

G.O Thrones 121

Chapter 121: Eight Hundred Warriors

As noon approached, the meeting concluded.

Each participant placed the stone ball in front of them back onto the disk and exited the conference hall together.

"Viserys."

As they stepped out of the main door, Alicent, dressed in a green gown, called softly and naturally took her husband's arm.

"How long have you been waiting, Alicent?"

Viserys asked with a smile, appreciating his wife's concern. He was in the prime of his life and really liked the young and beautiful Alicent, and they often showed their affection openly.

"I've prepared lunch, just waiting for you to join me."

Alicent's smile was charming, her gaze soft and inviting.

Viserys glanced at his advisers and straightened his back, feeling honored by his wife's thoughtfulness. The advisers acknowledged his look with nods and smiles, then dispersed.

Viserys turned to his children with an invitation. "How about joining us for lunch? Alicent has prepared a wonderful meal."

"No, I ate with Rhaegar," Rhaenyra responded flatly, turning to leave. She was estranged from her father and even more so from her "best sister" Alicent. The last thing she wanted was to share a table with them.

Rhaegar stood by, amused as he watched Rhaenyra walk away. Since she lost her status as heir, she's been more open about her disdain.

"Ahem..."

Rhaegar's thoughts were interrupted by a light cough. He looked over to see Tyland, a blonde Lannister, cupping his throat and winking at him. Though Tyland was handsome and stylish, Rhaegar found his winking irritating.

After a moment's contemplation, Rhaegar politely declined his father's invitation. "Father, the Mushroom Set's caravan will be entering the city soon, and I need to supervise it."

Viserys was a bit disappointed. "A bunch of savages, what's the point of being busy with them?"

However, he understood his eldest son's dedication and let it go. He took Alicent's hand and they walked away side by side.

Once they had gone, Rhaegar approached the waiting Tyland and smiled. "Lord Tyland, what do you need to discuss?"

"Let's chat as we walk."

"Alright."

As they walked down the corridor, Tyland clasped his hands behind his back, trying to appear casual. "Prince, do you know why the Queen showed up at the Council Chamber door today?"

"Did she take any action?"

Rhaegar kept his smile and asked.

Alicent had been quiet since the heir replacement ceremony.

Apart from a few minor, harmless maneuvers behind the scenes, she had consistently maintained the image of a virtuous woman and had never had any conflict with Rhaegar.

Tyland nodded. "The last time you proposed to clean up the streets of King's Landing, the Queen privately recommended her father, Lord Otto, to take up the post."

"Oh, she came up with a clever idea," Rhaegar said with a faint smile. "Not only does she bring Otto back into the fold, but she also secures real power."

The resident population of King's Landing had swelled to a staggering 500,000 people. It was one of the largest city-states in all of Westeros, serving as the political heart of the realm.

Yet, despite its significance, the city was plagued by severe issues. The population was bloated, order was lax, and the streets were littered with filth and reeked of human waste.

In the summer, the stench was so overpowering that even dragons could smell it from ten miles away.

Before the Dragonpit reform program, Rhaegar had suggested a street cleanup to improve the residents' environment.

"Prince, you should've planned ahead and picked someone to execute the strategy," Tyland said sincerely.

"Let's not forget that letting Otto go back to King's Landing will not only let him benefit from your efforts, but it'll also create unnecessary problems."

"Thank you for the information, Ser Tyland."

Rhaegar gave Tyland a pat on the shoulder and parted ways at the corner of the staircase with a smile.

Rhaegar had no doubt about the accuracy of Tyland's intelligence. However, he could only shake his head at the implications.

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Nightfall

Rhaegar returned to the Dragonpit.

The door opened, and a dimly lit interior was revealed, where the flickering of campfires merged with the glow of nightlights. Rhaegar walked at a steady pace, listening out for any subtle sounds on the stone floor.

"Roar..."

All of a sudden, a loud roar filled the cavern as green dragonfire shot up like a pillar, lighting up the whole space.

The Cannibal dragon made its way up to the top of the Dragonpit, looking down at it as the ruler.

The Dragonpit blazed with light, revealing a single silhouette standing tall, surrounded by others in a neat formation.

"Prince..."

As soon as they saw Rhaegar, cries echoed through the vastness of the Dragonpit, their resonance like the beat of drums.

Puh-puh-puh...

The bonfires were lit one after the other, quickly dispelling the darkness and bringing the Dragonpit back to full brightness.

In the center of the Dragonpit, two groups of men stood tall with their heads held high.

One side was made up of around three hundred men, all wearing leather armor and carrying spears and swords. They were the original guards of the Dragonpit.

On the other side, nearly a thousand tall, powerful individuals dressed in animal skins and rough-hewn clothes stood. These were the free folk who had followed Rhaegar from Crackclaw Point.

One man from each group stepped forward.

Maynard, decked out in a guard's uniform, looked like he'd been sick.

And a thin, brown-haired young man in coarse linen, with a white falcon perched on his shoulder.

The young man approached Rhaegar, bowed, and spoke in a soft voice. "Prince, eight hundred warriors are waiting for your orders."

Rhaegar clapped him on the shoulder. "No problems with transportation, right, Tormund?"

Tormund glanced at the white falcon on his shoulder and smiled shyly. "Don't worry, I have more than one pair of eyes."

This white falcon was a legacy from his tribe.

"Good," Rhaegar said. "Send someone to collect the equipment tomorrow and increase the number of Dragonkeepers to a thousand."

He scanned the 800 free folk warriors, his heart swelling with pride. These were the warriors he had painstakingly trained. Now, as the Dragonpit needed men, they formed a legitimate armed force.

In the vast city of King's Landing, the royal family's army consisted of only two thousand gold cloaks and the dragon couldn't always be by his side.

How could he rest easy without an armed force at his side?

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Rhaegar organized his men and made his way up to the second floor of the Dragonpit, where his private room was located.

There was a slight creak as he opened the door.

Rhaegar pushed open the door and stepped into the room, frowning slightly.

"You're back?"

A familiar voice rang out, and a lamp illuminated Rhaenyra's figure.

Rhaegar closed the door, lit the candle inside the room, and said with surprise, "Rhaenyra, why are you here?"

"Waiting for you, of course."

Rhaenyra, now wearing a strapless red dress, swayed her hips as she approached. She lifted his chin with a finger and laughed lightly. "This afternoon, the caravan of free folk looked like a long snake entering the city. It wasn't hard to guess where you'd be."

"You saw the team I organized. What do you think?"

Rhaegar didn't beat around the bush, sitting comfortably at the table in front of the fireplace.

"They're pretty fierce, and they're definitely worthy of the wildlings. They could be very useful."

Rhaenyra's tone was genuine.

Rhaegar picked up a quill and started sketching on a piece of paper as he talked. "Solving the survival problems of the free folk hasn't been easy."

"The Mushroom Set's caravan, right? That's a clever way to make money."

Rhaenyra thought of the special caravans operating in the Crownlands and the Riverlands, her tone tinged with envy.

Most nobles in the Crownlands were pretty well off, and their borders was a great place to make money.

Trade in the Riverlands had slowed down because of the way the rivers there run together and the fact that the local lords don't really work together.

Rhaegar had teamed up with the old Lord of the Tully family to organize traveling merchants who transported goods between different noble territories. They traded and exchanged along the way.

This venture brought in a lot of money every year.

That way, he could support the free folk under his command and also have surplus funds to spend.

Chapter 122: Laena and Daemon

Hearing Rhaenyra's envy, Rhaegar glanced at her and laughed, "You're making quite a profit from collecting ship taxes on Dragonstone Island, aren't you?"

"Not as much as you earn."

Rhaenyra moved a chair and sat aside.

Rhaegar shook his head. "The Mushroom Set caravan earns quite a lot but also spends a lot."

"Every year, the profit is divided: 30% goes to Old Tully as a dividend, 30% to maintain the lives of the free people, and 10% to fill the Princess's private coffers."

"In the end, not even half of the gold coins are left in my hands."

"Why, are you hurt?"

Thinking of the private treasury she had built for herself, Rhaenyra smiled.

It was a huge amount of resources. Not only gold dragons, but also all kinds of leather goods, jewelry, and exotic treasures.

