

## G.O Thrones 291

### Chapter 291: Long Lasting Face

In the afternoon sun

The sun warmed the air in the forest.

Creak...

The small door to the castle's backyard opened from within, and Rhaenyra stepped out, radiant and transformed from her morning attire. Her long hair, now loosely coiled with tiny braids interwoven, swayed behind her. She wore a black long dress adorned with exquisite jewelry at the collar, accentuating her grace and nobility. Around her pink and white neck, she had donned a Valyrian steel necklace with three dragon heads.

"Rhaegar, hurry up," Rhaenyra called, smiling as she walked under the fish beam wood with her hands clasped behind her back. Her joy at their reunion was palpable.

Rhaegar followed slowly, his appearance markedly changed under Rhaenyra's careful grooming. The most noticeable difference was his hair: his long silver-golden locks had been trimmed to a clean, sharp, ear-length cut. This change was due to Rhaegar's casual complaint during their bath, "You're crushing my hair."

Despite the new hairstyle, Rhaegar's handsome face remained unaffected. Clad in a plain black dress, he exuded a cool and noble aura. Holding a large pile of fluffy cushions, he looked resigned but amused.

Effortlessly, Rhaegar placed the cushions in an open space free of tree roots, creating a soft, inviting area under the tree. Rhaenyra, pleased with the setup, raised her chin. "Do you want to snuggle up to me, or should I snuggle up to you?"

Rhaegar sighed and sat obediently on the cushion. "I'm not a kid anymore," he said, shaking his head with a smile.

Rhaenyra leaned into his arms, teasing, "You unweaned brat, you don't look grown up at all."

After a few moments of peaceful silence, Rhaenyra lifted her head, curiosity sparkling in her eyes. "What were those gains you mentioned?"

Rhaegar, undeterred by the loss of his Dragon Claw, had found numerous treasures. With a wave of his right hand, five dusty, petrified dragon eggs appeared. He also retrieved a green dragon egg that he had carefully guarded.

"Dragon eggs?" Rhaenyra's interest was piqued. She examined one of the fossilized eggs, her eyebrows knitting occasionally. She quickly determined that five of them were inactive. However, when she received the green dragon egg from Rhaegar, her expression changed.

"This is a good dragon egg," she said confidently, her extensive experience with dragon eggs evident.

"This dragon egg was unearthed with the fossilized eggs of the Belaerys family," Rhaegar explained.

"Belaerys... a top Dragonlord family..." Rhaenyra murmured, cradling the dragon egg gently. Suddenly, she declared, "Give it to me."

Rhaegar was puzzled. Rhaenyra climbed out of his embrace, her expression serious. "I want to leave it for our children, to hatch a dragon that originated from the Belaerys family."

"You've already saved a bronze-colored dragon egg?" Rhaegar asked, hesitant about placing this egg, unearthed from the Smoking Sea, in a child's cradle. He believed it should be kept under the care of the Dragonkeepers.

Rhaenyra shook her head, hugging the dragon egg tightly. "I won't have just one child. I'll leave it for our second."

Afraid Rhaegar might refuse, she blushed and drew closer, whispering in his ear, "I love riding dragons, and I love riding you. Who knows, we might breed an army."

Her face turned crimson, and she hid it behind the green dragon egg.

Rhaegar froze, his earlobes reddening. He lowered his voice, "That's Grandmother's love talk to Grandfather. You're not allowed to mimic it."

Grandmother Alyssa Targaryen was not traditionally beautiful, but she was bold and spirited. Her passionate relationship with Grandfather Baelon had become a popular joke.

On their wedding night, the sounds of their pleasure echoed throughout the Red Keep and beyond, much to the amusement of their guests.

The morning after, Alyssa brazenly declared, "I mounted him and took him for a ride, and I mean to do the same tonight. I love to ride."

She referred to Rhaegar's grandfather, Baelon Targaryen. The couple was inseparable, spending every moment together, except when riding their dragons.

Alyssa had also tamed Meleys, the Red Queen, strapping her nine-day-old son, Viserys, to her chest and soaring through the skies on her dragon. Unfortunately, she didn't fulfill her promise to bear twenty sons, dying of puerperal fever six months after her third child's death.

Rhaegar had taken Rhaenyra's hand, firmly against the notion that childbirth was a woman's battlefield. He didn't want Rhaenyra to be part of such a battle.

"I understand what you're saying, but it's not something we can control," Rhaenyra replied seriously.

The shadow of her mother's death in childbirth always loomed over her. But she accepted it as a woman's fate, ready to face it for someone she truly loved and cared for.

Sensing her determination, Rhaegar squeezed her hand. After a few moments of silence, he took out the Valyrian steel sword, Brightroar, and plunged it into the soil under the fish beam wood.

"Valyrian steel sword!" Rhaenyra exclaimed, examining the sword's body, which was wider than her palm. Her eyes landed on the lion's head on the hilt. "Is this Lannister's Brightroar?"

The brothers Jason and Tyland had often boasted to her about the Lannisters' achievements.

Rhaegar laughed softly, "Its last name is Targaryen now."

Rhaenyra blinked and then turned away, "I'll send a message to the blacksmith in Qohor to have the sword recast."

Brightroar had been excavated from the ruins of the Smoking Sea, and no one but Rhaegar knew about it. The mercenaries who helped didn't recognize its significance.

Rhaenyra's plan was simple. Brightroar couldn't be exposed, or the Lannisters would claim it. While no one knew, the sword would be secretly recast. Then, it would be Rhaegar's new weapon, not the Lannister family's Brightroar.

"Wait, I summoned the blacksmith from Qohor as soon as I got out of the Smoking Sea."

Rhaegar tugged on Rhaenyra's sleeve, slowing her down. With a flip of his palm, he conjured a bunch of peculiar fruits, holding them in front of her eyes as if by magic.

Rhaenyra glanced at the fruits. They resembled cherries, lychee-sized and red, with two on a bunch.

"A trophy I snatched from a sea monster's nest," Rhaegar said, handing over the fruit. "Eat it, it will bring you good luck."

After many days, the Brightroar and the sea monster's corpse had been thoroughly explored. Calling up the system panel, Rhaegar checked the exploration record, which still showed progress.

[Brightroar]

Exploration Progress: 100%

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

"Pickup successful. You have obtained..."

[Lion's Treasure]

Grade: Epic (Purple)

Trigger Cue: "Blood of the King."

Rhaegar had tried using his own blood, but it didn't trigger, likely because he hadn't ascended the Iron Throne yet.

[Cursed Sea Monster]

Exploration Progress: 100%

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

"Pickup successful. You have gained..."

[Gift of the Sea Monster]

Grade: Rare (Blue)

Trigger Prompt: "Poor sea monster, to have such a trivial wish."

The bunch of fruit in Rhaegar's hand was the relic [Gift of the Sea Monster].

For a moment, it made him nostalgic for the White Hart that had given him the [Auspicious Blessing] for him. Magical creatures seemed to have a fondness for fruit.

Rhaenyra half-heartedly took the fruit and brought it to her mouth. "Should I eat it?"

"That's right," Rhaegar confirmed.

Rhaenyra rolled her eyes at him before opening her mouth to eat the two fruits on the bunch. She chewed thoughtfully, savoring the flavor.

Once the fruit was in her belly, a system beep echoed in Rhaegar's ears.

"Congratulations, Relic activation was successful. You have obtained..."

[Long Lasting Face]

Grade: Ordinary (White)

Effect: "Maintains appearance and slows down aging."

Evaluation: "Very average!"

Watching a blinding white light drill into Rhaenyra's belly, Rhaegar was momentarily silent. He hadn't encountered many ordinary-grade relics. The [Sea Monster's Gift] was at least rare; perhaps Rhaenyra wasn't very lucky today?

Rhaenyra didn't seem to notice anything unusual. "Sweet and sour, does it do anything?"

Rhaegar glanced at the evaluation and kindly said, "It makes you look beautiful."

The fruit's effect naturally manifested in Rhaenyra, fulfilling her wish, albeit modestly.

Rhaenyra wrapped her arms around Rhaegar and placed a gentle kiss on his cheek, laughing softly, "Mysterious."

Suddenly, a familiar voice rang out.

"Ha! ..."

Rhaenyra's eyes widened and she whispered, "That sounds like Helaena."

Rhaegar put away the fossilized dragon eggs and Brightroar, then got up and walked to the side of the thick fish beam wood.

On the other side of the sacred wood, two figures were engaged in a sword fight. Helaena, with her mouth set in a determined line and her eyes red, swung her wooden sword furiously, as if venting her anger. Each swing was accompanied by a shout, as if she were cheering herself on.

Opposite her, Mushroom, dressed in a comical costume, held a short, thick wooden sword and was playfully cooperating in the duel.

Seeing Mushroom, a dwarf, Rhaegar involuntarily frowned.

Rhaenyra whispered softly, "Borros of House Baratheon is making moves in private. Otto is proposing a marriage between Aegon and his daughter, and Alicent wants Helaena and Aegon together."

Rhaegar, who had just returned and was unaware of the latest events in King's Landing, listened attentively.

After a moment of thought, Rhaegar's frown deepened. "Baratheon..."

The problem was Borros Baratheon's insubordination. But Aegon and Helaena's marriage was also a significant issue.

"Otto proposes Aegon's marriage, Alicent favors family tradition. It needs to be resolved before it's too late."

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On the other side, in the open-air gallery, Aegon and Aemond stood side by side, watching Helaena wield her wooden sword.

"Mother actually wants me to marry her," Aegon spat, disgust evident in his voice. "She's a fool."

"Aegon, she is our sister!" Aemond's voice intensified as he spoke, defending Helaena.

#### Chapter 292: The Hidden Family Dangers

Helaena was his sister, the one who had always been there for him the most.

Aegon grunted dismissively. "We have nothing in common."

"She tamed Dreamfyre and is a true Targaryen," Aemond replied, his tone flat but thoughtful.

Aegon narrowed his eyes. "Then you marry her."

Having grown up overshadowed by his older brother Rhaegar, Aegon had no desire to compete for power. He craved a life of indulgence and debauchery.

Aemond stood silent for a moment, his hands clenched into fists beneath his green cloak. He watched Helaena, her silver-gold curls bouncing as she meticulously wielded her wooden sword. He knew she wasn't stupid—just lost in her own world at times. She had likely overheard her mother's quarrel with Aegon, which had driven her to the Godswood to vent her frustration through sword practice.

Aegon continued to provoke him with verbal taunts.

Finally, Aemond lifted his head and said calmly, "I am willing to fulfill my duty if Mother allows us to be betrothed."

Though he did not fully understand love, he felt sympathy for Helaena. Unlike Aegon, he would not shirk his responsibilities to the family.

"If?" Aegon scoffed. Their mother had tried to push Helaena onto him to manage this "different" relative. Aemond, for the moment, was not in a position to take his place.

