

G.O Thrones 151

Chapter 151: Unrest in the Seven Kingdoms

"Imagination is beautiful, but reality often falls short of expectations."

Just as Lyonel finished speaking, the Master of Laws Jasper stood up with a grave expression.

Viserys cast a glance at him and asked, "Why do you say that, Lord Jasper?"

Though not as dignified and forceful as his grandfather Jaehaerys, Viserys had no problem gathering his bannermen to defend the kingdom.

"Your Grace, war is a terrible machine that affects the entire body, and the kingdom's enemies are not only the pirates of the Triarchy."

Jasper said solemnly, "According to intelligence, Prince Martell of Dorne is likely to renew his alliance with the Three Daughters and lead his army to join the front battlefield."

"The Ironborn of the Iron Islands are also eager to take part, moving frequently around Lannisport in an attempt to disembark and pillage."

"How can this be?"

Viserys was taken aback and looked to Lyonel and Tyland.

"Yes, Your Grace." Lyonel replied.

"My brother even wrote to me recently that some Ironborn tried to infiltrate Lannisport. He caught and executed them."

Tyland showed a troubled expression and spoke the truth.

The Ironborn have always been a thorn in Lannister's side.

"So, it is difficult for the West to provide help?"

Viserys grimaced, somewhat displeased.

"Rest your anger, Your Grace," Tyland said nervously, "The situation in the Vale is not good. The mountain clans led by the Stone Crows tribe are causing turmoil everywhere. Lady Jeyne is overwhelmed."

Lyonel immediately followed, "In the Riverlands, the Bracken and Blackwood Houses are in conflict over boundary stones. They have been killing each other's people, with tensions escalating towards war."

Viserys froze at the words.

"Damn it, the kingdom was peaceful all day long, but now that a war is looming, turmoil erupts everywhere!"

Bad news after bad news left Viserys so angry he leaned back in his chair, panting.

First, there was Dorne, a constant thorn in the kingdom's side. Then the Ironborn, who only knew how to burn and pillage. Now, even the Vale and Riverlands were in trouble.

At this rate, rebels would be at the gates of the Red Keep by the time he woke up tomorrow morning!

"Father, don't worry. It's not as serious as you think."

Rhaenyra hurriedly walked behind Viserys and patted his back.

Her father had been born in a time of peace, and the sudden war was putting him under great stress.

Rhaenyra was afraid he wouldn't be able to cope.

The advisers looked at each other in disbelief, all worried about the coming war.

Rhaegar looked around the room, frowning as he saw the anxiety in their faces.

"My lords, the war has yet to come. Do not be overly pessimistic."

He knocked on the tabletop to draw attention to himself.

"Prince, what is your advice?"

The Master of Coin, Lyman Beesbury, who had been silent all this time, spoke slowly and with great solemnity.

Beesbury, an old man loyal to the royal family all his life, was one of the people who wanted peace in the kingdom the most.

Rhaegar put down the stone ball and sat upright. Cowardice before battle was a taboo. As the heir, he had to say something insightful to boost morale.

Rhaegar took a moment to contemplate, then spoke with a steady and confident voice, "My lords, Westeros has a long history of conflicts. During my great-grandfather Jaehaerys' reign, the kingdom enjoyed a period of peace."

"And it has remained so for decades now," he continued. "During these peaceful decades, the people of the kingdom have thrived, but many issues, large and small, have been hidden beneath the surface."

"It is not necessarily a bad thing that these issues reappear with the threat of war," he asserted.

"Only when the hidden tumors of the kingdom are revealed can we cut them out!"

His voice was strong and assured, and his words resonated with reason.

The advisers were silent and lowered their heads, understanding the truth in his words.

In their high positions, they knew well that peace had dulled their vigilance, making them fearful at the prospect of war.

"Rhaegar, what you say is very reasonable. In the face of war, how should the kingdom respond?"

Viserys, looking haggard, asked, his eyes full of expectation and gratitude for his eldest son.

As a king who had only known peace, Viserys felt ill-equipped to organize a war. Fortunately, his son possessed a temperament akin to his grandfather's and great-grandfather's, capable of handling the pressure.

Rhaegar's gaze fell on Tyland and Jasper as he said, "The last time there was a conflict in the Stepstones, Dorne allied with the Triarchy, clearly revealing their rebellious intentions."

"Now that the Triarchy is back, the Dornish will certainly not stand by without meddling in the war."

"Should we send a messenger to negotiate with Prince Martell of Dorne?" Tyland hesitated.

"Send a messenger, but do not count on it too much," Rhaegar replied. "The Triarchy is fighting a foreign war far overseas, while Dorne is on the continent of Westeros."

"If war breaks out in the Stepstones and the Prince of Dorne leads his army to the border, the kingdom must be prepared in advance."

Rhaegar signaled Cole to fetch a map of the continent and began analyzing it step by step.

"There are three paths for Dorne to invade the kingdom: the Prince's Pass, the Boneway, and the sea."

Pointing to a spot on the map, Rhaegar said seriously, "The Boneway has rugged terrain, making it difficult to advance a large number of troops. The Dondarrion House in Blackhaven should send troops to guard this road."

"The Prince's Pass has always been Dorne's first choice for invading the kingdom. House Tyrell in Highgarden should send heavy troops to set up a defensive line there."

"And as for the sea, we can basically rule it out. Communicate with the Stormlands and ask Lord Boremund to set up a naval defense, supported by Velaryon's patrol fleet. That way the Prince of Dorne won't make any rash moves."

"Dorne is like a pack of hungry wolves, always trying to take a bite out of the kingdom," Viserys spat, visibly calming as he listened to his son's organized analysis.

Hand of the King Lyonel spoke up, "Your Grace, the Prince's defense is thorough. With his bannermen's support, Dorne won't be able to cause much trouble."

Rhaegar's statement was logical and based on the defense and attack strategy dating back to Aegon the Conqueror's time. More importantly, his words boosted the advisers' morale.

Tyland quickly found Lannisport on the map and said, "The Ironborn have been plundering us for years. My brother can cope if we send heavy troops to guard the harbor."

The Ironborn believed in taking by force rather than hard labor. Lannisport had been looted before, and the Lannisters were always wary of the Ironborn.

"Your Grace, the Blackwood and Bracken clans in the Riverlands have not yet come to blows. Perhaps we can send someone to mediate," Lyman Beesbury suggested, aiming to resolve the Riverlands' issue.

Viserys looked at the map and frowned, "What about Lord Grover Tully of Riverrun? He is the Lord Paramount of the Trident and should manage these troubles."

"Lord Tully is old, and the actual ruler of Riverrun is his son," Lyonel explained, helplessly adding, "Unfortunately, Lord Tully's son is mediocre, and the lords of the Riverlands do not follow his orders."

Chapter 152: Navy Commander

“A bunch of wastrels!” Viserys cursed, waving his hand dismissively. “Lord Lyonel, your house is also in the Riverlands, so this matter will be handled by you.”

Lyonel hesitated for a moment before agreeing. “I will do my best to persuade the two houses as an emissary of the royal family.”

The Strong House, enshrined in the prestigious Harrenhal, was also one of the lords of the Riverlands. However, the Blackwood and Bracken families had histories stretching back thousands of years and were renowned nobles in the region.

Their feud was longstanding and bitter, each side determined to annihilate the other. Just a few years ago, when Rhaenyra toured the continent, a Bracken heir had been killed by Samwell Blackwood, a mere child at the time, further deepening the animosity between the two houses.

Viserys, relieved to have found a solution to one problem, asked, “What about the Vale? The mountain clans are a bunch of uncivilized barbarians.”

The mountain clans were a persistent threat in the Vale. Lady Jeyne’s father and brother, the last Lords of the Eyrie, had been killed in an ambush by the Stone Crow tribe, an incident that had caused a sensation.

“This...” Lyonel began but couldn’t find a solution.

The other advisers were also deep in thought. The Mountain Clans, familiar with the Vale’s terrain, could easily evade capture and were difficult to quell once they rebelled.

Just then, the door to the council hall creaked open, and Corlys and Rhaenys entered, hand in hand.