Rhaenyra's expenses in King's Landing largely relied on this private treasury.

"This is compensation for you. It's just some gold and silver, nothing more."

Rhaegar valued emotional bonds over gold and silver. If they were really short of money, the treasury could be drawn upon. He just didn't want to ask his father for money. Freedom of wealth and providing for free people needed to be managed independently.

After a few moments of silence, Rhaenyra changed her tone and asked, "I have two pieces of news, one good and one bad. Which would you like to hear first?"

Rhaegar's hand paused for a moment as he wondered, "Where did that come from?"

"Rhaenys!" Rhaenyra gave the answer.

"I see, let's start with the good news."

The news came from Rhaenys, and Rhaegar had a slight headache guessing about what.

Rhaenyra mused, "Laena has given birth, a set of twin daughters, and the Targaryen bloodline is multiplying again."

"She's still very much in love with Daemon."

Rhaegar snorted and said, "Back then she risked treason to save our good uncle and in the blink of an eye a child was born."

Seven years ago, on a rainy night, he guessed that Daemon wouldn't be honest and would not face the law, so he took the Cannibals to guard Blackwater Bay in advance.

Daemon, unsurprisingly, escaped on a Caraxes, and Rhaegar caught him in the act.

After he left, Laena rode Vaghar to rescue Daemon, who had fallen into the sea.

To escape the king, the two hid in a free-trading city-state and organized a wedding.

"Rhaegar, I know you. You don't care about them anymore."

Rhaenyra put her hand on Rhaegar's shoulder soothingly.

After that night, Daemon and Laena were wanted by the kingdom and fled. But Rhaenyra knew that both her father and brother had tacitly refrained from mentioning them again, assuming that the culprits had fallen into the sea.

"Tell me the bad news."

Rhaegar was a little annoyed.

Rhaenyra nodded. "Laena sent me a letter; she misses her homeland, wants her newborn son to grow up in it, and begged me to plead with you and Father."

"You agreed?"

Rhaegar raised his head in surprise, not expecting Laena to make such a request.

Rhaenyra replied helplessly, "If I had said yes, how could I call it bad news?"

Rhaegar grunted and rubbed his forehead.

Personal bravery aside, Laena was now the greatest dragon rider in the world, master of the greatest dragon, Vaghar. Her family's power had grown in recent years and was now at its peak.

Not to mention, the massive fleet under the Sea Snake's command was formidable.

As for the dragons, Laena commanded Vaghar, Meleys, Caraxes, and Seasmoke - all experienced in war. On the other hand, the royal family had only three dragon riders including him: Rhaenyra with Syrax and Aegon, who had recently tamed Sunfyre.

Of the three, only Rhaenyra had combat experience. Syrax and Sunfyre were still young dragons, inferior even to the youngest of Laena's dragons, Seasmoke.

"The Sea Snake is not an easy man to contend with. What are you planning to do?" Rhaenyra asked gently.

Rhaegar's thoughts flowed as he considered the Velaryons' deep heritage. "Laena can come back, but her two children, bearing the Targaryen name, must be raised by the royal family."

He had thought it over. Daemon was a traitor, but his children had pure Targaryen blood. Raising two children who could control dragons while keeping Laena as their mother was a strategic move. It was a deal that made sense from any angle.

"What about Daemon? He won't leave his wife and daughters," Rhaenyra asked.

Rhaegar tilted his head back and murmured, "Daemon is a traitor, and the day he returns to Westeros is the day I will ride Cannibal to tear him apart."

For the sake of their blood ties, Rhaegar could tolerate Daemon living in the world—but not in front of him.

"All right, I'll tell Laena the answer."

Thinking of the plea in her best friend's letter, Rhaenyra could only lament that things had changed.

Rhaegar squeezed her hand and said solemnly, "Rhaenyra, you have very poor taste in friends."

"Why do you say that?" Rhaenyra frowned, questioned about her judgment.

Rhaegar said amusedly, "Look at your close friends. Alicent became our stepmother and Laena married Daemon."

"I blame Grandfather for having only two heirs, Father and Daemon, or you might have had some good friends for aunts."

"Rhaegar, you are too much!!!"

Rhaenyra's mind exploded at the comment.

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Three days later at Dragonpit.

"Stay out of the way, or the dragon will stomp you!"

"I'm keeping my distance, brother."

"Then stay away, Sunfyre doesn't care if you're my brother or not..."

Rhaegar was making his routine inspection of the Dragonpit, and as soon as he entered, he heard a familiar voice.

He looked over and saw a golden dragon lying in the center of the Dragonpit, surrounded by dragonkeepers. Not far from the dragon stood two figures—one large and one small.

"Brother..."

Rhaegar was about to approach when he heard a soft, joyful call from the corner.

He turned and saw a little girl with silver hair and purple eyes sitting near a bonfire. She was about ten years old, pink and pretty, wearing a white dress.

"Helaena, why are you here?" Rhaegar asked, walking up to his sister and waving.

Helaena was pale, with some bottles and jars in front of her and a wriggling reptile in her hand. When she saw Rhaegar approaching, she hurriedly stuffed the reptile into a glass bottle and blocked it with the jars. Her brother didn't like her messing around with these little creatures.

Walking closer, Rhaegar glanced over Helaena's shoulder and said helplessly, "I already saw it. What's the use of hiding it?"

Helaena lowered her head like a child who had made a mistake. "I just looked, I didn't play with it."

"I'm not against you playing with bugs; I just think you should have more contact with humans," Rhaegar said, gently rubbing her little head.

He still liked his well-behaved sister, but for some reason, Helaena had become more withdrawn as she grew older. She spent all day locked in her room, playing with snakes and bugs that no normal girl would like. This was not a good sign.

Chapter 123: Sunfyre and Aegon

"Brother..."

Hearing Rhaegar's advice, Helaena stood up gently, her head lowered.

"Don't be nervous, no one will blame you."

Rhaegar held Helaena's face, lifting her head to look at him. "Why did you come to the Dragonpit?"

Seeing his little sister was rare, so he cherished these moments.

Feeling the warmth from his hands, Helaena turned away and mumbled, "Mother told me to come here. She said that all the Targaryen children have to tame a dragon."

Rhaegar smiled, understanding the situation. Glancing at his brothers in the distance, he saw through Alicent's intentions.

Aegon had tamed Sunfyre, giving Alicent a significant boost in status. Helaena, at nine, and Aemond, at seven, were old enough to tame dragons. Unfortunately, the dragon eggs in their cradles had never hatched. If they wanted to tame a dragon, they had to try at the Dragonpit.

Amused, Rhaegar held Helaena's small hand. "Come on, a dragon egg hatched in the Dragonpit at the beginning of the year. It's a very beautiful young dragon."

Despite Alicent's rivalry and ambition, Rhaegar wasn't one to let personal issues cloud his judgment. Helping his half-siblings tame dragons was wise; dragons were the Targaryens' treasure. A dragon without a master was ineffective.

Helaena shared his dreamer's gift and was a pure Targaryen. Helping her tame a dragon was no problem.

"Brother, can I touch Sunfyre?"

"No, Sunfyre is a raging dragon. It will bite your arm off."

"....."

As they approached the golden dragon, Rhaegar overheard his two brothers.

"Aegon, do you want to ride the dragon and let off steam?"

As he approached, Rhaegar's eyes were filled with amusement.

Rhaegar!"

Seeing Rhaegar, Aegon was startled and looked uncomfortable. He hated this half-brother more than anything.

"Big brother."

Aemond, a bit at a loss for words, greeted nervously. He was only seven, with frizzy silver-gold hair and a pale green tunic, resembling his father, Viserys.

"Well, you're getting a little taller."

Rhaegar let go of Helaena's hand and patted Aemond's head, keeping his smile.

Alicent had three sons and a daughter. Except for Aegon, whom he disliked and often lectured, Rhaegar was a caring older brother to the others.

His eyes fell on Aegon. Rhaegar tilted his head and asked, "Aegon, what did you just call me?"

"Nothing. I didn't call you anything."

Aegon's face stiffened and he unconsciously took half a step back.

Rhaegar shook his head, stepped forward and squeezed Aegon's shoulder, a playful look in his eyes.