Aemond, revealing more of his thoughts, said calmly, "It will strengthen the family and keep the Valyrian bloodline pure."

Aegon was taken aback by his words. "She's an idiot."

"She may well be your future wife," Aemond said seriously.

"Tsk." Aegon clicked his tongue, as if seeing his brother in a new light. How dare he contradict him.

Bending his knees to bring himself level with Aemond, Aegon taunted, "In fact, we have one thing in common: we both like long-legged beauties." He grinned wickedly and whispered in Aemond's ear, "Remember? Get this place wet."

These were the same crude words he had used the last time he had taken Aemond to a brothel.

Aemond bristled with disdain.

"Che, boring."

Not getting the reaction he wanted, Aegon stalked off alone, thinking his brother was as stupid as Helaena.

Aemond watched him go, disappointment surfacing in his eyes. "Aegon..."

Deep down, he wished for a close bond with Aegon, Helaena, and Daeron, just like Rhaenyra and Rhaegar shared. That's what his mother, Alicent, had instilled in him, and he believed it himself. But Aegon's poor character and irresponsible attitude frustrated him deeply.

A commotion from within the Godswood broke his reverie. Helaena had knocked the wooden sword from Mushroom's hand and was walking away, panting, out of sight of the open-air gallery.

As he watched her retreating figure, Aemond thought about his family and their differences. Feeling a familiar pang of isolation, he lowered his head and muttered, "I still don't have a dragon."

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After the fight, Helaena felt exhausted, struggling to carry her wooden sword. All she wanted was a glass of cold, sweet wine and to collapse on her bed.

"Helaena," came a soft call.

She looked up, surprised to see her brother Rhaegar standing under the fish beam wood. "Brother, I thought it would take a dinner party to see you."

Her mood immediately brightened. She studied him closely, noting his pale complexion, angular face, and melancholy aura. Most noticeable was his short silver-gold hair, a sharp difference from his usual long locks.

Rhaegar waved and smiled. "I saw you practicing your sword."

"No, just playing around," Helaena stammered, embarrassed to have been caught.

She spotted Rhaenyra sitting nearby with a green dragon egg in her arms and greeted her softly, "Sister."

Rhaenyra nodded, but remained seated. Rhaegar, sensing Helaena's shyness, changed the subject. "Is it Aegon that's bothering you?"

Helaena, usually quiet and introspective, had been practicing with her sword - a sign that something was on her mind. She shook her head, her interest waning. "No."

Seeing her distress, Rhaegar took her hand gently. She dropped her wooden sword and walked obediently to his side.

"Something on your mind?" Rhaegar bent to face her, their eyes level. Her cheeks were flushed with exhaustion, and a thin sheen of sweat covered her forehead.

She stared at him with large, watery eyes, and he could see her hidden emotions. "If you are in trouble, you must tell me," he said quietly.

He already knew the cause: House Baratheon's disrespect had led to talk of Aegon's marriage, with Alicent wanting to manipulate the unions of her children.

"House Targaryen doesn't have to sacrifice anyone," Rhaegar insisted, rubbing his head. With a dozen dragons and several battle-ready dragon riders, their family was strong. He wanted to protect his siblings and unite the Targaryens.

"Brother..." Helaena's voice was low, touched by his concern. "Mother wants me to marry Aegon. They had a big fight."

Rhaegar's eyes flickered, understanding much from her words. Aegon had always been dismissive of Helaena, a fact that had frustrated Rhaegar.

He didn't ask if she wanted to marry Aegon. Instead, he gently placed his arm around her and asked, "Did they argue in front of you?"

Helaena nodded vigorously, burying her face in his arms.

"They should ask your opinion," Rhaegar said, stroking her silver hair. "Good girl, I knew you were upset."

"Hmm..." Helaena's voice was small, her eyes red as she fought to hold back tears. She had been aware of the argument, and it had hurt her deeply.

"Shhh, no crying." Rhaegar cupped her face, wiping away her tears. "If you want to change things, you have to be brave."

While he could influence the marriage negotiations with House Baratheon, he couldn't easily sway Alicent's intentions for her children's marriages. He needed to encourage Helaena to find her own strength.

"Brave," Helaena repeated, curling up in his arms, clutching her wooden sword. She pondered deeply on the meaning of bravery, seeking strength in her brother's words.

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That night, a great feast was held in the Red Keep to celebrate Rhaegar's return. Viserys had invited many guests and planned an all-night feast.

After only a few glasses of wine, Viserys began coughing violently, his face turning red.

"Drink slowly," Alicent said gently, wiping the corners of his mouth with a cloth.

Viserys forced a bitter smile and muttered, "I can drink a thousand cups."

Sitting nearby, Rhaegar watched with concern. As Viserys aged, his health had deteriorated, and the wounds inflicted by the Iron Throne never fully healed, causing constant pain. Excessive drinking and debauchery only worsened his condition.

"Cheer up, this is a party for you," Rhaenyra whispered, sitting close to him.

Rhaegar furrowed his brow and raised his glass to clink with hers.

"There's an council meeting tomorrow. You should drink less," Rhaenyra said, her eyes full of concern as she placed some of his favorite foods on his plate.

Rhaegar smiled helplessly. "Of course."

After a bit of eating, the banquet moved into the dancing phase. Seizing a moment when no one was watching, Rhaegar took a parchment book left by the Shadowbinders from his spatial bracelet and flipped to the section on the ancient knowledge of Belaerys.

The stone wall not only recorded "forbidden spells," it also contained valuable information about dragons that the Targaryens lacked. One passage in particular caught his attention - it discussed the coexistence of dragons and their riders.

It suggested that riders influenced the emotions of their dragons, and dragons in turn influenced the will of their riders. Prolonged contact could even affect their physical bodies.

Rhaegar found this perspective fascinating. He believed that his own bloodline had been influenced by his bond with Cannibal, gradually strengthening it.

Perhaps his father could benefit from a new bond with the family's dragons. It might help him heal.

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### The Next Morning

Inside the Council Hall, sunlight refracted through the glass windows, casting a warm glow over the long table of the Small Council.

Clang-

Rhaegar, dressed in a white tunic with a striking red-striped shirt, stood calmly observing the room. As the Heir Prince, he always sat to his father's left at the council meetings.

Lord Lyonel sat opposite him. Rhaegar smiled politely, nodding to each of the royal advisers as his gaze fell upon the two women at the table.

Rhaenyra, in a strapless red dress, sat beside him. Alicent, her face composed, sat next to her husband, apart from the advisers.

### Chapter 293: The Regent Prince

Rhaenyra accompanied him to the Small Council meeting concerning House Baratheon.

Alicent continued her efforts to influence the marriage union, under the pretense of looking after her husband.

Rhaegar turned to his father, seated at the head of the table, and whispered, "Father, let's begin."

"Oh, right."

Viserys, bearded and reeking of last night's undiluted alcohol, said wearily, "The meeting will now discuss the issue of supplying materials for the Prince's Palace."

Lyonel frowned and gently reminded, "Your Grace, the supply of materials is controlled by Lord Borros of House Baratheon."

He was indicating that the meeting should focus on addressing the Baratheon House's defiance and restoring the royal family's authority, rather than mundane logistics.

Viserys rested his forehead on both hands and agreed listlessly. He was uncomfortable confronting a powerful lord directly.

Rhaegar sighed helplessly, "Father, take care of your health."

Turning to the assembled advisors, he said loudly, "My lords, the issue stems from the supply materials for the Prince's Palace, but we all know there are deeper issues at play."



If his father wouldn't address it, he would.

Lyonel nodded, affirming, "Prince, we suspect Lord Borros is retaliating for the misunderstanding at his father's funeral."

Rhaegar smiled, his gaze sweeping over the advisors.

"Yes, we all believe so."

The advisors nodded in agreement, understanding that there was no need for pretense.

"Very well." Rhaegar was satisfied. "Let's discuss how to deal with Lord Borros in a compliant and reasonable manner."

Viserys glanced at his eldest son, hesitating. Rhaegar's words hinted at action, but subtlety was required against a powerful lord.

The elderly Lyman spoke up boldly, "Your Grace, Prince, I suggest we summon Lord Borros to King's Landing to apologize and seek the Iron Throne's forgiveness."

Viserys looked embarrassed, rubbing his stubbled chin.

"Lord Lyman, your proposal seems hasty."

Grand Maester Mellos interrupted, analyzing, "Several noble families supplied the wrong materials. Even if Lord Borros is behind it, accusing him without evidence could lead to gossip."

Lyman glared at Mellos, retorting, "Your Grace is the Lord of the Seven Kingdoms. There's no need for hesitation."

A seasoned financier, Lyman knew the Targaryen dynasty's strength, including five dragon riders among the king's heirs, and more in the extended family. They had the power to deal with Borros.

Mellos, crossing his arms, said in an old-fashioned manner, "One must consider public opinion. His Grace values justice and strictness."

Lyman, frustrated, glared at Mellos. Such cautious advisors only fueled the king's indecision.

Seeing the heated argument, Rhaegar intervened, "Lord Lyman, your proposal is sound. Let's hear from the other lords."

Privately, Rhaegar agreed with Lyman. Maintaining control required occasionally asserting dominance, ensuring loyalty and preventing rebellion among the nobles.

With the Targaryen's strength, it was time to appropriately assert their authority over the seven kingdoms.

However...

Rhaegar glanced at his silent father, hesitating to make an immediate decision. Knowing Viserys' tendency to avoid risks and rely on public opinion, he doubted his father would confront the Lord of the Storm's End directly.

At that moment, Jasper politely interjected, "Lord Borros has no obvious faults, and summoning him to King's Landing for a reprimand might be inappropriate."

Jasper was still fixated on the idea of joining House Baratheon through marriage.

Rhaegar turned to him and asked calmly, "In your opinion, how should this be resolved?"

"Prince, before you returned to King's Landing, a good proposal was discussed."

Jasper's eyes twinkled as he glanced across the room at Otto, then continued with a serious expression, "It might be wise to invite Lord Borros to King's Landing to arrange a marriage between Prince Aegon and Borros' daughter, thereby strengthening the bond between our families."

Rhaegar fell silent, his eyes shifting between Jasper and Otto.

Otto, who remained calm, added, "Marriages are excellent political maneuvers, effective in avoiding conflict."

Viserys raised an eyebrow, considering the suggestion. The idea appealed to him more than a show of force.

Before he could voice his agreement, Alicent swallowed a mouthful of wine, set her cup down forcefully, and said coldly, "Marriage is no small matter. Aegon and Daemon were responsible for the disturbance at the funeral. Lord Borros may not be inclined to agree."

"There's no harm in trying; we have more than one prince," Otto replied gently. She wanted to use Aegon to protect her only daughter, Helaena, he understood Alicent's concerns.

Borros had four daughters, and Otto had three grandsons. If Aegon wasn't suitable, Aemond or even Daeron could be considered. There was always a way to forge an alliance with House Baratheon and strengthen his family's position.