“Gentlemen, forgive me for being late,” Corlys greeted calmly, holding his head high.

He had been up late the previous night, and upon waking, had quickly dressed to join the royal meeting.

“Lord Corlys, Princess Rhaenys...” The advisers greeted them. Having worked together for many years, they were no strangers to one another.

Corlys nodded in response, leading his wife to their seats. He first thanked Viserys, “Thank you for the place you prepared for me, Your Grace.”

“You are now an ally of the kingdom and should not be treated poorly,” Viserys smiled, gesturing for them to sit.

Corlys, unsurprised, sat with his wife, taking a black stone ball from the tray and placing it on the table.

Seeing this, the advisers also sat and placed their own stone balls on the table, marking the official start of the meeting.

Corlys, the focus of this meeting, was the first to speak. “Your Grace, the pirates of the Triarchy have already begun plundering merchant ships. We need to act swiftly.”

“We were just discussing the losses and troop deployments,” Viserys said, smiling faintly. “In response to the aggression of the Triarchy, the kingdom will spare no effort in its counter-attack, which cannot be done without your family's support.”

He glanced at Lyonel, who nodded in understanding, and took out a warrant. “Lord Corlys, in view of your illustrious deeds and experience against the Triarchy, the King appoints you as Navy Commander and Commander of the Battle for the Stepstones.”

Corlys glanced at the smiling Viserys, accepted the commission, and said, “Thank you for Your Grace's trust. I will fulfill my duty.”

This appointment had been the result of long deliberation. No one else was better suited for the position of Commander of the Navy.

After a pause, Corlys asked, “Your Grace, my family will fully support the war effort. How many troops will the kingdom send?”

This time, with the royal family backing the battle for the Stepstones, Corlys was determined to avoid the heavy losses his family had suffered in the past.

“The exact number is still under negotiation, but a conservative estimate is that the kingdom can send 3,000 men and 100 warships,” Viserys estimated, considering the resources of the nobles.

The Crownlands was directly under the Targaryen Dynasty's control, and every bannerman was fiercely loyal.

“With all due respect, that is far from enough to sustain a long war,” Corlys frowned, clearly dissatisfied.

The last Battle of the Stepstones had been fought primarily by his family's fleet and Daemon. They had hired more than three thousand mercenaries from the free cities alone.

“The lords of the kingdom's realms have yet to receive news of the Battle of the Stepstones. We need some time,” Lyonel explained.

“Then it should be soon, Lord Hand of the King,” Corlys urged. “The Stormlands are closest to the Stepstones, and Lord Boremund is a royal supporter. He will definitely back this battle.”

As a city by the sea, Storm's End also relied on port taxes to accumulate wealth. The Baratheon family was naturally on their side.

Grand Maester Mellos interjected, “No problem. Once this meeting is over, the ravens will fly to the Seven Kingdoms.”

The next step was to address a series of defensive issues based on the fullness of the treasury. Watchtowers needed to be built on the Stepstones, troops stationed there, and fleets patrolling the islands. Each of these required a considerable amount of money.

Every time Corlys proposed a garrison arrangement, Master of Coin Lyman's eyelids twitched a little. He closed his eyes in pain.

Finally, Corlys broached the key issue. “Your Grace, the battle requires the air superiority of dragons. How many dragons should our two houses deploy?”

Corlys looked serious, understanding the critical importance of this point.

Viserys didn’t answer immediately. His eyes swept over Rhaegar and Rhaenyra beside him, hesitation evident.

There were three dragon riders in the royal family. Rhaenyra, being a woman, wasn’t fit for battle. Rhaegar, his eldest son and heir, needed to stay in the Red Keep to ensure stability. Viserys didn’t expect much from his second son, Aegon, either.

For selfish reasons, Viserys didn’t want any of his children to go to war. The battlefield was a place where not only frontal combat but also treachery and backstabbing occurred.

His great uncle, Aemon Targaryen, was a member of House Targaryen. He was the third born child of King Jaehaerys I Targaryen and Queen Alysanne Targaryen.

It was a battle just like the Battle for the Stepstones, Aemon led the charge on a battlefield astride his formidable dragon, Caraxes.

Tragically, Aemon did not fall to an enemy’s blade but was instead assassinated in his own tent, despite being one of his grandfather Jaehaerys’ best sons and chosen heir.

Corlys stared at Viserys, sensing his hesitation. This displeased him greatly. The Battle for the Stepstones was not just Velaryon’s battle. If the royal family did not send a dragon rider, did they expect him to bring his wife and children to the battlefield?

As he pondered how to press the issue, Rhaegar spoke up.

“Father, the war is being led by the crown. We cannot back down.”

Rhaegar stood up and said calmly, “When the war begins, I will ride Cannibal to the battlefield, as I have promised Lord Corlys.”

“Rhaegar, when did you make this decision?” Viserys was visibly distressed by his eldest son’s declaration. He would rather send his second son, Aegon, than risk Rhaegar.

“Father, the crown needs to set an example. If the Targaryens who control the dragons do not go to war, who will follow us?”

Chapter 153: Pre-war Deployment

Rhaegar spoke softly but resolutely, seeing the situation clearly.

He was the heir of the realm and the master of the adult dragon, Cannibal. If he did not go to war, how could he expect his sister Rhaenyra or brother Aegon to do so? A cowardly act would make him the laughingstock of the Seven Kingdoms.

The only way to gain honor and secure his future claim to the throne was to lead by example, making a name for himself on the battlefield and earning the respect of the soldiers of the Seven Kingdoms.

"You've grown up and formed your own ideas," Viserys admitted, unable to refute his eldest son's logic. Overwhelmed with emotion, he reflected on how, if Balerion hadn't died of old age, he might have become a king with a formidable war record through battle.

Turning to Corlys, Viserys made a firm decision, "The royal family will send two dragons to support the defense of the Stepstones."

"Two dragons?" Corlys hesitated for a moment, glancing unconsciously at Rhaenyra behind the King's back. Did the King intend to send the Princess to the battlefield as well?

"No! Rhaenyra is my daughter, and I will not put her at risk," Viserys asserted firmly. "I have four sons, two of whom have tamed dragons, and they will fight on behalf of the royal family."

"Prince Aegon?" Corlys frowned and exchanged a look with his wife, Rhaenys. As far as they remembered, Aegon was an unremarkable young man, and his dragon was not yet fully grown. Such a noble youth might contribute less to the battle than experienced officers.

Viserys was adamant. "Rhaegar is going to war, and as his brother, Aegon must help."

In truth, he did not want Rhaegar to face the battle alone. At least with Aegon, Rhaegar would have some familial support, someone to watch his back. In Viserys's mind, the importance of his three younger sons combined paled in comparison to Rhaegar's.

Corlys, understanding the king's logic, agreed, "Very well. One more dragon will reduce the casualties of many soldiers."

Historically, the concept of a second son serving as a safeguard in battle was not uncommon. Since Rhaegar was going to war, it made sense for Aegon to follow, ensuring that any potential power plays at home were kept in check.

Rhaenyra remained silent, listening to the men's discussion. She, too, wanted to follow Rhaegar into battle. She had a dragon and was not merely an ordinary woman with no capabilities.

Rhaegar, however, felt a pang of helplessness. He did not want Aegon to go to war; the boy wasn't cut out for it. As his brother, Rhaegar would have to take care of him on the battlefield, ensuring he wasn't shot down by a scorpion crossbow.

"How many dragons does your house intend to send, Lord Corlys?" Viserys asked directly, his gaze intense. He had committed two of his sons, and the Velaryon house similarly had three dragons; he expected their participation to be no less than his own.

Corlys hesitated, ignoring his wife's insistent look, and responded, "Your Grace, Laena has just given birth, and Vhagar is still wandering the Narrow Sea, unable to take part in the battle."

Viserys tapped his fingers on the table, unmoved.

"I will lead Vaemond and Laenor in the Battle of the Stepstones, while Rhaenys stays on Driftmark to oversee family affairs and patrol the channels," Corlys explained, his tone steady.

He continued, "All the men of my family will be on the battlefield, but we can only deploy one dragon—Laenor's Sea Smoke."