"No, call me again."

"Gulp."

Looking directly into his elder brother's eyes, Aegon's heart pounded, and he swallowed hard.

His knees felt weak. Over the years, he had developed a fear of his eldest brother. Were it not for his younger brother and sister, he would have wanted to turn and run.

"What are you nervous about, brother?"

Sensing Aegon's emotions, Aemond tugged at the corner of his cloak, his eyes full of curiosity.

To Aemond, Aegon was a brave Dragon rider, a hero who feared nothing.

Looking down at his younger brother, Aegon gritted his teeth.

Why did you have to speak up now?

Taking a deep breath, Aegon, still intent on maintaining his composure, muttered, "Brother."

"That's right."

Rhaegar patted Aegon's shoulder, a smile playing on his lips.

Foolish brother, my name isn't something you can call so casually.

"Tell me, what are you doing with Sunfyre? Trying to ride a dragon for a run?"

The atmosphere eased, and Rhaegar glanced towards the golden dragon in the distance.

Sunfyre was no ordinary dragon. It had hatched from the same clutch of eggs as Syrax. With its golden scales and light pink wing membrane, it was a majestic, handsome dragon.

Sometimes, even Rhaegar envied Aegon for riding such a beautiful creature.

Aegon, still a bit wooden-faced, replied absentmindedly, "I brought the two of them to the Dragonpit to meet the dragons and to watch the dragon combat training you've implemented."

"Meeting the dragons is fine, but no to the combat training."

Rhaegar's tone was firm. "The Dragonkeepers have just been recruited. They're not familiar with the dragons yet, so the battle training will have to wait."

"It's just drawing a bow and shooting arrows at a dragon. What's so difficult about it?"

Aegon muttered, clearly reluctant.

The so-called dragon combat training referred to the traditional Targaryen technique. Soldiers would chain one of the dragon's legs and shoot arrows at it to train the dragon's dodging ability. This technique had been discontinued after Aegon the Conqueror's death.

To Rhaegar, the dragons were the family's strength. While there might not be many opportunities to ride a dragon into battle, every family member should be prepared.

That's one reason he revived the technique.

Rhaegar ignored Aegon's dissatisfaction. The boy was never very smart, and Rhaegar didn't care.

Rhaegar ordered the nearby Dragonkeeper, "Go fetch Tessarion."

Tessarion was the name Rhaenyra had given to the young dragon that had recently hatched. The Dragonkeeper nodded and hurried off.

Upon hearing there were other dragons, Aemond's eyes lit up, staring eagerly at Rhaegar with wide eyes. Rhaegar hesitated, recognizing the eagerness in Aemond's gaze.

There was only one young dragon, not enough for both Helaena and Aemond. After a moment of thought, Rhaegar asked another Dragonkeeper, "Is Dreamfyre sleeping?"

"No, that dragon just finished feeding," the young Dragonkeeper replied in High Valyrian, a language he wasn't fluent in.

Rhaegar nodded. "Bring Dreamfyre as well. It's been in the crypt long enough."

"As you wish, Prince," the Dragonkeeper responded. He called for helpers and went off to retrieve Dreamfyre.

After giving the orders, Rhaegar placed a hand on each of his siblings' heads, ruffling their hair gently. "There will be two dragons. It's up to you to tame them."

"Thank you, big brother," Aemond said, his face flushed with excitement. "I will succeed."

He didn't care about the animosity between Aegon and Rhaegar. All he wanted was a dragon of his own.

Helaena, however, was much quieter. She kept her head bowed and her toes traced circles on the stone floor, looking a bit bewildered. She rarely left her room and knew little about dragons.

When her mother told her to come, she came and since Rhaegar told her to tame a dragon, she would try.

Aegon watched the scene unfold. He despised Rhaegar for currying favor with their younger siblings. How could Aemond, with his eagerness, and Helaena, with her quiet demeanor, succeed in taming dragons?

He had spent years trying to tame Sunfyre.

"I'm not going to play house with you," Aegon muttered. He rolled his eyes and walked towards Sunfyre, standing a short distance away.

Chapter 124: Tessarion

He wasn't interested in watching a child tame a dragon; Sunfyre was his true love.

Aemond glanced at his less-than-happy brother and hesitated for a moment, pretending not to notice.

He was seven years old now.

By this age, his older sister Rhaenyra had already successfully ridden Syrax.

His older brother Rhaegar had tamed the largest dragon he had ever seen, the king of the wild dragons, the Cannibal, at the age of six.

Aemond wanted to tame a dragon so he could be honored by his father and praised by his mother.

As for his brother Aegon, he could only say sorry in his heart.

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Time passed.

The Dragonkeepers returned one after another.

"Roar..."

Two distinct dragon roars echoed through the Dragonpit, accompanied by the voices of the Dragonkeepers as they approached.

Before long, a large and a small dragon emerged from their respective crypts.

Dreamfyre needed no introduction.

With light blue scales threaded with silver, light blue wings, and silver back scales, the dragon was sleek and adorned with a regal crown of horns.

The smaller dragon, barely the size of a horse, was equally striking.

Its wings were a deep cobalt blue, and its claws, crown, and belly scales gleamed like polished copper. Its form was elegant and noble.

This was the newly hatched baby dragon, Tessarion.

"Dragons! There are two dragons!" Aemond's voice trembled with excitement as he took in the sight.

"Don't worry, they're unclaimed dragons. You'll have plenty of chances," Rhaegar said, placing a hand on Aemond's shoulder to prevent him from rushing forward in his enthusiasm.

To be honest, he was glad to see his third brother so enthusiastic.

Aemond's passion for dragons was similar to Rhaegar's from childhood—it was a shared interest.

"Uh-huh, I get it, brother."

Aemond's eyes never left the two dragons, scanning them eagerly.

As the dragons drew closer, his excitement grew. He pulled Helaena's hand and exclaimed, "Sister, look! Brother has prepared two dragons for us!"

Before coming to the Dragonpit, Alicent had advised the three siblings to avoid provoking Rhaegar and to focus on taming the dragons.

Aemond had been prepared for Rhaegar to make things difficult.

He hadn't expected Rhaegar to be so accommodating, presenting them with two dragons to tame.

Helaena winced in pain from her brother's grip and frowned. "Keep your voice down, Aemond. You might not succeed in taming them."

"Sister!" Aemond yelled, frustrated as if doused with cold water.

Helaena pulled her hand away, continued to gaze at Rhaegar, and muttered absentmindedly, "The beast will tear our flesh!"

"What?" Rhaegar was startled by her words and immediately turned to Helaena.

This little girl's occasional nonsensical remarks often held prophetic truths.

Her words were too powerful to ignore.

Rhaegar couldn't help but take them seriously.

Helaena flinched, her eyes filled with panic, and she stammered, "No, nothing, I'm talking nonsense."

"I heard what you just said. What does it mean?" Rhaegar asked gently, kneeling down to smooth her hair.

"No, no, I didn't..."

Terrified, Helaena backed away, tears welling up in her eyes.

She was scared!

Ever since she was a kid, she'd been plagued by visions and the rumors they'd sparked.

Her mother had taught her to be quiet and behave like a lady.

Although she wasn't sure what it meant to be a lady, she knew to keep her mouth shut.

"Be brave, Helaena."

Seeing his distressed sister, Rhaegar sighed and gently embraced her.

He stroked her head with a tender look of pity in his eyes. "Don't be afraid. No one can hurt you. I'll protect you."

He had the same nightmares, and he understood her situation.

Of course, he wanted to protect her.

"Sister, don't cry. I'll protect you too," Aemond said, holding Helaena's hand and gently shaking it.

Compared to their domineering brother Aegon, he preferred the company of his quiet sister.

When Helaena cried, he felt helpless.

He tried to mimic Rhaegar's comforting gestures.

Helaena's sensitive heart was soothed by their support, and she nestled into Rhaegar's arms, unwilling to let go.

"Prince, Dreamfyre is ready," the Dragonkeeper reported.

"Thank you. Take Aemond to meet the dragons first," Rhaegar instructed, his voice calm.

He looked at Helaena in his arms, a mix of concern and resignation on his face. It was obvious that she wasn't ready to tame a dragon today.

