

G.O Thrones 141

Chapter 141: Detaining Daemon

The dragon roars was loud and clear on Driftmark, startling the people in the castle.

The banquet was already in chaos, the ground covered in wreckage.

Daemon's consciousness blurred as the back of his head hit the ground. He hunched over, clutching his legs, cold sweat trickling from the pain.

He had been careless.

He hadn't known that Syrio had trained his nephew so well that even he had been bested.

"You're getting old, uncle," Rhaegar sneered, looking down at the fallen man while holding onto the tabletop with one hand.

Rhaegar was no longer a child, and he was not afraid of his uncle, even when fighting alone without relying on Cannibal.

"Roar..."

The dragons roared, and Rhaegar gasped, brushing his loose hair back.

He felt Cannibal's fury and horror.

Caraxes had been defeated, but it triggered a wild dance of dragons.

"Prince, listen to the dragons' roars outside. What should we do now?" Corlys questioned angrily, his eyes full of worry.

Dragons were not human; they were fierce beasts with ferocious temperaments. Once they fought, they wouldn't stop until death, and casualties were inevitable.

The death of a dragon would be an irreparable loss to both the Velaryon and Targaryen Houses.

"Lord Corlys, our priority now is Daemon. The dragon won't be able to intervene for a while," Rhaegar, connected to Cannibal's mind, assured, emphasizing the need to calm the people's agitation.

"Daemon has been seriously injured by you. What threat does he pose?" Corlys fretted, his heart racing. "One dragon is enough to destroy a town, and there's no telling how many dragons out there will fight. They'll destroy Driftmark!"

"The Velaryon family tamed and bred dragons on Driftmark. This is the risk you should have accepted," Rhaegar dismissed, his mind clear, focused on resolving the situation.

"Rhaegar, I sense Vhagar's wrath. It's engaged in battle," Laena warned, holding the dazed Daemon. As Vhagar's master, she could clearly sense Vhagar's current anger, which was beyond her control.

"The one battling Vhagar is Cannibal. I know that very well," Rhaegar declared, focusing on Daemon.

Laena pleaded, "He came here seeking understanding, with no intention of offending Your Grace."

She knew her husband well. The outwardly prodigal man had repented and wanted to atone by serving his kingdom.

"But he shouldn't have appeared to me in such a manner," Rhaegar insisted, commanding Lyonel, "You will personally escort him back to King's Landing in the morning."

"Yes, Prince," Lyonel affirmed solemnly, understanding the gravity of the task.

Daemon, being the king's brother, meant Rhaegar couldn't risk being killing him and being accused of Kinslaying. Moreover, Daemon held value as a bargaining chip for the Velaryon House.

Lyonel dared to think and act, instructing his servant to call the royal family's accompanying guards to take Daemon away promptly.

Laena, uneasy, tried to stop them, but Corlys dragged her away.

The Velaryon House was only a vassal and could not stop the Heir from arresting criminals.

The dragons on the island were still raging, and now was not the time to argue over Daemon alone.

"The farce is over. I'm going outside to see what's going on," Rhaenys, who had been sitting steadily in her chair, said as she stood up and strutted out the door with an ugly look on her face.

She disliked the domineering Daemon and was equally dissatisfied with her husband. As a woman, her heart was full of anger and struggle.

She couldn't control many political affairs, but she could control her own dragon. Meleys was also involved in the battle of the dragons, and the restlessness of her emotions pulled at her mind. She had to hurry and stop it.

Seeing Daemon being carried away by the guards, Rhaenyra breathed a sigh of relief and took Rhaegar's hand, inquiring, "Syrax is involved in the battle too. What's going to happen?"

Her dragon was still very young and had no combat experience. This made her very worried.

For a while, except for Rhaenys who had left earlier, everyone's eyes fell on Rhaegar.

Rhaegar scanned them one by one and said with a determined face, "Any dragon rider, come with me. Cannibal is under my command. I will stop the fight."

Saying this, he looked to Corlys and commanded, "Dispatch men, maintain law and order on the island, and seal off information for tonight."

On the eve of a war, there were many spies lurking in the shadows. With the Triarchy as an enemy right now, news of infighting must not be leaked.

"As you command. I hope you succeed in stopping the fight," Corlys responded, his heart in turmoil. Driftmark was the foundation of the family; it had to be protected.

"Damn you, Daemon!" Corlys cursed in his heart as he turned to deploy his soldiers.

If not for Daemon's sudden appearance, he would have been in a better position for negotiations at King's Landing.

Now that Daemon was captured, his daughter and wife would take the opportunity to get closer to the royal family, greatly reducing his influence.

"Laena, come out with me and try to control Vhagar," Rhaegar said, looking at the sorrowful Laena. He sighed, knowing that both her husband and father were too ambitious.

Rhaegar took the lead and walked out of the castle, followed by the rest. They all felt the dragon's agitation, and they were all afraid.

"Roar..."

In the night sky, six dragons were fighting each other.

Meleys flew in a circle, teasing the reckless Sunfyre and spitting scarlet dragonfire.

Sea Smoke and Syrax fought fiercely in the air, one with bites and the other with claws.

The most eye-catching of all were the two adult dragons.

The blackCannibal weaved through the clouds, its green dragonfire falling like a swarm of comets.

Vhagar, even larger, swept through the winds as he flew, its eyes fixed on the Cannibal.

On closer inspection, it became clear that Vhagar had lost a large chunk of flesh from his neck. If it weren't for his size, this bite would have killed any other dragon.

In contrast, Cannibal was in a worse state. His abdomen was torn open with two large holes, and hot dragon blood kept pouring down.

The head of the dragon was also scratched, a bloodstain piercing through one eye, but fortunately, its green pupil was intact.

The city of Driftmark was in a state of chaos at night, with soldiers being deployed to the two towns on the island.

"Meleys, please stop fighting and stay away from the battlefield!"

In the light of the torches, Rhaegar saw Rhaenys standing under a stone archway, shouting into the night sky.

Most of the dragons were still fighting in the sky above High Tide, except for Cannibal and Vhagar, who were chasing each other.

The dragon's roar was so loud that Rhaenys's cry was barely audible.

"Roar..."

Meleys, known as the Red Queen, was exceptionally gorgeous and was hatched from a nest of dragon eggs alongside Caraxes.

With its speed, the young Sunfyre was easily fooled.

Chapter 142: Stopping the Dragons

Many years ago, Meleys was known as the fastest dragon in Westeros history, easily surpassing Caraxes and Vhagar in the sky.

In tonight's dragon fight, it showed off its speed perfectly.

Sunfyre didn't even get a chance to touch it. It was far behind, like a cat playing with a mouse.

"Meleys, please stop fighting!"

Rhaenys was still shouting, looking at the swarming dragons with a heavy face.

"Roar..."

Amidst her shouts, Meleys seemed to have heard her voice.

The red dragon stopped its attack on Sunfyre and looked down at Driftmark below with vertical pupils, searching for the figure of its master.

Rhaenys was overjoyed and waved her torch, shouting, "Stay out of the battlefield, Meleys!"

"Roar..."

Meleys spotted her master and blasted away the chasing Sunfyre with a burst of dragonfire.

After sensing Rhaenys's wish, its pupils flashed with a diffused color, and it easily shook off Sunfyre, disappearing into the night.

It was a lazy dragon with a strong bond with its master, and it did as it was told to get out of the fight.

"Roar..."

Losing his opponent, Sunfyre was enraged. His pupils fell on Sea Smoke, who was fighting with Syrax, and he rushed over without thinking.

His golden scales were charred black by Meleys, and in his fury, Sea Smoke became his next target.

"Syrax!..."

Rhaegar and the others ran out of the castle, and Rhaenyra immediately saw the bloodied Syrax and cried out in shock.

Syrax seemed to sense the emotions of his rider, and his tearing motion stiffened for a moment.

"Roar..."

In an instant, it was slapped upside the head by a wing of the enraged Sea Smoke, who continued to tear at his opponent.

Sunfyre also rushed over and slammed his head into Sea Smoke. The three dragons attacked indiscriminately, and dragon flames flew all over the sky.

"Haha, good fight! Sunfyre, quickly tear it apart!"

Witnessing his own dragon fighting, Aegon was filled with excitement and laughed wildly as he applauded.

"Shut the fuck up!"

The situation was urgent, and Rhaegar kicked him down, hating to stitch his mouth shut.

Aegon rolled twice on the ground, looking at Rhaegar in fear and gritting his teeth in secret.

"Vhagar is out of control, its heart filled with rage."

At that moment, Laena came slowly, speaking in a disoriented manner.

"It's alright, Vhagar's speed is a weakness."

Rhaegar looked at the Cannibal spewing dragonfire in the night sky with a grave expression on his face.

The Cannibal was younger and had a more flexible body.

As long as he did not get into close combat with Vhagar, he would not be in danger.

Rhaegar closed his eyes slightly and tried to communicate with the Cannibal with all his heart, hoping to end this dance of dragons as soon as possible.

"Roar..."

In mid-air, Sea Smoke screamed miserably.

Syrax and Sunfyre's dragons surrounded and attacked it, tearing its flesh.

In just a few moments, Sea Smoke was bruised and bloodied all over.

"Rhaegar, quickly tell your dragon to stop this! Sea Smoke can't hold on much longer," Laenor said, looking anxious and pacing back and forth.

Sea Smoke was his dragon, and they had been together for more than ten years. He could feel Sea Smoke's pain.

"Don't rush. Cannibal has to shake off Vhagar's pursuit first," Rhaegar chided harshly, mentally establishing a connection with Cannibal.

He didn't want any dragons to fall in this farce either. Every dragon in the sky came from the Targaryens. If any dragon died, the one who would lose the most would be House Targaryen.

"Roar..."

Finally, Cannibal sensed the will of its master and roared as it looked down.

It was in a furious state, the pain from its wounds stimulating its nerves.

"Cannibal, distract Vhagar!"

The moment he made contact, Rhaegar shouted subconsciously and stared at the old dragon in the sky.

This old dragon was clearly out of control.

If they kept fighting, they'd both lose.

"Roar..."

Cannibal looked back and sprayed a mouthful of dragonfire, boosting its speed and rushing into the clouds above, flying straight out of Driftmark.

After spending many years raiding Dragonstone Island, Cannibal had not only built up a strong physique but also developed a cunning nature.

It was really angry about the old dragon's attack and wanted to tear it apart. However, its flames couldn't get through the old dragon's thick armor, and it couldn't gain the upper hand in close combat.

Vhagar, enraged and focused solely on killing Cannibal, struggled to catch up with its heavy body.