As expected, once Alicent realized there were multiple options, her anger subsided, and she began to think deeply.

Seeing his wife's change in demeanor, Viserys felt pleased and began to see the marriage proposal as feasible. He was about to voice his approval when Rhaegar's knuckles tapped on the tabletop, drawing everyone's attention.

Lyman, a staunch hardliner, trembled slightly as he asked, "Prince, we've all shared our thoughts. What is your opinion?"

He did not want the problem to be solved solely through marriage, hence his pointed question.

Rhaegar rose from his seat, his eyes scanning the group of advisers as he spoke candidly:

"My lords, firstly, I do not oppose the idea of a marriage alliance."

He glanced at Otto and Jasper before continuing, "However, I am also infuriated by Lord Borros' petty actions and believe he deserves to be punished."

Lyman nodded in agreement, saying, "That's right."

"Please, be at ease."

Rhaegar raised his hand and looked at his father as he spoke firmly, "Father, Lord Borros' actions seem to be provoking the royal family. We must respond decisively to preserve the dignity of House Targaryen."

Jasper interjected, "Prince, we have no proof."

"The Baratheon House is not as weak as we thought," Grand Maester Mellos echoed.

Rhaegar's eyes blazed as he snapped, "Silence!"

Jasper froze, his mouth opening to defend himself, but Rhaegar cut him off, pointing a finger at him, "If you interrupt me again without permission, I'll send you to the Wall to join the Night's Watch."

He also glared at Grand Maester Mellos, making it clear that their continued support of Otto's cautious approach was unacceptable. Advisers like these, who urged compromise and appeasement, would find no favor with him.

Rhaegar's outburst had the desired effect. Jasper, visibly chastened, bowed his head, his face alternating between green and red. Grand Maester Mellos also fell silent, while Otto slipped into a more subdued, observant role.

Seeing the shift in the room, Lyman spoke up, his mood lifted, "Borros is ambitious. A retreat will only diminish the prestige of the royal family."

Lyonel raised his hand and added, "The marriage is feasible, but it should come after Lord Borros is punished."

At this moment, both Lyman and Lyonel felt relieved. They had long struggled to assert their influence against the king's tendency to show weakness and Otto's persuasive skills.

Rhaegar, a hardliner unlike his father, provided the strong leadership they needed.

Viserys, overwhelmed by the shifting dynamics, turned to his eldest son, "Rhaegar, what do you think we should do then?"

At this critical juncture, he chose to trust his son's judgment.

"The punishment must be carried out and the marriage can proceed."

After a night of careful consideration, Rhaegar spoke decisively, "Lord Borros may not have any obvious faults, but we will find a way to hold him accountable and make sure he pays the price he deserves."

He was not opposed to a marriage alliance with House Baratheon, even if it involved Aegon or Aemond. His willingness to unite his half-brothers showed his evolving strategy to strengthen their family.

Lyonel wondered aloud, "Why don't we use the marriage as an excuse to bring our families together and rebuke Lord Borros face to face?"

Rhaegar shook his head, "A marriage can be used as an excuse, but it must not be discussed openly. The tournament is still several months away; I propose we organize a royal hunt to gather all the nobles of the King's Landing and the Stormlands."

Targeting the Baratheons in a public setting would be more effective. The advisors weighed the pros and cons, their silence reflecting their deep thought.

Viserys pondered the suggestion. A Kingswood Hunt was a plausible excuse, neither a direct order nor an overly formal invitation. Once the nobles were gathered, he believed he could handle Borros.

Smiling, Viserys agreed, "Good, let's do as you suggest."

He glanced at Alicent and whispered, "You can take the opportunity to introduce Aegon to Borros' daughter, if the children wish."

Alicent handed him a cup of wine and said thoughtfully, "As you wish."

The king endorsed the proposal, and the Small Council approved. As the meeting neared its end, Viserys gazed at his eldest son with a mix of pride and emotion. He felt a sense of relief, knowing Rhaegar was capable of leading the family and the kingdom.

Before the advisers could leave, Viserys made a momentous decision, "My lords, Rhaegar has been listening to matters of state for many years. I declare that I will grant him the right of regency."

The room fell silent, advisers shocked by the sudden announcement. Lyonel's eyes widened, "Your Grace, is it not too early for a regency?"

The title of regent held immense power, comparable to that of the king. While Rhaegar had been involved in governance, this new title would elevate his authority. As the heir, he commanded respect, but with the title of regent, all the nobles of the seven kingdoms would be compelled to follow his orders, effectively making him the second king.

#### Chapter 294: Preferences

Understanding the significance of the regency, the advisors reacted with mixed emotions.

Otto looked up in surprise and narrowed his eyes slightly. Jasper and Mellos winced, still stung by the recent rebuke, and remained silent. Only Lyonel, the Hand of the King, spoke up, while Lyman rose solemnly and said, "Your Grace, you are in the prime of life. Appointing a regent prematurely could destabilize the kingdom."

The king cannot be without a master, and two rulers cannot coexist. The position of regent was traditionally filled when the king was young or incapacitated. Viserys did not fit those criteria, and Lyman believed that sharing the king's power was a risky move.

The advisors' directness left Viserys momentarily speechless. It was the first time he had been so bluntly opposed in a council meeting. But as he looked around the room, his resolve only grew stronger. He realized that his eldest son, wiser and more capable, needed more authority to effectively implement his vision.

With newfound determination, Viserys turned to Rhaegar, his voice solemn, "Rhaegar, state your position on the regency."

Rhaegar was taken aback by his father's sudden suggestion. Moments ago he had not considered the title of Regent. He felt a tug on his cloak and heard Rhaenyra whisper, "Rhaegar, answer."

Whether his father's suggestion was a whim or a carefully considered plan, Rhaegar knew he had to seize the opportunity. He glanced at Rhaenyra, who nodded in encouragement.

Taking a deep breath, Rhaegar rose from his chair. Viserys, sensing his son's decision, offered his support, "Rhaegar, whatever you choose, I will support you."

Rhaegar straightened and addressed the council, "As Lyonel and Lord Lyman said, the position of Regent is a matter of great importance."

The eyes of the advisors were on him, some questioning, others resisting. They speculated whether Rhaegar would refuse the regency to maintain moderation. But they were to be disappointed.

With a calm demeanor, Rhaegar explained, "Today I have been reflecting on House Tully's motto: Family, Duty, Honor."

The advisers were puzzled, but Viserys and Rhaenyra looked on expectantly. Rhaegar continued, smiling, "Father believes in me, so I accept the position of regent."

Ignoring the worried looks of Lyonel and Lyman, he added, "The Tully motto resonates with me. To govern the kingdom, we must prioritize family, duty to the realm, and personal honor."

"I pledge to assist and maintain the peace of the kingdom during my regency."

He left his seat and bowed to his father. Viserys, listening to his son's confident speech, felt a surge of joy. What he lacked in perseverance and decisiveness, he found in his eldest son.

Viserys was doubly pleased to know that some of his advisors were unhappy. But he was determined to stand by Rhaegar and support his regency.

Pushing away Alicent's supporting hands, Viserys' demeanor changed. He assumed the majestic posture of a king, shedding any trace of indecision.

Stepping forward, he placed both hands on his eldest son's shoulders and smiled, "Stand up, my son."

"Father," Rhaegar said softly, obediently straightening his spine. In that moment, he felt his father's unwavering support and accepted the position of regent with a resolute heart.

"Good," Rhaenyra exclaimed, clapping her hands in approval.

Viserys and Rhaegar exchanged a knowing look before turning their attention to the council. Father and son, both with silver hair and purple eyes, smiled in unison, their gentle exteriors masking a shared condescension.

Otto was the first to clap, signaling his approval, and the other advisors followed suit. Even Lyonel and Lyman, despite their reservations, joined in the applause, acknowledging the king's decision.

The meeting ended, and as the doors opened, Viserys stepped out, but soon covered his mouth, coughing uncontrollably.

Alicent rushed to his side, "You should drink less wine. It's not good for your health."

"It's all right," Viserys replied with a smile, embracing his wife. "I just need some rest."

Rhaegar, lingering behind, watched his father's weakened state.

"Prince," a silver-armored, white-robed Erryk greeted him, fulfilling his duty as Rhaegar was the last to leave, following the king and queen.

Rhaegar paused to watch his father's distant figure, noticing how his once straight back had hunched over time. Thinking about his father's tired condition, he felt a pang of worry. If this continued, he might have to take the throne sooner than expected.

"Rhaegar, what are you looking at?" Rhaenyra asked, smiling back.

Rhaegar did not hide his concern, "Father's health is not good. It's worrying."

"Don't you have that serpent rune? Use it to help Father heal tonight," Rhaenyra suggested, holding his hand.

Rhaegar sighed, "I'll try."

He had occasionally used the Serpent Rune to heal his father's wounds, but the relief was temporary and often caused more pain in the long run.

"Don't worry," Rhaenyra comforted him, wrapping her arms around his waist. "Father is stronger than he appears. We both know that."

Sensing something different in her tone, Rhaegar looked down and met her loving gaze.

Rhaenyra stood on her tiptoes, kissed him enthusiastically, and said proudly, "I liked the way you took charge at the Small Council."

Rhaegar smiled, though he felt no pleasure. Holding her waist, he met her gaze with a hint of sadness.

"Rhaenyra, you and I are both father's favorite children," he said softly.

Rhaenyra pursed her lips, "I don't believe in Father as much as I believe in you."

Though she loved her father, the memory of being pulled down from her position as heir left a lingering thorn in her heart.

"Rhaenyra..." Rhaegar started, but stopped. His gaze fell on her soft red lips.

Outside the Small Council's stained glass window, the sun shone brightly and birds chirped. A small white snake picked up a bird and handed it to another snake. The two snakes touched heads and shared the meal, symbolizing unity and partnership.

...

Half of the afternoon had passed by the time Rhaegar and Rhaenyra emerged from the attic. They had lingered long after the other royal advisors had left.

As they walked, they reached the Godswood and were greeted by the sound of clashing swords.

Rhaegar snapped out of his thoughts and looked over.

In a clearing, Helaena and Aemond were sparring with wooden swords. Helaena had swapped her usual skirts for a white shirt, brown pants, and deerskin boots. Her fluffy silver-gold curls were tied back with a hairband for ease of movement. Aemond wore a similar outfit, with the addition of a green cloak, his face serious as he engaged in battle.

Rhaegar and Rhaenyra exchanged glances and approached quietly.

At that moment, Helaena, legs braced and sword in both hands, launched a determined attack. Aemond, on the defensive, fumbled to block each blow.

"Ha!" Helaena cried softly, charging forward and swinging her sword with all her might.

Heeding Rhaegar's advice to become stronger, Helaena had decided to train herself to become a capable swordswoman. With no formal training, her swings were wild and unrefined. Believing herself to be weak, she chose her seemingly weaker brother, Aemond, as her sparring partner.

