

G.O Thrones 311

Chapter 311: Layers of Calculations

After a moment of embrace, Aemond reluctantly pulled away, trying to maintain a composed demeanor despite the unfamiliar warmth.

Rhaegar, noticing but not commenting on Aemond's hesitation, smiled warmly. "Just call me Rhaegar or brother from now on. No need for formalities."

The casualness in Rhaegar's words and the repeated assurance touched Aemond, who blushed and looked away, embarrassed by the sudden informality.

"Well, I have some matters to attend to. Enjoy your day," Rhaegar said, patting Aemond on the shoulder. He then pulled up his hood and walked away briskly.

The Dragonkeepers stayed behind to escort Aemond, who turned to call after Rhaegar, wanting to prolong their time together. But Rhaegar was already disappearing around a corner.

Disappointed, Aemond brushed off his green tunic and rejoined Helaena and the others. Led by the Dragonkeepers, they made their way toward the northern exit of the town, heading for Dragonmont.

As they passed the town's only low-class brothel, an unexpected observer took note. Aegon, shirtless and with a curtain wrapped around his waist, stepped out onto the brothel's third-floor balcony to catch some air.

Peering down, he spotted Aemond and Helaena, escorted by the Dragonkeepers, and scratched his disheveled silver hair in confusion.

"Heading to Dragonmont? Taming a dragon?" he mused aloud, trying to piece together their plans.

A cold breeze hit him, making Aegon shiver. He retreated into the room filled with lewd voices, muttering under his breath, "An idiot and a fool."

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Stone Drum Tower

Rhaegar returned to the castle and sought out Ser Robert, the Steward of Dragonstone.

Ser Robert handed him a piece of letter paper with an eager expression. "As you predicted, a raven was sent from King's Landing and intercepted by me beforehand."

Rhaegar tore open the envelope and skimmed through the contents. "What has the Queen been up to?" he asked casually.

Dragonstone is Rhaenyra's territory, so of course he had a certain amount of power in it.

Ser Robert replied frankly, "The Queen remains in her chambers most of the time. The maids report she frequently picks at her nails. Conversely, Grand Mello, confined to the attic, has been asking vaguely if any letters have arrived from King's Landing."

"Mello?" Rhaegar echoed.

"Yes, Prince," Ser Robert confirmed.

Rhaegar pondered this, a sneer curling his lips. Mellos seemed to be playing both sides, openly loyal to his father and close to Rhaenyra, while secretly spying for Alicent. Truly, he was the Citadel's man through and through.

Reading the contents of the letter, Rhaegar exhaled deeply. As expected, it detailed Borros' death and Lady Elenda's pleas for help in investigating the cause. Rhaenys had added her own note, suspecting Borros was poisoned, much like her grandfather, Baelon Targaryen. She also emphasized the need for a Baratheon heir to oversee Storm's End, subtly hinting at the importance of the proposed marriage alliance.

Rhaenys' insight was clear; she recognized the issue of Storm's End's succession and supported uniting the families through marriage.

Rhaegar smiled, appreciating his aunt's loyalty and keen understanding. "Aunt Rhaenys remains devoted to the family and her duties as the Master of Dragons."

Chaos was not frightening; it could be a ladder to progress. By leveraging Borros' death, the family's control over Westeros could be further solidified.

Tearing the letter into shreds, Rhaegar instructed, "I'm going to meet my father. Ensure Dragonstone remains well-guarded."

The news needed to be contained for now, allowing the raven to fly a little longer. Those who had orchestrated foul deeds would be eagerly awaiting their fruits. By delaying the news, he could provoke restlessness and expose their hidden motives.

"Understood, Prince," Ser Robert assured with a confident pat on the back.

Rhaegar smiled and hurried towards his father's chambers. He deeply trusted Ser Robert, who was not only loyal but also highly capable, a steadfast ally to both him and Rhaenyra.

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The King's Residence

"Get out! I don't need any treatment. I'm perfectly healthy!"

Viserys' weak but angry cry was accompanied by the crash of a wine jug thrown through the open wooden door.

Alicent stood in the doorway, covering her nose against the stench of wine that filled the room. Since the Small Council's objection to dragon taming the previous day, her husband's pride had been wounded, and he had turned to wine to drown his sorrows.

Ser Orwyle, in his Maester's robes, kicked aside the bottles that littered the floor as he slowly left the room.

"How is he?" Alicent asked, her voice tinged with concern.

Despite their years of marriage, she still worried about her husband's well-being - it was her only anchor.

Orwyle hesitated before answering, "The king is in poor health, both emotionally and physically. His wounds are inflamed and beginning to fester from neglect and excessive drinking."

"He still refuses to take his medicine?" Alicent pressed.

Orwyle nodded helplessly. "The Grand Maester's comments have agitated him greatly. He doesn't want to see anyone and even threatened to cut off my fingers."

It was Orwyle's first day as Grand Maester, and it was not going well.

"He won't harm you, I promise," Alicent said, her eyes red-rimmed. "He's unstable right now. Perhaps some milk of the poppy would calm him?"

Orwyle frowned and shook his head. "The prince has strictly forbidden giving the king milk of the poppy without his orders. It's too addictive and clouds his judgment."

Alicent's suggestion was swiftly dismissed, and she waved a hand, feeling a bit embarrassed. "I understand. You can go for now."

"I'll return later, hopefully after he's fallen asleep," Orwyle said before leaving silently.

Alicent sighed, her gaze drifting to her husband lying in a drunken stupor on the bed. Mellos, the previous Grand Maester, had been a close ally, and without him, easing Viserys' pain seemed impossible.

Viserys groaned and rolled over, his shirtless back exposing inflamed wounds. Even in his sleep, he muttered for more wine. Alicent closed her eyes in anguish and whispered a prayer. "Blessed be the Seven, don't let me suffer any longer."

She left the room, contemplating whether she should seek a little poppy milk from Mellos.

Moments later, Rhaegar entered the room, immediately struck by the sight of his father. "Father!" he called out.