When it chased Cannibal out of Driftmark, the dragon had already hidden in the night and disappeared without a trace.

"Roar..."

Having lost its target, Vhagar was particularly agitated, spitting out dragonfire randomly and shaking its nose in search of the scent.

After a while, it seemed to have caught the scent of blood left behind by Cannibal and chased after it in the direction of the Narrow Sea.

The two dragons left Driftmark, but the three remaining dragons were still at it.

Sunfyre, seemingly crazed, spewed dragonfire and attacked both Sea Smoke and Syrax indiscriminately.

The two dragons, reacting with ferocity, turned their heads to bite his neck and legs, intent on taking down this reckless foe first.

"Don't! Sunfyre, run!" Aegon, seeing the dire situation, scrambled to his feet, urging and shouting into the air. He didn't want Sunfyre to die here.

"Rhaegar, Syrax is being held back! It and Sea Smoke will tear Sunfyre apart," Rhaenyra said, desperate to control the situation. She could contact Syrax, but the battle was fierce and beyond her control.

"Don't worry, Cannibal will be back soon!" Rhaegar held a torch and looked out into the dim night sky.

"Roar!"

As soon as he finished speaking, a dark figure emerged from the other side of Driftmark, heading straight for the three entangled dragons.

Boom...

Green dragonfire sprayed from afar, enveloping the three dragons like a landslide. Each of the three dragons was wounded, and their injuries sizzled and popped under the burning flames, emitting the odor of burnt sulfur.

Immediately after, the huge black shadow, carrying the dragon flames, charged at the three dragons, dispersing them in one go.

"Roar..."

Sea Smoke, being the closest, suffered the greatest impact, instantly smashed into the cliff below, screaming miserably.

Sunfyre was also dazed by the impact, shaking his head and roaring.

The green flames died out, revealing Cannibal, who stared fiercely at the two golden dragons.

Syrax, who had been with Cannibal for many years and knew its terror, followed his master's orders and fled.

Sunfyre, still not grasping the situation, roared furiously at Cannibal.

Boom!

Just as the roar echoed, Cannibal swooped down, halfway reversed, and its thick dragon tail whipped Sunfyre like a long whip.

Without even a scream, Sunfyre was instantly whipped away, falling onto the shallow beach nearby.

In that moment, it recalled its fear of Cannibal and immediately came to its senses. Twisting its body, it dug into the sand to avoid Cannibal's sight.

Cannibal's pupils indeed focused on it, assessing whether it would continue to resist so it could vent its anger.

Seeing Sunfyre trembling in fear, Cannibal let out a low growl and turned its gaze to Sea Smoke.

Sea Smoke had just climbed up, a large section of its scales broken, dragon blood roasting the grass underneath.

"Roar.."

Feeling the murderous gaze, Sea Smoke didn't care about the pain, awkwardly spreading its wings and flying back to its nest on Driftmark.

Chapter 143: The Storm Doesn't Stop

Cannibal looked at the retreating Sea Smoke and snorted, its pupils filled with disdain.

Apart from that old dragon, there wasn't a single dragon on the entire island that could challenge it.

It looked back at the dark night in the distance, a trace of jealousy flashing in its eyes.

Its wings vibrated, creating a gale as it flew toward the city below.

At the stone archway, a cluster of torches was lit.

Rhaegar watched Cannibal's figure, his face calm, but his thoughts turbulent.

Daemon's sudden arrival interrupted tonight's feast.

The presence of uncle and nephew in the same room and the clash of dragons shattered the fragile peace, leaving a scene that couldn't be undone.

Rhaegar sighed inwardly, silently scanning the Velaryon people and formulating a strategy.

As the chaos subsided, Rhaenys's expression eased, and she was the first to speak. "Rhaegar, your dragon is extraordinary."

With decades of experience handling dragons, she had barely managed to communicate with Meleys and control it enough to leave the battlefield.

The black dragon not only gave up fighting Vhagar but also managed to lure it away and force the rest of the dragons to retreat.

This was something no ordinary dragon rider could achieve.

As the dragons stopped fighting, the group let out a collective sigh of relief.

Although several dragons had sustained varying degrees of injury, especially Sea Smoke and Sunfyre, who had been severely wounded by Cannibal, they had at least survived.

"Aunt, tonight's events are far from over," Rhaegar said, lowering his eyes and secretly communicating with Cannibal.

"Rhaenys, the dragons have flown away. Is the matter settled?" Corlys, wearing light armor, strode in with a team of guards, anxiously asking his wife.

When the dragons were fighting, there had been unexpected disturbances on the island.

He had already sent his men to quell the disturbances and put the whole island on alert.

Looking at her husband with a complicated expression, Rhaenys hesitated. "Corlys..."

"Roar..."

Before she could finish, a roar like a bell rang out, and a gust of wind pressed down on High Tide from above.

In the night, Cannibal swooped down, extinguishing the torches in the wind.

"On guard!"

Sea Snake's expression suddenly changed. He rekindled his torch and shielded his wife behind him.

He had dreamed of more dragons in the Velaryon House.

But like Viserys, he had an inexplicable fear of the power of dragons.

Years of sailing had taught him that nature was so powerful that even a seasoned sailor could do nothing but hide from it.

In the eyes of the Sea Snake, dragons were more than human beings.

They could be used, but they were dangerous.

The guards formed a circle to protect Rhaegar and the others, hastily rekindling the torches.

Under the firelight, the darkness was dispersed once again.

Until then, a shadow emerged, enveloping half of High Tide.

"Lord Corlys, in addition to responding to the Triarchy, it seems we also need to discuss the ownership of the dragons," Rhaegar's voice echoed faintly, reaching everyone's ears.

The Sea Snake, who was getting on in years and had poor eyesight, squinted as he looked at Rhaegar under the stone archway.

Rhaegar hung his head slightly, facing away from everyone, his silver hair blowing in the night breeze.

"Prince, the dragon riders of my family are of Targaryen blood, and our two families have been joined in marriage for generations," Corlys said, locking eyes with his wife, his heart pounding faster and faster.

He felt a bit nervous as he spoke these words, as if he himself was not convinced of what he was saying.

"Oh, really?" Rhaegar's voice was indifferent, and he laughed softly. "Since that is the case, it is even more important to discuss this in detail and establish a perfect system to ensure that no one with ulterior motives jeopardizes the friendship between our two houses."

As he spoke, he slowly turned around.

Under the flickering torches, the crowd could faintly see an even larger dark figure standing behind the stone archway.

Rhaegar scanned over the Velaryon people and said lightly, "What do you say, Lord Corlys?"

A gust of wind blew, and the Cannibal stretched out its broad wings. Its bleeding dragon head was more than a match for the towers of High Tide, and its green pupils looked down on everyone.

The Sea Snake's eyes widened. He secretly swallowed his saliva and gripped his wife's hand tightly. No one could ignore the presence of such a dragon.

Rhaegar put his hands behind his back, took one step forward, and asked, "Aunt Rhaenys, you are a princess of Targaryen. Do you agree with my proposal?"

"Rhaegar, I am a woman and cannot decide the fate of my house," Rhaenys said, holding her head high and gazing fearlessly at her nephew.

She was a sharp, intelligent woman. From the moment she took command of the dragon, she had married and had children, competed for the Iron Throne, and fought numerous battles. But it was not to be.

The land of Westeros is ruled by men, and because she is a woman, she will never have as much say as the men. She became a victim of her family's marriage, a subordinate to her husband.

She known as the Queen Who Never Was, but could only be like her dragon, the Red Queen Meleys, lazily coiled on Driftmark.

She spent her days in a pretty boring routine.

"Auntie, it is not your fault that you were born a woman. You possess wisdom that is no less than that of Queen Visenya," Rhaegar said, convinced that Rhaenys's heart was still with the Targaryens.

He advised her, "I can secure you a new seat at the Small Council. The Targaryen dragons must not go abroad; they must be commanded by a Targaryen."

He planned to form an order of Dragon Knights, not only to gather the dragons of the Velaryon House but also to put an end to future family marriages and the dilemma of dragons following out-married daughters away.

"What duties do you intend to give Rhaenys?" Corlys asked, suspicion filling his voice as he heard about the council and the ownership of the dragons.

Rhaegar glanced at him but did not respond.

Corlys frowned at the situation, still wanting to pursue the question.

"Roar....."

Cannibal roared, and green dragonfire illuminated the entire High Tide, casting everything in an eerie emerald glow.

As the flames surged, the temperature rose sharply, creating a stifling, suffocating heat.

Rhaegar stood in front of Cannibal, his skin flushed and radiating a heat that rivaled the dragon's.

With his blood boiling, he was oblivious to the discomfort, and he sternly warned, "Lord Corlys, dragons are the wealth of the Targaryen House. This is not up for debate!"

He felt his father had been too lenient, allowing the Sea Snake and the Velaryon House to increasingly disregard the royal family's authority.

Initially, Rhaegar hadn't considered a strategy to reclaim the Velaryon dragons. Now he had a plan, and with newfound strength, he was determined to act decisively to avoid future trouble.

"Enough! They can't take the heat, Rhaegar!" Rhaenys exclaimed, holding her husband, who was struggling to breathe in the intense heat. She and her children were of true dragon blood, but her husband, being only of Valyrian descent, could not withstand the dragon's flames much longer.

"Do you agree with my proposal, Aunt?" Rhaegar asked, ignoring her plea.

Tonight was the perfect opportunity. The Velaryon dragons had fled, and their morale was low. He wasn't going to let this chance slip away.

Chapter 144: Hull

"Rhaegar, do you truly intend to grant me such authority?" Rhaenys asked, her eyes crinkling in disbelief as she looked at her nephew.

She wasn't after power for herself; she just wanted to change her husband's mind and ease the tensions between the Targaryens and Velaryons. She never expected such an opportunity to present itself this way.

"You are a princess of the royal family, in line with the wishes of our great-grandfather Jaehaerys, and I trust you," Rhaegar affirmed, without the slightest hesitation.

Though people remained skeptical, Rhaegar wouldn't completely entrust the Velaryon household to Rhaenys. It was precisely her dual identity, both Targaryen and Velaryon, that allowed her to bridge the gap and achieve peace without bloodshed.

With this reassurance, Rhaenys looked down at her husband's pained expression and made up her mind.

Raising her head again, she met Rhaegar's gaze and said, "I accept your proposal. There are only three families of old Valyrian descent left, and unity is our only way to preserve our power."

"You've made the right choice, Aunt," Rhaegar said, his voice clear as he clapped his hands.