Viserys's expression darkened at this. He had committed both of his sons to the fight, yet Corlys seemed content to keep his wife and daughter safely away from the front lines. His lips twitched in irritation, but he restrained himself.

He refused to allow Rhaenyra to go to war because she was a woman. Rhaenys and Laena, also women, had their own significant reasons—one to manage the family, the other having just given birth. It was indeed not appropriate to force them into battle.

"Lord Corlys, have you asked Aunt Rhaenys's opinion?" Rhaegar suddenly spoke, his gaze shifting between Corlys and Rhaenys.

Laena had been a bridge between their families, living in the Red Keep to raise her children. Rhaenys was no ordinary woman; her dragon, Meleys, was a full-grown force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. Corlys's earlier statement had left Rhaenys looking disheartened, a sign that the decision was not mutual.

Facing Rhaegar's question, Corlys responded curtly, "If Rhaenys doesn't stay on Driftmark, who will take care of my family?" He conveniently ignored the fact that his siblings Vaemond and Laenor, his eldest son, were already going to war. Someone had to manage the home front.

Rhaegar, undeterred by Corlys's deflection, turned directly to Rhaenys. "What do you think, Aunt?"

He believed that his aunt had no desire to remain hidden in the background. Leading her dragon into battle was fitting for the greatness of the Queen Who Never Was.

All eyes turned to Rhaenys. Corlys averted his gaze, pretending indifference to his wife's answer.

"Corlys's proposal is for the greater good, and as his wife, I support him," Rhaenys began, her voice steady. Then she shifted her tone, revealing her true feelings. "Personally, I look forward to riding my dragon into battle and defeating the pirates of the Triarchy."

Turning to Viserys, she added seriously, "Cousin, Driftmark needs a Velaryon presence, and my daughter can fulfill this duty without difficulty."

"Rhaenys!" Corlys exclaimed, surprised by her declaration. They had long planned to exchange Laena and the child for a return to Driftmark, using Rhaenys's involvement in the war as a cover. If possible, they had even considered ransoming Daemon to fill the gap.

Viserys, slightly stunned, frowned in confusion. Were the two not on the same page?

Rhaenyra, sensing the underlying tension, glanced at Rhaegar in surprise. Rhaegar, with a knowing smile, reassured her. "Lord Corlys, Aunt Rhaenys has always been eager to serve her kingdom."

He had promised Rhaenys a role at the council, and now it was time to fulfill that promise.

"Father, when I was on Driftmark, I discussed with Aunt Rhaenys adopting reforms regarding the ownership of dragons by the Targaryen and Velaryon families," Rhaegar said earnestly.

The issue of dragon ownership was too significant to be overlooked. Mishandling it could lead to civil unrest and bloodshed between the families.

Viserys narrowed his eyes, his tone firm. "Oh, the dragons have always belonged to the Targaryens. What is your point?"

The Velaryon dragons originated from Targaryen lineage. When Jaehaerys was in power, Rhaenys brought the first dragon to Driftmark upon marrying Corlys. Later, during the succession contest between Rhaenys and Viserys, Jaehaerys did not oppose Laenor going to Dragonstone to tame Sea Smoke.

Laena had tamed Vhagar at fifteen. At that time, Viserys, seeing her as Rhaenys's bloodline and feeling guilty for refusing her marriage, had tacitly accepted Laena's taming of Vhagar. However, this did not mean he recognized the dragons as Velaryon property.

Chapter 154: Master of Dragons

"Your Grace, the point was raised by the Prince," Corlys said in a low voice, weighing the pros and cons of the decision for his house.

Viserys turned to his eldest son and asked sternly, "Rhaegar, what are your thoughts?"

Long ago, Viserys had recognized the importance his eldest son placed on dragons. Whether it was taking control of the Dragonpit or the ongoing Dragonpit reforms, it was clear that Rhaegar had a deep connection to these creatures. He believed Rhaegar must have a better solution when he proposed the allocation of the giant dragons.

"Ahem..." Rhaegar cleared his throat and spoke thoughtfully. "Father, you are well-versed in the history of the old Valyrian Freehold and know how the forty Dragonlord families fought endlessly among themselves."

"Of course," Viserys replied, his eyes darkening as he recalled the terrifying power described in the histories.

At its peak, Old Valyria had over a thousand dragons, and the entire continent of Essos was subjugated under its might. The internal conflicts must have been fierce.

"This is precisely what I want to address," Rhaegar continued. "The prestige a dragon brings to a family name, to a house, is immense."

Rhaegar scanned the room, his gaze resolute. "After the Doom, only one Dragonlord family remains in Westeros and even in the entire world: the Targaryens."

The mention of the Dragonlord bloodline silenced the room. Dragons were magical creatures with supernatural power. No family could ignore the Targaryen dragons and their unique Dragonlord bloodline.

Of all the advisors, Tyland had the most to say on this topic.

During Rhaenyra's time as Heir, Tyland and his brother Jason Lannister had each mounted campaigns against her, seeking the power associated with her status and hoping to add the Dragonlord bloodline to their family, enabling future generations to tame dragons as the Velaryons had done.

"Prince, my wife Rhaenys is a true Targaryen princess, and my children have Targaryen blood," Corlys said slowly after a moment of silence.

He feared that Rhaegar's proposal would deprive his children of the right to rule the dragons. The Velaryons' greatness was due not only to their sea fleet but also to the deterrent power of their three dragons.

"Lord Corlys, hold your tongue. The prince has more to say," Grand Maester Mellos reminded him in his usual old-fashioned way, hands clasped in his sleeves.

Corlys looked at him with a flash of disgust. He detested the Maesters of the Citadel, whom he saw as self-righteous and bookish.

"Rhaegar, now that you've mentioned the uniqueness of House Targaryen, what do you propose for House Velaryon?" Viserys asked, puzzled. Couldn't they just take the dragons back by force?

Even so, they should wait until the war ended, rather than risk losing an important ally like the Sea Snake before the conflict began.

"Father, be at ease," Rhaegar said, giving his father a reassuring look. "There is only one House Targaryen, but the Dragonlord bloodline will continue to spread through the realm through marriage."

"Women will always marry out; there's no stopping it," Rhaenys interjected with a frown.

"Then we need restrictions!" Rhaegar declared. "I propose adding a new seat in the Small Council to specifically to manage issues such as the marriage of Targaryen family members and the education of heirs."

"What's the point of that?" Viserys asked, his doubts deepening.

It had always been the patriarch's right to govern his family members. He was not only the king but also the head of House Targaryen.

Establishing a royal seat to manage family affairs seemed like a division of his authority.

"Father, our great-grandfather had twelve children in his life. How many are still alive?" Rhaegar asked rhetorically.

Viserys was speechless. Jaehaerys had been a wise king, but the latter half of his life had been fraught with loss. His chosen heirs, Aemon and Baelon, had died.

Several of his daughters died in childbirth or from illnesses or injuries. A few sons and daughters who were unruly or disobedient left the kingdom.

If not for his uncles and aunts, Viserys wouldn't have had the chance to become king.

Viserys fell deep into thought. The Targaryen bloodline had never flourished. Aegon the Conqueror had no brothers, only a pair of sisters. He had two sons in his lifetime, one of whom died early in his reign.

One of his sons died young after inheriting the throne, and the other rebelled against his nephew and died on the Iron Throne.

After three kings, Jaehaerys I succeeded to the throne and had twelve children. But none of them survived.

In Viserys' lifetime, there was only one brother, Daemon, and a cousin, Rhaenys. Suddenly, an absurd thought struck Viserys.

"Will my six children grow up safely?"

In an instant, Viserys' scalp tingled, and he sat up straight. Gazing eagerly at his eldest son, he gulped and asked, "Rhaegar, your proposal is good, but how will the new Royal seat manage the outflow of blood?"

"Simple. The Targaryens have a brief family history, and every member is recorded," Rhaegar explained bluntly. "Female members marry out of the family, and children are distinguished by their last name and whether they are qualified to hatch dragon eggs and tame dragons."

Either the last name is Targaryen, or they follow their father's last name. The Targaryens have dragons; those with the their father's names do not."