Viserys was barely recognizable, his face flushed with drink, and a fresh puddle of vomit lay beside the bed. Rhaegar shook his head and gently lifted his father's upper body back onto the bed, wiping away the sweat.

He had come to discuss urgent news from Storm's End and to strategize against their enemies. However, seeing his father in such a state, he knew it was futile.

"Oh... Rhaegar..." Viserys mumbled, sprawled on the bed, wounds visible on his back.

Rhaegar, feeling helpless, cleaned up the vomit and sat on the edge of the bed. He sighed and gently combed his father's disheveled hair, which had gotten tangled under the pillow. "Father, you are the king. You must act decisively and not let your personal feelings be swayed by your council's opinions."

Viserys grunted in response, but it was unclear if he understood.

Having said his piece, Rhaegar stood up and left, closing the door quietly behind him. His father had become too compliant, too bound by the decisions of the Small Council.

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Dusk

A deep, resonant dragon roar echoed across Dragonstone Island as an immense, pitch-black dragon glided past the Stone Drum Tower, heading toward the Gullet. The attendants and guards within the tower looked up, their eyes filled with reverence and envy.

Half an hour earlier, Prince Rhaegar had received a message from a raven and decided to return to King's Landing with his dragon. Rumor had it that the prince's sword had been damaged, and he had invited the top blacksmiths of Qohor to recast it. This trip was to retrieve the newly forged blade.

Outside the castle, on the sea-facing cliffs, the light blue Dreamfyre and the golden Sunfyre stood apart, their eyes reflecting mutual hostility.

Sunfyre roared first, flapping his wings provocatively. Dreamfyre snorted, its vertical pupils locked onto the other dragon, moving slowly but deliberately. The two dragons did not clash directly, but the animosity between them was obvious.

Meanwhile, in the small garden behind the Stone Drum Tower, Aemond and his group, having spent the day wandering around Dragonmont, had returned to the castle and were now relaxing.

Helaena and Maris played in the gazebo, while Aemond and Cassandra walked hand in hand. Heeding Rhaegar's advice, Aemond tried to embrace the marriage and create some alone time with Cassandra.

Cassandra, older and more proactive, played the role of the big sister next door. Their quiet time was soon disrupted by an unwelcome visitor.

Aegon, reeking of wine, stumbled back from his visit to the brothel and found Aemond and the others in the garden. His first words annoyed everyone.

"Hi! A trip to Dragonmont and you didn't even see a dragon?"

"Aegon, we were just familiarizing ourselves with the area," Aemond retorted, letting go of Cassandra's hand. He didn't want to be taunted for not having dragons, nor did he want Aegon to see him and Cassandra together. Aegon had dismissed the Four Storms as if they were beneath him.

Aegon shrugged indifferently. "Then you should hurry before Vermithor and Silverwing sleep too much, or you'll be left to tame some sheep-stealing wild dragon."

The verbal jab stung, as usual. This time, Aemond couldn't hold back. "Aegon, I will tame Vermithor. You underestimate me."

Seeing her brother being bullied, Helaena ran out of the gazebo and stood protectively in front of Aemond. With her brother Rhaegar behind her and a Dreamfyre bigger than Sunfyre, she wasn't afraid of Aegon and his bullying.

The tension quickly escalated, and a small conflict was born.

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From a balcony of the Stone Drum Tower, Rhaegar watched the scene below with calm eyes, observing the clamor of the disorganized group.

Chapter 312: The Beginning

He climbed onto the dragon back in front of everyone and flew out of Dragonstone Island.

At first, he wanted to return to King's Landing, discover Larrys' secrets, and cut off his deceitful head with a sword. But he held back. The timing wasn't right, and killing a son of the Hand of the King would draw unwanted attention. The murder of Borros had just occurred, and any connection to it had to be avoided.

With a thousand thoughts swirling in his mind, Rhaegar sighed softly, "This night is not meant to be peaceful."

As he gazed at the dusky scenery, the fiery sunset clouds reflected the Targaryen motto, "Fire and Blood." Rhaegar smiled, deciding to ignore the quarrel below. He turned and stepped into the attic.

"I have already left Dragonstone Island with the Cannibal, so I can't show my face again. After a letter from King's Landing, the heir hurriedly returned to King's Landing, creating an illusion of a storm, I wonder if Alicent, who is anxiously waiting for news of Borros' death, is going to jump at my feet in a hurry to ask for forgiveness?"

...

"I'm not drinking this... get it away..."

In the king's bedroom, a drunken Viserys shook his head, refusing the milk of the poppy offered to him. Alicent held her husband's shoulders and urged him, "You need to take your medicine. A little will help you sleep."

"I don't need it!" Viserys snapped, flinging his hand and knocking the cup away, spilling the thick, milky liquid all over the carpet.

Alicent, startled and disheartened, sighed, "I'll see you later." She left her drunken husband and hurried out of the bedroom, carrying her skirt.

To ease his pain, Mellos had been consulted, and an impromptu cup of poppy milk was prepared. Once outside the room, Alicent wiped the corners of her eyes and walked quickly back to her bedroom down the same hallway.

"Queen."

Inside the bedroom, her personal maid, Terra, greeted her in a low voice. Alicent waved her hand dismissively, "I'm fine, get on with your tasks."

Sitting down heavily on the chair by the round table, she held her forehead with both hands, rubbing her temples with a headache. She had just received word that Rhaegar had flown to King's Landing on his green-eyed black dragon.

"Damn it, what's happening now?" Alicent muttered, her mind in turmoil.

Dragonstone Island was Rhaenyra's territory, and Rhaegar had influence there. With Mellos held captive, all external communications would be intercepted by Dragonstone's maester and wouldn't reach her.

Wracked with anxiety, Alicent called out, "Terra, bring me paper and a pen. I need to write a letter."

She wanted to send a letter to King's Landing, questioning Larys about the success of his operation.

"Yes, my queen," Terra nodded and fetched the letter paper and quill from the drawer.

Knock knock...

A knock on the door startled Alicent. "Who's there?" she called out, tensing up.

After a moment's pause, Otto's deep voice answered, "It's me, Alicent."

"Father?" Alicent murmured, confused.