"Big brother, I'll go ahead," Aemond said, patting Helaena's hair before eagerly following the Dragonkeeper. He was determined to tame a dragon and envisioned taking his sister on exhilarating flights to cheer her up.

The Dragonkeeper asked, "Prince, which dragon would you like to try?"

Aemond's gaze flitted between Dreamfyre and Tessarion, his mouth dry with anticipation. Both dragons were magnificent, and he wished he could have them both.

"I think I'll go for this one, smaller and more docile," he finally said, pointing to the young Tessarion.

Aemond approached Tessarion with a bit of caution, following the Dragonkeeper's instructions.

He wasn't making a spur-of-the-moment decision; he'd carefully gathered information from his brother Aegon.

Dreamfyre was known to be feisty and had been confined in the Dragonpit for years. Aegon had told him how Rhaegar had once tried to tame Dreamfyre and nearly got incinerated.

In Aemond's mind, Rhaegar's ability to tame the Cannibal marked him as extraordinary. If even he struggled with Dreamfyre, Aemond knew he needed to be realistic.

Under the Dragonkeeper's guidance, Aemond approached Tessarion slowly. "Tessarion, look at me," he said in High Valyrian, trying to establish a connection.

Tessarion lay lazily on the ground, flicking his tail and glancing occasionally at Dreamfyre and Sunfyre, clearly uneasy in their presence.

"Tessarion, we can be partners," Aemond said, his eyes full of hope as he reached out to touch Tessarion's horn.

Suddenly, Tessarion leaped up, snapping his jaws fiercely.

"Ah, no!" Aemond cried, pulling his hand back and stumbling away in fear.

"Quiet, Tessarion!" The Dragonkeeper tugged on the chain around Tessarion's neck and spoke calming words to pacify the young dragon.

Aemond collapsed to the cold ground, his heart pounding, cold sweat dotting his forehead. This was his first brush with real danger, and the failure stung deeply.

"Hahaha, did you pee your pants, Aemond?" Aegon taunted from atop Sunfyre, who roared in apparent agreement and spread his wings, shaking his head in mockery.

Feeling humiliated and defeated, Aemond could only watch as his brother continued to laugh at his expense.

Chapter 125: Aegon's Rebellion

Aegon was an arrogant character, and Sunfyre was also a proud dragon. Together they demonstrated the similarities between dragon and rider.

When mercilessly mocked by his brother, Aemond couldn't hide his anger. "No, you're wrong! What are you talking about?" he retorted, his pale face betraying his fear. Despite his terror, he held on to his pride and couldn't stand the humiliation.

Aegon rode Sunfyre closer, looking down at Aemond. "Idiot, that dragon doesn't even like you," he sneered. Taming a dragon wasn't easy; it had taken him years to bond with Sunfyre.

Aemond stood up, glaring at his brother. "You're lying! Tessarion is just not used to people yet. He'll accept me," he shouted. Despite the near injury, he still held hope.

Aegon tossed his long silver-gold hair back and replied proudly, "Save your breath. Taming a dragon doesn't happen overnight."

"No! I am also have dragon blood. I can definitely succeed!" Aemond insisted, summoning the courage to approach Tessarion again. He extended his hand, saying, "Tessarion, you will recognize me, right?"

"Roar..." Tessarion growled, his eyes filled with rage.

"Come on, I can be your master," Aemond said, stepping back anxiously. He had always dreamed of taming a dragon. His elder siblings, Rhaegar and Rhaenyra, had successfully tamed dragons at his age. How could he fail?

"Don't bother. This dragon isn't meant for you. Go back and hatch some eggs," Aegon mocked, stroking Sunfyre's scales.

"Aegon, Aemond is your brother. Watch your words!" Rhaegar intervened, unable to stand by any longer. Family bonds should not be mocked so cruelly.

Aegon, undeterred, retorted, "He's my brother. I can say whatever I want. It's none of your business!" He remembered his mother's teachings: an older brother should discipline his younger siblings. But he conveniently forgot the part about protecting them as well.

"Aegon, who do you think you're talking to?" Rhaegar's eyes narrowed as he approached, holding Helaena. Seeing Rhaegar angry, Aegon felt a chill down his spine.

Sunfyre growled lowly, sensing his master's unease. Aegon reached out to touch Sunfyre's spine, drawing courage from the dragon's warmth. Memories of Rhaegar's oppression, his father Viserys's disdain, and his mother's lessons fueled his rebellion.

"I'll say what I want. We're all born of the same father. Why should I be afraid?" Aegon declared, gripping the saddle tightly. "What can you do to me?"

Rhaegar's response was a cold smile. "Good, you impressed me today." He began walking toward Sunfyre, Helaena still in his arms.

"What are you doing? Don't come closer!" Aegon yelled, panic creeping into his voice.

"Aegon, do you think being a Dragon rider makes you superior?" Rhaegar asked, now standing directly in front of the golden dragon and his brother.

"Of Course! I tamed Sunfyre; I am the pride of the royal family!" Aegon shouted, his voice cracking as he involuntarily shifted back on the saddle.

"Roar..." Sunfyre, sensing his rider's distress, let out a warning roar. The dragon's massive muzzle opened, releasing a sulfurous stench that blew Rhaegar's hair back.

Rhaegar, unfazed, covered Helaena's ears and glared coldly at Sunfyre. "Quiet!" he commanded in High Valyrian. Despite the dragon's roar, Rhaegar's authority grew stronger.

Sunfyre's ferocity was roused as he lowered his head and exhaled hot breath towards Rhaegar. But Rhaegar showed no fear, his violet eyes locking with Sunfyre's.

In a flash, a green dragon pattern flickered in Rhaegar's pupils, caught by Sunfyre's sensitive gaze. A strong sense of danger caused the dragon's pupils to shrink, and he backed away slightly, closing his jaws.

Rhaegar, ignoring the golden dragon, pointed at Aegon and said coldly, "Get off, Aegon!"

"Brother, you're hot!" Helaena, nestled in his arms, squirmed and raised her head.

Rhaegar's skin had turned red, and his body temperature was rising rapidly, as if he were aflame. Helaena, feeling the intense heat, began to sweat.

Aegon, drenched in sweat himself, was shocked. Rhaegar wasn't afraid of the dragon; the dragon was afraid of Rhaegar.

Fighting the urge to roll off Sunfyre's back, Aegon's eyes darted to Tessarion, who was fidgeting nearby. His eyes lit up with an idea. "It's this dragon that scares Aemond. Why are you taking offense at me? Go find it."

"I told you to get off, Aegon!" Rhaegar's voice grew icier, focused solely on Aegon. Today, Rhaegar was determined to teach him a lesson about respect and hierarchy.

Aegon shivered at Rhaegar's yell and looked toward the disoriented Aemond. "Aemond, don't you want to tame the dragon? I'll help you subdue it!"

He then ordered Sunfyre, "Hold down that young dragon."

"Roar..." Sunfyre, having just restrained his temper, received his master's command. His eyes fixed on Tessarion, a hint of cruelty glinting within them. Misunderstanding the command, Sunfyre's instincts were to incapacitate it.

Sunfyre lunged toward Tessarion, golden flames bursting from his mouth. Tessarion, unable to defend himself, was engulfed in the fire, his body scorched.

"No! Tessarion, are you alright?" Aemond cried, rushing to his beloved dragon.

"Idiot! Unauthorized attacks are forbidden in the Dragonpit!" Rhaegar didn't expect Aegon to target Tessarion.

Sunfyre's attack triggered a chain reaction. The injured Tessarion roared in pain, and Dreamfyre, startled by the commotion, flapped her wings and roared in response, causing a cacophony of dragon cries.

"Find a place to hide," Rhaegar ordered, putting down Helaena and grabbing a strong bow from the Dragonkeepers. He aimed an arrow directly at Aegon. "Don't make me say it a third time, Aegon!"

"Don't! I'll come down, I'll come down," Aegon stammered, unlocking the chain around his waist and hurriedly dismounting Sunfyre. He realized he was in deep trouble.

"Roar..." Sunfyre, now free, twisted and turned, scanning the other dragons with irritation. The presence of Dreamfyre and Tessarion agitated him, driving his bloodlust.