"The Westerosi tradition is that children inherit their father's name," Corlys interrupted, his face suddenly changing.

"Dragons come from Old Valyria," Rhaegar replied, his expression unwavering. "The new position I propose is the Master of Dragons. Newborns who follow the Targaryen surname are raised by the royal family and receive dragon eggs and dragon taming training. And only one newborn in the direct line of each allied family will be able to take the Targaryen surname."

These two key rules were clear: one was to add to the royal bloodline, ensuring the family name and upbringing thoroughly integrated the newborn into House Targaryen.

The second was to prevent allied families from having numerous children with Targaryen daughters and using their numbers to overshadow the rights of the royal family.

"Prince, your conditions are too harsh. According to your proposal, both Laena and Laenor will have to change their surnames to Targaryen!" Corlys grimaced, struggling to suppress his emotions.

The so-called Master of Dragons position would first restrict House Velaryon.

"Lord Corlys, you must understand one thing: dragons have never belonged to the Velaryons," Rhaegar rebutted calmly. "Laena and Laenor's ability to harness dragons was granted by my great-grandfather and father.

I will not deprive them of their family name or their dragons. But with the establishment of the position of Master of Dragons, House Targaryen will be united as one and not allow the emergence of a second Dragonlord family."

The restriction was aimed at House Velaryon. The Targaryens now had only three dragon riders, the same number as the Velaryons. In the end, who was the true Dragonlord family?

"Prince, Laenor is not yet married. Will his heir have the qualifications to change his family name?" Corlys asked, calming down slightly as he continued to fight for his heir's future.

"Not necessarily," Rhaegar admitted. "Laenor is the son of Aunt Rhaenys, and unless he marries another Targaryen, his children will be purely Velaryon."

This had to be clearly stated. The only way to change a family name was through a direct line of Targaryen members.

Chapter 155: Game of Thrones

"A very stringent regulation, suitable for the foundation of a new system," Viserys remarked, his eyes lighting up as he listened to his eldest son's proposal.

Dragons had always been the foundation of House Targaryen. The royal family's control over dragons could never be loosened.

Rhaegar's idea of a Master of Dragons and the system of changing surnames for newborns were both cornerstone strategies that would be beneficial in the future.

With that in mind, Viserys turned to Rhaenys and asked with a smile, "Cousin, what do you think of this proposal?"

Corlys lowered his gaze to his wife, deep in thought. He didn't want his wife to agree to this proposal.

It would mean that House Velaryon would be disqualified from riding dragons after Laenor's generation.

Rhaenys took her husband's hand, her eyes firm. "I agree with this proposal!" she exclaimed. Her last name was Targaryen, and her family's honor had been a part of her life.

There was no reason for her not to support what was beneficial to the family, even if it shattered her husband's unrealistic fantasies.

"Rhaenys..." Corlys's eyes were complicated, and his hands trembled slightly.

"Corlys, I've been pretending to be deaf and dumb for years, and I don't want to live that way anymore," Rhaenys said, gripping her husband's hand. The wrinkles at the corners of her eyes smoothed as she spoke.

"I respect your choice, but we have our own family and children," Corlys said, taking a deep breath and advising his wife to consider the situation.

His words were meant not only for her but for everyone in the room. House Velaryon had complied with the rules and should be compensated accordingly.

Rhaegar and Viserys exchanged a look, understanding passing between them.

Viserys patted his daughter's hand that was resting on his shoulder, stood up, and smiled. "Cousin, the position of Master of Dragons must be led by a Targaryen mature enough to have a calm disposition, and you are the best choice."

"And you would be willing to take away the power of the throne?" Rhaenys asked, giving him a sidelong glance, her tone cool. She knew her cousin's indecisive nature all too well.

"Rhaegar has made the importance of the Master of Dragons position clear, and the royal family has ignored that matter for far too long," Viserys said, unfazed by her tone. "You and I came from the Fire and Blood; we should trust each other."

"You're always so smooth-talking," Rhaenys said, her expression softening as she looked at her husband. Corlys pursed his lips and nodded lightly.

He was a victim of the Master of Dragons system's benefits but had to admit its importance. He wanted to oppose it, but the power was not in his hands.

When the pirates of the Triarchy Kingdom attacked, Driftmark was the first to be jeopardized.

If he left now, he would only be giving away his house business and the dragons, effectively excluding himself from the center of power.

Patience! A politician must be aware of this.

"Your Grace, I am willing to accept the position of Master of Dragons," Rhaenys said with a smile.

"Very well. Lord Lyonel, you will arrange the inauguration ceremony and ensure it is completed within three days," Viserys replied, his smile widening as he handed the task to the Hand of the King.

Lyonel felt overwhelmed by the increasing responsibilities. Touching on his chest, he cheered himself up and calmly said, "It is my duty to share your burdens, Your Grace."

"Now that I've joined the Small Council, can I be honest?" Rhaenys asked, looking around.

"I have always encouraged the advisers to speak candidly," Viserys replied, settling back into his seat comfortably.

"Then I will speak," Rhaenys said, raising her chin. "As for the number of dragons to go to war, I nominate myself as the vanguard."

"But according to Lord Corlys, you will stay on Driftmark?" Tyland, the Master of Ships, hesitantly glanced at the Sea Snake.

"My daughter Laena can manage Driftmark. She is not only a Velaryon but also married to a Targaryen," Rhaenys said frankly.

"I agree," Rhaegar said, smiling. "Laena has written to me about missing her homeland, and I think she will gladly accept."

"What do you think, Your Grace?" Rhaenys asked bluntly.

"I believe in Laena's abilities, but her children are still very young," Viserys hesitated slightly, glancing at Rhaenyra.

Rhaegar immediately picked up the conversation. "When the war comes, my sister can travel to Driftmark to take care of Laena and the newborn."

"If Rhaenyra is the adoptive mother of the two children. Is this arrangement still valid?" Rhaenys probed without hesitation.

Rhaenyra smiled lightly. "Of course. When I go to Driftmark, I will bring two dragon eggs to place in the children's cradles."

"You'll be a good mother," Rhaenys nodded, her eyes pleased.

The position of Master of Dragons was a double-edged sword. Accepting it would mean that Velaryon's descendants would lose their right to ride dragons.

It was a conflict of power. Laena and her children were meant to bridge the two houses, to be considered half members of both.

Rhaenyra's promise to bring dragon eggs as compensation was a strategic move. In one go, the Targaryens addressed the bloodline and dragon issues.

Velaryon kept her existing dragons, and Rhaenys became an advisor in the Small Council, earning the trust of the royal family on her daughter's behalf.

It was the best possible outcome.

With the issues between the two houses resolved, the Council returned to discussing the Triarchy.

"Lord Tyland, as Master of Ships, you will be in charge of war preparations," Viserys explained.

"Yes, Your Grace," Tyland replied solemnly.

"Now, I need a leading general to assist Lord Corlys in deploying the king's army," Viserys said, his gaze falling on Cole, who was serving beside him.

Sensing the king's scrutiny, Cole's breath hitched and he stood straighter.

"Ser Cole, you have never been to war. Do you have the confidence to take on this great responsibility?" Viserys asked, smiling.

As the honor of leading the army fell upon him, Cole's spirits lifted. "Absolutely, Your Grace!" he said with suppressed excitement.

"Very well. I appoint you commander of the king's army to aid Lord Corlys," Viserys said, pleased with Cole's boldness. The kingdom had been at peace for too long without a decent leader.

He had to choose the best of the available options, and he chose Cole, the loyal and brave captain of the Kingsguard.

Corlys glanced at the two men and shook his head, laughing. He didn't worry about a young man who had never led an army before.

Tyland thought for a moment and said worriedly, "Your Grace, the time it takes for the ravens to deliver news is too slow, and the situation in the Vale and the Reach is complicated. It could make things harder."

"What solution do you propose?" Viserys asked, feeling his head spin at the mention of the chaos.

Tyland pondered for a moment and suggested, "Lord Lyonel can handle the Riverlands. The ravens will be sufficient for sending letters to Storm's End. The main problem lies in the Vale and the Reach."

Chapter 156: Letter from the Vale

He avoided mentioning the North.