Creak—

Otto pushed open the door and calmly surveyed the room, his eyes lingering on the pen and paper in Terra's hand. Without a word, he walked straight to his daughter and sat down across from her, asking casually, "Are you writing a letter?"

Alicent bowed her head, afraid to answer.

"Mellos found me. He said you were anxious." Otto explained his visit, not pressing the issue of the letter.

Once Rhaegar had left, Mellos had been sneaked out by Alicent and had taken the opportunity to find Otto, telling him about the Queen's concerns over the raven's messages.

Alicent's heart tightened, and she picked at her nails.

"Alicent, you haven't been able to lie since you were a child," Otto sighed softly, taking her hands in his. "You have beautiful hands. It's a shame to see them ruined by your nervous habit."

Alicent looked down at her hands, ashamed. Her once pristine fingers were now gouged and bloody from her anxious picking.

Otto struck while the iron was hot, his voice gentle, "Tell your father what trouble you're in."

Mellos had taken a risk by finding him, indicating that the issue was serious. Otto felt the need to step in and ensure the well-being of his daughter and their family.

Overcome with relief, Alicent's mental defenses crumbled, and tears welled up in her eyes. "Larys has devised an evil plan, and I'm involved in it."

Facing her father, who exuded reliability and strength, Alicent let her guard down and confessed everything in detail.

For a moment, Otto took a deep breath and glanced discreetly at the brown-haired maid standing at the entrance of the room. He whispered, "Is she trustworthy?"

Alicent, her eyes red and swollen, replied, "Terra has been with me since I was a teenager. We're like sisters."

Otto nodded gently, his expression growing serious. "Don't write any letters. Stay in your room and don't go anywhere."

"But Rhaegar..." Alicent began, her voice filled with worry.

Otto shook his head, his tone firm. "Don't worry about Rhaegar. You haven't been exposed yet. Acting rashly will only draw attention to you."

The cause of Borros' death remained a mystery, and no one could definitively identify the true culprit. As long as Alicent stayed calm and out of the way, she couldn't be implicated. Writing to King's Landing would only increase suspicion.

As for Larys....

He's a schemer with a black heart. It would be best if the Heir, having discovered his treachery, dealt with him swiftly. That would end the trouble once and for all.

...

As the sun set and night enveloped Dragonstone, the Stone Drum Tower lay in darkness.

Inside a bedroom, under the pale moonlight spilling through glazed windows, two figures lay entwined on the floor, their heavy breaths mingling in the quiet night.

Suddenly, a sharp knock interrupted the moment—two light raps followed by one heavy. Footsteps echoed briefly before fading away.

"Hmph!"

With a low growl, the activity in the room ceased. Daemon rose from the floor, wiping sweat from his brow and wrapping a shirt around his waist. He walked to the door and found a note slipped underneath.

Opening the door, he peered into the empty corridor. The messenger was long gone.

"Prince, who dares disturb us at this hour?" a husky voice called from behind. A woman pressed her warm, soft body against his back.

Daemon shrugged off her embrace, moving to the window to examine the note. His expression darkened as he read.

His most trusted informant, White Worm Mysaria, had planted spies everywhere. The message confirmed his suspicions about the new mistress.

Turning, he gazed at the voluptuous woman standing naked on the floor. Alys Rivers, his latest conquest from the Kingswood hunt, met his eyes with a sultry smile.

"Bad news?" she asked, her tone playful.

Daemon feigned sorrow, "It's my brother. His condition has worsened."

"The disease isn't terrible; it just needs the right cure," Alys said, sitting at his feet and looking up seductively.

"You mentioned a secret recipe for eternal youth and healing," Daemon mused, cupping her chin.

"No one heals better than me," she purred. "The king's injuries are from a curse. Dragon blood can cure him."

"Dragon blood is as hot as lava. My brother can't endure it," Daemon replied, testing her.

Alys seemed unfazed, resting her head on his thigh. "Not the beasts' blood. Targaryen blood."

"Targaryen blood?" Daemon's eyes flashed with cold fury. He squeezed her neck roughly.

"No! That's not what I meant..." Alys struggled, her face contorted in pain. "You can use a bastard, as long as the bloodline is pure."

Daemon pushed her away, leaping from the window's edge. "My brother won't allow such evil sorcery. Stay away from him, or I'll have your head."

He had accepted Alys as a mistress for her beauty, but her true nature was now revealed. The so-called cure was nothing more than a blood sacrifice, and Daemon wanted no part of it.

Not a single word from the forest witch could be trusted.

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In the dimly lit corridor, a silvery blonde figure quietly slipped out.

"Strange, there's no token in father's room," Aemond muttered, his face crumpled with frustration. He was still seething from Aegon's taunts earlier that evening.

With his older brother Rhaegar's unfortunate departure, Aemond feared there would be no one to help him tame a dragon. Tossing and turning in his bed, unable to sleep, he decided to sneak off to Dragonmont and tame a dragon on his own.

Scratching his head, Aemond brightened up. "Rhaenyra is the Princess of Dragonstone. The token for commanding the Dragonkeepers must be in her hands."

Dragonstone Island's castle, the black stone gate, and Dragonmont were all patrolled by Dragonkeepers. Without the token, he couldn't sneak out.

Determined, Aemond quietly descended the stairs and reached Rhaenyra's door.

Knock knock...

Cautiously, he knocked on the door, hoping she wasn't in her room. With Rhaegar away from the island, there was a good chance Rhaenyra would be with her twin adopted daughters, putting them to bed.

After a few moments of silence, Aemond's heart leapt with joy. He tiptoed to the door and gently pushed it open.

Crunch—

The door creaked slightly as it opened, revealing a room lit by a dozen smoked candles but devoid of any human presence.

"Perfect!" Aemond cheered softly, quickly rummaging through the room with nimble hands. He searched the bed, the closet, and the dresser.

Finally, in the first drawer of the dresser, he found the dark iron token. Picking it up, he kissed it in triumph. "Dragonmont, here I come!"

Returning the room to its original state, he hurried off. His first stop was the castle entrance, where a group of patrolling Dragonkeepers intercepted him.

