

## The Dread Lord of Essos

### Chapter 43

The Great Masters were huddled around a table, deep in the belly of the Great Pyramid. Every so often, the frightful screech of that winged beast would catch their ears, sending trembles of terror down their fat, pitiful bodies. Just then, a young man that was drenched in sweat came barrelling through the door, not even bothering to knock. In normal times, that indiscretion was enough to have him outright killed. At the moment, the Great Masters had other problems to worry about.

“Your Worships! The invaders are nearly at the doorstep! The Guardsmen don’t know what to do,” he cried out, his hands shaking badly. He must have known that these would be the last few minutes of his life.

“Where’s Captain Hohlorro?” Great Master Pahl asked angrily. Hohlorro was in charge of security at the Great Pyramid. He was the one that should be leading their defense.

“D-Dead, Your Worship,” the boy answered as his body trembled. “His body was found in his room next to an empty bottle of poison,” he said in a shaky voice.

“That cowardly son-of-a-whore!” one of the Great Masters spat while throwing his glass cup against the wall. The expensive crystal shattered into a thousand pieces, making the young man jump in fright.

“And my brother, Commander Nohklaz?” Great Master Pahl asked.

“N-Nowhere to be seen ... Your Worship.” The boy’s lip trembled. A thundering boom in the distance was loud enough to make them all jump. The young man heard the sound of one of the Great Masters shitting himself. If he wasn’t sure before, he was when the room began to stink. All he wanted to do was leave the city and go back to the village where he had been born. He only hoped that the village was untouched and that his family was safe.

“Tell them to fight to the last man! Show these barbarians that the Meereenese are not cowards!” one of the Great Masters barked just as another grunted. The wet, juicy sound of another relieving themselves quickly followed. The young man nodded quickly, holding back a gag as he quickly left the room.

“Pull yourself together, Galare! Shitting yourself like a toddler ... disgusting,” one said with contempt. The other glared.

“We wouldn’t be in this situation if not for Pahl’s cowardly brother! He is probably halfway to Westeros by now,” he declared.

“Watch what you say about my kin,” Pahl snarled. “My bloodline dates back to the First Conquest. We were fighting battles when your kin was still sucking cock for half-pennies!”

“How dare you!” Galare growled just before letting out another grunt of relief. “It is obvious that your brother is a good-for-nothing coward who should have never been given the position of Commander in the City Guard. If he is so gallant, then where is he?”

“Just you wait ... He will find a way to save us ...” Pahl declared, hoping against hope that his brother hadn’t yet heroically died in battle. By then, it was obvious that none of their allies would arrive in time to help them. The invaders were at their doorstep, and the Great Pyramid was their last line of defense. Nohklaz was their only hope.

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Nohklaz gently slapped the side of his mistress’s face a few times. She didn’t wake up. The poison that he had slipped her was doing its job. With the amount that he had given her, she wouldn’t survive the hour. Already her face was pale and her breathing was shallow and labored. He looked at her face one last time. ‘It is such a shame that I cannot take her with me,’ he thought. She was young and beautiful with big, violet eyes and hair like spun twilight. She had been a trophy for him over the last year.

Unfortunately, he only had the supplies for one to escape. While it was true that he could have rationed his food so that both of them could have escaped, in the end, he decided against it. He would sometimes get headaches if he didn’t eat regularly. His hopeful escape would be hard enough without the mild pain annoying him. Besides, she had a decent stock of food here, and he wanted to take it with him. He would be much happier with a full belly. While she was still breathing, he pulled the sheet over her head and began pillaging her house. He didn’t have much gold on him. He only had a few coins in his money pouch from the night before. His home was well behind enemy lines, and there was no possible way for him to reach it without getting caught. The stashes of gold hidden in his family’s pyramid were now lost to him. That, of course, was a devastating blow. Thankfully, his family had been smart enough to diversify. They had businesses in several kingdoms and accounts with several different banks. If he could make it out of Meereen safely, all of his problems would be over. He hoped that his family would survive, but that remained to be seen. If not, he would be the sole benefactor of his family’s wealth. That wasn’t something to cry about. The only problem was getting out.