"Roar..."

The dragon finally stopped its flame, let out a final roar, and lifted its wings, soaring into the sky. The old dragon might come back to Driftmark at any moment, so it had to remain vigilant.

As the dragonfire died down, the temperature gradually dropped, and the air began to circulate again. The Sea Snake gasped for air, his pupils slowly regaining their focus. Moments ago, he felt as if he had seen the Stranger.

He felt this feeling before, many years ago. It was something that happened to him when he was young. He was on a ship that was caught in a storm and all the people on it were swept away by the waves.

Rhaenys, her eyes firm, stroked her husband's cheek and advised, "Corlys, we should united with the royal family."

She had been married for many years and didn't want to see her husband go astray.

"Fine, I'll listen to you on all counts," the Sea Snake agreed, breathing heavily. He recognized the stark difference between how Viserys and his son handled matters. He decided to abandon his original intentions and reconsider his house's future.

"It's good that you've realized this. We missed our chance; we should learn to let go," Rhaenys said, referring to the failed bid for the 101st Grand Council succession.

The Sea Snake had always been haunted by this, believing that if his wife were elected successor, the Velaryon House could ascend in status. This lingering sense of inadequacy was a significant reason for his estrangement from the royal family.

Laenor and Laena approached their parents, sensing the somber mood.

Rhaenyra walked over to Rhaegar, while Aegon, gritting his teeth, stood behind him.

A circle of guards with torches surrounded the two families, each taking their side.

"The danger's over, and so is the feast," Laena said, forcing a smile at the three Targaryen siblings.

"Go back and rest. It's late," the Sea Snake said, his legs sore and weak, trying his best to maintain a dignified image as he invited the Targaryen siblings to return to the castle.

Things had come to a head, and it was impossible for the Velaryon House to rebel against the kingdom at the risk of mutual destruction. The Sea Snake had traveled the world and cultivated broad-mindedness along the way. He wouldn't lose his composure over one setback.

"Thank you, Lord Corlys. You and your family are indispensable friends of the royal family," Rhaegar nodded respectfully, and the matter was concluded.

...

Three days later.

Driftmark was buzzing with activity as guests from all over the realm arrived, filling the harbor with ships to celebrate Rhaenys's name day. The celebration was a huge success, exceeding everyone's expectations.

As the host, the Sea Snake, along with his eldest son, Laenor, welcomed and entertained the castle's guests.

Two days earlier, Laenor had returned to King's Landing, bringing along the bound Daemon. Laena volunteered to accompany them, taking her two children to King's Landing as well.

Vhagar had not yet returned, though some fishermen reported sightings of it at sea.

Snake didn't object to Laena's decision. He decided to go along with the idea of reintegrating under royal rule, and he trusted that Viserys would not trouble his daughter.

After the celebrations, he planned to take his family to King's Landing to discuss matters concerning the Three Daughters and his wife's new responsibilities. As a seasoned politician, he was determined to reclaim what the Velaryons had lost and solidify their standing with the crown.

...

Hull Town

A grand theater bustled with activity. To celebrate the Queen Who Never Was name day, numerous theater actors and circus troupes flocked to Driftmark, eager to profit from the festivities.

Rhaegar was sitting on the second floor, watching the show. The play was about the 101st Council's succession crisis, which is a story that's been told many times before.

As expected, the actress playing Rhaenys was quickly overpowered by the actor playing Viserys, which symbolized her failed bid for succession.

"Boring show. Why doesn't the kingdom ban these plays that mock the royal family?" Rhaegar remarked, popping one red grape after another into his mouth. He glanced curiously at the seat beside him.

"A bunch of clowns, that's all," Rhaenys replied, draped in a black robe, her legs crossed as she watched the performance calmly. She showed no sign of annoyance, even critiquing the actresses for their appearance, saying they damaged her image.

"Auntie, it's your name day. Are you sure you don't want to go back to the castle?" Rhaegar asked casually.

Rhaenys shook her head. "I've already shown my face. I don't want to entertain those female guests; it's too annoying."

"So, are we just going to watch this poor performance?" Rhaegar speculated about why Rhaenys had brought him here.

"Why not?" Rhaenys retorted. "This is the kingdom's prejudice against women. I'm sure Rhaenyra has seen quite a few similar plays."

"There are very few theater troupes in King's Landing," Rhaegar remarked, seemingly irrelevant.

When he was elected heir, King's Landing was filled with plays about the Sleeping Dragon bringing down the Realm's Delight.

The performances were cut short that night, with the actors' tongues removed. Nobody knew who was behind it, but it effectively put an end to the theaters.

Rhaenys, recalling rumors she'd heard, asked, "Are you going to take back Laenor and Laena's dragons?"

Rhaegar shook his head. "Once a dragon recognizes its master, it won't accept another. Back in old Valyria, the forty Dragonlord families maintained their glory through a parliamentary system.

Here in Westeros, the Targaryens are the only Dragonlord family. I've decided to form an Order of Dragon Knights to bring dragon riders outside the Targaryen family under the Crown's jurisdiction."

"Is that why you chose to put me in charge?" Rhaenys asked, not surprised but a little impressed.

"Targaryen rule comes from dragons, and only dragons can destroy dragons," Rhaegar quoted their great-grandfather Jaehaerys.

"I will caution Corlys to abandon his illusions," Rhaenys sighed, leaning back in her chair and closing her eyes.

Seeing that his aunt had lost the will to talk, Rhaegar stood, grabbed a handful of dates, and left. The celebrations were over, but a crucial negotiation in King's Landing awaited.

The Three Daughters' Kingdom loomed in the shadows, ready to strike at any moment. The kingdom's instability prevented it from focusing on external threats.

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At that moment, Laena came slowly, speaking in a disoriented manner.

"It's alright, Vhagar's speed is a weakness."

Rhaegar looked at the Cannibal spewing dragonfire in the night sky with a grave expression on his face.

The Cannibal was younger and had a more flexible body.

As long as he did not get into close combat with Vhagar, he would not be in danger.

Rhaegar closed his eyes slightly and tried to communicate with the Cannibal with all his heart, hoping to end this dance of dragons as soon as possible.

"Roar..."

In mid-air, Sea Smoke screamed miserably.

Syrax and Sunfyre's dragons surrounded and attacked it, tearing its flesh.

In just a few moments, Sea Smoke was bruised and bloodied all over.

"Rhaegar, quickly tell your dragon to stop this! Sea Smoke can't hold on much longer," Laenor said, looking anxious and pacing back and forth.

Sea Smoke was his dragon, and they had been together for more than ten years. He could feel Sea Smoke's pain.

"Don't rush. Cannibal has to shake off Vhagar's pursuit first," Rhaegar chided harshly, mentally establishing a connection with Cannibal.

He didn't want any dragons to fall in this farce either. Every dragon in the sky came from the Targaryens. If any dragon died, the one who would lose the most would be House Targaryen.

"Roar..."

Finally, Cannibal sensed the will of its master and roared as it looked down.

It was in a furious state, the pain from its wounds stimulating its nerves.

"Cannibal, distract Vhagar!"

The moment he made contact, Rhaegar shouted subconsciously and stared at the old dragon in the sky.

This old dragon was clearly out of control.

If they kept fighting, they'd both lose.

"Roar..."

Cannibal looked back and sprayed a mouthful of dragonfire, boosting its speed and rushing into the clouds above, flying straight out of Driftmark.

After spending many years raiding Dragonstone Island, Cannibal had not only built up a strong physique but also developed a cunning nature.

It was really angry about the old dragon's attack and wanted to tear it apart. However, its flames couldn't get through the old dragon's thick armor, and it couldn't gain the upper hand in close combat.

Vhagar, enraged and focused solely on killing Cannibal, struggled to catch up with its heavy body.

When it chased Cannibal out of Driftmark, the dragon had already hidden in the night and disappeared without a trace.

"Roar..."

Having lost its target, Vhagar was particularly agitated, spitting out dragonfire randomly and shaking its nose in search of the scent.

After a while, it seemed to have caught the scent of blood left behind by Cannibal and chased after it in the direction of the Narrow Sea.

The two dragons left Driftmark, but the three remaining dragons were still at it.

Sunfyre, seemingly crazed, spewed dragonfire and attacked both Sea Smoke and Syrax indiscriminately.

The two dragons, reacting with ferocity, turned their heads to bite his neck and legs, intent on taking down this reckless foe first.

"Don't! Sunfyre, run!" Aegon, seeing the dire situation, scrambled to his feet, urging and shouting into the air. He didn't want Sunfyre to die here.

"Rhaegar, Syrax is being held back! It and Sea Smoke will tear Sunfyre apart," Rhaenyra said, desperate to control the situation. She could contact Syrax, but the battle was fierce and beyond her control.

"Don't worry, Cannibal will be back soon!" Rhaegar held a torch and looked out into the dim night sky.

"Roar!"

As soon as he finished speaking, a dark figure emerged from the other side of Driftmark, heading straight for the three entangled dragons.

Boom...

Green dragonfire sprayed from afar, enveloping the three dragons like a landslide. Each of the three dragons was wounded, and their injuries sizzled and popped under the burning flames, emitting the odor of burnt sulfur.

Immediately after, the huge black shadow, carrying the dragon flames, charged at the three dragons, dispersing them in one go.

"Roar..."

Sea Smoke, being the closest, suffered the greatest impact, instantly smashed into the cliff below, screaming miserably.

Sunfyre was also dazed by the impact, shaking his head and roaring.

The green flames died out, revealing Cannibal, who stared fiercely at the two golden dragons.

Syrax, who had been with Cannibal for many years and knew its terror, followed his master's orders and fled.

Sunfyre, still not grasping the situation, roared furiously at Cannibal.

Boom!

Just as the roar echoed, Cannibal swooped down, halfway reversed, and its thick dragon tail whipped Sunfyre like a long whip.

Without even a scream, Sunfyre was instantly whipped away, falling onto the shallow beach nearby.

In that moment, it recalled its fear of Cannibal and immediately came to its senses. Twisting its body, it dug into the sand to avoid Cannibal's sight.

Cannibal's pupils indeed focused on it, assessing whether it would continue to resist so it could vent its anger.

Seeing Sunfyre trembling in fear, Cannibal let out a low growl and turned its gaze to Sea Smoke.

Sea Smoke had just climbed up, a large section of its scales broken, dragon blood roasting the grass underneath.

"Roar.."

Feeling the murderous gaze, Sea Smoke didn't care about the pain, awkwardly spreading its wings and flying back to its nest on Driftmark.