With a smug look, Aemond raised the token and declared, "I have the token. Send two men to escort me to Dragonmont!"

The ten-man team of Dragonkeepers exchanged puzzled glances. Their captain's eyes flickered with recognition, and he nodded. "Yes, Prince."

Just like that, Aemond slipped out of the castle, his heart pounding with excitement and anticipation.

Chapter 313: The Bronze Fury

On the west side of the Stone Drum Tower, in a dragon-shaped watchtower, metal clanging sounds echoed through a secret room, accompanied by bursts of blinding sparks.

The secret room, roughly a dozen square meters, was entirely constructed of black dragonstone. On one side of the wall stood a forging furnace, its fire burning vigorously. A gray-haired, wiry old blacksmith wielded a hammer, forging the glowing red embryo of a longsword.

Rhaegar leaned against the stone wall near the door, patiently waiting for his new sword to be born.
Creak...

The wooden door to the room opened, and Ser Robert hurried inside.

"Prince, as you expected, there's unrest in the Stone Drum Tower."

Without hesitation, Ser Robert reported the developments. Rhaegar listened quietly, his expression composed.

Otto had met with Alicent, and Mellos had contacted the Hightower father and daughter. This was anticipated. Under pressure, people seek help.

There were also unexpected revelations: Daemon had brought a mysterious mistress into the Stone Drum House, keeping her hidden. The little maid trained by Sara had tracked the spider near Alicent to Daemon's room and overheard the mistress's identity: the missing forest witch, Alys Rivers.

"Hmph, I leave for a short while, and the rats start popping out," Rhaegar remarked with a playful smile.

Ser Robert hesitated before continuing, "Prince, half an hour ago, Prince Aemond slipped out of the castle and hurried towards Dragonmont."

Rhaegar raised an eyebrow, surprised by the boy's boldness.

Ser Robert's expression grew more troubled. "Just now, the king woke up from his stupor, discovered that Aemond had left, and chased after him without even changing his clothes."

"My father?" Rhaegar was startled. At this time, his father should still be resting.

"Aemond was rummaging through the king's bedroom for a pass token. The half-asleep king must have noticed and overheard something about Dragonmont and taming dragons."

Indeed, Viserys had been lying in a stupor when Aemond slipped in, muttering about Dragonmont and taming dragons. When he sobered up a bit, Viserys realized that his eldest son was gone, and his second son Aegon was even drunker. He decided to find Aemond himself.

"Prince, the king left a little while ago. Should we send someone to convince him?" Ser Robert asked anxiously.

After his initial surprise, Rhaegar thought calmly. Aemond was eager to tame a dragon, and with the stone tablet Rhaegar had given him, he was basically safe. It was unlike Viserys to venture out recklessly.

Rhaegar closed his eyes briefly, murmuring, "If he heard Aemond, he'll hear me."

Then, shaking his head with a faint smile, he said, "No need to stop them. Send more men to escort them."

He suspected his father was using this as a pretext to try taming the dragon himself. As the king, he was a proud man.

Ser Robert nodded and exited silently.

Dang!

The old blacksmith swung the final hammer, completing the forging of the longsword's embryo. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with a rag and uttered a single word in Valyrian, "Quenching."

A young blacksmith picked up the glowing sword embryo with tongs and plunged it into a waiting bucket of water.

Ssss... White steam billowed up.

Without glancing at the cooling sword, the old blacksmith took out three precious materials he had prepared: a pitch-black dragon bone as thick as an arm, an octagonal reddish ruby, and a piece of rune-inscribed parchment.

He polished the dragon bone, creating a slot at the end where he set the ruby. Wrapping them together with the parchment, he threw the bundle into the furnace, chanting under his breath.

Whoosh!

The flames roared higher as the old blacksmith chanted, wrapping the pitch-black dragon bone in layers of fire. The parchment melted into liquid, seeping into the slot between the bone and the ruby, merging them into one.

"Flaming Red Heart, Fusion Rune..." Rhaegar's eyes gleamed as he watched the fiery process.

The blackened dragon bone came from Balerion's remains, the ruby was a Flaming Red Heart, and the parchment was derived from Valyria's legendary sword, Brightroar.

He called up the system panel.

[Brightroar]

Exploration Progress: 100%

"This exploration is complete, please pick up the lost treasures."

"Picked up successfully, you have obtained..."

[Lion's Treasure]

Level: Epic (Purple)

Trigger Cue: "Blood of a King."

Scanning the contents of the panel, Rhaegar remained composed.

While treating his father's injuries, he had extracted a few drops of pus and blood from the festering wound to trigger the [Lion's Treasure].

The system panel recorded:

"Congratulations, the Lion's Treasure has been activated, you have gained..."

[Fusion Rune]

Grade: Rare (Blue)

Function: A disposable item that fuses two items of equal quality, turning decay into magic.

Evaluation: "Take out your two most precious items possible."

Buzz...

Suddenly, the furnace flames intensified, and the Flaming Red Heart set in the pitch-black dragon bone glowed brilliantly.

Rhaegar focused his thoughts, anticipation building. "R'hllor's legacy treasure, from now on it will also bear the name Targaryen."

The casting of the sword was nearing completion. He was ready to bring his creation to life.

...

Dragonmont.

An active volcano loomed against the night sky.

"Hurry up, we're almost there."

In the barren clearing, Aemond clutched a torch and ran tirelessly, a euphoric smile spreading across his face as he neared Dragonmont.

Two Dragonkeepers followed closely, each holding a torch.

Soon, the dimly lit Dragonmont loomed before them, three flickering clusters of firelight marking their approach.

The mountain was massive, its exterior made of black volcanic rock, with the surrounding air as hot as a summer day.

Aemond pushed forward, passing two patrols of Dragonkeepers, both of which were dispatched by his token.

Climbing the steep rocks, he reached a wide, deep, dark cave at the foot of the mountain.

As he raised his foot to enter, a team of Dragonkeepers led by an elderly Dragonkeeper hurriedly arrived.