He grabbed the small bag of coins that his mistress had been saving and stuffed it in his sack. Her bread, cheeses, salted and dried meats, spices, salt, and anything else that looked appetizing was also thrown in the sack. Once done, he cinched the neck closed and hefted it over his shoulder. As he passed her softly wheezing body, he didn’t bother giving her a second look. She was his past. He had his future to look forward to. The journey would be dangerous, and he needed all of his wits if he wanted to survive. He gently pushed open the door and peeked through the crack. The alley was clear. He stuck his head out and looked around the other side. There was no one to be seen. Letting out a nervous laugh, he slipped through the

door and closed it behind him. As fast as he could, he pelted down the alley and pushed his body against the wall. He looked around the corner and saw some men at the end of the road. They had their backs to him. As fast as his legs could carry him, he ran across the street to the next alley.

Being behind enemy lines was very stressful. He had hoped that they would have at least one more day, but that morning, the invaders began moving in. He knew that it was only a matter of time until his mistress's house was searched, and he was found. It was now or never.

He ran down the narrow alley until he reached the end. Stopping, he once again peeked around the corner. "Shit!" he quietly cried out, quickly pulling his head back. There were enemy soldiers everywhere. From what he could tell, they were going from building to building, searching for their enemies. Nohklaz's heart was hammering in his chest, and his stomach dropped. His only choice was to try and walk across the street and into the next alley as though he was just another innocent civilian. His family tokar had been left back at his mistress's house, and he was wearing clothes that would help him blend in more. Putting his head down, he began walking across the street. For a moment, he thought that he might just get away with it, but as he approached the alley, he heard, "HAULT!"

Knowing that stopping wasn't an option for him, he ran down the alley as fast as humanly possible. He heard yelling behind him and the sounds of footsteps falling hard on the cobbled path. They continued to yell for him to stop, but he couldn't hear them. His heart was beating so hard that he could hear the rhythmic pounding in his ears. Sweat poured down his face, chest, and back as he reached the end of the alley. He turned the corner, not bothering to check if the coast was clear first. He ran two buildings down and cut into a different ally. He counted three doors on the left and barged in. He was immediately met with a knife pointed at him.

"Put that away, Zhak!" he glared, hunched over and breathing heavily. Outside, it seemed that he had stirred up a hornet's nest. Voices were shouting, though they were muffled by the thin walls.

"Did someone see you come in?" Zhak asked. "Well?" he asked again. Nohklaz stood up straight after catching his breath.

"I don't know ... I was being chased," he told them.

"The Gods be damned!" Zhak cursed, going to the door and pressing his ear against it. The voices sounded like they were getting closer.

"Why did you lead them here?!" Zhak glared.

"I had no choice! They were after me!" Nohklaz glared back.

Zhak cursed. "Now we all may be doomed because of your incompetence."

Nohklaz was about to respond when Zhak began walking away. "Where are you going?" Nohklaz asked, running after him.

"We must flee. There's no time left."

They went to the back room and joined the small group of men waiting with their own sacks. They had been planning on escaping the following day, but the enemy had already taken over the territory. It was too dangerous to stay any longer. They had then planned on escaping using the cover of darkness. Pahl had ruined that plan it seemed. When Zhak informed them of the change in plans and why, Nohklaz had never seen so many angry glares. Still, he stood tall with his chest proudly sticking out. He was a member of the Pahl family, and compared to him, these men were nothing but riff-raff.

Each of the men stood up, holding their sacks tightly. Zhak went around and checked the front of the house through a second-story window. He came back down quickly. "The front is clear. We must move fast!" he said quietly. Nohklaz was the first one to the front door. As soon as it was unlocked and opened, they all hurried through.

"The sewer entrance is not far from here," Zhak said. "We will make our escape beyond the city walls, and we will follow the river until we pass the mountains. Then, we will make our way to Hesh. I have friends there. They will get us transportation to Port Yhos. From there, we will hire a ship to take us to Qarth," he explained.

That sounded perfect to Nohklaz. His family had an account in the Qarathi bank. They mainly used it for trading, but he'd be able to access the gold within. His spirits were beginning to soar as they made their way down the smallest backstreets to try and avoid the patrolling enemy. However, when they were only a couple of blocks away, they heard someone yell out, "Over there!"