With a deft dodge and upward swing, Aemond disarmed Helaena, sending her wooden sword flying from her hands. Unbalanced, she stumbled and fell to the ground.

"Sister!" Aemond, startled, dropped his sword and rushed to help her up.

It wasn't easy for him either. Targaryen tradition dictated that boys begin fighting training at the age of six, and Helaena had relentlessly pushed him to spar with her, taking advantage of his slightly superior skills.

Rhaegar approached with a smile, "Are you all right?"

"Brother!" Aemond, startled by Rhaegar's sudden appearance, stood frozen, fearing a reprimand for seemingly bullying his sister.

"Well done, Aemond. That was a clean move," Rhaegar said with a smile.

It was just a friendly spar, and bumps and bruises were part of the process. He recognized Aemond's talent, which surpassed that of their lazy brother, Aegon.

Aemond sighed in relief and hurried to help Helaena, who was already standing and dusting off her clothes. She looked down, disappointed at her defeat.

"Brother," Helaena shyly greeted Rhaegar as he smiled at her.

Rhaegar picked up the fallen wooden sword. "Do you like practicing swords?"

"No!" Helaena shook her head vigorously, then added quietly, "But when I practice, I don't see these fragmented images."

#### Chapter 295: The Thought of Taming the Dragon

Seeing Helaena's pitiful expression, Rhaegar gently removed a fallen leaf from her hair and whispered, "Do you want to get good at swordplay?"

Helaena gave him a shy look and fidgeted nervously with her fingers. Dreamfyre had given her some courage, but it never felt like enough. Deep down, she hoped that learning swordplay would be a better way to protect herself.

"If you want to practice swordsmanship, I can ask Ser Arryk of the Kingsguard to teach you," Rhaegar continued.

"Really?" Helaena tilted her head, her large eyes gleaming.

"Of course," Rhaegar nodded, smiling. "Provided you work hard and are not afraid of suffering."

He had no preconceived notions that women should only take on traditional female roles. To him, every Targaryen had unlimited potential.

"Yes, I will practice hard and become as powerful as Queen Visenya," Helaena replied eagerly.

Everyone had their idols. Rhaenyra admired Nymeria, the Warrior Queen, for her heroic deeds, while Helaena worshipped Visenya Targaryen. Rhaegar also admired the brave and wise Visenya. He rubbed Helaena's head affectionately and mused, "If you become skilled in swordplay, I will give you a gift."

"What kind of gift?" Helaena asked curiously.

Rhaegar glanced at the wooden sword in his hand and shook his head, "It's a secret, but it will be great."

"Uh-huh," Helaena replied overjoyed and jumped into his arms.

Helaena clung to him tightly, and Rhaegar smiled helplessly, supporting her legs as she wrapped them around his waist. "Thank you, brother," she whispered, nuzzling his neck and pressing her lips to his cheek.

Rhaegar shook his head, smiling as he patted her back and kissed her forehead. Both he and Helaena shared the gift of Dragon Dreams, which bonded them closely since childhood.

Their intimate moment affected those around them. Rhaenyra, standing behind Rhaegar, narrowed her eyes as she watched Helaena cling to him. Sensing her gaze, Helaena looked up and met Rhaenyra's eyes directly. The coldness in Rhaenyra's eyes softened to avoid frightening Helaena.

Helaena smiled, tightening her arms around Rhaegar's neck and nuzzling her head against him, locking eyes with Rhaenyra.

On the other side of the clearing, Aemond watched his sister nestled in their older brother's arms and blinked, silently closing the distance. He didn't have any particular thoughts, just a subtle, inexplicable envy—toward both Rhaegar and Helaena.

Noticing Aemond's approach, Rhaegar extended a hand, resting it on his younger brother's shoulder with a smile. "What is it? Something on your mind?"

Aemond was caught off guard, suddenly finding himself under his brother's affectionate attention. His mind went blank, cheeks flushing as he stammered, "Brother, do you remember your promise before you went to Storm's End..."

"To go to Dragonstone and tame dragons," Rhaegar finished for him, seeing his struggle.

Aemond's face lit up, nodding eagerly. "That's right!"

"Don't worry," Rhaegar reassured him. "There's a Kingswood hunt in a month. After that, I'll persuade Father to visit Dragonstone, and I'll help you tame a dragon."

Rhaegar had been studying ancient texts on dragons and their riders, keen on deepening the bond between Targaryens and their dragons. He wanted his father to reconnect with the dragons, an endeavor that required a trip to Dragonstone. Moreover, he aimed to share forbidden magical knowledge with his father, hoping to unite their family through this shared power.

Aemond's eyes sparkled with excitement. "Really?"

Splat! Rhaegar playfully smacked his head. "Man up. Don't act like Helaena."

Aemond pouted, rubbing his head.

"Rhaegar, put Helaena down. We need to go back," came Rhaenyra's voice, cold and firm.

Rhaegar turned to see his sister's calm, yet stern expression. He knew her well enough to sense something was off.

He gently set Helaena down, ruffling both her and Aemond's hair. "Go play."

"Uh-huh," Helaena replied, pulling Aemond along as they bounced away.

Rhaenyra had already turned and was walking away briskly, her red skirt swaying with her steps. Rhaegar's eyes followed her, trying to recall what might have displeased her.



It was nighttime, and the moon was a thin crescent in the sky.

Inside the king's chambers, a few lit tallow candles hung on the walls, casting a hazy glow. The deep corridor echoed with a knock on the door.

"Ahem..." Viserys's coughing filled the room, his voice a raspy wheeze. "Come in."

The harshness of his cough made his breathing sound labored and his throat raw.

Creak—

The door opened, and Rhaegar was the first to enter, his eyes scanning the dimly lit room. Rhaenyra followed, her long silver hair cascading over her shoulder as she peeked in.

Rhaegar glanced at her with amusement. "Come on in, we're not thieves."

"It's just my first night here," Rhaenyra muttered, lifting the hem of her black skirt and walking in lightly.

After leaving the Godswood Forest, Rhaenyra had been uncharacteristically silent, not wanting to witness her father receiving treatment. The siblings had not exchanged a word before entering the chamber.

Carrying a tray with a butter candle, Rhaegar took Rhaenyra's hand, and they walked into the bedroom together.

"You're all here?" Viserys leaned listlessly against the headboard, his loose robe barely covering his frail frame. He hadn't expected his daughter to join them.

"She insisted on tagging along," Rhaegar said, resigned.

The first night he returned, he had spoken to his father about treating his wounds. The gathering had been postponed until tonight.

Viserys smiled weakly. "Just come, be generous."

Rhaenyra shot Rhaegar a look before quickly approaching the bed. "I wanted to see you," she said softly, adjusting a goose feather pillow behind her father's back.

She knew her father's wounds were severe, though he had never let her see them. She wanted to understand the pain and stress he endured.

"Oh, a body covered in cuts is nothing to see," Viserys joked weakly. "You should see me during the day; I still have a bit of gallantry left."

Rhaenyra held her father's hand, feeling the weight of his suffering. His hand was missing two fingers, and the other was wrapped in gauze, with a hint of blood seeping through.

She looked down, biting her lower lip. During the day, her father was the king, strong and imposing. But at night, he shed his tough facade, revealing his vulnerability.

Rhaenyra's eyes welled up with tears, and she glanced helplessly at Rhaegar.

"Ugh, really can't do anything about you," Rhaegar sighed, walking to her side and whispering, "Remember? Father isn't as fragile as he seems."

These were the same words Rhaenyra had used to reassure him earlier in the day.

Her tears fell freely now. "Rhaegar..."

Seeing her father like this, and hearing Rhaegar repeat her own words, filled Rhaenyra with a deep guilt and an inexplicable embarrassment.

"What are you crying for? It doesn't affect my enjoyment," Viserys said gently, wrapping his arms around his daughter and kissing her head. "You're right, resilience is one of the few things I have going for me."

"I'm sorry..." Rhaenyra choked out, burying her head in her father's chest. She hadn't realized how deeply a single look or touch from him could affect her.

Rhaegar sat on the edge of the bed and patted Rhaenyra's head softly. "No one is blaming you. Let me treat Father first."

Rhaenyra sniffled and said, "Do it, just don't let Father be in pain."

Rhaegar and Viserys exchanged a helpless glance.

"Father has many wounds on his body. Don't be afraid," Rhaegar reminded gently as he helped his father remove his robe.

"Don't worry." Rhaenyra wiped her eyes and moved aside to give them space.

Rhaegar began the treatment. Viserys, bare-chested, grimaced and groaned occasionally, enduring the pain and itch as his wounds healed.

Rhaegar was focused, using a strangely shaped serpent to draw black smoke from each wound. Halfway through the treatment, Rhaenyra couldn't bear to watch any longer. She quickly walked to the other side of the bed, knelt, and wrapped her arms around her father.

Viserys leaned against her shoulder, the pain easing a bit, and forced a smile.

After a long while, the treatment was over. Rhaenyra dressed her father in his robe, carefully smoothing out the folds.

Rhaegar examined his father's freshly treated hand, noting the gash that had previously been deep enough to see the bone. Now, only a faint bloodstain remained.

"The wound is healing," Rhaegar said, a flash of inspiration lighting up his eyes. "It must be healing in the right way now."

Though Viserys was still a bit chesty and short of breath, he looked more relaxed. He watched his children, a warm smile spreading across his face. "It's late. You should both go back to rest."

He could see that the siblings had some unresolved issues when they entered, and he didn't want to take up any more of their time.

"There's no rush," Rhaegar said, his hands still working. He looked at his father seriously. "I have some questions for you. Father, have you ever thought about taming a dragon again?"

Chapter 295: The Thought of Taming the Dragon

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#### Chapter 296: An Old Father's Mistake

Viserys froze at his son's words, looking at Rhaegar in surprise. His eldest son wasn't joking. Viserys restrained his smile, struck dumb. The question echoed in his mind: Have you ever thought about taming a dragon again?

Deep down, Viserys had always known the answer was "Of course!" He remembered taming his first dragon, the legendary Black Dread Balerion, the largest and oldest dragon of his time. His youthful pride and boldness drove him to pursue the strongest dragon, much like his pursuit of the Iron Throne.

But both endeavors had their shortcuts and hidden dangers. Balerion, over two hundred years old, was already nearing death. The dragon had grown too weak to respond to the Dragonkeeper's or accept food. No one dared approach him, let alone attempt to tame him, until Viserys met Balerion in the Dragonpit.

Perhaps Balerion saw something in Viserys, or perhaps the dragon wanted to soar the skies one last time. They bonded, and Balerion, despite his weakness, took to the skies for one final flight. Viserys had wanted to fly Balerion back to Dragonstone for his final rest, but the old dragon couldn't manage the journey, and half a year later, Balerion died in the Dragonpit.