Chapter 143: The Storm Doesn't Stop

Cannibal looked at the retreating Sea Smoke and snorted, its pupils filled with disdain.

Apart from that old dragon, there wasn't a single dragon on the entire island that could challenge it.

It looked back at the dark night in the distance, a trace of jealousy flashing in its eyes.

Its wings vibrated, creating a gale as it flew toward the city below.

At the stone archway, a cluster of torches was lit.

Rhaegar watched Cannibal's figure, his face calm, but his thoughts turbulent.

Daemon's sudden arrival interrupted tonight's feast.

The presence of uncle and nephew in the same room and the clash of dragons shattered the fragile peace, leaving a scene that couldn't be undone.

Rhaegar sighed inwardly, silently scanning the Velaryon people and formulating a strategy.

As the chaos subsided, Rhaenys's expression eased, and she was the first to speak. "Rhaegar, your dragon is extraordinary."

With decades of experience handling dragons, she had barely managed to communicate with Meleys and control it enough to leave the battlefield.

The black dragon not only gave up fighting Vhagar but also managed to lure it away and force the rest of the dragons to retreat.

This was something no ordinary dragon rider could achieve.

As the dragons stopped fighting, the group let out a collective sigh of relief.

Although several dragons had sustained varying degrees of injury, especially Sea Smoke and Sunfyre, who had been severely wounded by Cannibal, they had at least survived.

"Aunt, tonight's events are far from over," Rhaegar said, lowering his eyes and secretly communicating with Cannibal.

"Rhaenys, the dragons have flown away. Is the matter settled?" Corlys, wearing light armor, strode in with a team of guards, anxiously asking his wife.

When the dragons were fighting, there had been unexpected disturbances on the island.

He had already sent his men to quell the disturbances and put the whole island on alert.

Looking at her husband with a complicated expression, Rhaenys hesitated. "Corlys..."

"Roar..."

Before she could finish, a roar like a bell rang out, and a gust of wind pressed down on High Tide from above.

In the night, Cannibal swooped down, extinguishing the torches in the wind.

"On guard!"

Sea Snake's expression suddenly changed. He rekindled his torch and shielded his wife behind him.

He had dreamed of more dragons in the Velaryon House.

But like Viserys, he had an inexplicable fear of the power of dragons.

Years of sailing had taught him that nature was so powerful that even a seasoned sailor could do nothing but hide from it.

In the eyes of the Sea Snake, dragons were more than human beings.

They could be used, but they were dangerous.

The guards formed a circle to protect Rhaegar and the others, hastily rekindling the torches.

Under the firelight, the darkness was dispersed once again.

Until then, a shadow emerged, enveloping half of High Tide.

"Lord Corlys, in addition to responding to the Triarchy, it seems we also need to discuss the ownership of the dragons," Rhaegar's voice echoed faintly, reaching everyone's ears.

The Sea Snake, who was getting on in years and had poor eyesight, squinted as he looked at Rhaegar under the stone archway.

Rhaegar hung his head slightly, facing away from everyone, his silver hair blowing in the night breeze.

"Prince, the dragon riders of my family are of Targaryen blood, and our two families have been joined in marriage for generations," Corlys said, locking eyes with his wife, his heart pounding faster and faster.

He felt a bit nervous as he spoke these words, as if he himself was not convinced of what he was saying.

"Oh, really?" Rhaegar's voice was indifferent, and he laughed softly. "Since that is the case, it is even more important to discuss this in detail and establish a perfect system to ensure that no one with ulterior motives jeopardizes the friendship between our two houses."

As he spoke, he slowly turned around.

Under the flickering torches, the crowd could faintly see an even larger dark figure standing behind the stone archway.

Rhaegar scanned over the Velaryon people and said lightly, "What do you say, Lord Corlys?"

A gust of wind blew, and the Cannibal stretched out its broad wings. Its bleeding dragon head was more than a match for the towers of High Tide, and its green pupils looked down on everyone.

The Sea Snake's eyes widened. He secretly swallowed his saliva and gripped his wife's hand tightly. No one could ignore the presence of such a dragon.

Rhaegar put his hands behind his back, took one step forward, and asked, "Aunt Rhaenys, you are a princess of Targaryen. Do you agree with my proposal?"

"Rhaegar, I am a woman and cannot decide the fate of my house," Rhaenys said, holding her head high and gazing fearlessly at her nephew.

She was a sharp, intelligent woman. From the moment she took command of the dragon, she had married and had children, competed for the Iron Throne, and fought numerous battles. But it was not to be.

The land of Westeros is ruled by men, and because she is a woman, she will never have as much say as the men. She became a victim of her family's marriage, a subordinate to her husband.

She known as the Queen Who Never Was, but could only be like her dragon, the Red Queen Meleys, lazily coiled on Driftmark.

She spent her days in a pretty boring routine.

"Auntie, it is not your fault that you were born a woman. You possess wisdom that is no less than that of Queen Visenya," Rhaegar said, convinced that Rhaenys's heart was still with the Targaryens.

He advised her, "I can secure you a new seat at the Small Council. The Targaryen dragons must not go abroad; they must be commanded by a Targaryen."

He planned to form an order of Dragon Knights, not only to gather the dragons of the Velaryon House but also to put an end to future family marriages and the dilemma of dragons following out-married daughters away.

"What duties do you intend to give Rhaenys?" Corlys asked, suspicion filling his voice as he heard about the council and the ownership of the dragons.

Rhaegar glanced at him but did not respond.

Corlys frowned at the situation, still wanting to pursue the question.

"Roar....."

Cannibal roared, and green dragonfire illuminated the entire High Tide, casting everything in an eerie emerald glow.

As the flames surged, the temperature rose sharply, creating a stifling, suffocating heat.

Rhaegar stood in front of Cannibal, his skin flushed and radiating a heat that rivaled the dragon's.

With his blood boiling, he was oblivious to the discomfort, and he sternly warned, "Lord Corlys, dragons are the wealth of the Targaryen House. This is not up for debate!"

He felt his father had been too lenient, allowing the Sea Snake and the Velaryon House to increasingly disregard the royal family's authority.

Initially, Rhaegar hadn't considered a strategy to reclaim the Velaryon dragons. Now he had a plan, and with newfound strength, he was determined to act decisively to avoid future trouble.

"Enough! They can't take the heat, Rhaegar!" Rhaenys exclaimed, holding her husband, who was struggling to breathe in the intense heat. She and her children were of true dragon blood, but her husband, being only of Valyrian descent, could not withstand the dragon's flames much longer.

"Do you agree with my proposal, Aunt?" Rhaegar asked, ignoring her plea.

Tonight was the perfect opportunity. The Velaryon dragons had fled, and their morale was low. He wasn't going to let this chance slip away.

Chapter 144: Hull

"Rhaegar, do you truly intend to grant me such authority?" Rhaenys asked, her eyes crinkling in disbelief as she looked at her nephew.

She wasn't after power for herself; she just wanted to change her husband's mind and ease the tensions between the Targaryens and Velaryons. She never expected such an opportunity to present itself this way.

"You are a princess of the royal family, in line with the wishes of our great-grandfather Jaehaerys, and I trust you," Rhaegar affirmed, without the slightest hesitation.

Though people remained skeptical, Rhaegar wouldn't completely entrust the Velaryon household to Rhaenys. It was precisely her dual identity, both Targaryen and Velaryon, that allowed her to bridge the gap and achieve peace without bloodshed.

With this reassurance, Rhaenys looked down at her husband's pained expression and made up her mind.

Raising her head again, she met Rhaegar's gaze and said, "I accept your proposal. There are only three families of old Valyrian descent left, and unity is our only way to preserve our power."

"You've made the right choice, Aunt," Rhaegar said, his voice clear as he clapped his hands.

"Roar..."

The dragon finally stopped its flame, let out a final roar, and lifted its wings, soaring into the sky. The old dragon might come back to Driftmark at any moment, so it had to remain vigilant.

As the dragonfire died down, the temperature gradually dropped, and the air began to circulate again. The Sea Snake gasped for air, his pupils slowly regaining their focus. Moments ago, he felt as if he had seen the Stranger.

He felt this feeling before, many years ago. It was something that happened to him when he was young. He was on a ship that was caught in a storm and all the people on it were swept away by the waves.

Rhaenys, her eyes firm, stroked her husband's cheek and advised, "Corlys, we should united with the royal family."

She had been married for many years and didn't want to see her husband go astray.

"Fine, I'll listen to you on all counts," the Sea Snake agreed, breathing heavily. He recognized the stark difference between how Viserys and his son handled matters. He decided to abandon his original intentions and reconsider his house's future.

"It's good that you've realized this. We missed our chance; we should learn to let go," Rhaenys said, referring to the failed bid for the 101st Grand Council succession.

The Sea Snake had always been haunted by this, believing that if his wife were elected successor, the Velaryon House could ascend in status. This lingering sense of inadequacy was a significant reason for his estrangement from the royal family.

Laenor and Laena approached their parents, sensing the somber mood.

Rhaenyra walked over to Rhaegar, while Aegon, gritting his teeth, stood behind him.

A circle of guards with torches surrounded the two families, each taking their side.

"The danger's over, and so is the feast," Laena said, forcing a smile at the three Targaryen siblings.

"Go back and rest. It's late," the Sea Snake said, his legs sore and weak, trying his best to maintain a dignified image as he invited the Targaryen siblings to return to the castle.

Things had come to a head, and it was impossible for the Velaryon House to rebel against the kingdom at the risk of mutual destruction. The Sea Snake had traveled the world and cultivated broad-mindedness along the way. He wouldn't lose his composure over one setback.

"Thank you, Lord Corlys. You and your family are indispensable friends of the royal family," Rhaegar nodded respectfully, and the matter was concluded.

...

Three days later.

Driftmark was buzzing with activity as guests from all over the realm arrived, filling the harbor with ships to celebrate Rhaenys's name day. The celebration was a huge success, exceeding everyone's expectations.

As the host, the Sea Snake, along with his eldest son, Laenor, welcomed and entertained the castle's guests.

Two days earlier, Laenor had returned to King's Landing, bringing along the bound Daemon. Laena volunteered to accompany them, taking her two children to King's Landing as well.

Vhagar had not yet returned, though some fishermen reported sightings of it at sea.

Snake didn't object to Laena's decision. He decided to go along with the idea of reintegrating under royal rule, and he trusted that Viserys would not trouble his daughter.

After the celebrations, he planned to take his family to King's Landing to discuss matters concerning the Three Daughters and his wife's new responsibilities. As a seasoned politician, he was determined to reclaim what the Velaryons had lost and solidify their standing with the crown.

