

G.O Thrones 16

Chapter 16: The Dornishman

"You're right, Ser," Rhaegar concurred.

Speechless, Rhaegar continued to watch the bloody tournament unfold before him.

"Hungry," he muttered to Rhaenyra, rising from his seat and making his way towards the banquet hall. The pointless fighting had robbed him of his appetite, and he desperately sought some fruit to ease his fatigue.

Erryk simply shrugged and accompanied him.

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The charge session ended, concluding with mounted archery, melee combat, and duels.

As the dust settled from the blood and guts, attention turned to the duels.

The rules were straightforward: two opponents in armor, armed with weapons, engaging in unlimited combat until one concedes defeat or death. This was commonly known as single combat.

The first two duels proved to be thrilling spectacles, with knights wielding swords, hammers, and iron and steel in a riveting display of combat prowess.

Thanks to the sturdy protection afforded by their armor, injuries were mostly superficial, unlikely to cause disability or death.

The duelists on the field were not fools. They fought for honor and gold, knowing well that most nobles preferred their entertainment without fatalities. Why risk fighting to the death when a spirited performance could earn cheers and applause from the noble spectators?

It was often difficult for the audience to discern whether the combat was genuine or staged.

The anticipation mounted as the third duel approached.

On one side stood Bart of Iron Oaks from the Vale, known as the Knight of the Hammer. Towering and rugged, he was clad in silver and gray armor, wielding a hammer in one hand and a shield in the other.

Opposing him was a young man with brown skin, lightly armored and armed with a lance. It was evident that he hailed from Dorne.

Although Aegon the Conqueror held dominion over the Seven Kingdoms, the Dornish people never acknowledged the authority of the Targaryen dynasty and remained in constant rebellion.

It wasn't until a few years before Aegon I's death that Prince Martell of the Dornish kingdoms sent a representative to initiate reconciliation between the two sides, effectively ending the conflict between the Targaryens and the Dornish.

However, while the formal war had ceased, sporadic disputes persisted. The fierce Dornish frequently raided neighboring territories, perpetuating trouble for the kingdom.

Observing the Dornish faces below, Rhaenyra's boredom gave way to intrigue.

"I didn't expect a Dornish warrior to participate in this tournament," she remarked.

Turning to Cole, her companion, she inquired curiously, "Who do you think will emerge victorious?"

Cole chuckled, replying, "We haven't seen them fight yet; it's too early to make predictions."

"It's said that the Dornish are ferocious and warlike, labeled as bloodthirsty barbarians. I wonder if there's truth to that," Rhaenyra mused, her interest piqued.

As the referee sounded his horn, signaling the start of the duel, Bart concealed his face under his helmet, gripping his hammer tightly as he advanced cautiously, wary of his opponent.

He had heard the rumors surrounding the Dornish—tales of their fierceness and ruthlessness.

He dared not underestimate them; who knew if they would show mercy?

In stark contrast, the Dornish youth moved with fluid grace, pacing confidently with his spear, his words dripping with provocation: "Foolish giant, why wield a broken hammer when you could have forged iron at the smithy?"

As they exchanged words, both combatants displayed agile body movements, constantly exerting psychological pressure on each other.

Bart, lacking battlefield experience and less adept at controlling his emotions, struggled to contain his anger after being insulted.

"Brown-skinned monkey, I hope your brain is as resilient as your tongue, or it'll be crushed under my hammer," he retorted.

Seizing an opportunity as his opponent leaped, Bart advanced with an arrow-step, swinging his hammer in a sweeping motion fueled by momentum.

Spectators outside the arena watched intently, anticipating the spectacle of bloodshed.

"Idiot, you're too slow," the Dornish youth taunted, rolling to evade Bart's hammer strike.

Swiftly halting his roll, he thrust his weapon into the vulnerable juncture of Bart's leg armor, eliciting a gush of blood.