The old Dragonkeeper, leaning on a bamboo pole, spoke in Valyrian, "Prince, please stop!"

"Why should I? I have a token!" Aemond retorted, his breath coming in gasps, hot sweat seeping from his forehead.

The Dragonkeeper stepped forward, his cloudy eyes filled with gravity. "At dusk, the Cannibal's roar disturbed Vermithor, and now it is cranky."

Vermithor, also known as the Bronze Fury, was a notoriously ill-tempered dragon. The Dragonkeeper couldn't risk the prince's life by allowing him to venture inside.

Aemond wiped away the sweat, his purple eyes scanning the pitch-black grotto. The longing in his eyes was unmistakable.

He was tired of being taunted. He would tame one of the strongest and biggest dragons and prove his Dragonlord bloodline to everyone.

Desire overpowered reason. Shoving aside the Dragonkeepers blocking his path, Aemond roared, "Waking it up will save me the trouble!"

With that, he rushed into the cavern, clutching his torch, determination driving him forward.

He was only one tunnel away from Vermithor. There was no way he would give up now and turn back.

The elderly Dragonkeeper stumbled from the push, looking distraught. "Quickly, catch up! We can't let the prince tame the dragon alone."

Even if it meant death, they had to protect the prince.

The Dragonkeepers helped the elderly man and followed Aemond into the cave.

But the darkness had already swallowed Aemond. By the time they entered, he had disappeared into the depths, leaving them to follow blindly.

...

On the outskirts of Dragonmont, the barren plains were lit by a moving cluster of firelight.

Fifty Dragonkeepers, holding torches, escorted their king with urgency.

"Ho ho..."

Viserys was exhausted, sweating profusely and panting heavily. Despite the long journey, he hadn't taken time to change, still wearing a loose silk robe. The running had caused his neckline to gape open, barely covering his body.

"Faster, we need to get there before Aemond," Viserys gasped, his eyes glowing with determination as he gazed at the towering Dragonmont.

In his drowsiness, he had heeded his eldest son's counsel and realized that following the advice of his royal advisers would only lead to losing his grip on power. Aemond's sneaking into his room provided him with the perfect excuse to act.

Not only did he want to solidify his rule, but he also yearned to tame a dragon again. Tonight, he hoped he and his third son, Aemond, would soar together.

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In the underground cave of Dragonmont, Aemond carefully groped his way forward, humming the Valyrian nursery rhyme "Shepherd's Evening Sun."

He had learned that the Valyrian language could communicate with dragons, and humming the ballad could have a calming effect.

As he ventured deeper, the temperature of the cave grew hotter, the stone walls burning to the touch.

"It's hot!" Aemond wiped away sweat, his freckled face flushed red.

After what seemed like an eternity, the cavern's downward slope leveled out. Holding his torch aloft, Aemond saw the stone walls covered in pungent sulfurous ore.

"Roar..."

A rough, low roar echoed from the cave's depths, like a war drum's beat.

Excited and surprised, Aemond whispered, "Vermithor!"

The roar could only belong to Vermithor or Silverwing. Filled with anticipation, Aemond ignored the heat and ran toward the sound.

"Hurry! I hear Vermithor's roar..."

The low voice of a Dragonkeeper rang out from behind as they chased after him.

Aemond glanced back and sneered, "Fools, I've already made it in. What's the point of chasing me now?"

Feeling closer to Vermithor, Aemond suppressed his excitement and continued humming the song.

As the cave opened up into a scorching hot crypt, Aemond's eyes lit up. He leapt over bumpy potholes and landed on a dark platform.

A rustling sound of scales rubbing against rock came from the platform, revealing a hideous silhouette in the darkness.

Aemond's body stiffened, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead. He knew it was an adult dragon.

Gathering his courage, he stared into the darkness and raised one hand high. "Vermithor, come out to meet me!"

Chapter 314: Behold Your King!

"Roar..."

A low, guttural growl emanated from the depths of the cavern as Aemond's words left his mouth. His eyes widened, not wanting to miss a single moment.

The rattling of scales ceased, and a blast of searing, sulfur-scented air erupted from above. Aemond's gaze shot upward, locking onto the source of the airflow. "Vermithor, I'm coming!" he shouted.

The platform rumbled and shook, the crunching sound of sharp claws piercing through rock echoed throughout the cavern. Aemond's face flushed, and his heartbeat quickened.

The next second, a thunderous roar filled the cave, and a blazing golden Dragonfire erupted like a volcanic explosion. The intense heat and light illuminated the entire underground platform as if it were daylight.

Aemond cried out in surprise, lifting his cloak to shield himself from the scorching heat wave. The dragon's flames swept through the cavern, leaving the space awash in golden light.

Through the flames, a massive dragon's head emerged from the crypt, roaring skyward. Bronze-colored scales, thick horned crowns, and tyrannical, ferocious vertical pupils glared down at Aemond.

Every terrifying feature underscored that this was an incredibly brutal adult dragon.

"Vermithor..." Aemond whispered, stepping back involuntarily. The dragon before him was even more savage and formidable than he had imagined, like a wrathful god.

The Dragonfire ceased, and Vermithor shook its head, revealing its massive form. Thick, dorsal-scaled neck, broad brown wings, and stone pillar-like sharp claws—the dragon's body was a war machine in itself.

Aemond swallowed hard, trembling as he stretched out a hand. "Vermithor, let me ride on your back!" he demanded, his gaze never leaving the bronze beast's eyes.

“Roar...”

Vermithor's throat rumbled, and it let out a low roar. Slowly standing on its hind legs, its broad wings supported its massive frame as it climbed onto the spacious platform.

For the silver-haired boy beneath it, the dragon didn't even spare a glance.

“Vermithor, look at me!” Aemond yelled in frustration, rushing towards the dragon and shaking his torch to get its attention.

Vermithor's hideous head lowered, its vertical pupils focusing on the insignificant bug blocking its way, bloodthirsty thoughts swirling in its mind.

“Vermithor!” Aemond called out, oblivious to the imminent danger, his eyes locked with the dragon's brutal gaze.

“Roar...”