The memory brought a wistful smile to Viserys' face. "Taming a dragon is not child's play, and I'm not fit to be a dragon master at my age," he said, shaking his head.

Taming dragons was dangerous. Even if Viserys wanted to try again, the Small Council would never agree. If a dragon went berserk, the king's life would be at risk.

"Father, while I was in Volantis, I discovered a secret dragon taming technique unique to the top Dragonlord families," Rhaegar said, his expression serious. He began to recite the forbidden magic spell of the Belaerys family.

Viserys' face clouded, his eyes shifting as he listened. When Rhaegar finished, the pent-up emotions erupted. Clutching his son's hand, Viserys' voice shook with anger. "Rhaegar, tell me frankly. Did you enter a dangerous place you shouldn't be and undertake an adventure you shouldn't have?"

He didn't believe in the so-called "coincidence." The Belaerys family had been a prestigious Dragonlord family, one the Targaryens could only look up to. Such top-secret knowledge couldn't be easily stumbled upon. Given Rhaegar's month-long disappearance in Volantis, Viserys could only think of the Smoking Sea and the Valyrian ruins.

Rhaegar hesitated, his eyes flashing with uncertainty. He didn't dare respond hastily.

Viserys shifted from his usual carelessness, scrutinizing every tiny detail. Turning to his daughter, he demanded sternly, "Rhaenyra, do you know anything?"

Viserys knew how close Rhaegar and Rhaenyra were. They rarely kept secrets from each other. Rhaenyra, looking uneasy, couldn't meet her father's gaze.

"Father, don't blame Rhaenyra. It was my decision," Rhaegar interjected, realizing he couldn't evade the probing questions any longer. He decided to come clean, giving a rough account of his trip to the Smoking Sea, carefully omitting the most dangerous details.

Despite the omissions, Viserys was furious. His anger erupted as he pointed at Rhaegar's head and cursed for an entire hour. The bedchamber echoed with his tirade.

Rhaegar felt as if he wanted to shrink into nothingness. Rhaenyra, feeling implicated, stood silently, absorbing the scolding.

When Viserys finally stopped, his voice hoarse and mouth dry, he accepted a drink of fresh water from Rhaenyra. His anger began to subside.

Rhaenyra, feeling the sting of her father's anger, remained attentive, but her heart ached for her brother.

Viserys grunted, his gaze scrutinizing. "Can forbidden magic spells really help tame dragons?" he asked, his voice heavy with skepticism.

Rhaegar quietly looked up, trying to read his father's expression. "Stop staring and answer me," Viserys snapped. "Can the secret dragon taming spell truly guarantee success?"

Rhaegar pondered for a moment before replying, "I can't say for sure. Dragons possess intelligence akin to humans and choose their riders. The forbidden spell only provides some assurance."

He knew that if he had the "flying spell," his chances of taming a dragon would increase, but the forbidden spell he learned merely reduced the dragon's ferocity, preventing it from incinerating him with its dragonfire.

Upon hearing this, Viserys felt a weight lift from his heart and breathed a sigh of relief. "That's good. The more demanding dragon taming is, the more secure our family's position remains."

The Targaryens were the last of the Dragonlord families, and their dragons were their strongest foundation. Easy dragon taming through a simple spell would have been a dangerous liability. If such a spell were ever leaked, other claimants to the Dragonlord lineage might seize the opportunity to steal dragons from Dragonstone.

Viserys then turned his gaze to Rhaenyra. "Are the Dragonkeepers on Dragonstone Island still sufficient?" he asked.

Rhaenyra nodded gently. "No problem, Father. There are Dragonkeepers patrolling around Dragonmont at all times. No one can get near there."

Since the incident of bribed Dragonkeepers, there had been a significant overhaul on Dragonstone Island. The dragons and their Dragonkeepers were now strictly monitored and enforced.

Satisfied, Viserys couldn't help but dwell on the possibility of taming dragons that Rhaegar had mentioned. After a moment of contemplation, he continued, "As I recall, there are still three dragons on Dragonstone Island?"

Rhaegar's eyes flickered as he replied calmly, "That's right! Vermithor, Silverwing, and Sheepstealer."

Almost as an afterthought, he added, "After the Kingswood hunt, I promised to take Aemond to Dragonstone to tame one of the dragons."

"And if none of these three dragons are suitable, you could try Grey Ghost in the Isle of Faces," he suggested, implying four potential dragons to choose from.

Viserys coughed lightly, ignoring the teasing tone in his son's suggestion. "The taming of dragons is a matter of great importance. I will consider it carefully."

Rhaegar lowered his head, hiding a satisfied smile. He knew the allure of taming a dragon was irresistible.

Leaving Viserys to his thoughts, Rhaegar gestured to Rhaenyra, and they quickly left the room. After being scolded so thoroughly, neither sibling wanted to linger a moment longer.

...

A white horse trotted by as the days slipped away. Outside King's Landing, a luxurious white carriage rolled along the royal road toward the Kingswood, flanked by white-robed Kingsguard on horseback. Behind them, cavalymen held high the banner of the three-headed red dragon.

Inside the carriage, Viserys, draped in a black cloak, was in high spirits. "Isn't this great? Our whole family heading to the Kingswood for an adventure together?" he exclaimed.

He sat on a soft cushion on the left side of the carriage, with a sleepy Aegon on his right near the horses and a sharply dressed Helaena on his left. Alicent sat across from him, facing the door, with young Daeron lying on her lap. Rhaegar and Rhaenyra occupied the remaining cushion on the right, with a silent Aemond huddled beside them.

Hearing their father's question, the six children remained silent, none offering a response. The atmosphere grew tense.

Rhaenyra nudged Rhaegar with her shoulder, and the siblings exchanged amused glances.

Alicent finally broke the silence, displaying the grace of a good wife and mother. "Very well, it's been a long time since we've been to the Kingswood," she said gently.

Clang!

The carriage jolted violently as the wheels rolled over a rock. Alicent, wrapped in pale red fox fur, struggled to steady herself, clutching Daeron to her chest.

"Pfft..." Aegon couldn't suppress his laughter and quickly covered his mouth.

Viserys, seeing this, smiled ruefully and fell silent. He knew why he had ended up in this situation.



The journey to the Kingswood had been proposed by Rhaegar, with unanimous agreement from the children to travel by dragon. Even Aemond, who lacked a dragon, wanted to ride with Aegon on Sunfyre.

Viserys had strongly opposed this, insisting that the Kingswood trip should be on horseback. As a result, the dragon riders were now crammed into a spacious carriage.

"Roar!"

Cannibal's loud and clear roar echoed high in the sky not far from the carriage. Aemond's spirits lifted as he eagerly pulled open the curtains to glimpse the scene outside.

In the azure sky, several dragons of different sizes spread their wings and soared. The black-as-charcoal Cannibal led the way, with the golden Syrax and Sunfyre playfully chasing behind.

Hoo!

A light blue dragon, Dreamfyre, flashed past, gracefully soaring.

"Roar..."

Tessarion, with dark blue scales and copper highlights, hung far behind, roaring as it tried to catch up.

Aemond's eyes filled with envy as he murmured, "It's beautiful!"

Despite Viserys' insistence, the dragon riders had found a way to accompany their dragons. Privately releasing several dragons from the Dragonpit, they now escorted the carriage to the Kingswood.

Viserys sighed as he heard the dragons' roars, feeling the children's rebellion against his wishes. Rhaegar looked out the window and turned to his father with a smile. "Father, this Kingswood hunt is meant to impress the Stormlands' nobles. How can we not bring our dragons?"

Helaena eagerly nodded, her head adorned with a pillared headpiece.

"Yes, Rhaegar is right," Aegon chimed in, raising his hand.

Even Daeron, lying drowsily in Alicent's lap, opened his eyes and grunted in agreement.

He was young and rarely had the chance to ride a dragon. This trip, arranged by his older siblings, was a rare opportunity vetoed by his father.

#### Chapter 297: Lionel Disciplines His Son

Viserys sighed softly, smiling wryly at the complaints from his children. "Don't make your father seem so uncaring," he said. "The people fear the dragons because they're so powerful."

Helaena, with her round eyes wide, asked innocently, "But why should they fear us if we don't do bad things?"

Viserys was momentarily stunned, embarrassment flashing in his eyes. He knew everyone had their own misdeeds, and dragons' power was inherently fearsome.

Alicent intervened with a smile. "Helaena, your dragon is too fierce. It's natural for people to be afraid."

Helaena blinked, her confusion clear. "Oh, okay."

Viserys smiled at his well-behaved, adorable daughter, pulling her into his arms and rubbing her head. Helaena leaned into her father, wrapping her arms around his waist.

Feeling his youngest daughter's warmth, Viserys's smile deepened. He looked at Alicent and sighed, "Alicent, you've given me wonderful children."

"It's our children," Alicent replied, her eyes gentle. She knew exactly how to touch her husband's heart.

The children, watching their parents' tender exchange, fell silent. Rhaenyra's eyes flashed with a hint of contempt, unwilling to witness her former friend so close to her father. Beside her, Rhaegar leaned back, staring out the window.

Murmuring to himself about the forbidden magic spells, Rhaegar's thoughts wandered. Half a month ago, Viserys had learned the spell but hesitated to use it for taming dragons on Dragonstone Island. Rhaegar couldn't force his father's decision and suggested teaching the spell to the rest of the Targaryens.

Viserys had refused, saying, "Targaryens are products of disorder and arrogance. Venturing into magic will only bring disaster!"

Rhaegar realized his father was right. The Targaryen House was disorganized, with scattered members. Daemon was unpredictable, and the three brothers born to Alicent were not entirely loyal to their eldest sibling. Targaryens, proud because of their dragons, would not settle for less. Daemon's unpredictability was a prime example.

"What are you thinking about, so lost in thought?" Rhaenyra's soft voice broke his reverie as she gently brushed her hand across his face.

Rhaegar smiled, "Nothing, just thinking it's been a while since we visited the Kingswood."

"Really?" Rhaenyra was skeptical.

Rhaegar shrugged, too lazy to lie. Seeing his nonchalant attitude, Rhaenyra laughed. "We'll arrive at the Kingswood soon. Rest a while."

She helped him lie back, his head resting on her lap. Alicent, seeing this, laughed. "The first time we went hunting in the Kingswood, Rhaegar was smaller than Daeron and lay in your arms just like this."

Rhaenyra smiled without replying. If it weren't for her father and siblings all being in the same carriage, she wouldn't have bothered with Alicent at all. Being a stepmother really required maintaining appearances.

...

By noon, the group finally arrived at the camp on the edge of the Kingswood, having navigated through a muddy stretch of road from the melted snow. The Kingsguard on white horses entered the camp first, announcing the arrival of the royal family.

The camp was bustling with colorful tents, bonfires, and food, filled with nobles from all over the realm.