That bitter, cold land had always been out of touch with the rest of the kingdom.

By the time the Starks lead their armies south, the war would likely be over.

Tyland continued, "The unrest in the Vale is troublesome, but Gulltown has harbors that can support warships and large numbers of soldiers."

"While House Tyrell in the Reach must defend against Dornish invasion, House Redwyne on the Arbor has a powerful fleet that can support the battlefield. Additionally, Oldtown in the Reach and White Harbor in the North are among the largest ports in the kingdom."

The crowd listened quietly, agreeing with his analysis.

Rhaegar asked, "Lord Tyland, Oldtown and the Arbor are fine, but White Harbor is too remote, and Gulltown has to support the Eyrie."

"Prince, while the war has not yet begun, we should do our best to expedite our preparations," Tyland said.

Rhaegar waved his hand, signaling him to continue.

Tyland said, "The royal family has dragons, which fly faster than ravens, and a member of the royal family is more persuasive than a letter."

"A good idea," Viserys raised an eyebrow, "but there are too many places to travel for my children to cover them all."

"Your Grace, Aegon's maternal grandfather's family is House Hightower in Oldtown. If Aegon travels there, Lord Hobert will naturally help him communicate with the Tyrells and the Redwynes," Tyland explained.

"Princess Rhaenyra can go to White Harbor and convince House Manderly to send troops. Prince Rhaegar and Lady Jeyne are cousins, and the dragon can deter the mountain clans and gain the support of Gulltown."

It made sense, and Viserys' old habit of hesitation kicked in. He looked at Lyonel, hoping he would give his opinion.

Lyonel, always careful with his words when it came to royalty, said in a low voice, "The trip to the Vale may be accompanied by danger. The mountain clans are not to be underestimated. Several Lords of the Eyrie have died at their hands."

Corlys spoke up, "Your Grace, the mountain clans in the Vale are nothing more than a bunch of fools, and the dragons will overwhelm them."

Rhaenys thought for a moment and commented, "Let Laenor go. He has harnessed Sea Smoke and can bring word of the true state of affairs in the Vale."

Viserys hesitated. He was tempted to agree to Rhaenys's request, but Rhaegar, as the Heir, was more likely to represent the Crown.

Grand Maester Mellos rummaged through his satchel, seemed to remember something, and said indistinctly, "Your Grace, I have a letter from the Vale here that may clarify the situation."

A letter with a red lacquer seal was taken out, received by Cole, and handed to the king.

Viserys opened the letter and read it carefully.

"Runestone... Lady Rhea to... hold a wedding..." he muttered, his lips moving slightly as his voice trailed off, and he gradually frowned.

After a moment, Viserys handed the letter to Lyonel, displeased. "Lady Rhea of Runestone and her cousin Gerold Royce are engaged and intend to organize a wedding."

After Daemon left for the Free Cities, Lady Rhea had sought Viserys multiple times to urge for a divorce. Viserys, annoyed, had finally acceded to her request. Now, Lady Rhea had found someone to marry.

Jasper grimaced and said, "Runestone is in the center of the Vale, and if Lady Rhea is planning a wedding, it seems the situation in the Vale isn't too bad."

Lyonel quickly read through the letter, his expression surprised. Hesitantly, he said, "The letter says that Lady Jeyne will be traveling to attend the wedding, and they hope members of the royal family will attend."

"Pfft..." Tyland couldn't hold back a laugh and hurriedly covered his mouth.

Lady Rhea remarried and invited the royals. Is she inviting her ex-husband Daemon?

"That foolish woman - no wonder my brother couldn't stand to be bed her," Viserys muttered, grimacing at the thought of his former sister-in-law.

"Your Grace, that is actually good news," Lyman said slowly and methodically. "The Vale is at least still stable, and sending a dragon rider there will provide considerable support."

Viserys understood and turned to his eldest son. "Rhaegar, what do you think?"

Opening up Gulltown's harbor would enable troop support from the entire Vale, a significant advantage.

Rhaegar smiled, "No problem. The mountain clans are less of a threat now. They're hardly as dangerous as the savages of Crackclaw Point, and the Cannibal will take care of them."

"Father, I'll go with Rhaegar," Rhaenyra pleaded, resting her head on Viserys' shoulder.

Viserys frowned. "You still need to go to White Harbor."

"I haven't seen Cousin Jeyne in a long time, and I can keep an eye on Rhaegar."

Rhaenyra used Jeyne as a pretext, uneasy about her brother traveling to the Vale alone.

"That's one more thing to worry about," Viserys sighed, rubbing his brow.

Rhaenys interjected, "Laenor is up to the task. Corlys is close friends with Lord Manderly; he'll bring back good news."

Rhaenyra smiled gratefully at her aunt, who shook her head and avoided her gaze.

Rhaenys' two granddaughters were still waiting for their dragon eggs, so establishing this connection early was beneficial.

Seeing the family united, Viserys felt a rare warmth and urged, "Go and come back quickly. You still have two more children to look after."

"I will," Rhaenyra promised, happy to travel with Rhaegar in a dragon once more.

The meeting ended, and the advisors went about their business.

...

Night fell quickly over the Red Keep.

In the dimly lit forge room, the constant clanging of metal echoed.

Before a massive furnace, a foreign blacksmith wielded a hammer, striking a freshly forged rippled steel sword. An apprentice busied himself with the furnace, while another polished the sword on the floor.

Creak...

The wooden door to the forge room opened, and Rhaenyra, dressed simply, stepped lightly inside, scanning the room.

The fire from the furnace cast a red glow over half the chamber, the heat palpable.

"Rhaegar..." Rhaenyra spotted her brother reclining in a chair and approached him with a sigh.

Rhaegar had insisted on checking the progress of the weapon forging and hadn't even eaten dinner.

Facing the fire, Rhaegar had fallen asleep, his pale cheeks flushed with the furnace's heat.

Rhaenyra opened her mouth to wake him but decided against it. Rhaegar's sleep was always troubled, and she didn't want to disturb him when he finally found rest.

"Sleep well, you have your own little kitchen; you won't go hungry," Rhaenyra whispered, sitting on the edge of the recliner and gently stroking Rhaegar's face.

The blacksmiths continued their work, unfazed by her presence.

In his dream, Rhaegar found himself by a vast lake with an island at its center. The noon sun glistened on the turquoise water as a black swan played nearby.

"Roar..." A dragon's call echoed, and a silver dragon soared above the lake, its wings casting shadows over the water.

Chapter 157: Valyrian Steel Sword – Dragon's Claw

The dragon flew past, followed by an army of thousands, each soldier's armor and weapons gleaming in the sunlight.

Rhaegar watched from afar, transfixed.

The young man riding the dragon had silver-blond hair and a familiar, though indistinct, face. He carried a longsword at his waist and a spear on his back.

The massive dragon and its accompanying army circled the great lake and landed on its northern shore.

"Roar..."

Another dragon's roar, deep and thunderous, echoed across the sky and earth.

A fierce wind swept through, and a pair of immense dragon wings blotted out the sun, casting the entire lake into shadow.

Rhaegar's eyes widened in astonishment as he saw a colossal black dragon hovering above. This dragon, covered in black scales with scarlet-red horns and wing membranes, had cold, merciless eyes that resembled the god of death.

A name surfaced in Rhaegar's mind: The Black Dread—Balerion.

"Uncle, you have usurped power and seized the throne. Surrender!" the young man on the silver dragon shouted, drawing his longsword.

Rhaegar looked at Balerion's back. Seated in a black iron saddle was a tall, powerful middle-aged man with short silver-gold hair.

Rhaegar's mind cleared, and he realized, "This is the Battle at the God's Eye Lake!"

He remembered the brief history of House Targaryen. The cruel Maegor I had killed his nephew, Aegon Targaryen, north of the God's Eye Lake.

"My nephew, the throne is mine, and you will not escape today!" the middle-aged man on Balerion's back laughed, his voice thick and powerful.

"Roar..."

Balerion's wings beat mightily, and he lunged at the silver dragon.

Balerion was the largest dragon ever seen in Westeros. Compared to him, the silver dragon looked like a sparrow, tiny and vulnerable.