As soon as Aegon was on the ground, Sunfyre lunged at Dreamfyre, initiating a new wave of chaos among the dragons.

Chapter 126: Sunfyre = Snack

Sunfyre moved with agility, dashing away the smaller dragons that blocked his path, and slammed his head into Dreamfyre.

"Roar..."

Caught off guard, Dreamfyre was knocked to the ground. Sunfyre, smaller but relentless, immediately lunged at Dreamfyre's neck, aiming to tear off a chunk of flesh.

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre hastily retracted its neck and let out a furious roar, flapping its wings to strike Sunfyre repeatedly. Sunfyre, smaller but more aggressive, immediately lunged for Dreamfyre's neck, aiming to rip off a chunk of flesh.

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre hastily retracted its neck and let out a furious roar, flapping its wings to strike Sunfyre repeatedly. Despite Sunfyre's ferocity, he struggled to land a meaningful bite.

Dreamfyre, though not the largest of the second-generation dragons, was still formidable compared to the fourth-generation Sunfyre. Dreamfyre's experience and size gave it an edge, despite being out of practice.

With a mighty breath, Dreamfyre unleashed a torrent of orange and light blue dragon flame, knocking Sunfyre to the ground. Sunfyre staggered as he tried to rise, his smaller size making it difficult to match Dreamfyre's strength.

As the dragons tussled, Aegon realized the gravity of his mistake and tried to flee.

Whoosh!

An arrow grazed his cheek, slicing off a strand of hair. Aegon froze in place, fear gripping him as he saw the arrow had come from his brother Rhaegar.

"Run, and you'll regret it," Rhaegar's cold voice echoed, sending a shiver down Aegon's spine.

Glancing at the two battling dragons, Rhaegar discarded his longbow and advanced toward Aegon with a menacing calm. Aegon didn't dare move, his fear paralyzing him.

When Rhaegar reached him, he grabbed Aegon's hair and slammed him to the ground with a thud.

"You insolent brat, your arrogance has grown!"

Ignoring Aegon's cries, Rhaegar pinned him down, holding his head with one hand and raising the other to deliver a harsh slap.

Splat—

A slap jerked Aegon's head to the side, and a red, swollen mark immediately appeared on his cheek.

"Roar..."

Meanwhile, Sunfyre, having been knocked away by Dreamfyre, became even more ferocious, roaring as he lunged forward again. Dreamfyre's wings were pressed to the ground, its slender neck stretched out, dragonflame ready to strike. The two dragons were poised for another clash.

Rhaegar, momentarily distracted by the dragon's roar, glanced over, his expression indifferent.

Just as Sunfyre flapped his wings to pounce on Dreamfyre, a deafening roar echoed through the Dragonpit. A shadow, swift and lethal, emerged from the depths of a crypt, descending like a thunderbolt upon the two dragons.

With a sharp, black claw, Cannibal clamped down on Sunfyre's neck, instantly ending the battle.

"Roar..."

The ferocious black dragon, disturbed from its slumber, glared at the golden dragon beneath its claws, a low, menacing growl emanating from its throat. Cannibal had been resting peacefully when the commotion above had roused it. Sensing the call of its master, it had rushed to stop the chaos.

Now, it was furious.

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre, agitated at having its opponent taken away, roared at Cannibal, spreading its wings in a show of defiance. Cannibal lifted its head, its green eyes narrowing at Dreamfyre. A wave of overwhelming fury radiated from the black dragon.

Dreamfyre stiffened, its anger dissipating. It lowered its head and backed away, recognizing the vast difference in strength between itself and Cannibal. Dreamfyre had been confined in the Dragonpit for decades, its growth stunted, comparable to the third generation of dragons.

Cannibal, a second-generation dragon, has thrived in the wild, and it consumed the Life Essence to increase its potential. Over the years, it has grown immensely in size and power.

Vermithor, once comparable in size, now seemed smaller than Cannibal. On their recent return to Dragonstone Island, Cannibal had grown to be one-fifth larger than Vermithor.

Dreamfyre, standing in front of Cannibal, appeared minuscule, its entire body enveloped by the black dragon's massive frame. It was only two-thirds of Cannibal's size, while Sunfyre, pinned under Cannibal's claws, looked utterly insignificant—a mouse before a cat.

"Send Dreamfyre and Tessarion back to the crypt!" Rhaegar commanded the Dragonkeepers, who were still frozen in shock.

"Yes, Prince..." The Dragonkeepers hurried forward to calm and guide the two dragons back to their enclosures.

With the trouble resolved, Rhaegar turned his gaze back to Aegon, his expression softening into a kind smile. "Aegon, do you realize your mistake?"

"Yes, I know I'm wrong," Aegon stammered, covering his red, swollen cheek.

"Oh? And what exactly did you do wrong?"

"I... shouldn't have ordered Sunfyre to cause trouble..."

Splat—

Rhaegar backhanded Aegon again. "Nope, rephrase!"

"I shouldn't have run. I shouldn't have mocked Aemond. I apologize..."

Receiving another slap, Aegon's head reeled, and he hastily admitted his faults.

Slap—

Another blow landed, splitting Aegon's lip and drawing blood. Rhaegar stood, gripping Aegon's hair, lifting him to his feet. His voice, a cold whisper in Aegon's ear, sounded almost demonic. "No, go on!"

"I don't know, I really don't know. If you say I'm wrong, then I'm wrong..."

Rhaegar's grip tightened as he pointed towards Cannibal. "You think you're proud of your newfound mastery of dragons?"

"What do you... what do you want to do?" Aegon stammered, his eyes darting to the struggling Sunfyre.

"Don't worry, my dragon will show you," Rhaegar replied calmly, yet ominously.

"Roar..."

Cannibal, sensing its master's intent, stomped down hard on Sunfyre, eliciting a mournful wail from the golden dragon.

"Don't! Sunfyre is just a dragon; he doesn't know any better!" Aegon twisted in a futile attempt to escape.

Bang!

Rhaegar kneed Aegon in the back, forcing him to watch. "Watch and see what happens when you don't recognize your mistakes."

Cannibal roared, its pupils locked onto Sunfyre, a cruel grin spreading across its muzzle. Sunfyre was its prey, a delicacy. It had been a long time since Cannibal had tasted its own kind, and it was eager for a bite.

The next moment, Cannibal's claw lifted, and it lowered its head, teeth sinking into Sunfyre's neck.

"No! It's going to eat Sunfyre!" Aemond, watching from the sidelines, collapsed in fear.

Chapter 127: Legacy of the Dark Sister

"Be quiet, Aemond," Rhaegar said calmly. "You can stay and watch, or you can leave."

Aemond stood frozen, his chest heaving as he watched Cannibal's violent spectacle. The sight of a dragon devouring another dragon was beyond shocking.

"Roar..."

As Sunfyre's head was engulfed by Cannibal's jaws, the smaller dragon writhed in terror, letting out a pitiful scream. Cannibal's eyes glinted with cruel amusement.

Instead of finishing Sunfyre quickly, it savored the moment, slowly closing its jaws and swallowing Sunfyre inch by inch.

Aegon stared in disbelief, paralyzed by the horror. As Sunfyre's long neck disappeared into Cannibal's maw, tears filled Aegon's eyes, and he snapped back to reality.

Desperately, he clutched Rhaegar's tunic, pleading, "Brother! I was wrong, I truly know I was wrong. Please, command Cannibal to let Sunfyre go, please..."

Tears streamed down his face, his voice choking with anguish. Targaryens had varying degrees of attachment to their dragons, and Aegon had spent years bonding with Sunfyre.

Rhaegar tilted his head, showing no mercy. If only you had thought of this earlier, he seemed to convey.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre's frantic flapping and cries filled the Dragonpit. Cannibal, annoyed, lifted its wings and used its front claws to shove Sunfyre further into its mouth, much like a child greedily stuffing snacks.

"No!" Aegon screamed, collapsing in despair. Paralyzed on the ground, he cried out, "Brother, tell me what I did wrong. I'll change, I swear! Just let Sunfyre go!"

Watching his dragon being devoured broke Aegon's spirit. As a young boy, he couldn't bear the tragedy unfolding before him.