"Phew~"

The carriage halted in an open area at the camp's entrance. The thick door slowly opened under the watchful eyes of the assembled nobles and knights.

Viserys stepped out first, smiling and waving at the gathered nobility as he descended from the carriage with the help of a short stool. Alicent followed, elegantly dressed in a pale yellow gown and a red cloak, taking her husband's hand as she stepped down.

"Your Grace the King... Your Grace the Queen..."

The nobles erupted in cheers and applause, greeting the king and queen enthusiastically.

Rhaegar was the third to emerge, surveying the camp with keen eyes.

Thud.

He jumped off the carriage, then turned to assist Rhaenyra, gently helping her down. Rhaenyra habitually opened her arms, smiling.

"Brother, hug," Helaena called, squeezing her way to the carriage door with outstretched arms.

Rhaegar laughed softly. "Of course."

Rhaenyra gave him a warning look but said nothing. She had already warned him privately.

Aegon, squeezed to the side, grumbled impatiently, "What's with all the squeezing?"

The family then proceeded together towards the main tent. Along the way, nobles cheered and celebrated their presence.

Rhaenyra held Rhaegar's hand as they walked behind their father and Alicent. Rhaegar felt the warmth of his sister's touch, smiling gently while scanning the nobles around them.

Near the entrance, Lyonel Strong, cloaked and riding a black horse, watched the scene with gleaming eyes. Beside him were his sons, Harwin and Larys, who stood on the ground observing the royal family.

"Ahem..."

Larys coughed lightly, keeping his head down and his eyes wandering.

Among the crowd, a middle-aged man with a constant smile and a familiar large nose caught Rhaegar's attention.

"That's Hobert Hightower, remember?" Rhaenyra whispered.

Rhaegar nodded, smirking. "Of course, the big-nosed fool."

Hobert Hightower, Lord of the Hightower House and Otto's brother, had attended Rhaegar's coronation as heir. He stood with a haughty noblewoman and a sturdy young man.

The siblings continued to talk and laugh as they recognized more familiar faces. Near an isolated fence stood Daemon, Laena, and their twin daughters.

Rhaegar exchanged a look with Daemon, who gazed back with an intense, aggressive expression.

...

Soon, the family entered the main tent.

"Your Grace, it's been too long."

As soon as Rhaegar entered, he saw a figure with blonde hair striding forward, laughing loudly in a display of self-assured bravado.

Viserys recognized the man and greeted him warmly. "Lord Jason, indeed it has been a long time."

The newcomer was none other than Jason Lannister, the Warden of the West and Lord of Casterly Rock. With his curly blonde hair, thick beard, and lavish attire adorned with the crest of the Roaring Lion, Jason exuded arrogance, often looking down his nose at others.

After greeting the king, Jason turned his attention to Alicent, saying courteously, "Your Grace, you are as beautiful as ever."

He then took Alicent's hand and kissed it with an air of exaggerated honor.

Alicent's smile was forced as she replied, "You are still as valiant as ever, Lord Jason."

She felt uncomfortable every time she interacted with Jason, the egomaniac.

Noticing his wife's discomfort, Viserys intervened. "Alright, let's not block the entrance. Let's go inside and talk."

"Please, Your Grace, come in." Jason's smile remained unyielding.

As he turned around, his eyes briefly lingered on Rhaenyra, seemingly disappointed that he couldn't greet her directly.

Rhaegar gave Jason a cursory glance, feeling a slight tingle of irritation.

"Prince," a voice called from the corner of the tent.

It was Erryk, dressed in silver armor and white robes. Rhaenyra's eyes flickered as she and Rhaegar approached him, finding a secluded spot behind one of the tent's pillars.

Rhaegar's expression turned serious as he asked, "Any news?"

"None," Erryk replied, his face grim. "I've searched the entire Red Keep, but there's no sign of the woman you described."

Rhaegar frowned. "Alys Rivers' features are very distinctive. Anyone who's seen her should remember her."

Alys Rivers was a dangerous figure, suspected to be the bastard daughter or nursemaid of Hand of the King Lyonel Strong. Old Tully had warned that she might have defected to Larys Strong and was now lurking in the Red Keep. Rhaegar had tasked Erryk with finding her discreetly, to avoid alerting their enemies. Yet there had been no trace of her.

"Prince, there are no buxom women with green eyes and prominent features in the Red Keep," Erryk said helplessly. "Could she be hiding in an outer mansion or somewhere outside the castle?"

"It's possible," Rhaegar conceded. "But continue searching the Red Keep thoroughly. Don't overlook any detail."

His mind was racing, ever vigilant.

...

Meanwhile, in the camp's horse stable, Lyonel dismounted and tethered his mount.

As he turned around, he noticed his two sons, Harwin and Larys, lingering near the fence, each gazing intently in different directions.

"You two, come here!" Lyonel barked, his anger evident.

"Yes, father," Harwin responded hastily, reluctantly tearing his gaze away.

"What are you looking at?" Lyonel demanded, frowning as he followed Harwin's line of sight.

In the distance, the backs of the king's family were barely visible. Lyonel's anger flared, and he lashed his eldest son with a horsewhip. "Put away your foolish thoughts, you unproductive fool!"

"I wasn't—" Harwin began to protest, his head bowed.

Snap! Snap! Lyonel struck him twice more with the whip. "Whether you were or not, you're past the age of marriage. Take this opportunity during the Kingswood hunt to find a suitable noble lady."

"Father..." Harwin looked up in surprise, but before he could finish, another lash from the whip nearly struck his face.

"Shut up and show me you can change," Lyonel growled, gritting his teeth.

Reluctantly, Harwin nodded in agreement, looking disheveled and chastised.

"Ahem..." Larys limped closer, his presence accentuated by his deliberate coughs.

## Chapter 298: Dragons and Lions

Larys's coughing caught the attention of his father and brother.

He walked laboriously to his elder brother's side, casting a glance at his father before saying humbly, "Brother, it is time for you to marry and carry on the family name."

"I know, Larys," Harwin muttered, clearly in a foul mood.

Larys's eyes glinted with shrewdness. "I just saw the prince and princess walking hand in hand into the tent. They truly are a match made in heaven."

Harwin stiffened, eyeing his brother warily.

"Don't look at me like that; everyone is saying it," Larys added with an ambiguous smile.

"Shut up, Larys!" Lyonel snapped. "These fantasies of yours are dangerous and need to stop."

Larys blushed and smiled apologetically. "Yes, father."

Lyonel's stern expression softened slightly as he lowered his voice. "Where did that woman go?"

"Who?" Larys feigned ignorance.

Lyonel's face darkened, his riding crop pointing at Larys. "Don't play dumb. Where is Alys Rivers hiding?"

"Father, if Alys Rivers is sneaking around, how would I know?" Larys hunched over, trying to appear as humble as possible. "If I knew where she was, I would have told you immediately."

Lyonel's suspicion remained. "You truly don't know?"

"A thousand times, no," Larys replied sincerely.

Lyonel's eyes flickered. He lashed his son's shoulder with the riding crop and said, "Whether you know or not, remember that she is a danger. Do you understand?"

When the Strong House moved to Harrenhal, Alys Rivers had suddenly disappeared. Initially, it was thought she had been left behind or separated during the journey. Lyonel, having developed a fondness for her, had sent people to search for her. Rumors linked her to the Red Keep, where even Prince Rhaegar had conducted a thorough but fruitless search.

Lyonel suspected his second son had a close relationship with Alys and was testing him.

Larys took half a step back and lowered his head. "You can rest assured, father."

"Hmph! You brothers take care of yourselves," Lyonel snorted, tossing the riding crop into Harwin's arms before storming off.

Both sons were a constant source of concern.

As soon as their father left, Harwin's frown deepened and he followed him out of the stable.

Larys stayed where he was, lifting his head slightly. His gray-brown eyes followed his father and brother, a calculating look on his face.

...

Inside the main tent, Viserys was all smiles, seated at the head of the table and exchanging pleasantries with the various lords and knights.

He loved lively gatherings, and the Kingswood hunt was one of his favorite events.

"Your Grace, you must visit Casterly Rock someday. The honeyed wine there is truly mesmerizing," Jason said, holding a glass of red wine and boasting.

Viserys saw through his ploy and replied with a smirk, "Lord Jason, if you really wanted me to taste it, you should have brought a shipload with you."

Jason was momentarily speechless and shrugged it off. "I was in a hurry to get here. Next time, for sure."

"Very well, I look forward to it," Viserys said graciously.

The primary invitees for the Kingswood hunt were the nobles of the king's domain and the Stormlands, but Viserys, seeking even more excitement, had extended invitations to lords from neighboring regions as well, including the Lannisters of the Westerlands, the Hightowers of Oldtown, and the Redwynes of the Arbor.

"Your Grace," Otto approached with a solemn face.

Viserys was in the middle of raising a glass with someone and couldn't immediately attend to the Master of Civil Affairs. After finishing his drink, he noticed Daemon entering the tent with his family, accompanied by a woman with dark hair streaked with silver.

"Viserys!" Rhaenys greeted cheerfully, stepping forward with her cousin and daughter.

Viserys put down his glass and said in surprise, "Cousin, you're all here."

"Brother," Daemon greeted with a nod, his expression bland.

"Find a seat and join me for a drink later," Viserys said happily. Noticing the absence of a familiar face, he asked, "Lord Corlys didn't come?"

Rhaenys sighed, "Corlys always has a ton of business to attend to."

"Haha, compared to him, it looks like I'm the king who doesn't do any work," Viserys teased, laughing loudly.

A few years ago, Corlys and House Velaryon had been a source of tension for him, constantly stirring up trouble. But now, he was at ease, joking casually.

Sensing her cousin's warmth, Rhaenys shook her head with a smile. "You never change, do you?"

Despite her words, a touch of sadness crossed her eyes. Laena, sensing her mother's feelings, took her hand and offered a comforting glance, her other hand resting on her slightly bulging belly.

...

Rhaegar parted ways with Erryk and soon encountered another familiar face—Tyland Lannister.

Tyland, far more handsome than his brother Jason, had neatly combed blonde hair and a meticulously trimmed beard, making him a striking figure.

"Prince, we meet again," Tyland greeted with enthusiasm, stepping forward with a beaming smile.

Three years ago, after leading a failed sneak attack on Gray Gallows Island, Tyland had been stripped of his position as Master of Ships and nearly faced severe consequences. Rhaegar had provided him a lifeline by assigning him to oversee the construction of the Prince's Palace on the Dornish borderlands, making him one of Rhaegar's staff.

As Tyland approached, Rhaegar smiled warmly. "I haven't seen you in half a year. How have you been?"

"All is well," Tyland replied, nodding eagerly.

After the initial pleasantries, Rhaegar got to the point. "There have been issues with the supplies for the Prince's Palace. Do you know what's causing the problem?"

Tyland's expression shifted slightly, and he whispered, "I've personally visited the noble territories involved. It seems the orders came from Lord Borros."