Roar...

Balerion's speed was incredible. He closed the distance quickly, ignoring the silver dragon's dragonfire, and tore off one of its wings with his powerful jaws, swallowing it whole.

The silver dragon had no power to resist. With a final scream, it and its rider plummeted to the ground, perishing together.

Boom...

When they hit the ground, a burst of blood from both dragon and rider sprayed tens of meters, staining the grass by the lake.

Rhaegar was horrified by Balerion's power. The world around him began to shake, and the dream started to shatter.

Click...

A crunching sound came from beneath him. The ground was covered in frost.

When Rhaegar looked up, snow began to fall, quickly covering the bloodied dragon's corpse.

"Roar..."

In the sky, Balerion roared again, spewing hot dragonfire, dark with smoke.

Rhaegar stood there, dumbfounded, his body chilled by the cold wind as he gazed up at the fiery contrast in the sky.

Waking up, Rhaegar frowned slightly, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead as his arms and legs twitched involuntarily.

"Rhaegar!"

Startled, Rhaenyra quickly called his name, realizing his distress.

Rhaegar often had nightmares, and whenever this happened, she would wake him.

"Ah!"

With a sharp cry, Rhaegar's eyes snapped open, and he sat up straight.

"Rhaegar, are you okay?" Rhaenyra asked anxiously, gently pressing his shoulders and shaking them.

Rhaegar, wide-eyed, murmured, "Ice and fire..."

The scene from his dream was still vivid in his mind, but he didn't mention Maegor's Kinslaying or the tragic death of the silver dragon. Instead, the snow and dragonfire seemed to be imprinted in his memory, replaying over and over.

"What ice and fire? Did you dream about the song of ice and fire?" Rhaenyra, recognizing the phrase, grew even more concerned.

"No, not ice and fire." Rhaegar gasped heavily, holding his forehead. "I dreamt of Maegor's Kinslaying."

"What were you dreaming about, anyway? All that nonsense," Rhaenyra sighed, cuddling into his neck and leaning against his chest.

In the past, Rhaegar hadn't reacted so violently to his nightmares. Feeling her warmth, Rhaegar's racing heart began to calm, and he closed his eyes in silence, though he still had a headache. The snow and dragonfire were what had woken him, and this was not a good sign.

Rhaenyra, sensing his turmoil, gently rubbed his scalp and whispered, "It's like you haven't grown up."

Rhaegar wanted to retort but instead hugged her waist. He had only had a nightmare and was under a bit of pressure. The sound of hammering continued in the background as the blacksmiths worked.

After a while, Rhaegar sniffed the familiar light fragrance and suddenly remembered his identity as a man. "Ahem, I'm better," he said, breaking away from the warm embrace and coughing lightly to cover his embarrassment.

Rhaenyra smirked at him, withdrawing her hands and folding them behind her back.

"Prince, the sword is cast!" The blacksmith spoke in High Valyrian, giving Rhaegar a much-needed distraction.

"Good! Let me see!" Rhaegar said eagerly, walking quickly to the fireplace.

The blacksmith, an old man with curly chestnut-colored hair and a worn face, held a long narrow box lined with red cloth.

Rhaegar looked at him expectantly. The blacksmith looked solemn and motioned for him to lift the red cloth. Rhaegar did so, revealing a long, gleaming sword inside the box.

The longsword was a standard hand-and-a-half sword, its blade covered in the distinctive watery pattern of Valyrian steel, with razor-sharp edges. The hilt and pommel were made of grayish bone, shaped like a dragon's claw.

One side featured a sharply curved dragon's back toe, while the other side displayed the first three toes of the dragon, carved as a single piece. The hilt was carved with fine dragon scale patterns, curving slightly at the end, making it look as if the claws of a giant dragon extended from the sword.

Surveying the recast Valyrian steel sword, Rhaegar felt a surge of satisfaction and gripped the hilt, lifting it from the box.

Buzz...

Swinging the sword, the blade cut through the air with a soft, reverberating hum, reminiscent of a dragon's roar.

"Good sword! Excellent craftsmanship!" Rhaegar exclaimed, holding the sword with one hand and rubbing the blade with the other. "The hilt looks like a dragon's claw. This sword shall be named Dragon Claw!"

"Qohor blacksmiths are world-famous; it's true," Rhaenyra said, joining him. "Dragon Claw is a fitting name."

"Of course, I've been thinking about this name for days," Rhaegar replied proudly, handing the sword to her. "Look at the hilt and the jaw. I used a piece of Balerion's dragon horn, which is as strong as meteorite iron."

"Only you would think of such a thing," Rhaenyra admired the freshly forged Valyrian steel sword. "With this, our family will have three ancestral swords."

"It's more than that," Rhaegar said, pointing to the furnace with a mysterious smile. "The melted Valyrian steel from the heavy sword left enough material. Even after forging Dragon Claw, there's still quite a bit of Valyrian steel left."

Chapter 158: Mysterious Scroll

After retrieving Dragon Claw, Rhaegar and Rhaenyra left the forging room and returned to their respective chambers.

Walking through the dimly lit corridor, Rhaegar occasionally stroked the hilt of Dragon Claw, savoring the texture of the dragon's horn.

Suddenly, a system notification sounded.

"Congratulations, the Sword of the Nameless has been activated. You have obtained..."

Rhaegar's spirits lifted as he summoned the Explorer's System Interface.

[Mysterious Scroll

Grade: Excellent (Blue)

Function: A mysterious scroll from old Valyria that brings you the treasures of your homeland.

Evaluation: "A scroll of mystical magic, you'll love it."]

With a soft pop, a parchment scroll about the length of a small arm materialized out of thin air. Rhaegar caught it immediately, opening it with great anticipation.

The scroll was yellowish, depicting a magnificent building complex.

"The Red Keep?" Rhaegar recognized the drawing instantly.

Besides organizing banquets and tournaments, his father's hobby was stone carving, and his bedchamber was filled with ornaments from old Valyria. It was said that Alicent had captured his father's heart through stone carving.

Examining the scroll closely, Rhaegar frowned. "This looks like a quest-like relic. Could it be a treasure map?"

Relics bestowed by the Explorer's Interface often had mysterious powers, becoming more enigmatic with each exploration.

Buzz—

As if sensing his doubts, the scroll glowed faintly, and the lines of the painting gradually morphed into coordinates.

Accustomed to magical occurrences, Rhaegar wasn't surprised. He studied the coordinates, which slowly aligned with the map of the Red Keep in his memory.

"This seems to be... Father's room?" Rhaegar said, realization dawning on him. The scroll was pointing to Blackfyre's location.

Rhaegar shook his head and smiled. "The scroll can help me find relics with the conditions for exploration?"

The more he thought about it, the more likely it seemed.

"Might as well try to explore Blackfyre again," he mused. With his imminent departure for the Vale, this could be a fortuitous opportunity.

He went to a nearby window and looked out into the night. It was just after dark, and a crescent moon shone brightly. His father probably hadn't gone to bed yet.

...

Rhaegar left the kitchen and made his way to his father's room. Just as he was about to knock, the door opened from the inside.

Alicent, dressed in a green gown, stepped out and bumped into him.

"Ah! Rhaegar?" Alicent exclaimed. Recognizing him, she took a few steps back.

"Queen," Rhaegar greeted simply, stepping aside with his hands behind his back.

Alicent, covering her chest with one hand, nodded lightly and quickly left. Rhaegar noticed her red eyes and teardrops.

Frowning slightly, Rhaegar wondered, "Could this be about Aegon's participation in the Battle of Stepstones?"

"Ahem..." Viserys's hoarse voice came from inside the room. "Rhaegar, is that you at the door?"

"It's me, Father," Rhaegar responded, walking into the room.

Viserys, in his pajamas, was leaning against a round table in the living room. He beckoned his eldest son over and sighed, "Come, sit here."

Rhaegar obediently sat down opposite him and asked with concern, "What is it, Father?"

"A woman's kindness," Viserys replied, looking ill. "You wanted to see me at this late hour?"

"Yes, to share good news with you," Rhaegar said, removing the scabbard from his belt and handing over Dragon Claw.