"Ah! Damn Dornishman!" Bart howled in pain, his fury ignited, eager to crush his opponent's skull with his warhammer.

But the Dornish youth proved elusive, evading Bart's strikes with the agility of a rolling donkey. With a quick jerk, he drew his lance and stabbed once more at the weak spot in Bart's hip.

Pfft...

A sharp pain seared through Bart's hip as he stumbled, falling to his knees, blood seeping from his armor.

Rather than capitalizing on his victory, the Dornish youth looked down at the fallen Bart with a mocking smirk.

"Knight of the Vale, it seems you harbor ill will towards us Dornishmen," he quipped, his tone dripping with sarcasm.

"You call me a brown-skinned ape, so what does that make you, people of the Vale?" the Dornish youth retorted, pulling his lance from his opponent's wound amidst the wails of agony.

"Hairless goats?" he added, tauntingly.

Struggling to rise, Bart was kicked back to the ground by his adversary, humiliation engulfing him as he cried out, "Vile Dornishman, have the courage to face me head-on instead of leaping around like a monkey!"

"Hahaha, what a clever retort, inviting a challenge to one's strengths with one's weaknesses," the Dornish youth remarked, his teasing evident. "Do you ask your enemies to reveal themselves in battle, Valley Goat?"

"Damn you to hell, you bastard!" Bart, consumed by rage, seized the opportunity presented by his opponent's words, swinging his hammer in a tight arc, aiming to shatter his foe's ankle.

But the Dornish youth, ever vigilant, evaded the planned ambush with a deft jump. In the ensuing melee, the lance pierced through Bart's right hand, slicing off his palm and eliciting a scream of agony.

Bang!

Before Bart's cry subsided, the Dornish youth drove his knee into Bart's jaw, silencing him with a choke.

Ripping off Bart's helmet, the Dornish youth exposed his vulnerable head, a cruel smile playing on his lips as he delivered a vicious kick to Bart's mouth.

Teeth, mingled with blood, filled Bart's mouth as he let out a desperate whimper.

Collapsing to the ground, Bart's body convulsed slightly from the trauma inflicted upon his head.

The Dornish youth pressed his spear against Bart's throat, addressing the crowd of onlookers with a triumphant proclamation, "Witness! Behold the valor of this knight of the Vale, refusing to yield."

As he spoke, his large feet encased in thick leather boots mercilessly trampled Bart's face, grinding it back and forth.

The spectators, witnessing this brutal scene, paled in shock. What had begun as a simple duel had escalated into a one-sided, sadistic spectacle of violence.

Breaking his opponent's teeth and denying him the opportunity to surrender was not merely victory but utter cruelty.

King Viserys, his face turning blue with rage, turned to Council Member Lyonel standing beside him, his glare piercing.

"What manner of dishonorable brute from Dorne shows no respect or mercy? He's making a mockery of all present!"

Wiping away imaginary sweat with a handkerchief, Lyonel attempted to explain, "Your Majesty, the Dornishman in the arena goes by the name of Degas Orléans. When he registered for the tournament, he expressed great admiration for you and sought to provide an impressive performance."

"And this is his idea of an impressive performance?" Viserys seethed with anger. "The Dornish have never shown gratitude. He should be arrested for his insolence and thrown into the darkest dungeon until his dying breath!"

"I beg your forgiveness, Your Majesty," Lyonel bowed his head in shame. "At this point, all we can hope for is that he swiftly dispatches the Bart Knight and minimizes any further disgrace."

"How can you speak so callously?" Viserys retorted coldly, no longer able to ignore the situation.

Meanwhile, inside the arena, the Dornish youth continued his frenzied antics, oblivious to the turmoil he had caused.

"I've heard there are many formidable warriors in the Vale. How is it possible that this knight is so feeble?" The Dornish addressed the crowd. "Could it be that someone accepted a bribe to allow him entry?"

The speculation rippled through the spectators, casting doubt on Bart's capabilities and raising suspicions of foul play.