"Very well Borros, I will remember this," Rhaegar sneered.

After discussing the Prince's Palace further, their conversation drifted to other matters. Tyland hesitated before speaking worriedly, "Prince, thousands of Dornish refugees are gathering at Vulture's Roost near the Boneway. It seems suspicious."

"Has there been any response from Sunspear?" Rhaegar frowned.

"No. Prince Qoren is preoccupied with establishing diplomatic relations with Braavos," Tyland said regretfully.

After a moment of thought, Rhaegar said, "The Boneway is treacherous terrain, difficult to traverse. Ensure that House Dondarrion of Blackhaven increases their patrols and garrisons."

A few thousand refugees didn't concern him much. The Boneway was a narrow, hazardous path where a single misstep could lead to a fatal fall. The Dondarrion House guarded the exit, and even a large army would struggle to break through their defenses.

Before they could continue, Rhaenyra called out to Rhaegar. He apologized, "I need to attend to something."

"Of course, Prince. Make yourself at home," Tyland said with a smile.

The construction of the Prince's Palace was more than halfway completed, and maintaining a good relationship with the Heir was crucial for Tyland's return to prominence.

...

The tent was crowded as Rhaegar made his way through, exchanging greetings with the nobles. He approached the main seat where Rhaenys stood, elegantly dressed.

"Aunt," he greeted with a smile.

"Rhaegar," Rhaenys responded warmly, stepping forward to hug her nephew.

Rhaegar bent slightly to accommodate the embrace and casually asked, "Lord Corlys didn't come?"

"You're just like your father—always more interested in Corlys than me," Rhaenys sighed, half in jest. "He decided to stay on Driftmark and didn't want to participate in the hunt."

Rhaegar nodded and moved on to greet Daemon and Laena.

At that moment, Otto approached Viserys, who was sitting and enjoying the gathering. "Your Grace, the messenger reported that Lord Borros is on his way and will arrive shortly."

Viserys' smile vanished. "I've arrived, and he's even later than me?"

"The messenger said the carriage broke down," Otto explained.

Viserys dismissed the excuse with a wave. "What do you think?"

"The truth is unknown, but Lord Borros was not on time," Otto replied nonchalantly.

Viserys slammed his wine goblet onto the table, his face darkening. "His arrogance is astounding. He dares to arrive later than the king!"

The nearby nobles overheard the conversation. Jason's eyes gleamed as he interjected, "Your Grace, Borros Baratheon has disrespected the royal family and should be punished."

Viserys eyed him skeptically. "Oh? And what do you suggest, Lord Jason?"

"Borros is unfit to be the Lord of Storm's End. Strip him of his title and replace him with a descendant of Lord Bormond's cousin," Jason proposed eagerly. "This will serve as a warning and secure the loyalty of the new lord."

A tense silence followed Jason's suggestion. Otto observed quietly, his expression unreadable.

Viserys, now intrigued, asked, "Lord Jason, what crime should I punish Lord Borros for?"



Otto smirked slightly, adding, "Perhaps for having a broken wheel and being late to the camp."

"No! That's not a reason," Jason protested. "Lord Borros has obstructed the supply of materials for the Prince's Palace, intentionally causing difficulties for the royal family."

Viserys' expression hardened. "Do you have any evidence to support this claim?"

"Uh..." Jason faltered, realizing his error. Under the king's intense gaze, he stammered, "Not exactly, but it's common knowledge..."

"Common knowledge?" Viserys interrupted, his voice dripping with disdain. "And who is this 'everyone'?"

He loathed Jason's sycophantic behavior and his baseless accusations. If he intended to punish Borros severely, he would need concrete evidence, not hearsay.

#### Chapter 299: The Deterrence of Dragons

Jason's face turned red from the reprimand, and he stammered, unable to utter a single coherent word.

Otto seized the moment. "Your Grace, it appears many are attempting to second-guess your intentions."

"No! That's not what I meant at all," Jason gulped, hastily denying it.

At that moment, Lyonel entered the tent with a stern expression. "Your Grace, Lord Borros' party has arrived at the camp nearby."

Seeing an opportunity to escape, Jason mumbled, "If you'll excuse me, I have urgent business to attend to," and hurriedly slipped away from the main seat, retreating quietly.

Viserys snorted in irritation. "If Borros is here, he should come to see me immediately. I won't go out to greet him."

The king's stance was firm and unyielding.

Lyonel responded calmly, "I'll send one of the Kingsguard to receive him."

Given Borros' status, sending a Kingsguard to greet him was appropriate.

"Wait," Rhaegar interrupted. "Since Lord Borros was invited, it's better if I go to greet him."

"You?" Viserys raised an eyebrow.

Rhaegar's lips curled into a mischievous smile. "Not just me—I'll bring Aegon and the others along."

Viserys, recognizing the mischief in his son's eyes, chuckled. "Very well, take your siblings with you."

Rhaegar nodded and turned to leave.

Just then, Grand Maester Mellos approached the platform, carrying a satchel. "Your Grace, it's time to change your bandage."

"Of course," Viserys extended his injured left hand.

Mellos carefully unwrapped the bandage, removed the caked ointment, and applied a fresh layer of medicinal salve.

The process was routine and unremarkable, but Rhaegar, on his way out, noticed the wound on his father's hand had festered slightly. It had been a month since the last treatment, and it was not unexpected for the wound to have worsened.

However, something about Mellos' methodical movements caught Rhaegar's attention. His purple eyes flickered with suspicion before he strode out of the tent.

...

It didn't take long for Rhaegar to find Aegon and Aemond in the picnic area near the main tent. Meanwhile, Helaena and Daeron were with Alicent in another tent, mingling with some noblewomen.

Rhaegar walked calmly into the ladies' tent and explained his intentions to Alicent.

Alicent, holding a cushion and a glass of wine, looked surprised. "Daeron is only seven years old. Is he going too?"

"There's nothing he can't handle. I was riding dragons when I was six," Rhaegar replied, not giving her a chance to object. He called Helaena and Daeron, who were both eager to leave.

Alicent's brows furrowed in concern as she watched her children leave, clutching her wine glass tightly.

Rhaegar, already on his way out with his siblings, didn't look back. Outside the tent, Daeron cheered and bounded ahead, relieved to escape the company of middle-aged noblewomen who wore overpowering perfume.

Rhaegar pressed forward, indifferent to Alicent's thoughts. This queen indeed loved her children, but her love was stifling. Under Otto's stern influence, she constantly repressed and disciplined their every move, treating them like pets in captivity.

...

Outside the camp, on the dirt roads, several luxurious carriages rattled along, flanked by two teams of Storm Knights adorned in armor and shields bearing the crest of the Stag.

"Damn broken road, it really needs to be widened and repaired!" Borros grumbled inside one of the leading wagons, his words coarse and filled with annoyance.

Beside him sat Lady Elenda, accompanied by their four daughters of varying ages.

"Borros, we are already late," Elenda said, her tone exasperated as she held her forehead, trying to persuade her husband to speak less.

"So what? Should we still have to wait for that old man?" Borros retorted, his eyes rounding with frustration. "The king is looking for trouble with me over the supply issues. It's not like I'm going to just take it lying down."

Elenda sighed at her husband's arrogance and haughtiness. "The king has specially organized this Kingswood hunt; he won't let this go easily."

Coming from Night Song City in the Dornish Borderlands, Elenda was acutely aware of the potential for crisis. But Borros dismissed her concerns and grew even more smug. "The king is weak. He organized this hunt because he wants his second son to marry our daughter and secure Baratheon support."

The four Baratheon girls exchanged glances, each showing a touch of disdain. None of them wanted to marry the king's second son. At the last funeral, they had secretly admired the king's eldest son, Rhaegar Targaryen—a powerful and skilled warrior, tall and handsome.

Elenda scanned her husband and daughters, then sighed and lowered her head. "I hope you're right."

Not far from the camp, the party quickened their pace, soon seeing the fortifications at the camp's outskirts. Borros straightened his silk robes over his bloated figure and said solemnly, "We're almost there. Show the pride of House Baratheon."

The carriages halted at the gate, with no space inside the camp. The coachman lowered a small stool for the family to alight. Borros stepped out first, holding his potbelly, his head tilted high in pride.

A deafening dragon roar resounded, and the sun was momentarily blotted out. Startled, Borros looked up. A massive black dragon soared from the direction of the Kingswood, its wings casting a shadow over the entire camp. The dragon's green vertical pupils locked onto the group below.

In the next instant, the dragon bare its fangs, and green Dragonfire misted from its mouth. The horses panicked, struggling until their legs buckled. Borros, standing on the stool, was thrown into a muddy puddle, screaming in terror.

Dragonfire did not descend. The dark green flames cut through the sky, the black dragon flapping its wings and stirring up a gust of wind. Following its roar, several more dragons of different colors rose from the Kingswood, each spitting Dragonfire as they flew over the camp.

"Roar..."

Aegon rode on Sunfyre's back, his hair flying wildly in the wind.

Nearby, Tessarion, carrying the slender Daeron, flapped his wings excitedly, spewing azure Dragonfire. Helaena rode Dreamfyre, the second largest dragon after Cannibal, with an excited Aemond squeezed into the saddle behind her.

"Roar!" Dreamfyre, known for her nasty disposition, roared and swooped down, her light blue scales glinting as she passed over a wagon, sweeping out a scorching gale. The carriage shook violently, its wheels creaking in the howling wind. The white horses pulling the carriage frothed at the mouth, convulsing and collapsing from stress.

"Alert!" commanded a stalwart-faced middle-aged man, his armor depicting dense nightingales on a yellow background. He was Royce of House Caron of Nightsong, Borros' father-in-law. Royce unsheathed his longsword and quickly stepped forward to protect Borros, his lord and son-in-law.

The Stormlands Knights followed suit, drawing their swords, picking up their shields, and quickly forming a formation. Unfortunately, their horses were too frightened by Dreamfyre and fell to the ground, forcing the knights to gather on foot.

As the Stormlands Knights prepared, the guards at the camp's entrance responded by drawing their swords.

"All stop!" A commanding shout came from inside the camp, filled with an unyielding authority. Borros, casting his gaze in surprise and anger, saw Rhaegar striding forward, flanked by two silver-armored Kingsguard.

Seeing Rhaegar, Borros immediately recognized this as a challenge. Humiliated in front of his wife, daughters, and knights, his anger boiled over. He pushed away Royce and yelled, "Prince Rhaegar, is this how Targaryens show hospitality, by attacking with dragons?"

"Lord Borros, mind your words," Rhaegar replied coldly. "As we all know, dragons are dangerous beasts and sometimes lose their temper."

The implication was clear—Targaryens could also lose their temper. Borros, missing the deeper meaning, let his anger cloud his judgment. "Who do you take for a fool? It's obvious your siblings are deliberately riding those dragons to provoke us!"