"Run!" one of the group shouted. Nohklaz didn't need to be told twice. He barrelled past his cohorts, even pushing a few to the ground as he chased after Zhak who was already sprinting away. He didn't look back. He couldn't slow down for even a second if he hoped to escape. Zhak, who was fatter and more out of shape than him, was getting closer and closer as he gained on him. He saw his friend look over his shoulder with wide, wild eyes. Nohklaz was forced to look behind as well. His eyes bugged out when he saw that several men were closing in on them. He wasn't sure if they would make it. Digging deep, he used every ounce of energy that he had and ran. He heard Zhak cry out as he started to pass him. It was then that he felt a searing pain in his lower back. He fell to the ground hard and reached behind him. He felt a knife handle sticking out right above his right buttock. Zhak had literally stabbed him in the back. He looked at his friend who ran away, never looking back.

Nohklaz realized when Zhak turned the corner that he had been used as a diversion. Zhak sent him to the ground to get the men chasing them to stop. His plan worked like a charm. As

Nohklaz thrashed and cursed while the invaders stopped to grab him, Zhak made his way through the twists and turns of the backstreets. Nohklaz only hoped that his treacherous friend would die during his long journey to freedom. If Nohklaz somehow survived, he swore that he would get his revenge on the Zhak family. That was the last thing he thought about before being clubbed in the head.

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Nohklaz sputtered as water was splashed on his face. He shook his head, trying to get the water out of his nose while coughing and choking. Once he was able to breathe properly, he looked around and tried to get his bearings. He was in a dark room with only a small, burning candle to provide light. He attempted to stand up but found that his arms and legs were tied. His gaze swept upward, and he caught a glimpse of a figure in black that nearly blended in with the shadows of the room. Nohklaz jumped and yelped in fright, his heart thumping loudly in his ears.

“Nohklaz Pahl ... You were a difficult man to track down,” the dark figure said in his native language.

“Release me this instant!” Nohklaz snarled angrily. The shadow man just laughed and walked up to him. He patted the top of his head as though he were a dog. Nohklaz gritted his teeth in anger.

“The city is nearly mine, Pahl,” the dark figure said. “You are in no position to demand anything. You should also remember that I’m not some lowly slave that will recoil out of fear of one of your tantrums.”

“You shit-eating mongrel! I will ...”

Lights flashed behind his eyes, and he became momentarily peaceful. His problems seemed to disappear as he blissfully existed in his own dazed mind. Unfortunately, his ears were ringing quite badly. He wanted to tap the side of his head to try and make the annoying ringing stop, but he suddenly remembered that he couldn’t move his hands. As his daze began to clear, the pain in his jaw began to blossom. He groaned when he finally realized what had happened. He spat out a glob of blood that had been pooling in his mouth.

“There’s no reason to be rude,” he heard that annoying voice again. “You’re my guest after all.”

Nohklaz groaned again and shook his head, shaking away the last of his brain fog. “Why did you bring me here?” he asked. “Why not just kill me where I was found?” he asked.

“I need something from you,” the voice told him. Nohklaz spat blood at the man’s feet.

“I will never help you!” he growled. The man just laughed. Nohklaz then heard the snapping of fingers before he recoiled from the sudden ball of light that was hovering in what he could now

see as a small basement room. Nohklaz blinked rapidly as his eyes struggled to adapt to the sudden brightness. After a few moments of this, his eyes were able to focus on the figure in front of him. Standing tall was the famed and feared Dread Lord. Just then, he reached up, removed his black mask, and pulled back his hood. His face was very handsome with brilliant green eyes. As he stood there, his face suddenly shifted, and it turned into an exact replica of Nohklaz's own. Nohklaz found this incredibly unnerving. His body began trembling uncontrollably.

"I don't need your help ... Only your face," the Dread Lord said with an amused expression. Harry didn't know what the man looked like, so he had been looking for him so that he could cover his face with a perfect Glamour Charm. A few useful spies and turncoats were more than happy to help Harry catch the man with the promise of freedom or riches.

"Faceless Man!" Nohklaz cried out and began thrashing and pulling at his restraints.

"Not exactly," the Dread Lord chuckled happily.

"What are you going to do?!" he asked, terrified of what he was seeing.

"The Great Pyramid is heavily guarded, and many have already died just trying to get close enough to wage a proper attack," the Dread Lord told him. "I could attack and win," he said. "But the losses would be high, and I already have other plans for my army. I could attack from above and burn the pyramid to ash, but I want the city to be intact when I take over. I could lay siege and starve them out, but that will take time that I don't have to spare."