"Oh, your Valyrian steel sword is finished," Viserys noted, knowing his son had recast a heavy Valyrian steel sword.

He drew Dragon Claw, its cold aura shimmering in the dim light. Examining it, Viserys smiled. "Valyrian steel is very rare. This is a fine sword."

"The blacksmiths of Qohor are indeed skilled," Rhaegar said with a smile, glancing around the room until his gaze fixed on Blackfyre hanging on the wall.

Standing up, he reached out to take down Blackfyre.

"Want to compare the two swords?" Viserys asked with a smirk, noticing Rhaegar's movements.

Rhaegar laughed, resuming his seat with Blackfyre in hand.

A system beep sounded in Rhaegar's ears.

"The quest mission has begun. The target is the Valyrian Steel Sword, Blackfyre."

[Blackfyre

Exploration Progress: 0.3%

Exploration mission triggered. Please wait for the exploration progress to complete.]

Viserys chuckled. "You've been interested in Blackfyre since you were a child. Are you looking to trade it for Dragon Claw?"

Rhaegar shook his head firmly. "Blackfyre symbolizes kingship. I'm more suited to wield Dragon Claw right now."

Viserys, twirling Dragon Claw in his hands, asked, "A sword forged in battle—what do you think it symbolizes?"

"It was made for battle so, to me, it symbolizes fearlessness," Rhaegar replied thoughtfully.

He had actually wanted to say "war." The Targaryens had two ancestral swords. Blackfyre symbolized kingship. Dark Sister embodied bravery, loyalty, and protection, qualities attributed by Queen Visenya. The one thing missing was a symbol of war and conquest. Rhaegar hoped Dragon Claw would represent that, helping him defend the kingdom's glory.

"Not a bad idea. Fearless courage is rare," Viserys mused, unaware of Rhaegar's deeper thoughts. He sighed, feeling his own lack of such courage.

Both father and son fell silent, the room heavy with contemplation.

After a long pause, Viserys glanced at Rhaegar, surprised he hadn't gone to bed. Rhaegar was waiting for the quest to progress, having woken up from a nap and not feeling sleepy.

Searching for a topic, Viserys asked, "Rhaegar, you're thirteen now—old enough to be engaged."

"Huh?" Rhaegar looked up, puzzled by the sudden shift to his marriage prospects.

Viserys continued, "Do you have someone you favor?"

"No, I haven't thought about it," Rhaegar quickly replied. He rarely ventured outside the king's domain, and the noble ladies he met always seemed eager to devour him with their eyes. None of them truly interested him.

"What about following the family tradition?" Viserys pressed.

Rhaegar paused, understanding his father's implication. He had considered it, but his feelings for Rhaenyra were complicated, and their relationship had always been platonic.

"You're good at many things, but slow in matters of the heart," Viserys observed. "Look at Aegon. He understood love at eleven. What about you?"

"I haven't," Rhaegar mumbled, his head drooping as he fidgeted. It wasn't that he was slow to develop; he was just preoccupied with remodeling the Dragonpit, practicing martial arts, and mastering dragon-riding. He had too many responsibilities.

Viserys rubbed his forehead, worried about his eldest son's emotional intelligence.

Chapter 159: Dreamscape

Reflecting on the past, Viserys remembered his own romantic escapades. He couldn't understand why his eldest son was so serious.

After a moment of hesitation, Viserys said, "Rhaegar, when I was your age, I had already strolled through most of the brothels in King's Landing with Daemon."

Rhaegar pursed his lips, remaining silent.

"Damn it!" Viserys cursed, frustrated by his son's lack of response.

It wasn't Rhaegar's fault. Traditionally, Targaryen men would have their brothers or cousins take them to brothels for initiation after they reached puberty. But Rhaegar, as the eldest, had no older brothers or cousins to guide him—only Laenor, who was his cousin. His younger brothers were still too young for such activities, except Aegon, who was terrified of Rhaegar and avoided him.

Determined to help his eldest son, Viserys decided to take matters into his own hands. "Rhaegar, you should go where Aegon goes. I won't blame you."

Rhaegar looked at his father in disbelief. "Father, are you encouraging me to go to brothels?"

"Father, I'm not interested in Aegon's tastes," Rhaegar replied.

"Seven hells!" Viserys sighed, exasperated. "There are all kinds of girls in those places. Aegon even fathered a bastard."

"Aegon's got a bastard?" Rhaegar's eyes widened in shock. How old was Aegon? He already had a bastard?

"Hmph, that boy's a loose cannon," Viserys muttered. "I'll have Lyonel prepare a list of suitable noble ladies for you tomorrow, so you can choose one."

"But what about Rhaenyra?" Rhaegar hesitated, feeling uneasy about the situation.

"Forget Rhaenyra for now," Viserys said firmly. "Sort through the engagement choices and then decide who you'll marry!"

Viserys was frustrated with Rhaenyra's reluctance to marry, so he wanted Rhaegar to be prepared. Once Rhaegar was of age, he would need to marry and carry on the family line.

"You decide," Rhaegar agreed, seeing no reason to argue. His views on marriage hadn't changed—whether it was a family tradition, love at first sight, or a political alliance, he could accept it.

Viserys then proceeded to educate his eldest son on a series of matters, hoping to prepare him for his future responsibilities.

...

Before he knew it, dawn had arrived.

Viserys was slumped in his chair, a blanket draped over him, snoring lightly. Rhaegar had fallen asleep at the desk, clutching a Valyrian steel sword.

The previous night, father and son had spent the entire time talking. Rhaegar had endured the long hours for the sake of completing the Blackfyre exploration.

A voice suddenly woke Rhaegar from his sleep.

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

Rhaegar lifted his head, disoriented, and glanced around. The Explorer's System interface appeared.
[Blackfyre]

Exploration Progress: 100%

"It's dawn, the exploration is complete," Rhaegar mumbled, rubbing his face to wake up.

On the table, a grapefruit-sized purple halo hovered near the Blackfyre. Rhaegar reached out to touch it.

Wave~

The purple halo burst like a bubble, scattering points of purple light.

"Relic picked up successfully. Detection in progress..."

"Detection successful. Recognized as an epic relic: the King's Gaze."

Listening to the announcement, Rhaegar's face lit up with joy. "Epic level, that's excellent."

On the interface, a purple eye floated in mid-air, looking empty and dead. Below it, a line of small text provided a hint:

"The Monarch has more than one pair of eyes and sees things from multiple perspectives."

Rhaegar was puzzled, unable to immediately understand the relic's key function. He stared into the unblinking purple eye, tilting his head in confusion.

Suddenly, the purple eye transformed into a stream of light and entered Rhaegar's brain.

"Damn!" Rhaegar blurted out, rushing to pour a glass of water to check his reflection. He feared he might have grown a third eye.

His face appeared normal in the reflection. He reached up, touching his forehead—no bumps, just smooth skin.

"Scared me to death," Rhaegar sighed in relief, feeling cold sweat on his back.

Another beep sounded.

"Congratulations, the King's Gaze has been activated. You have gained..."

[Dreamscape]

Grade: Legendary (Red)

Effect: Grants you the ability to maintain awareness in the dream world.

Evaluation: "A special relic combined with a special talent, giving you a unique perspective."

Rhaegar suddenly felt a surge of clarity. His drowsiness vanished, his spirit revitalized, and his mind became sharp. He could recall memories with greater clarity and detail.

Looking out the window, he noticed the engraved bricks on the distant city wall with remarkable precision.

Rhaegar touched the corners of his eyes and whispered, "Memory enhancement, improved eyesight... this must be part of Dreamscape's ability."

He realized these enhancements were just the beginning. Legendary relics were incredibly rare. Currently, he possessed only [Blood and Fire] and [True Dragon's Blood], which had already laid a strong foundation for him.

Contemplating further, he opened his personal profile:

Rhaegar Targaryen

Talent: Dreamer (Gold), Longevity (Green)

Bloodline: Ancient Valyrian Dragonlord (39%)

Skills: Sword Mastery, Spear Mastery, Old Valyrian Language Proficiency

Relics: Blood and Fire, True Dragon's Blood, Dreamscape...