Vermithor, thoroughly enraged by the audacious boy, cruelly baring its teeth as golden Dragonfire built up in his throat.

It was in a foul mood, exceedingly so. A few days prior, a wild dragon had disrupted his hibernation at Dragonmont. After finally driving that dragon away, another stench of dragon-eating lingered, adding to his agitation.

His vertical pupils glinted with menace as he aimed his muzzle at the silver-haired boy, Dragonfire ready to erupt.

Realizing the imminent danger, Aemond shrieked, "No! No Dragonfire!"

But Vermithor was beyond reasoning, the flames raging in his mouth, poised to unleash.

“No, no, no!” Aemond backed away in horror, desperately clutching the treasure his brother Rhaegar had given him. In a panic, he pulled out the stone tablet from his robes, holding it high, and shouted with all his might in Valyrian, “Obey!”

Just then, the Dragonkeepers arrived at the grotto's entrance, witnessing the perilous scene with horror.

Vermithor, understanding the Valyrian command, gazed at the bloodstained runes on the stone plaque. The dragon's rage subsided slightly, regaining a trace of sanity. However, the Dragonfire, once ignited, could not be stopped.

Under Aemond's terrified gaze, the golden Dragonfire erupted.

“Roar!!!”

At the last moment, Vermithor flung his head, redirecting the flames towards the cave entrance. The torrent of fire surged forth, instantly consuming the Dragonkeepers in a blaze, leaving only charred remains.

Boom...

Vermithor roared in anger, flapping his massive wings and moving swiftly. He sensed the foul stench of Cannibal near Dragonmont. This was his territory, and he needed to assert his dominance.

“No! Vermithor, don’t leave!”

As the Bronze Fury climbed out of the cave, Aemond, unwilling to give up, grabbed the thick, long dragon tail in desperation. Clinging to the finely scaled tail with both hands, he was dragged out of the cavern by the rampaging Vermithor.

In an instant, they disappeared into the darkness.

...

Watchtower, Underground Chamber

Rhaegar stood in the dimly lit chamber, his eyes lowered, lost in thought.

Three years ago, heated arguments with his father over the division of power had driven him to Harrenhal in anger. Harrenhal, desperately needing manpower, had led him to transfer half of King's Landing's men, leaving only the 800 Dragonkeepers in the Dragonpit and Syrio's intelligence scouts.

With Syrio now in Volantis, his forces in King's Landing were dangerously depleted and needed immediate reinforcement.

"Storm's End, Mellos, Larys..." He silently repeated the names, his eyes flashing with resolve.

The sound of metal striking metal interrupted his thoughts.

He turned to see the old blacksmith pulling a pitch-black dragon bone from the furnace, fitting it onto a sword blade. The blacksmith's skill was undeniable, and with a few precise hammer blows, the longsword was flawlessly assembled.

"My lord, your sword!" The old blacksmith held the newly forged Valyrian steel sword with reverence, presenting it to Rhaegar.

Rhaegar stood, taking the longsword to examine it closely. It was unlike any Valyrian steel sword he had ever seen. The blade was pitch black with subtle silver ripples, resembling a night sky dotted with stars. As if crafted from meteorite iron, the blade gleamed darkly, mimicking Blackfyre.

Two hideous dragon heads, reminiscent of a Cannibal, were carved on either side, adorned with four tiny emeralds.

The hilt was made from the leg bone of Balerion, lacquered black, and polished to prevent slippage. At its end, an octagonal ruby, the Flaming Red Heart, was set—large as a baby's fist.

The sword's overall appearance was similar to House Targaryen's ancestral sword, Blackfyre, both featuring dragon head designs and ruby inlays. However, Blackfyre's blade was wider, its hilt shorter, and its ruby had been replaced with a hexagram symbolizing the Faith of the Seven. In contrast, the new sword's blade was narrower and its appearance uniquely dark.

Rhaegar flicked the blade, which responded with a clear, resonant hum, the ripples shimmering like running water. "Good sword!" he complimented, gripping the hilt. The frosted roughness felt warm and solid in his hand.

Reflecting on the Dragon Claw taken by that wild dragon, he caressed the sword and mused, "The Targaryen House already has kingship, guardianship, and bravery, but it lacks a sword to kill and destroy."

The old blacksmith interjected, "My lord, please name the sword."

Rhaegar smiled, having already chosen a name. Glancing at the roaring furnace, his violet eyes reflecting the flames, he murmured, "Blood and fire come from the same source; it will be called Truefyre."

"My lord, I prepared a bowl of snake lizard blood for the sword's christening," the blacksmith said, gesturing to the young apprentice who brought a small basin of thick green blood.

Rhaegar shook his head, "No need, there is no shortage of blood and fire tonight." He raised the sword, and Truefyre cut a half moon through the air.

Hula—

The Flaming Red Heart at the hilt's end glowed, igniting the pitch-black blade with flickering flames. Truefyre, now imbued with Rhaegar's magic, connected with the power in his blood.

Creak—

Pushing open the wooden door, Rhaegar stepped out, sword in hand. Outside, the night sky was shrouded in dark clouds, hiding the moon. It was a perfect night for killing.

...

Dragonmont

"Quickly, go inside! This is Vermithor's cave!"

Viserys, drenched in sweat and panting heavily, arrived at the mouth of the deep grotto. His voice, hoarse from exertion, commanded the Dragonkeepers to explore the cave.

His body was failing him. After running for a bell, dizziness clouded his vision, and his lungs felt ready to burst. Each step brought searing pain, his white silk robe soaked with blood from numerous cuts. The salty sweat stung his wounds, making each movement agony.

The Dragonkeepers, carrying torches, ventured into the grotto. Viserys collapsed to the ground, gulping air to soothe his parched throat.

"Roar!!!"

A thunderous dragon roar echoed from the cave, followed by the Dragonkeepers' horrified screams.

"Oh no," Viserys muttered, forcing himself to stand. The Dragonkeepers rallied around him, forming a protective circle. There were forty-seven of them, their torches a blazing circle of light.

Rumble...