Nohklaz couldn't believe that his own face was looking back at him while happily laying out his plan. It was utterly bizarre. "No, the best way is to attack from within," the Dread Lord told him. "And who better to do it than the most powerful Great Master's own brother?" the Dread Lord laughed. "The best part is that I'll be able to walk right in. So, I feel that I must thank you, Commander Pahl," the Dread Lord smirked, pulling out his midnight black sword.

Nohklaz's mouth went dry, and he desperately tried to break free as the tip of the sword crept closer. "You have been a great help to my kingdom," he said merrily as the tip of the sword slipped into his chest.

"NOOO! Please! I beg you to ..."

The sword sank in deeper, but Nohklaz blinked in surprise. He felt no pain. He looked down and saw that his chest had been completely penetrated by the evil-looking blade. He opened his mouth to beg again, but the black blade suddenly erupted in fire. His eyes went wide, and he screamed in agony as he was cooked from the inside out. He thrashed and bucked as his meat sizzled and cooked. He didn't know how long the torture lasted, but he was thankful when his body finally went into shock and the pain faded along with his vision.

“Feed him to my dragon,” Harry told his drones. They ran in and dragged the smoking, man-sized piece of jerky away.

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The Great Masters were enjoying their feast of spit-roasted goat, turtle soup, and roasted potatoes when the door opened. They all looked around, though many refused to stop shoveling vast amounts of food into their open gobs. Great Master Pahl, however, was very relieved to see his brother entering the room with several Guardsmen flanking his sides.

“Nohklaz!” his brother called out, standing up to greet him. “I am relieved to see you alive, brother! Tell us ... How goes our defense? Has Yunkai and Astapor come to our aid yet?” He was eager to hear the news.

“Sadly, your friends in Slaver’s Bay have forsaken you,” his brother said as the Guardsmen fanned out. “There is no one coming to save you.”

“But that’s impossible! We have an ironclad agreement with th...”

Suddenly, the Guardsmen rushed forward and began hacking the rest of the Great Masters. He screamed as one of their heads rolled off of their shoulders and tipped over his golden plate full of steaming hot turtle soup. The soup spilled out, landing in his lap. He screamed in pain as his crotch was severely burned. All around him were the agonizing screams of his fellow rulers being hacked to bits. Poor Vhelesas down at the end of the table was being pierced over and over by two spear-wielding maniacs. As one spear entered his chest and was pulled out, another was jammed into his bloated belly. His dying screams were terrifying to hear. Beside him, the leader of the Yherizan family wailed pathetically as a sword nearly split his skull. The sword was pulled out and rivers of blood began pouring down his forehead and face. The sword cleaved his head open again, and blood splattered on the Great Pahl’s face.

“Brother! You have betrayed ...” he began but quieted when the vision of his brother suddenly changed into that of an intimidating man with deep, green eyes. Pahl whimpered as his brethren gasped and wheezed out their final breaths.

“Allow me to introduce myself,” the man said amusedly. He walked over to Pahl and heaved him out of his seat by the front of his pink and white tokar. Pahl tried to fight back and break free, but the man’s grip was unbreakable. He was dragged toward the open window. “My name is Harold, and I’ve come to claim these lands.”

“YES! YOU CAN HAVE THEM! THEY ARE YOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOURRRRRSSS!” Pahl screamed as he was tossed out the window. Harry stuck his head out and watched him fall a long distance before ricocheting off the sloping side of the pyramid. His body bounced off and eventually landed on a group of City Guardsmen who were guarding the perimeter of the

pyramid. Down below, the rest of the guards looked up. Some of them started moving toward the entrance.

“They are coming!” Harry shouted. “Send the signal,” he told his soldiers. One of his men pulled out his bow and set an arrow alight. He stood in front of the window and fired it out. Only moments later, Harry heard the roaring of his army as they began taking the Great Pyramid. Harry and his men got ready to move down through the lower floors of the pyramid until they were able to hit the guards in the back while the enemy was worrying about his army smashing against their front lines. Harry placed his Valyrian Steel faceplate back on and raised his hood. He wanted to remain in character for the big show.