Evaluation: "Your talent has been developed twice. Use it to your advantage and avoid harm."

"Let's test it!" Rhaegar murmured, stretching as he got up.

Sleeping at the desk had not been comfortable. He picked up Blackfyre and re-hung it on the wall, then secured his Dragon Claw and quietly left the room.

...

Three days later.

Red Castle, Throne Hall.

Rhaenys stood in the center of the hall, dressed in black and red, surrounded by advisers and nobles of various ranks. Today marked her celebration as the new Master of Dragons.

Viserys, adorned in his coronation attire and wearing a crown, stood before the Iron Throne, holding the legendary Blackfyre. His face was solemn as he addressed the assembled crowd.

"My lords, the rule of the Targaryen Dynasty has endured for 118 years, with our royal bloodline passed down through the generations," he proclaimed.

"Today, in the name of Viserys I, I establish a new royal duty, exclusive to the Targaryens: the Master of Dragons!"

Applause erupted as his words echoed through the hall.

Rhaenys proudly lifted her head and walked toward the Iron Throne. When she was three meters away, she stopped and knelt on one knee.

Viserys raised Blackfyre and placed it on her shoulder, speaking with grave formality, "Rhaenys Targaryen, I appoint you as the first Master of Dragons, granting you the authority to manage the royal bloodline and oversee the royal legacy!"

"Yes, Your Grace," Rhaenys responded, her voice steady as she accepted the honorable appointment.

Viserys smiled softly, lowered Blackfyre, and symbolically helped her rise.

Chapter 160: Gifting Dark Sister

On either side of the Iron Throne stood members of the Targaryen and Velaryon Houses, each lost in his own thoughts.

With a smile, Rhaegar stepped out from the crowd and called, "Father!"

Viserys looked at him and nodded.

Rhaegar approached, unsheathing one of the swords at his waist. Everyone noticed that the Heir carried two scabbards—one long, one short. Rhaenys, watching intently, was amazed.

Rhaegar crossed the scabbard in his hand and smiled. "Auntie, take the sword."

Rhaenys recognized it immediately—the house sword, Dark Sister.

"Blackfyre is a symbol of kingship, and Dark Sister deserves to have duties of its own," Rhaegar announced, his tone solemn. "Its first owner, Queen Visenya, used it to protect Aegon the Conqueror, killing more than a dozen assassins with a single sword."

"I hope Dark Sister becomes a symbol of protection for the kingdom."

Rhaenys, visibly moved, took the sword with trembling hands. "I never thought I'd hold Dark Sister one day."

"The Dark Sister never belonged to any one person," Rhaegar explained. "From now on, it will be the sword of every Master of Dragons."

Hearing this, Rhaenys's eyes filled with determination. With a swift motion, she unsheathed Dark Sister and declared, "I will fulfill my duty and bear the burden of guarding the family."

Applause erupted, reaching a crescendo. But the celebration was not over.

Queen Alicent led the way to the banquet hall, while Rhaegar and the other dragon masters headed to the Dragonpit. Corlys took Laena and his two granddaughters back to Driftmark by boat.

The meeting had been agreed upon in advance. After the appointment of the Master of Dragons, everyone took up their respective duties.

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Above King's Landing.

"Roar..."

Accompanied by rising dragon roars, five giant dragons burst from the Dragonpit—Cannibal, Meleys, Sunfyre, and others. The people of King's Landing paused to watch the majestic sight of the dragons dancing together.

Meleys, swift as lightning, carried Rhaenys straight to Blackwater Bay. Bored, Aegon followed on his Sunfyre.

"Let's go, too!" Rhaegar said, guiding the Cannibal with a calm demeanor. With a powerful flutter of wings, the Cannibal quickly left King's Landing, followed by Rhaenyra on Syrax and Laenor on Sea Smoke.

All three dragons passed through the clouds, traveling together for now. After they disappeared into the sky, the city of King's Landing buzzed with news of the five dragons.

At the entrance of the Dragonpit, Helaena, dressed in white, held Aemond's hand and stood on her tiptoes, looking at the sky.

"Sister, the dragons have flown away," Aemond said gently, looking enviously at the sky.

"I know," Helaena replied, her big eyes full of determination. She beamed, "Let's go! Let's tame a dragon too!"

"Yes!" Aemond nodded eagerly, allowing his sister to lead him.

...

The three dragons soared through the sky.

From King's Landing, they passed Sow's Horn, God's Eye Lake, and the Saltpans.

By dusk, they had flown over the Mountains of the Moon, surveying the endless ranges and treacherous peaks below. Soon they reached the first gate of the Vale of Arryn, the impregnable Bloody Gate.

The Bloody Gate is a fortification consisting of a series of battlements on the cliffs on either side of the road leading from the Mountains of the Moon into the Vale of Arryn. Two watchtowers clung to the cliff face, connected by a weathered gray stone arch bridge.

The walls had been defended by successive Bloody Gate knights, who had repelled numerous enemies who had attempted to reach the Eyrie.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal's roar echoed over the Bloody Gate, drawing the attention of the Bloody Gate knights. The dragon was the unmistakable symbol of House Targaryen. The appearance of three dragons in quick succession could only signify the arrival of the royal family.

In a flurry of movement, dozens of knights emerged and stood upright on the cliffs flanking the arch bridge. A sturdy knight in heavy armor stood on the bridge, looking up at the approaching dragons.

Rhaegar, observing the activity below, found it interesting.

"This is a Bloody Gate knight. Should I greet him first?" Laenor asked gently, seated atop Seasmoke.

It was getting late, and it wasn't wise to continue the journey at night. They decided to visit Eyrie City with Rhaegar's brother and sister.

Before Rhaegar could answer, the knight below shouted loudly, "Who wishes to pass through the Bloody Gate?" It was the duty of the Blood Gate Knights to question those attempting to pass through.

Rhaenyra chuckled softly, glancing at the slightly exhausted Rhaegar and Laenor. "They've asked, so it's only right to respond," she said.

"Leave it to me," Laenor volunteered. He guided Seasmoke lower and announced, "This is the eldest son of Viserys I, heir to the Iron Throne, Rhaegar Targaryen."

The Knight Commander's pupils narrowed, and he puffed out his chest. "And who are the companions?" he continued.

"The eldest daughter of Viserys I, Princess of Dragonstone, Rhaenyra Targaryen, and me, heir to Driftmark, dragon rider, Laenor Velaryon," Laenor declared proudly.

"I understand. Let them pass!" the Knight Commander shouted. With a wave of his hand, he signaled the Blood Gate Knights on both sides of the cliff to stand down.

Rhaegar found this interesting and whispered, "Let's go. We need to reach the Eyrie before dark."

Rhaenyra and Laenor complied, and together they rode their dragons through the towering Bloody Gate.

Since the Heroic Age, countless soldiers and armies had perished here, unable to conquer the Vale of Arryn. Only once, during the Conquest, had Queen Visenya landed in the Eyrie's garden with her dragon, Vhagar, easily bypassing the Bloody Gate. The young Lord of the Eyrie had been amazed as Vhagar descended from the sky, and Visenya held him in her arms and teased him. When his regent mother arrived, Visenya's mere presence was enough for the Eyrie, and the entire Vale, to submit to Aegon the Conqueror.

As the three dragons flew through the Bloody Gate, a fierce wind blew in their wake. The Knight Commander knelt on one knee, placed a hand on his chest, and shouted, "The Vale sends its sincere greetings to you, Prince!"

"The Vale sends you its greetings!" echoed the rest of the Bloody Gate knights, falling to their knees in unison.

The voices carried by the wind reached Rhaegar's ears. He smiled faintly and urged Cannibal to speed up. His mother, Aemma Arryn, hailed from the Eyrie, making the Vale his natural ally.

Passing through the Bloody Gate, the mountain range elevation increased, and the paths became narrower. Further up was the summit of the Gates of the Moon, the highest peak known as the Giant's Lance.

Rhaegar guided Cannibal higher, the air pressure posing no hindrance, as if breaking through an invisible barrier.

"Roar..."

In the blink of an eye, Cannibal rose into the sky, with the Giant's Lance in sight.