The sound of something immense crashing through the cave filled the air. Viserys, summoning the courage of a king, commanded, "Stand back, it's a dragon inside!"

"Roar..."

A massive, hideous dragon head, the size of a house, emerged from the grotto, followed by its neck, wings, and torso. Bronze scales, like dark gold, shimmered under the night sky.

Viserys' eyes widened, and he gasped, "Vermithor!"

This was his grandfather, King Jaehaerys I's dragon, the mighty beast that had once secured great victories for House Targaryen. In the firelight, the dragon's scales bore scars from battles past, evidence of its ferocity and survival.

Vermithor climbed out of the grotto, towering arrogantly above the gathered crowd. Its eyes swept over them, indifferent to the fear they inspired. Only the silver-gold haired Viserys caught its attention.

In a heartbeat, Viserys raised a trembling hand and shouted with all his might, "Vermithor, behold your king!"

Chapter 315: Taming the Dragon

Viserys' voice was hoarse and weak, yet it carried an unyielding determination.

"Roar ..."

Vermithor's icy, vertical pupils locked onto the Targaryen who dared to command him.

Viserys inhaled sharply, meeting the dragon's gaze head-on, his heart pounding violently in his chest.

Vermithor's eyes flashed with anger, and his massive head moved closer, radiating searing heat.

"Everyone, back off! Don't get caught in the wave!" Viserys shouted urgently.

The dragon's head continued to approach, and the heat wave forced the Dragonkeepers back, scattering them like leaves. The sheer power of Vermithor, with just a slight toss of his head, sent more than a dozen Dragonkeepers flying, their bodies crashing to the ground in a lifeless heap.

Seeing his guards fall, Viserys' anxiety turned to rage. He shouted again, "Vermithor, obey!"

As he spoke, his blood surged with heat, flowing into his raised palm. He had barely mastered the "Forbidden Magic Spell," enough to tap into the small reservoir of magic within his blood.

Buzz...

Magic power coursed through his hand, turning his palm crimson and forming a dragon-shaped imprint.

Vermithor's head breached the final line of defense, stopping just a few meters from Viserys. Man and dragon locked eyes, the dragon-shaped imprint reflecting in Vermithor's icy pupils.

Vermithor's furious advance halted, his eyes flashing with a touch of doubt amidst the fury.

This strange sensation, both familiar and unfamiliar, made the dragon pause.

Seizing the moment, Viserys spoke through gritted teeth, "Vermithor, where is my child?"

His eyes darted between the dragon and the grotto, but there was no sign of his third son, Aemond.

Vermithor cocked his head slightly, the doubt in his pupils deepening.

Dragons were intelligent, but communication with humans was difficult. Vermithor didn't understand the Targaryen's question.

Zira!

Viserys' face turned pale as his magic power waned, the dragon seal flickering out.

In an instant, Vermithor's anger surged back. His dragon's maw opened wide, and he let out a deafening roar, his fury unrestrained.

"Roar!!"

Vermithor's roar echoed through the night, shaking the very ground beneath them.

Viserys faced the dragon's gaping maw as a scorching, acrid wind blasted him, causing him to stagger and nearly fall. His long silver hair whipped wildly around him.

With a crunch, the buttons on his silk robe snapped apart, and he was blown backward by the force of the gust, flailing like a kite with broken strings.

In that critical moment, Viserys' mind went blank, his survival instincts overpowering his fear and hesitation.

Raising his palms high, he summoned the last of his magical energy, closed his eyes, and roared, "Vermithor, obey!"

He didn't know why he shouted it, but it was what he felt compelled to say to assert control over the dragon.

The dragon seal reappeared, its power commanding Vermithor's attention.

Vermithor paused, his roar echoing like a cold-blooded butcher's call.

Viserys, overwhelmed and exhausted, collapsed, supported by the Dragonkeepers who rushed to his aid. He struggled to stay conscious.

For a long time, the cavern fell silent.

Viserys, dizzy and weak, slowly opened his eyes.

A pair of cold vertical pupils met his gaze, and a bronze-scaled beast with a long neck loomed before him.

Vermithor lay on his haunches, his wings supporting him as he climbed the rocky terrain. His pupils scrutinized Viserys intently.

The dragon mistook him for another would-be tamer, like the silver-haired boy, Aemond.

Viserys panted heavily, his eyes locking onto the dragon with a mix of fear and determination. "Vermithor, submit to your king!"

His original mission on Dragonstone was to tame a dragon. Facing Vermithor's fury, he had no choice but to follow through.

"Roar ..."

Vermithor growled low, his body inching closer, his head aimed directly at Viserys.

The dragon sensed an inexplicable pull from the man before him.

In the depths of Vermithor's eyes, a memory surfaced—a reflection of a long-bearded old man with silver-gold hair. The old man's face was noble, even in old age, and he carried a heroic aura.

This was King Jaehaerys I, Vermithor's first and only master.

Jaehaerys' sister, Rhaena, had placed a dragon egg in his cradle. The dragon that hatched from the egg was Vermithor. They had been together for 69 years, facing countless trials and tribulations.

"Roar!"

Recalling his long-gone rider, Vermithor's rage surged. He raised his head and roared, golden Dragonfire slicing through the dark night.

When he lowered his head again, his eyes were filled with scrutiny and disdain for Viserys.

"Vermithor," Viserys called out, waving away the Dragonkeepers. He stood alone, his knees weak but unyielding.

Whew-

Vermithor leaned forward, snorting heavily.

Viserys ducked to avoid the heat, and the dragon's head nudged him, forcing him to stumble back several steps.

Amusement flickered in Vermithor's eyes as he stepped forward, golden Dragonfire glowing in his maw.

The dragon seemed to be giving him a chance, a test of worthiness.

A dragon chooses its rider.

Vermithor had sensed the difference between Aemond and Viserys. Aemond had looked at him with lust for power, a weak man's desperate desire to become strong.

But Vermithor was inherently strong and unwilling to lend his power to fulfill a weakling's insignificant wish.

Vermithor's throat rumbled with a low, threatening growl, its vertical pupils fixed coldly on Viserys. Despite feeling the kingly grace and dominance radiating from Viserys, it was but a fraction of what its previous master had commanded. Still, the strength and authority were enough to warrant a test.