He wanted to admit his mistakes, beg for forgiveness, and plead for mercy from Rhaegar.

Rhaegar looked down at his sobbing brother. His eyes, previously cold, softened slightly. He released Aegon's hair, cupping his chin, and sighed, "My foolish brother, you should be glad we share the same blood."

Meanwhile, Cannibal continued to swallow Sunfyre, only the hind legs and tail remaining visible.

"Cannibal!" Rhaegar called softly, patting Aegon's head.

"Roar..."

Cannibal paused, turning its head towards Rhaegar, still chewing on its "treat." Rhaegar smiled apologetically, meeting Cannibal's gaze.

A green dragon pattern emerged in Rhaegar's eyes, mirrored in Cannibal's pupils. They communicated silently, understanding each other perfectly.

After a tense moment, Cannibal retracted its wings, reluctantly turned, and spat Sunfyre out. The golden dragon fell to the ground, covered in sticky saliva, twitching in distress.

Rhaegar looked down at Aegon one last time. "Learn from this, Aegon. Next time, think before you act."

"Roar..."

Cannibal was unusually annoyed as its snack flew away. It flung its tail violently, sending the helpless Sunfyre flying far away. Cannibal had chosen to comply with its master's wishes.

Seeing that Sunfyre was saved, Aegon turned his sadness into joy and said excitedly, "Thank you, brother."

Rhaegar looked down at him calmly. "Aegon, you asked me where you went wrong. As your brother, I will remind you. Remember, no matter when, where, or in what capacity you and I meet, you must always show me the utmost respect."

"Otherwise..."

"I will, I will change," Aegon interrupted, eager to show his willingness.

"It's more than that," Rhaegar continued, shaking his head. "You are my brother, and it is my duty to teach and protect you. In return, you need to recognize your place and show respect."

"What I give you is yours. What I do not give, you cannot take," he added, pointing to the paralyzed Sunfyre. "The opportunity to learn this lesson only comes once. Do you understand?"

"Uh-huh," Aegon replied, overwhelmed by the oppressive atmosphere. He nodded vigorously, his smile more a grimace of fear than joy. The Seven Gods bear witness! He would never forget today's painful lesson.

"Good, it seems you understand," Rhaegar said, smiling. He beckoned to a few Dragonkeepers. "Return my younger siblings safely to the Red Keep."

With the messy dispute over, he still had to appease Cannibal. The dragon would surely harbor some resentment for being denied its meal.

"Let me help you up, Prince," a Dragonguard offered, assisting Aegon and the fallen Aemond.

Helaena had hidden behind a cluster of bonfires, watching the entire farce with endless emotions. Her mouth slightly open, she stared at Rhaegar's back, deeply impressed.

"Do dragons give people courage?" she wondered aloud. She didn't know why her big brother was so majestic, but the image of him commanding the dragon was etched into her mind.

"Princess, please follow me," a Dragonkeeper said, walking towards her.

Helaena covered her mouth, looking around in panic. Her eyes finally landed on the entrance to a crypt. She saw Dreamfyre, the dragon with light blue scales, walking inside.

Dreamfyre wasn't as large as Cannibal, but it was bigger than Sunfyre and Tessarion. Helaena's innocent mind whirled with thoughts. She believed that if she could tame Dreamfyre, she could gain the same courage as her big brother.

Rhaegar glanced at the girl. Seeing her dazed and confused, he assumed she was scared and instructed the Dragonkeeper to take good care of her.

...

Night fell on King's Landing.

In the sky above, a massive black dragon circled slowly, several cows and sheep in its claws.

In the saddle, Rhaegar closed his eyes tightly and tilted his head back to clear his mind.

He had just returned from Dragonstone Island, where Cannibal had spent a good half day indulging in some livestock.

As time passed, the bond between Rhaegar and Cannibal grew stronger, thanks in part to the contributions of his good uncle, Daemon.

Summoning the system interface, Rhaegar reviewed his past exploits.

"Dark Sister Exploration Progress: 100%."

"This exploration is complete. Please claim the lost treasure."

"Relic successfully retrieved. Recognition in progress..."

"Recognition successful. Detected as an epic relic: Knight's Glory."

The prompt continued, "Please choose a knight."

Without hesitation, Rhaegar selected Cannibal, binding them together as knight and dragon.

"Congratulations, Knight's Glory has been activated. You have gained..."

Knight's Oath

Grade: Epic (Purple)

Function: Unity of Mind

Evaluation: "Under this oath, life and death follow."

With the evening wind brushing against his face, Rhaegar slowly opened his eyes and drew the Dark Sister from his waist.

The ancestral sword had brought him an invaluable relic.

Cannibal became his guardian knight, bridging the gap between dragon and man with seamless communication through their shared thoughts.

And Rhaegar enjoyed the special effects bestowed upon him by Cannibal.

Chapter 128: Alicent's Plea

The Red Keep, under the veil of night.

Inside the King's Bedchamber.

"Viserys, you know what happened today, don't you?" Alicent murmured from the comfort of her husband's embrace, clad in a delicate lace nightgown.

Her voice carried a husky tone, tinged with concern.

Viserys, his senses lulled by the warmth of his wife's presence, leaned back against the bed and closed his eyes in contentment.

After a moment's pause, he replied, "It's not uncommon for siblings to have disagreements."

He understood the incident she referred to all too well – the confrontation between Rhaegar and Aegon in the Dragonpit.

Sitting up, Alicent's eyes glistened with tears as she confessed, "I'm not trying to complain, but Aegon was hurt badly. The maester mentioned his teeth might be loose."

Her heart ached at the thought of her son's injuries.

They were her children, her treasures, nurtured with love and care. How could she bear to see them harmed?

"Alicent, perhaps you're reading too much into it," Viserys reassured her, gently stroking her shoulder.

"I looked into the matter at the Dragonpit. It was Aegon who instigated the trouble before Rhaegar intervened to teach him a lesson."

Viserys opened his eyes, his hand tenderly cupping his wife's cheek as he continued, "Rhaegar is still a protective older brother. He's even arranged for two dragons to be set aside for Aemond and Helaena."

He spoke of Rhaegar's thoughtful organization, ensuring the safety and comfort of his younger siblings, a gesture that brought relief to his heart.

"But I couldn't help but worry," Alicent confided, her fingers intertwining with her husband's as she spoke softly. "Aegon can be quite headstrong, and having to answer to Rhaegar... How will he manage?"

Viserys furrowed his brow at her words, seeking clarification. "What exactly do you mean by that?"

He had anticipated a complaint from Alicent, but her tone seemed different, not accusatory towards Rhaegar.

"Aegon lacks discipline and maturity. He needs someone to guide him," Alicent stated plainly, her gaze fixed on her husband.

Viserys chuckled in recognition. "Let me guess, you mean Otto, don't you?"

Alicent had long advocated Otto's return to King's Landing. However, Viserys had been reluctant, partly for personal reasons, partly because there was no suitable position for him.

Alicent's eyes gleamed with hope as she nodded. "My father served as Hand of the King, and Aegon is his grandson. He could provide the guidance Aegon needs."

"You know, I have my reservations about Otto," Viserys replied cryptically.

"Rhaegar may have disciplined Aegon today, but who's to say it won't happen again tomorrow... Where does it end?" he voiced his concerns.

Alicent's smile faltered, her plea growing more serious. "Rhaegar's authority as heir is unquestioned, and my father would never speak ill of him to Aegon. Please, consider it."

"Let me think on it," Viserys sighed, massaging his temples with a growing headache, shifting to a more comfortable position on the bed.

"Viserys, Aegon is your son too. They both deserve your love and attention," Alicent urged softly as she extinguished the bedside lamp, casting the room into darkness.

Outside the door stood Arryk, clad in shimmering armor and flowing white robes. As the sounds of mingled whispers emanated from within, he silently stepped away, leaving the couple to their privacy.

...

The next morning, Rhaegar was summoned to his father's chambers.

Viserys, dressed in his pajamas, sat at the round table in the living area, enjoying his breakfast.

When he saw his eldest son arrive, he gestured with his knife and fork and offered warmly, "You haven't had your breakfast yet. Join me, son."

Rhaegar glanced at the closed bedroom door and smiled, "I'm famished."