His men were all specially created drones that resembled the men of the City Guard. As such, Harry didn't need to worry about hiding his magic. As guards ran noisily up the stairs toward them, Harry flung his hand out and a torrent of fire erupted into the stairwell. Seconds later, he heard the screams of men being set on fire. With a wave of his hand, he snuffed the flames out and hurriedly made his way down the steps. When nearly to the next floor, he found the smoldering husks that were once a dozen men. Harry paid them no mind and carried on. When he came across another small group, he waved his hand and several of the men's eyes glazed over. Before their comrades knew that something had gone wrong, they were already being stabbed by their fellow guards' swords. Harry's men easily rushed in and finished them all off, even the Imperiused ones.

With a single wave of the hand, necks were sliced open, sending men to their knees holding onto the wide gashes as blood leaked from between their quivering fingers. Some Guardsmen gasped with wide, terrified eyes and cried out, “Warlock!” in their native tongues. One such man dropped his sword and ran, only to get a piercing bolt right in the spine. His body hit the ground hard and slid across the polished, stone ground. He was whimpering in pain as he dragged his lifeless lower half across the floor leaving a smear of blood behind. Harry didn't know what happened to the boy. He simply walked on and left him behind.

When one cowardly group saw the dreaded Dragonlord coming for them, they screamed and retreated into a side room. They quickly closed and barred the thick, wooden double doors. When Harry arrived, he gave the doors a kick. A loud, echoing bang filled the cavernous corridor, and the door squealed in protest. He heard the enemy soldiers crying out from behind the door. Harry reared back and kicked it again. He heard the sound of wood cracking. The men behind the door were yelling for him to go away. Harry scoffed at their stupidity. He lashed out with his magic, and the door was blown off of its hinges. Smears of blood on the ground told him that several unlucky men who were directly behind the door wouldn't likely be getting up any time soon. One man gagged and began vomiting his entrails before he quickly died. Another screamed and writhed on the ground as his blood turned to acid. Harry's drones rushed in and made quick work of the rest.

Floor after floor, Harry and his group made it down taking care of anyone in their path. Only the slaves were spared as they finally reached the ground level. By then, there was no one left in

the pyramid to stop them. They ran for the entrance, and Harry heard the battle still raging outside. He barreled through the door with his sword in hand. His dark blade ignited as he lifted it high into the air. He slashed it downward and a fireball exploded from the tip. A long line of his enemies was set on fire. They screamed and ran in circles. Some dropped to the ground and rolled around, desperately trying to snuff the flames. Meanwhile, Harry was hacking limbs and heads off while his drones did the same. The enemy was becoming frantic and confused as they tried to fight off two groups of fighters both in the front and at their backs. Screams and cries of pain filled the plaza as thousands of men were cut down. The floor quickly became slick with the blood of the fallen.

As his army pushed in, the enemy was forced back toward Harry and his group. They were forced to trample their wounded while some outright tripped over the dead. As they fell, his drones jumped on them and pierced their chests with their swords. On the battleground, men on both sides lay dying with their hands outstretched as they begged for help. They were ignored by all.

One brave soldier stepped up to Harry with his battle axe in hand. He screamed like a Viking in a war charge. Harry was quite impressed with his bravery. As his axe came down, Harry easily blocked it with his sword and flipped him over his back. Behind him, Harry could hear his drones slicing the brave man to pieces. One guardsman was repeatedly stabbing one of his fallen soldiers. Harry swung as hard as he could and caved the back of his head in with his armored fist. Before the body fell, Harry grabbed it by the back of its shirt and threw it hard into the crowd of enemies, knocking many to the ground. Just then, Harry heard the sound of war cries getting closer. Harry ran to a nearby statue and quickly climbed up it. In the distance, he could see a large group of reinforcements coming to pinch his army. They were screaming wildly and brandishing their swords.

A sudden tornado of fire slammed down on the group and the building next to them. The building exploded, shooting flaming debris in every direction. The entire group was incinerated by the flying menace that was still circling above. That seemed to finally break the defenders' spirits. Many began trying to flee even as his army sliced, stabbed, and hacked them to pieces. Some did successfully make their escape, but Harry cared little for them. All that he cared about was that the city had just fallen. Jumping to the ground, he slowly walked back to the pyramid. As he did, a soldier ran past him trying to escape. Harry's hand whipped out and snatched him by the chin. With a hard twist, the man's neck snapped cleanly, and Harry let his body drop to the ground. Harry brushed the dirt from his hands. He had work to do.