...

Hull Town

A grand theater bustled with activity. To celebrate the Queen Who Never Was name day, numerous theater actors and circus troupes flocked to Driftmark, eager to profit from the festivities.

Rhaegar was sitting on the second floor, watching the show. The play was about the 101st Council's succession crisis, which is a story that's been told many times before.

As expected, the actress playing Rhaenys was quickly overpowered by the actor playing Viserys, which symbolized her failed bid for succession.

"Boring show. Why doesn't the kingdom ban these plays that mock the royal family?" Rhaegar remarked, popping one red grape after another into his mouth. He glanced curiously at the seat beside him.

"A bunch of clowns, that's all," Rhaenys replied, draped in a black robe, her legs crossed as she watched the performance calmly. She showed no sign of annoyance, even critiquing the actresses for their appearance, saying they damaged her image.

"Auntie, it's your name day. Are you sure you don't want to go back to the castle?" Rhaegar asked casually.

Rhaenys shook her head. "I've already shown my face. I don't want to entertain those female guests; it's too annoying."

"So, are we just going to watch this poor performance?" Rhaegar speculated about why Rhaenys had brought him here.

"Why not?" Rhaenys retorted. "This is the kingdom's prejudice against women. I'm sure Rhaenyra has seen quite a few similar plays."

"There are very few theater troupes in King's Landing," Rhaegar remarked, seemingly irrelevant.

When he was elected heir, King's Landing was filled with plays about the Sleeping Dragon bringing down the Realm's Delight.

The performances were cut short that night, with the actors' tongues removed. Nobody knew who was behind it, but it effectively put an end to the theaters.

Rhaenys, recalling rumors she'd heard, asked, "Are you going to take back Laenor and Laena's dragons?"

Rhaegar shook his head. "Once a dragon recognizes its master, it won't accept another. Back in old Valyria, the forty Dragonlord families maintained their glory through a parliamentary system.

Here in Westeros, the Targaryens are the only Dragonlord family. I've decided to form an Order of Dragon Knights to bring dragon riders outside the Targaryen family under the Crown's jurisdiction."

"Is that why you chose to put me in charge?" Rhaenys asked, not surprised but a little impressed.

"Targaryen rule comes from dragons, and only dragons can destroy dragons," Rhaegar quoted their great-grandfather Jaehaerys.

"I will caution Corlys to abandon his illusions," Rhaenys sighed, leaning back in her chair and closing her eyes.

Seeing that his aunt had lost the will to talk, Rhaegar stood, grabbed a handful of dates, and left. The celebrations were over, but a crucial negotiation in King's Landing awaited.

The Three Daughters' Kingdom loomed in the shadows, ready to strike at any moment. The kingdom's instability prevented it from focusing on external threats.

Chapter 145: The Vanguard of the Triarchy

After leaving the theater, Rhaegar wandered aimlessly through the streets, taking in the sights of Hull Town.

Living on an island where land is scarce, most people earn their living through handicrafts.

Stalls lined both sides of the street, bustling with activity.

In addition to the local crafts, there were many other profitable businesses: gambling houses, brothels, and fighting rings.

Rhaegar, dressed in a black suit with his silver hair and handsome face, stood out in the crowd.

Many of the women on the street approached him, offering to show him a good time.

Despite his stoic expression, Rhaegar, being young and somewhat naive, felt a flicker of excitement at the prospect.

As he hesitated, his expression still blank, he suddenly heard a familiar voice.

Raising an eyebrow in interest, he brushed past the insistent women and made his way to the mouth of an alley at the end of the street.

"Hey, you're so wet and so beautiful," Aegon said naked to a big, fat woman as he worked out vigorously, sweating like rain.

"Aegon..." Rhaegar's eyes widened, unaware that the boy had begun whoring so early in his life.

Like a good brother, Rhaegar did not understand Aegon's excitement about having sex in the street, but he chose to tolerate it.

Aegon's genitals were visible, and Rhaegar's eyes held a playful, contemptuous expression.

But when he took a closer look at the woman in Aegon's arms, his face hardened and his mouth opened wide.

"What is it, handsome?" the woman asked.

The lady who had invited him followed, looked at the sex in the alley, and said amusedly: "That's my mother. Do you prefer mature women?"

"No, no, no, I like the young and beautiful ones."

Rhaegar, slightly disturbed and deeply shaken by Aegon's taste, left the scene in a hurry.

He swore that the old woman had the same effect on him as the Shadowbinder he had fought as a child.

"The Seven Hells! How did Alicent teach her son?"

Ignoring the tempting invitations, Rhaegar left in a hurry.

He had no intention of prolonging his stay for even a minute.

...

It was noon. The sunlight on the island was blindingly bright, so intense that people could barely keep their eyes open.

Running out of the bustling street, Rhaegar learned from passers-by that he had entered the largest dark alley in town.

After understanding Aegon's outlook on life, Rhaegar felt a calmness wash over him, allowing reason to triumph over desire.

He continued to wander through the town until he reached the harbor of Hull.

The harbor was teeming with ships, and workers were busy loading and unloading goods under the scorching sun.

Just as he was looking for a shady place to rest, a commotion erupted in the harbor.

"Come quickly, there's a lifeboat drifting over..."

"There are dead people on board, covered in blood..."

The harbor buzzed with shouts as sturdy sailors jumped into the sea to guide the lifeboat back and bring the bodies ashore.

Rhaegar turned his gaze to the scene.

One of the deceased was richly dressed, with an arrow lodged in his heart.

Soon, soldiers rushed in, carrying away the dead and restoring order.

"Looks like something happened," Rhaegar murmured as he silently returned to High Tide.

The routes of the Narrow Sea, the Stepstones, and other nearby waters were generally considered safe.

Judging by the condition of the boat, it appeared to have been attacked, likely by the pirates of the Triarchy.

On his way back, Rhaegar encountered a tense Rhaenys, accompanied by a group of guards.

"I just received news that a group of pirates appeared in the waters of the Stepstones and intercepted a Volantis fleet," Rhaenys said solemnly.

"I saw the boat that failed to escape in the harbor," Rhaegar recounted.

"Corlys has tried to keep the news quiet to avoid panic among the guests. We need to get back quickly."

Rhaenys, known for her fiery temper, understood all too well the threat the pirates posed.

...

High Tide Castle

The guests were still enjoying the banquet, blissfully unaware of the brewing trouble. Rhaenys led Rhaegar through a dark passage into the Driftwood Throne Hall, where the Sea Snake awaited them.

Seeing his wife and Rhaegar, the Sea Snake quickly rose from his driftwood throne. "The scouts have returned," he said in a grave tone. "It's the pirates of the Triarchy. This attack appears to be a pre-war test."

"Should we gather the fleet?" Rhaenys asked directly.

"No, too much commotion will alarm the guests," the Sea Snake replied. "The raiding pirates are operating in small groups, and the fleet wouldn't be able to catch them."

The Sea Snake's face was serious as he analyzed the situation. "The pirates of the Triarchy always retreat after a skirmish. If we dispatch the fleet now, they'll be long gone before we arrive."

"After looting a fleet, they'll need to transport their plunder, which takes time and effort," Rhaenys said thoughtfully, then smiled. "If the fleet can't catch them, the dragons certainly can!"

The Sea Snake frowned, uneasy. "The pirates know our strength. Their ships are equipped with scorpion crossbows."

In the last battle of the Stepstones, the scorpion crossbows had posed a significant threat, forcing Caraxes and Sea Smoke to avoid direct confrontation during sea battles.

"It doesn't matter," Rhaenys said confidently. "At most, only a few pirate ships will have scorpion crossbows. Meleys is the fastest dragon; they won't be able to hit her."

The Sea Snake hesitated. His wife was right. Meleys was incredibly fast and could reach the Stepstones in an hour. But he worried about her safety. His eldest son Laenor was occupied with the guests, and he couldn't bear to send Rhaenys alone into danger.

His hesitation was interrupted. "Lord Corlys, I can go with Aunt Rhaenys," Rhaegar volunteered.

The Sea Snake frowned. "Prince, the pirates of the Triarchy are not mere poachers. It's too risky."

He knew that Rhaegar was the king's eldest son and the kingdom's heir. Allowing him to face such danger could make him a traitor to House Velaryon if anything happened to Rhaegar.

"You don't have to worry," Rhaegar said confidently. "You've seen the Cannibal's strength. A few pirates are no match."

Rhaegar was eager to gauge the strength of the Three Daughters' pirates himself. He'd heard a lot about their prowess and wanted to see it firsthand.

The Sea Snake's face was grim as he glanced at his wife, his eyes questioning. He would have preferred to let the pirates go rather than send Rhaenys and Rhaegar into peril. "Are you ready to face blood and fire?"

"A bunch of pirates? I don't care," Rhaegar said with a light laugh. The dragon he rode was a predator, a true beast of battle. The pirates posed little threat unless, like Queen Rhaenys during the Conquest, he was unlucky enough to be struck by a scorpion bolt.

Chapter 146: Crushing Air Raid

The aunt and nephew quickly made their decision and sprang into action. The Sea Snake deployed a small team to leave the harbor first, heading toward the Stepstones under the guise of a routine patrol.

Rhaenys and Rhaegar slipped out of the castle, making their way to find their dragons. Several dragons now resided on Driftmark.

Among them, the most noticeable was Caraxes, who had crawled from the shallow beach to the rocks.

This red dragon, known as the Blood Wurm, was badly injured, with one wing broken and scales missing all over his body. Despite the severity of his wounds, the dragon's impressive resilience had saved his life.

Due to his wing injury, Caraxes had temporarily lost the ability to fly. He now relied on soldiers to feed him cattle and sheep. Once healed, he would be returned to the Dragonpit or Dragonstone Island.

...

Shortly after, Rhaegar mounted the saddle on the Cannibal and rushed to the eastern coastline to meet up with Rhaenys. Meleys' lair was there, undisturbed and perfect for catching large deep-sea fish.

"Roar..." The Cannibal roared and leapt into the air, leading the way out of Driftmark. Meleys, the fastest dragon in history, followed swiftly, her powerful wings cutting through the air as she caught up.

The two dragons soared together for a while before Meleys, like a red lightning bolt, overtook the Cannibal. Despite his efforts, the Cannibal struggled to match her speed.

"No wonder Aunt Rhaenys is so confident," Rhaegar thought, watching the red dragon with awe.