As they ate, Viserys broached the subject, "Yesterday, Tyland brought two pieces of news that concern you."

"What news?" Rhaegar asked, sipping his milk.

"Regarding the Stepstones Islands," Viserys began, his expression serious as he finished his meal and dabbed at his lips with a napkin, "Reports from our informants confirm that the pirates raiding our ships hail from the Three Daughters. They seem poised for war."

"War is imminent," Rhaegar admitted, his brow furrowed in thought. "The Three Daughters, strengthened by Dornish support, will be formidable opponents."

"And there's more serious news," Viserys continued with a heavy sigh. "The Sea Snake has amassed a fleet of warships at Driftmark Island, apparently preparing to engage the Three Daughters once more."

"Corlys intends to instigate another war?" Rhaegar's frown deepened.

War was no trivial matter. The previous engagement at the Stepstones had been costly, albeit successful, thanks to the collaboration between the Sea Snake and Daemon.

Their victory had driven out the pirates of the Three Daughters and curbed the Sea Snake's influence. However, the return of the Three Daughters would be a far greater challenge this time.

Moreover, in the previous conflict, Daemon had represented the royal family and wielded considerable influence over the Sea Snake's actions.

With another war looming, the royal family could not afford to remain passive. Failure to act would severely damage their reputation.

Rhaegar inquired, "Father, are we considering an alliance with the Sea Snake?"

The royal family had no navy of its own, so it had to rely on the resources of House Velaryon.

"Indeed," Viserys affirmed, a hint of resignation in his tone. "With the Three Daughters Kingdom's impending threat, the expertise of the Sea Snake is indispensable."

"So, what's your proposal?" Rhaegar sensed his father's underlying motive.

Viserys revealed his intention, "Given the longstanding discord between House Velaryon and House Targaryen, I wish for you to journey to Driftmark. Invite the Sea Snake to King's Landing for diplomatic discussions regarding our foreign affairs."

Emphasizing the need to meet any conditions the Sea Serpent might set, Viserys stressed, "It is of the utmost importance to foster friendly relations between our houses."

Rhaegar readily agreed and inquired, "When do we leave?"

"In a few days, during your Aunt Rhaenys's name-day celebrations," Viserys replied. "You may ride the dragons to the event, but be careful."

"Understood. I'll take care of it," Rhaegar assured, getting up to leave.

As he closed the door behind him, Rhaegar's expression turned somber, and he rubbed his face in thought.

"Attending a feast on Driftmark..." The task ahead seemed daunting, especially considering the complex dynamics involved.

Navigating the Sea Snake's animosity towards his father, not to mention the ongoing tensions with Laena and Daemon, posed significant challenges.

"This journey won't be easy," Rhaegar mused, pacing the open-air corridor, lost in thought.

"Prince," a voice interrupted his reverie.

Turning, Rhaegar saw Larys sitting on a nearby bench, a friendly smile on his face.

"Larys, what brings you here?" Rhaegar inquired, curious about the sudden appearance of the Hand's son.

With a respectful bow, Larys replied, "I have stumbled upon some information I think you should know."

Chapter 129: Intelligence from Larys

Larys wore a smile that seemed to hide a world of complexities behind his eyes, giving him the air of an enigmatic genius out of favor.

Taking Larys's hand, Rhaegar smiled, "What news do you bring?"

Having known the family since childhood, Rhaegar was well aware of Larys's tendency to expose secrets.

Larys took a few steps forward, scepter in hand, leaning on his crutch. "Shall we find a quieter place for our discussion?"

"Of course," Rhaegar agreed, intrigued by what Larys had discovered.

Leading the way with deliberate steps, Larys led Rhaegar to the secluded attic, assuring him, "This place sees little traffic, perfect for our conversation."

As they entered, Larys waved away the dust with a theatrical flourish.

Taking a seat near the balcony's glass windows, Rhaegar cut to the chase, "Why the secrecy, Larys?"

Knowing Larys' disinterest in trivialities, Rhaegar anticipated an underlying motive.

Larys sat down with a hint of discomfort and fidgeted in his chair before meeting Rhaegar's gaze with a sarcastic smile.

"Hmm..." Clearing his throat, Larys finally spoke, "Your Highness, I've gathered information from three sources. Which would you like to hear first?"

"In what order?" Rhaegar inquired, leaning forward with interest.

"From the Old Town, the Vale, and Driftmark," Larys revealed with a knowing grin.

"Begin with the Old Town," Rhaegar prompted, intrigued by the unfolding revelations.

Larys nodded, organizing his thoughts before delving into the revelations. "Former Hand of the King Otto Hightower, known for his ties to the Faith of the Seven, has been frequenting the Citadel, engaging in lengthy discussions with the High Septon."

Rhaegar looked confused. "Why is that significant?"

The Hightower family and the church of the Old Town had a long-standing connection, so it wasn't surprising that they were interacting.

Larys shook his head with a knowing smile. "About half a month ago, the Citadel dispatched a group of maesters to King's Landing for service."

"And in Flea Bottom's orphanage, members of the congregation have been performing acts of charity, distributing congee to the needy," Larys continued.

"Winning over hearts?" Rhaegar mused, connecting the dots.

"You've hit the nail on the head. With your reform proposal, Otto is eager to consolidate his power. Queen Alicent has also been lobbying the king privately," Larys confirmed.

"Ah, their commitment to the kingdom is truly commendable," Rhaegar chuckled, before turning his attention back to the matter at hand. "Now, tell me about the next piece of intelligence."

"Are you not curious about Otto's intentions?" Larys asked, a glint of mischief in his eyes.

"No need. I've never paid much attention to the so-called Green Faction," Rhaegar replied confidently.

Alicent's green dress stood out conspicuously at the heir exchange ceremony.

With the backing of Oldtown and a few minor nobles and marginalized knights, it was created the Green faction, like Alicent's dress that night.

Alicent's affiliation with the green faction as a Queen was merely a superficial label, Rhaegar believed.

The true division lay between the supporters of Rhaenyra and himself, known as the Blacks, and those aligned with Alicent, labeled the Greens.

Rhaegar dismissed the notion of such factionalism, seeing it as trivial compared to the greater challenges facing the kingdom.

But if she entertained any other notions, the kingdom would remain devoid of any green influence.

King's Landing would never be Green.

"Your broad-mindedness is truly admirable," Larys remarked, visibly impressed by Rhaegar's confidence.

Shifting to the intelligence from the Vale, Larys revealed, "Lady Royce of Runestone is set to marry her cousin and consummate the marriage next month."

"Rhea Royce?" Rhaegar exclaimed, surprised by the news.

Larys nodded, "Yes, Prince Daemon's ex-wife."

Rhaegar paid little mind to the affairs of his former aunt but it seems only fitting for Rhea to remarry, especially considering Daemon's offspring with Laena.

"But our focus isn't on Runestone City," Larys continued

Larys continued, "About six months ago, a heated dispute erupted between the Lady of the Eyrie, Jeyne, and her cousin Arnold Arryn."

"The argument started when Arnold questioned Lady Jeyne's right to female succession, claiming women were unfit to lead the Vale," Larys explained.

"And the outcome?" Rhaegar inquired.

Larys smiled, "The argument ended badly, with Arnold leaving the Eyrie without a trace."

"It's interesting to note that shortly after Arnold's disappearance, the mountain clans of the valley became increasingly aggressive, often raiding the villages below," Larys added.

"Are you suggesting Arnold's collusion with the mountain clans to spark rebellion?" Rhaegar speculated, furrowing his brow.

"It's a possibility, especially considering Arnold's sudden disappearance," Larys replied noncommittally, relishing the challenge of piecing together the puzzle.

"And the final piece of intelligence?" Rhaegar prompted, eager for news closer to Driftmark.

Larys straightened up, adopting a serious demeanor. "According to reliable sources, the Sea Snake's daughter, Lady Laena, returned to Driftmark under cover of night. Lord Corlys himself celebrated the homecoming with a grand reception for his granddaughters."

Rhaegar's expression darkened at the revelation. Just days ago, Rhaenyra had mentioned Laena's plea for assistance to return home. Now, it seemed she had made the journey clandestinely, disregarding any consequences for the royal family.