Rhaegar glanced at the dragons soaring in the sky and said indifferently, "You misunderstand. They're still learning to ride properly. They were just practicing."

Looking at the Baratheon family's carriage, Rhaegar added with a faint smile, "I apologize if they frightened your family."

The message was clear: this was just a small warning.

Borros, enraged, was about to lash out, but Royce quickly intervened. "Don't be impulsive. It's a felony to challenge the Heir."

"This is a setup," Borros fumed.

Rhaegar's smile widened. "Lord Borros, the dragons will soon be calmed. Please pardon us."

As if on cue, the sky resounded with Cannibal's roar. The massive black dragon shook its body mid-air, then slowly flew away, its vast wings spread wide. As Cannibal left, the remaining dragons ceased their roars, circling low in the sky, their vertical pupils locked onto the Baratheon group.

"Sunfyre, a little lower," Aegon urged, still unsatisfied. Sunfyre shook its head, its golden scales shimmering in the sunlight, its pink wing membranes brilliant and colorful.

Without waiting to land, Sunfyre's wings flapped fiercely, sending a gust of wind mixed with the smell of sulfur across the camp's entrance. The wind ruffled Rhaegar's silver hair and made his lapel flutter. Even Rhaegar, standing with his back to the wind, felt its force, while Borros and his group struggled to stay on their feet and keep their eyes open.

As the wind died down, Rhaegar turned his head silently, his eyes fixing on Sunfyre and Aegon, who had just landed in the camp's open space.

Chapter 300: Fleeing Sunfyre

"Roar..."

Sunfyre landed with a powerful thud, his wings spreading wide as he stretched his neck and roared. The gathered nobles at the camp entrance scattered in terror, pulling back in panic.

If this continued, chaos was inevitable.

Ignoring Borros' shouts, Rhaegar spoke coldly, "Aegon, control your dragon."

There was no need for Sunfyre to intimidate loyal nobles; Aegon was overstepping his bounds.

"Che, Sunfyre is fine," Aegon scoffed, urging Sunfyre to settle down.

Unperturbed, Sunfyre's golden body shimmered as he flaunted his pale pink wing membranes.

Royce, standing protectively in front of Borros, taunted, "Prince Rhaegar, it seems your dragons are indeed disobedient."

Borros, his face contorted in anger, snarled, "I will seek justice from the king!"

Rhaegar's eyes flashed coldly as he confronted Borros. The tension between them dropped the air temperature as if below freezing.

Above, Helaena and Daeron noticed the escalating tension and landed their dragons, looking concerned.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre continued to cause trouble, golden Dragonfire flickering from his maw as he shook his head. Rhaegar turned his back to Aegon and spoke coldly, "Aegon, must I repeat myself?"

Seeing the gravity of the situation, Aegon hurriedly tried to calm Sunfyre. "Sunfyre, quiet down!"

"Roar..."

Sunfyre, ignoring Aegon, crawled toward the camp entrance, roaring defiantly. It seemed he viewed Rhaegar as an enemy.

Feeling the hot, foul-smelling breath behind him, Rhaegar turned to face the unruly dragon.

Sunfyre snorted, spreading his wings and casting a shadow over Rhaegar, seemingly forgetting the fear Cannibal once instilled in him.

In full view, man and dragon faced off.

"Aegon, tell Sunfyre to stand down!" Helaena shouted in alarm.

Aegon jumped from the saddle, tugging on Sunfyre's scales. "Sunfyre, behave!"

"Roar..."

Sunfyre shook his body, annoyed at Aegon, and roared at Rhaegar again, lowering his head and revealing his menacing teeth.

Rhaegar's face hardened, his eyes flickering with green dragon stripes. He raised a palm and bellowed in High Valyrian, "Sunfyre, get down!"

As the words left his mouth, flames erupted from his palm, forming a dragon-shaped crest. In an instant, the cruelty in Sunfyre's eyes faded, replaced by fear. Its golden body trembled, submitting to the commanding presence of Rhaegar.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre shrieked in alarm, retreating rapidly and flapping his wings in panic. He rose into the air, fleeing as if pursued by a terrifying beast.

“No, no, no! Stop it!”

Aegon, having failed to secure his chains, was thrown off Sunfyre's back as the dragon lifted violently. Fortunately, he wasn't far from the ground, and Aegon landed with a thud, rolling to cushion the impact.

“Roar...”

Ignoring his fallen rider, Sunfyre soared low and disappeared into the dense Kingswood, leaving the onlookers in stunned silence.

What had they just witnessed? The prince, with flames in his hands, had commanded a dragon into submission!

“Brother!”

Helaena cried out, swiftly sliding off Dreamfyre's back and running to Rhaegar's side. Daeron dismounted as well, barking at Tesseract to exit the camp, then following on his short legs.

Rhaegar, observing the astonishment on the faces of the crowd, felt a serene confidence. He had used a technique from the "forbidden spell" to command Sunfyre.

This spell, typically employed by dragonlords to control young dragons, wasn't usually potent enough to scare away a dragon like Sunfyre. However, Rhaegar's unique connection to the Cannibal allowed him to borrow its fearsome presence, compelling Sunfyre to flee as if avoiding a predator.

Holding Helaena and Daeron close, Rhaegar turned to the dumbfounded Borros. In the man's terrified eyes, Rhaegar sighed softly and asked, "What justice do you seek?"

“Roar...”

At that moment, the Cannibal descended from the sky, its massive, pitch-black form casting a shadow over the camp. It didn't land, but cast a menacing glance at Borros before turning to chase Sunfyre into the Kingswood.

Borros, recognizing the true purpose of the Kingswood hunt, stammered nervously, "No, nothing."

Rhaegar smiled slightly, "Very well, then. I will escort you to pay respects to my father."

Satisfied with the display, Rhaegar led Helaena and Daeron back, flanked by the two Kingsguard. As they walked through the camp, the gathered nobles watched with a mixture of fervor, fear, and awe. The admiration for Rhaegar's strength overshadowed their fear.

“Prince Rhaegar! ...”

“The Young Dragonlord! ...”

The nobles erupted in cheers, clapping resoundingly through the camp. Titles and honors once attributed to Rhaegar were revived in their praises.

Rhaegar, his expression unchanged, acknowledged the cheers with a calm sweep of his gaze. These people were, after all, his subjects.

As he passed, Aegon, who was being helped up by Aemond, grimaced and wailed in mock agony. Rhaegar glanced at him briefly, then moved on without a word.

...

It was past noon.

Borros had changed out of his mud-soaked clothes and now led his family into the main tent with palpable trepidation.

Upon entering, five figures kneeling on the ground immediately caught their eyes.

Borros' heart skipped a beat. These were all nobles he recognized—lords from families that had refused to supply materials for the king's honorarium.

Trembling, Borros crossed the room, his eyes scanning the tent nervously.

Viserys sat at the head of the tent, flanked by several royal advisers. Apart from them, only Rhaenys, Daemon, and a few of the king's children were present. All other non-essential personnel had been dismissed.

"Your Grace, Baratheon sends his greetings," Borros said, bowing low, his previous arrogance utterly gone.

Viserys barely acknowledged him, his gaze instead falling on the four girls behind Borros.

The girls, ranging in age from about sixteen or seventeen to four or five, stood nervously.

"Aegon, come here," Viserys called out to his son, who hung his head in the corner.

Turning to the girls, Viserys smiled kindly, "I need to discuss some matters with your father. Why don't you go outside with my children for a while?"

He then waved dismissively at Aegon, "Take your siblings and go."

Aegon, head still bowed, responded, "Yes, father," and led his siblings out of the tent, followed by the four Baratheon girls, who left at their mother Elenda's urging.

The dragons had terrified them when they arrived at the camp, and the tension was evident on their faces.

Viserys then turned to the gentle Lady Elenda. "Lady Elenda, you should leave as well," he said, indicating that all non-essential individuals should exit.

Along with the royal advisers, Rhaenys and Daemon remained, while Rhaenyra touched Rhaegar's hand, their silent communication evident.

Understanding her intention, Rhaegar nodded to his father and followed Rhaenyra out.

Once the tent was clear, Viserys threw a stack of papers at Borros, hitting him hard on the head. "Look at your bannermen! Their fiefs are not facing disaster, yet they refuse to supply building materials!"

Over the past month, the true state of the noble fiefdoms had been investigated thoroughly.

Outside the tent, the sounds of Borros' panicked and helpless defenses could be heard.

It wasn't long before five bloodied heads were hung on the camp's pillars for public display.

Borros had been forced to execute them himself, in front of everyone.

Blood splattered all over his head and face, staining his expensive clothes once again.

...

On the other side of the camp, Alicent and a group of women were entertaining Lady Elenda, leading her to the tent where the women were meeting. Rhaenyra and Rhaegar walked side by side, drawing the attention of many noble ladies and young maidens.

Halfway there, Rhaenyra playfully pouted and insisted Rhaegar not accompany her further, worried that he would attract too much attention from the eager noblewomen. Rhaegar, not wanting to mingle in the heavily perfumed crowd, agreed and changed his course towards the maester's tents near the main tent.

In a few strides, he reached the entrance of one such tent. From behind the curtain, he could hear voices inside. Lifting the curtain, he entered and was greeted by a gray-robed maester with dark skin and close-cropped hair.

"Prince," the maester greeted, clearly flattered, and set aside the herbs he was working with to bow.

"Rise, Orwyle," Rhaegar said, motioning for him to stand.

Orwyle wiped his hands clean and responded respectfully, "Yes, Prince."

Rhaegar glanced at the table covered with various herbs and medical equipment. "You seem well-versed in herbology and medicine," he remarked.

If memory served him correctly, Orwyle was an assistant to Grand Maester Mellos and had played a role in treating his father.

Cautiously, Orwyle replied, "I've earned my maester's chain link in both fields."

Rhaegar continued, seemingly offhandedly, "How does your knowledge compare to that of the Grand Maester?"

Orwyle hesitated, a look of conflict crossing his face. "It should be... similar," he said cautiously, not wanting to appear arrogant.

Rhaegar narrowed his eyes, sensing the maester's humility and underlying frustration.

He lowered the curtain and approached the desk, picking up a white flower. The finished product of this flower was often mashed into a pulp and solidified into milky white beads. "This is a Poppy?" he asked.

"Yes," Orwyle confirmed, adding, "The king occasionally drinks a small sip of poppy milk to relieve pain, especially during the night."

Rhaegar's expression darkened. He hadn't known his father relied on poppy milk, a substance that could calm pain but was dangerously addictive, numbing nerves and muscles.

Recalling the numerous times Grand Maester Mellos had treated his father without significant improvement, a dangerous glint appeared in Rhaegar's eyes.

After so many years, his father's condition hadn't improved. Even if a complete cure was impossible, the wound should have been better managed.



Rhaegar fixed Orwyle with a grim gaze and asked, "Is the Grand Maester's medicine effective or not?"