After about an hour, Meleys slowed, allowing the Cannibal to catch up, and the two dragons flew side by side. Below them, a rocky island emerged from the endless sea, appearing like scattered pieces of rubble on a blue canvas.

"Rhaegar, this is the Stepstones," Rhaenys called out clearly from Meleys' back.

Rhaegar looked down at the dense, scattered islands below. It was his first time seeing the Stepstones, a significant and contested location in the Narrow Sea.

The Stepstones were once part of the Arm of Dorne, connecting Westeros to the land of Essos.

Thousands of years ago, the old Valyrian Freehold invaded the cities of Essos, enslaving many, including the ancestors of the First Men.

Overwhelmed, the First Men invaded Westeros from the Arm of Dorne, then ruled by the Children of the Forest and the Giants. The Children used powerful magic to shatter the Arm of Dorne, creating the Stepstones.

Located between the Broken Arm of Dorne and the Disputed Lands, the Stepstones became a haven for pirates.

The free cities of Myr, Lys, and Tyrosh frequently fought for control of these islands. When the three cities united to form the Triarchy, they annexed the Stepstones and swept away the pirates.

However, the Triarchy's navy was worse than the pirates, imposing high tolls, abducting women and boys for brothels, and robbing ships.

This was one of the reasons the Sea Snake joined Daemon in the First Battle of the Stepstones.

"A strategic location, right in the middle of two continents on the main navigational route," Rhaegar mused, realizing why the Stepstones were so fiercely contested.

It was no wonder wars were fought here year after year.

"Roar..."

Cannibal suddenly let out a cry, turning its head toward the southeast corner of the island.

"You smell blood?" Rhaegar asked, becoming serious.

"Roar..."

Cannibal responded by flapping its wings and heading in the direction of the scent. Rhaegar called out to Rhaenys, and the two dragons flew together.

"Be quick, cut down these wimps!"

"This is the last ship of the day, hurry up and grab it..."

The sounds of shouting and fighting grew louder as they approached a hidden cove where several bloodstained ships were anchored.

As Cannibal arrived overhead, Rhaegar saw pirates swarming onto a large ship, smashing and looting it while attacking its defenders.

"Shall we intervene, Aunt?" Rhaegar asked, frowning at the scene below.

"Watch out for stray arrows and make sure your dragon flies high enough!" Rhaenys warned before diving down on Meleys.

"Dracarys!" she cried out.

Meleys unleashed a torrent of scarlet flames, incinerating the looting pirates. Their screams filled the air as they turned to charred corpses.

Rhaegar, initially stunned, laughed. "Cannibal, stay alert for hidden arrows. Let's join the fray!"

"Roar..."

The smell of blood had roused Cannibal's aggression. With a roar, the dragon dived, wings outstretched.

Boom...

Green dragonfire erupted from Cannibal, raining down on the pirates jumping into the sea.

"Cannibal, target that pirate ship and sink it!" Rhaegar commanded, directing Cannibal toward the largest vessel.

"It's a dragon! Watch out for the dragonfire! Shoot arrows!" the pirate leader shouted, rallying his men.

The pirates, though terrified, obeyed and loosed their arrows at the dragons.

In a flash, arrows rained down. Meleys, agile and swift, ascended before the arrows struck, leaving a trail of dragonfire that set the ship's mast ablaze.

"Roar..."

Cannibal, more domineering, faced the arrows head-on, spewing a torrent of flames that turned the projectiles to ash and molten metal. This level of attack was no match for a dragon.

"Retreat! Abandon the supplies and get back to the ship!" the pirate leader shouted, fear in his voice as he ran back to the ship, commanding the helmsman to set sail.

Boom!

Rhaegar wasn't about to let them escape. Cannibal swooped down, unleashing a torrent of dragonfire that engulfed the warship.

"Ah!..."

In moments, the ship was ablaze, the flames consuming it as the pirates' screams of agony filled the air.

Whoosh...

A sudden gust of wind whistled past, and a steel spear shot out from the darkness.

"Cannibal, left wing down!" Rhaegar shouted, spotting the spear in time.

Cannibal sensed the danger and deftly adjusted its flight path, narrowly avoiding the spear.

Rhaegar scanned the area and spotted a small, inconspicuous island with another pirate ship lurking behind it.

"Cannibal, burn them all!" he commanded, his voice cold as he glared at the pirate ship launching arrows.

"Roar..."

Cannibal roared and flapped its wings, heading towards the target.

Whoosh...

Seeing the dragon approach, the pirates frantically reloaded their scorpion crossbows and fired more steel spears.

Cannibal's eyes flashed with disdain as it easily tilted its body to dodge the second spear.

"Dracarys!" Rhaegar ordered.

While dodging the projectiles, Cannibal flew above the pirate ship and unleashed a torrent of dragonfire, engulfing the vessel in flames.

Chapter 147: Unexpected Gain

Boom...

The pirate ship nearly capsized under the intense spray of dragonfire. The mast snapped in the middle, crashing down.

The sailor manning the scorpion crossbow didn't have a chance to dodge and was crushed beneath the falling mast, his body incinerated by the flames.

"Keep burning, sink the whole ship!" Rhaegar commanded, urging Cannibal to continue its fiery assault.

With the threat of the scorpion crossbow neutralized, Cannibal hovered in the air, unbothered by the remaining arrows, and bathed the entire pirate ship in green dragonfire.

Rhaegar sat in his saddle, vigilantly scanning for any escaping enemies. It was his first encounter with the fearsome pirates of the Triarchy, and he was determined not to let his guard down. The only way to ensure victory was to completely engulf the ship in flames.

After a while, Rhaenys arrived on Meleys and called out, "Rhaegar, are you alright?"

"I'm fine, but I did spot a scorpion crossbow," Rhaegar replied, signaling Cannibal to stop its onslaught. Below them, the pirate ship was reduced to a smoldering wreck.

"You're so cautious," Rhaenys remarked, tugging on Meleys' reins as she surveyed the devastation below. The ship was completely incinerated, with not a single pirate or weapon left intact.

"It's good to be cautious," Rhaegar said with a grin, steering Cannibal towards the merchant ship that had been rescued.

Rhaenys nodded and guided her dragon to follow.

Back on the remote island where the battle had taken place, the remnants of the pirate ship continued to burn, with the dragonfire consuming everything.

The merchant ship nearby had also been affected, with its hull scorched and its canvas still smoldering.

Poof!

A charred hatch burst open, and a group of emaciated, unclothed people scrambled out.

"The slave traders are dead, let's run!"

"Blessed be the Lord of Light, the flames purify the sins..."

This ragged group, comprised of the old and young, men and women, fled in panic.

"Are these people slaves?" Rhaegar's face darkened, his voice turning cold at the mention of slave traders.

Westeros vehemently opposed slavery, and the slave trade was forbidden. This was his first encounter with a slave ship.

"Slaves exist everywhere, except in Westeros and Braavos where slavery is explicitly outlawed," Rhaenys responded, her tone muted and her brow furrowed in distaste.

Having traveled extensively with her husband's fleet, she had witnessed the harsh realities of slavery, especially in places like Lys, Myr, Tyrosh, and Slaver's Bay, where slaves were treated like livestock.

"Shall we go down and take a look?" Rhaenys suggested, noting Rhaegar's revulsion.

"Good idea. This ship won't last long. Let's transfer these people to another merchant ship," Rhaegar agreed, guiding Cannibal to lower its altitude.

"Dragonlord... Dragonlord..." The slaves fell to their knees, bowing in fear as the dragon approached.

The Dragonlord families of old Valyria still haunted the memories of Essos.

Rhaegar called out loudly, "Where are you from, and where were you being taken?"

"Great Dragonlord, we were sold from all over the world, and this ship was bound for Pentos," an elderly, gaunt man replied, his voice raspy.

"Pentos?" Rhaegar was taken aback.

Pentos, a free city, had an agreement with Braavos to prohibit slave trading. However, it wasn't unusual for Pentos to covertly defy this ban, as it wasn't bounded by Westerosi ideals.

Rhaegar pondered this, realizing that despite surface agreements, the reality of slavery continued in the shadows.

As Rhaegar was deep in thought, a man crawled out from among the kneeling slaves, trying to sneak away.

"He's a pirate!" someone shouted, exposing the escapee.

Before the pirate could react, the surrounding slaves stormed him, subduing him with punches and kicks.

Rhaegar watched coldly, not intervening. He had already sensed something was off about this man—the other slaves were all thin, but he was robust and strong.

Suddenly, the sound of a sharp blade piercing flesh echoed, and the attacking slaves scattered in panic.

Rhaegar looked over.

A thin, young girl stood up, holding a dagger in one hand and the pirate's severed head in the other. Clang...

The girl dropped the dagger, her chest heaving slightly, and she stepped forward. The other slaves moved aside to let her pass.

When she reached a group of slaves, she fell to her knees, holding the pirate's head low without a word.

Rhaegar studied her. She was as thin as a reed, with messy black hair and a pale, exotic face.

"What's your name?" Rhaegar was intrigued by her swiftness in killing.

"Sara," the girl's voice was hoarse, and she looked weak.

"Are you also a slave?"

"I haven't been sold," Sara replied, her voice faltering between words.

Rhaegar glanced at the girl among the slaves and instructed, "Take care of her for now. A fleet will take you away tonight."

She had guts, but Rhaegar had no time for trivial matters at the moment.

"Great Dragonlord, where will the fleet take us?" the dry, thin old man asked with trepidation.

Rhaegar paused and looked up at Rhaenys. These folks weren't slaves for sale or resettlement.

Seeing his difficulty, Rhaenys stepped in, "First, we'll transport them to Driftmark. Those who can't find work there will be sent to King's Landing."

She was experienced in such matters. Slaves often included women, children, young laborers, and various craftsmen. In a stable environment, they could find a way to live.

"Good, let's do that," Rhaegar agreed, preparing to return to Driftmark.

"Wait!" the foreign girl hurriedly spoke up, excitedly saying, "Honorable Prince, I have a treasure to present to you."

Rhaegar paused, intrigued. "Oh? What kind of treasure?"

There were several merchant ships in the vicinity, and it was uncertain what kind of treasure might be found among them. His explorer's system missions required such treasures of long tradition or rare materials.

"It's a longsword made of Valyrian steel!" the young girl answered immediately.

Rhaegar's eyes lit up with excitement. A Valyrian steel longsword was worth a fortune, and there were few in all of Westeros. Moreover, Valyrian steel contained magic, which, with certain experiences, could trigger an explorer's mission.

"Valyrian steel longsword? Where is it?" Rhaegar asked eagerly.