Taking a deep breath to compose himself, Rhaegar spoke icily, "Where is Daemon? Did he accompany his wife and daughter back to Driftmark?"

"I can't say for sure. The scouts only saw Lady Rhaenyra and the two infants," Larys admitted, though he made a guess, "Prince Daemon probably stayed behind, since he's not from the Velaryon House."

"However, I presume you are aware of the developments regarding the Three Daughters," Larys continued, his tone taking on a calculating edge. "With war on the horizon, the Sea Snake's cooperation with the crown seems inevitable."

"So, if he asks to have the warrant against his daughter and son-in-law lifted, I wonder if the King would agree?" Larys asked, looking at Rhaegar.

Rhaegar exchanged a knowing glance with Larys, acknowledging the likelihood of such a scenario.

As Rhaegar rose to depart, Larys met his gaze with a subtle smile, a testament to his dedication and pursuit of excellence.

Confident that his gesture of cooperation would yield favorable outcomes, Larys watched Rhaegar.

"Thank you for the intelligence, Lord Larys," Rhaegar murmured as he prepared to exit.

As the loft door closed behind Rhaegar, Larys's smile faded, his expression briefly vacant but he quickly regained his composure, reflecting on Rhaegar's demeanor.

With a small smile, Larys thought to himself, "What a proud Targaryen!"

...

As night descended, Rhaegar luxuriated in a soothing bath before reclining naked on his bed.

Having parted ways with Larys, he took a leisurely stroll through the streets of King's Landing. Unsurprisingly, he noted an increased presence of followers of the Faith of the Seven in the poorer districts.

"Alicent, Otto, the Sea Snake..."

Rhaegar softly uttered the names that seemed to perpetually trouble him, allowing his mind to gradually empty of thoughts.

As the heir to the throne, he bore a weighty responsibility. While Rhaenyra faced limitations due to her gender, he, as a male and the firstborn by law, enjoyed the favor of the realm's nobility. Yet, the shadows still harbored those with ambitions, ever ready to play their clandestine games.

Chapter 130: King's Landing Darkness

A soft knock at the door interrupted Rhaegar's thoughts.

"Who is it?" he called out, frowning at the late-night disturbance.

"It's me, your sister," came Rhaenyra's voice from the other side.

"Rhaenyra?" he repeated, slightly stunned. Climbing out of bed, he said, "Come in."

The door creaked open, and Rhaenyra entered, carrying a dinner tray.

"Rhaenyra, what are you doing here?" Rhaegar asked, confused.

"I heard you've taken on a big mission and wanted to check on you," she replied, walking over to the bed and sitting down. She placed the dinner tray on a nearby table, revealing a glass of milk.

"I brought you some milk to help you sleep," Rhaenyra said with a playful smile.

"Thanks," Rhaegar replied, taking the glass and sipping the milk. Suddenly, he noticed her attire—a formal dress in an unusual shade of green, rather than her usual black or red.

"Why does that dress look familiar?" Rhaegar asked casually.

Rhaenyra giggled and tugged at the hem of her skirt. "You finally noticed. Last time, you were talking in your sleep, mumbling about your stepmother's dress, so I borrowed one from Alicent."

Rhaegar choked, spewing milk as he tried to catch his breath. "What?"

Rhaenyra rolled her eyes and patted his back. "Why are you reacting like that? I've been debating for days whether to wear this dress."

Rhaegar's face flushed red. "It was just a dream. It had nothing to do with Alicent."

He felt a wave of embarrassment wash over him. His dreams were often a jumble of images, and any resemblance to reality was purely coincidental.

"Rhaenyra, you really should return Alicent's dress," Rhaegar said, feeling a twinge of guilt.

"What? You don't think it looks good?" Rhaenyra stood up excitedly and spun around to show off.

Rhaegar averted his eyes and covered his face with his hand. "You and Alicent have different figures. She's... slimmer than you."

Despite having four kids, Alicent still had the slim figure of a teenager, which had helped her keep Viserys interested for years. By contrast, both Rhaegar and Rhaenyra inherited their mother's sturdier, more robust build.

Rhaenyra's attempt to fit into Alicent's green dress had the waist straining and the fabric barely containing her form, which looked a bit off. It was no surprise that Rhaegar had noticed right away.

"Rhaegar, do you dare say that again?" Rhaenyra's mood shifted abruptly, her eyes narrowing at her brother.

Rhaegar hesitated, sensing danger. "What I meant was that the dress doesn't fit you properly. It's not your size."

"How dare you!" Rhaenyra took his words to mean that he thought she was overweight, which made her feel insulted.

She'd put a lot of effort into wearing the dress, and instead of a compliment, she felt like she was being insulted. She felt a surge of anger.

Her chest was heaving with indignation, and the dress seemed to be strained to its limits. Before Rhaegar could explain further, Rhaenyra lunged at him, reaching for his neck.

Despite her intensity, she was no match for Rhaegar in a physical confrontation. Laughing, he caught her around the waist, thinking it was just another one of their playful scuffles. As a child, Rhaenyra often tried to show her dominance by roughing him up a bit.

Rhaenyra pinched and scratched with all her might, but to no avail. "Rhaegar, if you dare talk nonsense again, I'll pull out your tongue!"

"Hehe, you said it," Rhaegar teased, still not grasping the seriousness of her anger. He opened his mouth wide in a provocative gesture.

"Owww!" Rhaenyra's rage reached its peak, and she bit him on the shoulder.

"Rhaenyra, it hurts! Let go!" Rhaegar cried out, pain flaring up.

"Nice try, you brat. You just don't want to be disciplined," Rhaenyra muttered through gritted teeth, maintaining her bite and attempting to wrestle him into submission.

Rhaegar, wincing from the pain, suddenly rolled over, pinning her beneath him. Rhaenyra still clung to his shoulder, her eyes blazing with anger.

Outside the window, the moon was shining brightly, bathing the bedroom in its light. The evening breeze rustled through the garden, making the leaves whisper.

Rhaegar looked down at Rhaenyra, who had just bitten him, and paused for a moment. Eventually, Rhaenyra's mouth, which was stained with blood, slowly released its grip.

"Ouch, that hurts!" Rhaegar let out a cry and quickly pulled away, covering his bleeding shoulder.

Rhaenyra, who was now lying on the bed, said in a sullen tone, "I'll go with you to Driftmark."

"Who told you that?" Rhaegar leaned back on the bed, wiping the drool off his shoulder, and looked at her in surprise.

"Is there any secret in King's Landing that stays hidden, except for your Dragonpit?" Rhaenyra's words carried a hint of mockery.

Rhaegar nodded, not bothering to refute. As the political center of the continent, King's Landing was constantly under scrutiny.

"I can go to Driftmark by myself. The Sea Snake wouldn't dare to make a move," Rhaegar said confidently. "Besides, I'm going to celebrate the naming day, and Aunt Rhaenys will be there."

"And what about Laena and Daemon?" Rhaenyra lifted her head, her face serious.

Rhaegar froze, not expecting her to know about that.

"Unfortunately, you've been the heir for many years, but you're still too self-righteous," Rhaenyra sighed, her tone helpless.

Under Rhaegar's puzzled gaze, she kicked off her boots, lay back on the bed, and cuddled him in her arms. Rhaegar put his head on her shoulder and felt his frustration melt away.

"Rhaegar, I was also chosen by our father to be his heir," she began. "But because I'm not a man, the bannermen who swore allegiance to me despised me and spoke against me."

"King's Landing is the world's biggest sewer, full of snakes, rats, and ants," she continued. "Every preference, every decision you make, becomes a target for these bedbugs."

Rhaenyra kissed Rhaegar's forehead and admonished, "Don't trust anyone. They only covet your flesh and blood, and mine."

Her warning was genuine; she wanted her brother to be more cautious, to avoid being used as a pawn.

Rhaegar gently cupped her slender waist, rubbing his cheek against hers, and said emotionally, "I understand, I know everything."

"You don't understand," Rhaenyra replied, pressing her hand harder on his. "I know firsthand what it's like to be isolated, while you've been living in the sunshine."

Rhaenyra looked him in the eye as she continued, "You don't have any roots in the small council, and Father's ears have always been pretty easy to bend."