous.’ Harry thought.

Harry concentrated on the present, keeping such thoughts in the back of his mind.

“For once, the rumours were not wrong, Magister Matadar. It’s my hope the canal will be completed before the year ends, and when that happens, Avalon could directly trade with Pentos.”

“Hmm. You think this canal is feasible and can be completed within a year?” Magister Matadar asked curiously.

“Yes. I have the means to accelerate the work to complete the canal. Once it is completed, I hope to enhance our spice trade. Hopefully, Essos would be much receptive to the ice trade we hope to establish.”

“Ice trade?” Magister Matadar asked in interest.

“Oh, yes. Our people in the North have found ways to preserve the ice, so we’ve started selling ice to the rest of the Seven Kingdoms. We hope that Essos will also be receptive to the ice trade. Here...have a look.” Harry nodded at Josera.

Josera placed the ice box on a table and opened it, attracting Magister Matadar's interest. Inside the box was ice and two small bottles of Arbor gold packed in a golden-coloured glass. It was Harry’s idea to buy casks of Arbor gold and Dornish red from southern merchants and have them repacked in finely decorated glass to be resold at a higher price. He suspected the Redwynes and the Dornish were unaware of his sleight of hand. Not that it’d affect him in any way. There were no laws that prohibited him from what he was doing. He had bought the casks of Dornish red and Arbor gold fair and square. What he did with the wine he purchased was entirely within his control.

Josera picked the bottle and poured a glassful of the finest wine from the Reach.

“Please try it. You’ll be pleasantly surprised.” Harry said.

The way the magister’s eyes widened when he drank the cool wine was all Harry needed to see he had the man hooked.

“The ice will remain inside the box for a few days at most until it turns into water. It’s my distinct pleasure to gift this to you.” Harry said as Josera offered the box to the magister, who took it happily.

“This gift is marvellous, Lord Harrion.” Magister Matadar said as he relished the last drops of cool wine that remained in his glass.

“Once we can supply more ice and ice boxes, your people will get some reprieve from the eastern sun.”

“I see a great fortune in this ice trade Lord Harrion.”

“Indeed, and it’s something we can benefit from in the future. We’ll be needing Pentoshi merchants to transport our ice further inland in distant markets where our ships cannot reach.” said Harry.

“I could not agree more. May gold and silver flood our coffers.”

Harry smiled and reciprocated the toast.

“May gold and silver flood our coffers.”

The meeting with the Prince of Pentos was extremely fruitful as far as Harry was concerned. They had a concise discussion on the proposed tolls and port duties to be enforced once the canal was opened for shipping. Harry had promised to waive a considerable portion of port duties for Pentoshi ships in return for lowering the price of some selected spices. There was also an agreement between several Pentoshi guilds to facilitate the transport of glass into Lys, Tyrosh and Volantis itself.

Depending solely on Braavosi, shipping was not a good idea in Harry's mind. While the Manderlys preferred to trade with the Braavosi, Harry had to look after Avalon's interests. Diversifying their shipping to spread Avalonian glass, ice, fur, ale, and other products from the North was vital to controlling pricing. With Braavosi and Pentoshi ships vying for the North's wares, it'd bring down shipping costs, which would also help sell the products at an affordable price.

He also had to keep in mind to keep his Pentoshi and Braavosi clients happy. Their support would be invaluable once the North declared independence and transitioned into a kingdom. While he had ensured his people would never starve because of the high-yield farms, the situation was not simple. He had to factor in the population increase now that the North was less affected by winter because of the climate-altering charms he had implemented.

The future also had to be kept in mind. A large-scale war would divert people from the farmlands to battlefronts. In such scenarios, having some solid ties with the Free Cities of Essos would be a boon.

Therefore, Harry was quite pleased when he returned to the manse.

However, he found a completely different scenario when he entered the manse. The manse was in utter chaos, with corpses of Unsullied soldiers littering the ground and blood covering the floor.

Harry rushed into the compound, wand in hand, followed by Elsera and Josera. To his relief, he found Jon and Robb safe with Anya in a hall while some burnt bodies lay on the floor. Anya had her fire bow in hand when he saw them and nearly used her bow on them when Harry made his sudden entrance.

"What happened here?"

"We were attacked by assassins." Robb said, looking chalk white.

Harry frowned upon hearing that.

“We captured a prisoner.” said Jon, pointing to a man bound in drapes, but the man was also bleeding out from his missing right arm.

“I had to cut off his arm. He was using some form of water magic to counter Anya’s arrows.” Jon explained sheepishly.

Harry stared coldly at the assassin.

“Who are you? Who sent you here?” Harry asked, glaring into the onyx eyes of the assassin, who defiantly stared back at him.

“Brave of you not to speak and out your employer, but your efforts are wasted, Dermes.” Harry said, making the assassin widen his eyes.

Harry slowly unsheathed Godkiller from its scabbard. The sword lit with golden runes as an oppressive aura bared down on everyone.

“I’ll be visiting Myr to have a heart-to-heart chat with Magister Aelux Araelor. But you don’t need to worry about any of that, Dermes. I grant you the sweet freedom of death for daring to raise your hand against a Stark.” Harry said calmly.

With a swift swing of his sword, Dermes’ head was lopped off. Silence prevailed in the hall for a moment until Harry chose to break it.

“This is the third time Myr has sent assassins. I think it’s time the free city of Myr needs to understand the cost of harming a Stark.”