"In the slave master's cabin. He used that sword to demonstrate its sharpness by chopping off the head of a female slave," Sara said weakly.

The thin old man was shocked by the news and hurriedly urged the stronger men around him, "Quickly, find that sword for the Dragonlord."

The other slaves rushed into the ruined cabin, searching everywhere despite the burning wood. Soon, they overturned a charred body, and a long, dark sword fell beside it.

The thin old man retrieved the sword and used a piece of hemp cloth to carefully wipe away the ashes, revealing the true appearance of the Valyrian steel longsword.

Chapter 148: The Old Shipwright

"Great Dragonlord, only your kindness and wisdom are worthy of this precious sword," the frail old man said, struggling to lift the Valyrian Steel Longsword with both hands.

The effort made his body tremble, indicating the sword's considerable weight.

Seeing the Valyrian Steel Longsword, Rhaegar's heart surged with excitement. He leaped from Cannibal's back and landed with a thud beside the charred remains of the pirate leader.

Despite the foul smell emanating from the charred armor, Rhaegar's eyes were fixed on the sword as he approached the old man.

As Rhaegar took the sword into his hands, he paused, a smile spreading across his face. "It's actually a greatsword!" he exclaimed.

Swords came in various types, and this one was particularly special. The common ones were hand-and-a-half swords, like Blackfyre, the standard sword of his house. But greatswords, longswords, shortswords—they all had their unique attributes.

It was said that the Starks of the North possessed a Valyrian steel greatsword named Ice, passed down through generations.

Rhaegar examined the charred hilt and the blade, his fingers tracing the palm-sized surface. Though the sword's surface was blackened by dragonfire, the distinctive water-patterned steel of Valyria shone through. The material was exceptional.

The wooden handle was burned and worn, and the blade bore the scars of numerous battles, its edges chipped and pitted.

"The quest is now open: Retrieve the lost Valyrian steel greatsword," the system beeped in Rhaegar's mind. He grinned, summoning the system interface.

[Lost Valyrian Steel Greatsword]

Exploration Progress: 0.5%

"Thanks to these pirates, I've acquired a Valyrian steel greatsword," Rhaegar thought, gripping the hilt with both hands. He swung the sword twice, testing its balance and weight.

"It's a bit heavy, not ideal for prolonged combat," he mused.

With the relic [True Dragon's Blood], Rhaegar's physical abilities far surpassed those of ordinary men, enhancing his endurance and strength. His current sword, Dark Sister, was originally designed for women—long, thin, and increasingly inadequate for his needs.

This Valyrian steel greatsword could replace Dark Sister.

Overjoyed with his new sword and the quest it presented, Rhaegar felt a surge of gratitude. He pointed to the young girl who had brought him the sword. "Take good care of her. If she can't find work, she can come with me to King's Landing."

This sword had been delivered to him by this slave ship, and he felt a responsibility to help these destitute people.

Wrapping the greatsword in a piece of burlap, Rhaegar secured it to his back.

"Roar..."

Cannibal, sensing Rhaegar's intention, lowered his altitude to allow Rhaegar to climb the soft ladder draped around his neck.

As the dragon and his rider ascended into the sky, Rhaenys eyed the heavy sword cradled in Rhaegar's arms with envy. "You really are lucky," she remarked.

Valyrian steel, a magical product from the ancient Valyrian Freehold, was exceedingly rare. When the Doom befell Valyria, the secrets of forging Valyrian steel were lost, along with most of its creations.

Today, only a handful of Valyrian steel artifacts remained.

A heavy Valyrian steel sword was a priceless treasure.

"Thank you for letting me go," Rhaegar said with a genuine smile. "With this sword, House Targaryen gains another ancestral weapon."

"These slaves presented the sword to you, not me," Rhaenys teased, her head held high. "Just don't let Corlys see it; he'll go mad with envy."

House Velaryon had a long history dating back to Valyria, though it was once a minor noble house.

Many years ago, the Velaryons possessed a Valyrian steel weapon—a scimitar called Sea Foam. It was lost on a voyage, leaving House Velaryon without a Valyrian steel heirloom.

The Targaryens, also of Valyrian descent, were among the most prominent Dragonlords, possessing the ancestral swords Blackfyre and Dark Sister, as well as the lesser-known Dragonhorn Dagger.

House Celtigar was rumored to have a Valyrian steel battle axe.

House Velaryon, however, had no such weapon.

The Sea Snake, Lord Corlys Velaryon, had sailed around the world, harboring dreams of acquiring a Valyrian steel weapon. Unfortunately, his dream had yet to be realized.

Rhaegar's grin widened. "I can't wait to see Lord Corlys' envious and jealous expression."

The sword was now his, and no one could take it away.

He relished the thought of flaunting it in front of the cunning old man, Corlys.

Rhaenys shook her head, laughing at her nephew's antics. "I don't want to talk to you, you lucky devil."

Rhaegar issued orders for the boatload of slaves to wait. Then, the dragons and Rhaenys returned to Driftmark.

...

The feast on Driftmark lasted for several days and concluded successfully.

One by one, the large ships that had brought the guests began to depart from the harbor, returning to their respective islands.

A sizable ship with seahorse sails was anchored in the harbor, with sailors maintaining order and laborers loading supplies.

"Prince, the Stepstones Islands are scattered and disorganized. My family's fleet can only set up defenses on Bloodstone Island. Any wider area is out of reach," Sea Snake reported in a low voice as he stood on the pier, watching the goods being transported onto the ship.

Rhaegar stood beside him, nodding in understanding. "To fortify the entire Stepstones Islands, we would need watchtowers, fleet patrols, and soldiers stationed at fortresses. It's beyond the capabilities of House Velaryon alone."

The Stepstones consisted primarily of two large islands: Bloodstone Island and Gray Gallows Island.

In the last battle of the Stepstones Islands, the pirates of the Triarchy had defended these two islands, avoiding direct conflict and delaying the battle indefinitely.

Currently, the Triarchy had not yet captured the islands, presenting an opportunity for the kingdom to send troops and repair the defense fortifications.

"When we return to King's Landing, I will inform my father of the situation," Rhaegar said. "I'll strive to secure funds from the treasury to fully arm the Stepstones Islands and bring them under the kingdom's protection."

As they spoke, a group of bare-chested old shipwrights disembarked from the ship, accompanied by their apprentices, and approached the two men.

"Lord Corlys, the ship's inspection is complete, and everything is in order," reported a short, stout, silver-haired old shipwright respectfully.

Sea Snake glanced at him and nodded. "Thank you, Master Hammer."

"Yes, Lord Corlys," Master Hammer replied, accustomed to his lord's condescension. He then led his companions away.

With no outsiders to disturb them, Sea Snake and Rhaegar continued their discussion about the defense of the Islands.

"Prince, we should take action as soon as possible. The pirates of the Triarchy could invade the Stepstones Islands at any moment," Sea Snake advised. "Without proper defenses, we risk repeating the failures of the last battle."

Sea Snake's analysis was sound and highlighted the urgency of the situation.

Rhaegar listened attentively, scanning the harbor. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed the short, stout old shipwright, Master Hammer, squatting in front of a stall selling oranges, bargaining with the vendor. Beside him were two small figures.

Two little boys with silver-blond hair and dark skin.

They reminded Rhaegar of the bastards he had seen on Dragonstone.

As the seat of House Targaryen, Dragonstone had many bastards, with blood relations often tangled.

It was surprising to see that even the traditionally old-fashioned and noble House Velaryon had its share of bastards.

Chapter 149: Otto's Appointment

The transportation of goods was completed, and Rhaegar and Rhaenyra arrived with dozens of slaves in tow.

Rhaenyra looked exhausted, holding her forehead. "We left behind many elderly, women, and young men. The rest are mainly children and craftsmen."

Driftmark, being relatively prosperous, offered opportunities for the elderly and women to engage in handicrafts and for the young men to find work lifting and carrying at the pier.

However, the children could not fend for themselves, and with no orphanage on Driftmark, they would have to follow the larger ships back to King's Landing.

The craftsmen, on the other hand, had a choice: stay on Driftmark or follow the Dragonlord who had saved them. With their skills, they wouldn't lack work anywhere.

"Thank you for your hard work. Let's leave as soon as everyone is on board," Rhaegar said warmly, squeezing Rhaenyra's shoulders appreciatively.

"Hmph, go find Aegon. Who knows whose bed he's in tonight," Rhaenyra retorted, clearly irritated by Aegon's infamous behavior.

Rhaegar's expression darkened slightly, reflecting his distaste for Aegon's indiscretions. The thought of his brother's questionable taste in women cast a shadow over his mood.

...

With all preparations complete, the Sea Snake boarded the great ship and set sail. Meanwhile, the dragon riders mounted their dragons and flew ahead to King's Landing.

As the day wore on, the dragons arrived at the Dragonpit. Maynard, the Dragonpit Maester, led the Dragonkeepers forward, greeting them joyfully, "Prince, we are happy for your safe return."

"Nothing happened recently, right?" Rhaegar asked casually as he dismounted from the dragon.

Maynard glanced at the listless Aegon and cautiously replied, "The king has appointed the former Hand of the King, Otto Hightower, as the Master of Civil Affairs, a new advisor position. He will return to King's Landing to take up his post in the next few days."

"A good thing, I expected it," Rhaegar said with a playful smile. He had delayed asking about the street-cleaning program, anticipating Otto would take the lead and relieve some pressure from him. Now it seemed his plan was falling into place. Alicent's influence on the king was certainly effective.

Rhaenyra, stretching and looking weary, interrupted, "Are you done talking? It's been cold all day, and I need to go back and take a hot shower."

"It's not my fault. You and Aegon's dragons are too slow. If I hadn't waited for you, I would have been back as early as Aunt Rhaenys," Rhaegar teased, taking her hand. They left Aegon, who was struggling with fatigue, to take the carriage back to the Red Keep.

...

The next day, the Sea Snake's fleet crossed Blackwater Bay and arrived at the harbor of King's Landing.

As the heir, Rhaegar personally went to meet them. The Sea Snake commanded the sailors to unload the royal supplies from the ship, one box after another, and explained, "Several dozen slaves also disembarked. You can take them away."

With that, the sailors brought out the slaves. Rhaegar nodded appreciatively, "Thank you, Lord Corlys."

Erryk, one of the guards, stepped forward to lead the group away. The children would be nurtured as future citizens of the kingdom, and the artisans, whose skills were invaluable, would be put to good use.

After leaving the harbor, the Sea Snake, accompanied by his wife and eldest son, made their way to the Red Keep in grand fashion. Along the way, Rhaenys informed him about Laena's situation. She was safe and well-cared-for in the Red Keep, with several maids and nannies under Alicent's personal supervision.

In the Red Keep, King Viserys had prepared a grand feast to welcome House Velaryon. In fact, the Red Keep had been hosting banquets for the past few days. First, they welcomed Laena and Rhaenys, followed by Laenor and his family.

At the banquet, all the advisers raised their glasses and celebrated with great enthusiasm. No one brought up the matter of the Stepstones, ensuring the feast concluded smoothly and joyfully.

...

Nightfall.

Rhaegar left the banquet early and returned to his room alone. He sat at the round table, took out the Valyrian steel heavy sword, and began to habitually stroke it, his mind filled with anticipation.

He summoned his system interface and checked the records of the previous day's exploration.

[Lost Valyrian Steel Heavy Sword]

Exploration Progress: 100%

"This exploration is complete. Please pick up the lost treasure."

"Relic retrieved successfully. Checking..."

"Detection successful. Judged to be an excellent grade relic: Sword of the Nameless."

The small letters at the bottom of the screen prompted, "An ancient relic returned to the hands of the an ancient bloodline. It needs a resounding name."

Rhaegar's fingers traced the bumpy blade as he mused, "The heavy sword is made of Valyrian steel, but it isn't as prestigious a relic as Dark Sister?"

He pondered the difference. Dark Sister had been a Targaryen House sword for generations, steeped in legendary history.

Its storied past elevated its status. The Valyrian steel heavy sword, while of excellent material, lacked such a background and a legendary name. This, he concluded, was why it was deemed inferior in the system's exploration hierarchy.

Over the years, Rhaegar tried numerous explorations within the Red Keep.

He had examined the remains of Meraxes and Quicksilver, just like he did with Balerion's skull.

He had even sat on the Iron Throne, wearing Aegon the Conqueror's black iron crown. Yet, none of these triggered an Explorer's Quest.

Rhaegar theorized that Meraxes and Quicksilver had died too young to become a relic.

The Iron Throne and the black iron crown, though significant, had been cast for over a century and lacked the ancient resonance needed for an exploration trigger.

He realized there was only one item in the Red Keep that could truly trigger an Exploration Quest: Blackfyre, the Targaryen House sword carried by his father, Viserys.

When he asked for it under the pretext of observation, his father said it was too early and promised to hand it over when Rhaegar came of age.

Rhaegar had been disappointed but decided not to push the matter. In the meantime, he had collected exotic treasures and antiques from Westeros and the Free Cities.

Despite his efforts and expenses, only a few of these items had triggered exploration quests. He had almost depleted his mushroom caravan funds in the process.

Knock, knock...

A soft knocking came from the door, followed by Rhaenyra's voice.

"Rhaegar, I'm coming in."

Creak...

The door opened, and Rhaenyra, wearing a striking red dress, strode into the room. Rhaegar looked up with a smile. "The banquet is over. I thought you would still be dancing."

"Helping Alicent organize the banquet was exhausting enough. I had no energy left to dance," Rhaenyra replied, collapsing onto the bed.

She glanced at the Valyrian steel heavy sword in Rhaegar's hands and asked curiously, "I heard you asked the Sea Snake to invite skilled craftsmen from Qohor. Are you planning to recast this sword?"

The production process of Valyrian steel had been lost, but the master blacksmiths of Qohor were known for their ability to recast Valyrian steel.

"Yes, the blade is blunt, and it's too heavy," Rhaegar said, swinging the heavy sword twice. Its weight was impractical for continuous battlefield fighting.

He had decided it would be better to recast it into a hand-and-a-half sword of the right weight, then give the newly forged Valyrian steel sword a fitting name as the system hinted and collect it as a relic.

Rhaenyra tapped her lips thoughtfully but showed little interest. As a woman, she had no place on the battlefield and wouldn't need the best weapon.

After a moment, she said, "There will be a council meeting tomorrow to discuss the alliance between the Crown and House Velaryon."

Chapter 150: The Faith of the Seven's Small Actions

"It's only natural that we must draw in allies before the war," Rhaegar said, unfazed by the news.

Rhaenyra's eyes gleamed as she added mysteriously, "I've heard some new information: Otto is returning to King's Landing."

"This was already known," Rhaegar replied, puzzled.

"No, there's more. Besides Otto, the High Septon of the Faith of the Seven will be accompanying him," Rhaenyra said seriously.

"There are more and more followers of the Seven Gods in Flea Bottom. Rumors about the war are spreading, and the people are beginning to show signs of rejecting House Velaryon."

"Otto's alliance with the Faith is to incite the people?" Rhaegar frowned, dismissing the tactic as a minor annoyance.

"I have to admit, it's a clever move," Rhaenyra said, annoyed. "The Faith of the Seven have always been adept at causing trouble for the royal family. Public opinion can be extremely influential."

"It's fine, I'll shut them up," Rhaegar said after a moment of thought, deciding how to handle the matter. With war approaching, he needed to ensure stability within the realm and prevent anyone from undermining their efforts.

Rhaegar set the heavy sword aside and stood up. "I'm going out. You should rest."

"Where are you going?" Rhaenyra asked, surprised.

"To find a good helper," Rhaegar replied, leaving the room with Erryk, who had been guarding the door.

...

Inside the banquet hall, the nobles were singing and dancing, each seeking a partner to dance with.

In stark contrast, the dungeon of the Red Keep was dark and damp, with creepy crawlies everywhere.

"Prince, you don't need to come in person," Erryk, dressed in black, advised as he followed Rhaegar into the dungeon.

Rhaegar, also dressed in black robes, surveyed the dungeon environment himself, walking deeper into its depths. Erryk sent the guards away and hurriedly followed him.

Before long, they arrived at the far end of the dungeon.

The sound of chains clinking echoed through the narrow, dark corridors.

Rhaegar approached a single cell, peering inside.

"Prince, I didn't expect you to come and see me in person," Syrio said, surprised to see Rhaegar.

Syrio had assumed the prince didn't care if he lived or died. Though Rhaegar would occasionally take him out for training, he was usually locked up without a second thought.

Rhaegar glanced around the cell, noting its relative comfort. It was dry, clean, and had a mattress—far better than the public cells.

Syrio looked as he always did, with his fluffy brown curls, unkempt stubble, and a perpetual smile.

"It's time to redeem yourself for your past mistakes. I'm going to let you out," Rhaegar said with a smile.

"Oh? And what do you have in mind for me?" Syrio asked, intrigued.

After years in the dungeon, he was eager for a change.

"I want you to form an intelligence organization and train some killers," Rhaegar said bluntly.

Syrio, hailing from Braavos and known for his water dancing, was accustomed to fighting and assassination. Rhaegar intended to use those skills.

"Thank you for your trust. I won't let you down," Syrio replied decisively, holding out his shackled hands.

Rhaegar signaled to Erryk, who stepped forward to unlock the chains with a key he had prepared in advance.

As this was happening, Rhaegar turned and spotted another familiar face in the corner of the dungeon.

"Uncle, how are you holding up?" he asked.

In another single cell, Daemon lay on his bed, shackled hand and foot.

Rhaegar glanced around Daemon's cell, noting a chair, a toilet, and heavy bedding—special provisions.

Daemon rolled over, turning his back to Rhaegar, and remained silent.

On the first day of his imprisonment, his brother Viserys had visited, berating and degrading him, almost to the point of execution. Since then, he had been left to rot.

"Never mind, you clearly don't want to see me," Rhaegar said.

With Syrio freed, Rhaegar decided not to press Daemon further and led the way out of the dungeon. He had more pressing matters to attend to.

After dropping Syrio off at the Dragonpit, Rhaegar returned to his room. When he pushed open the door, the candles had long been extinguished.

After a busy day, he felt the weight of exhaustion. He took off his shirt and slipped into bed. The quilt was warm, and he leaned into the fragrant softness, quickly falling into a deep sleep.

...

The next day, early in the morning.

Cole knocked on Rhaegar's door to let him know that the king had called a royal meeting.

Rhaegar, still sleepy-eyed, hurriedly ate a quick breakfast before heading to the meeting.

"Keep your collar neat. Today's meeting is important," Rhaenyra said, adjusting his wrinkled attire with a worried look.

Rhaegar let her fuss over him while he silently chewed his bread.

"You should be thanking me," Rhaenyra muttered in exasperation, rolling her eyes.

Although she was enjoying herself, this was supposed to be Alicent's duty.

When they arrived at the entrance to the council chambers, they could hear Tyland's voice through the thick wooden door.

"Your Grace, the Stepstones is a land of constant conflict. The money spent on warring, building fortresses, and maintaining them will be astronomical."

The two siblings exchanged a glance, sharing a look of helplessness.

In addition to the bravery of soldiers, the most important aspect of war is logistics and provisions. Once the war started, money would be spent like water.

"Prince, Princess," Ser Steffon, the Kingsguard guarding the doorway, greeted them and personally pushed open the wooden door.

The meeting suddenly came to a halt.

Rhaegar walked into the hall and took a look around.

As usual, the former advisers to the realm and his father, Viserys, were there. Rhaegar took note of the three new chairs at the table.

Besides the one he had secured for Rhaenyra, the remaining two were presumably for the Sea Snake and his wife.

Taking his seat, Rhaegar looked at Tyland, who was standing in front of the table, and asked, "Did I arrive before Lord Corlys?"

"The Kingsguard just went to call him. He is on his way," Tyland answered honestly.

Rhaegar didn't mind. Last night's banquet had lasted very late, making it understandably difficult for the elderly to get up early.

"While Lord Corlys is not here yet, we should address any urgent matters," Rhaegar suggested, thinking of the impact of the war and deciding to discuss it first.

He picked up a stone ball and played with it in his hand.

"Prince, this is my estimated war damage report," Tyland said, handing over a prepared list.

Rhaegar accepted it politely.

Viserys, looking weary and in poor spirits, leaned back in his chair. "Lord Lyonel, you go first," he said, unable to sleep at night with the thought of the impending war.

Lyonel stood up and began his analysis. "Your Grace, in the face of the Three Daughters' advance, we should mobilize as many of the kingdom's lords as possible to support our troops."

"The Stormlands are the closest to the Stepstones Islands. Lord Baratheon will definitely give his full support," Lyonel continued.

"Boremund is Rhaenys's uncle, and he has always been a staunch supporter of the Crown," Viserys agreed.

"In addition, the Riverlands, the Vale, and the Westerlands will all be able to mobilize soldiers to supplement our strength," Lyonel suggested.