Viserys halted in his tracks, his heart racing as he saw dragonfire building in the creature's maw. He knew from his training never to show fear in the face of a dragon. Steeling himself, he raised his chin and locked eyes with Vermithor, determined to appear fearless.

Time dragged on. Viserys, drenched in sweat and trembling, maintained his gaze. His pupils reflected the bronze dragon, unwavering despite the mounting pressure.

Finally, Vermithor extinguished the dragonfire and settled down, its eyes shifting from the image of its former rider, Jaehaerys, to the shadow of Viserys. The dragon's growl softened, and it flicked its head in annoyance, raising a cloud of dust.

"Vermithor, fly me in a circle," Viserys commanded, moving closer with determination. He saw the dragon's hesitation as an opportunity. If Vermithor hadn't attacked or fled, it meant there was a chance to mount.

Ignoring the dragon's agitation, Viserys placed his hand on its scales and began to climb. Two loyal Dragonkeepers rushed forward to assist, but Viserys snapped, "Stand down! I don't need help climbing my own dragon."

The reprimand spurred him on, and with newfound strength, he scrambled up Vermithor's back. The dragon roared and launched into the air, its powerful wings flapping as it ascended rapidly.

Viserys nearly slipped, clutching desperately at the dragon's scales. With no saddle or ropes, he stretched his limbs and gripped the scales tightly, trying to stabilize himself. He wedged his feet into small gaps between the thick scales, finding some semblance of balance.

Boom! Vermithor, not content with a simple flight, spewed golden dragonfire and dove sharply. Viserys, engulfed by the flames, let out a primal scream.

The searing heat scorched his skin, igniting his hair and beard, burning holes in his clothing. Yet, as a Targaryen, he was born with a resistance to fire. The fire was intense, but not as deadly as Cannibal's smoldering breath.

As they soared through the flames, Viserys' skin blistered, and his whiskers burned away. But he clung on, protected partially by Vermithor's massive head and back scales. Below, Dragonkeepers watched in horror, their king taken by the dragon.

"You, go back to the castle and report this! The rest of you, follow me!" the commander shouted, directing his men to chase after Vermithor and Viserys.

In moments, the clearing emptied. Birds scattered, and the deep grotto fell back into a deathly silence.

Suddenly, fragmented footsteps echoed through the grotto, accompanied by the sound of panting and grunting. Utilizing the torches abandoned by the Dragonkeepers, a disheveled Aemond emerged, clutching the stone wall for support.

Gone was the composed young man who had first entered. His clothes were tattered, his pants torn, and his elbows and knees were scraped raw, revealing bloody abrasions. The only intact piece of clothing was a green cloak, now riddled with holes.

Enduring the pain, Aemond stumbled out of the grotto and surveyed the chaotic scene with a sinking heart. He looked up to see a majestic dragon silhouetted against the night sky, spewing golden dragonfire.

"Vermithor!" he cried, his voice thick with sobs. The dragon he had pinned his hopes on, the dragon meant to change his fate, was now out of reach.

"Bastard! I won't give in!" Aemond shouted defiantly. Wiping away his tears, he turned and sprinted back into the grotto, determined to find another dragon. He remembered that Dragonmont housed more than one dragon. Without Vermithor, there was still its mate, Silverwing.

As he turned, the night cast a massive shadow over the grotto. Oblivious, Aemond ran with his head down.

"Roar..." A piercing dragon roar echoed, and the shadow descended swiftly, pouncing on the silver-haired boy in front of the deep grotto.

Caught in a strong gust of wind, Aemond looked back in shock, his eyes wide with terror.

"Don't!..." he screamed, his voice trailing off into the darkness.

Chapter 316: Murderous Cannibal Dragon

Stone Drum Tower

The castle gates were tightly closed, and armor-clad Dragonkeepers patrolled the perimeter.

Top Floor of the Attic

The dim corridor was silent, with candles hanging one meter apart, casting a faint glow.

A sharp blade slashed through the silence, and a stream of blood sprayed the dark roof like a fountain.

"Prince, you can't do this..." Grand Maester Mellos cried out, his body paralyzed on the black stone floor, shakily trying to move.

In front of him, Rhaegar, dressed in black robes, wore a grim expression as he casually flicked his blood-splattered sword. The corridor was littered with the corpses of maesters.

Farther down, in front of the king's bedroom door, lay a plump woman in a green dress, her black hair soaked in blood, her severed head lying grotesquely nearby. It was the ill-intentioned Alys Rivers.

This vicious woman, despised by Daemon, had sneaked out to steal the dragon eggs of Baela and Rhaena. Fortunately, Rhaenyra had been with her adopted daughters, thwarting Alys's plan. When Rhaegar entered the Stone Drum Tower, he found Alys trying to flee empty-handed and swiftly decapitated her.

Before she died, she claimed she could cure the king's curse with the sacrifice of a dragon seed. Rhaegar dismissed her words entirely, knowing Bracken had recently died in a blood sacrifice.

Rhaegar exhaled, "Grand Maester, your student is quite foolish."

He stepped on Mellos' robe, his eyes fixed on the maester's hand hidden in his sleeve.

Having just killed Alys Rivers, Mellos had emerged from the next room with several young maesters in tow. Mellos shook his head repeatedly, his voice trembling with fear, "Prince, it was the Queen who instructed me to use the Milk of the Poppy. You cannot be reckless."

"Not reckless at all. I've long wanted to kill you," Rhaegar replied lightly.

With those words, he swung Truefyre, beheading the old maester. The head rolled to the ground, its eyes filled with disbelief.

"With Father absent and you falling into my hands, it would be a shame not to kill you."

Rhaegar grinned, picking up the crumpled letter clutched in the headless corpse's hand.

Dangang!

The tip of the Truefyre Sword struck the black stone floor with a resounding clang as Rhaegar flattened the letter paper, reading it silently word by word.

The note did not contain the expected phrases from a man suspected of deliberately worsening his father's injuries. Instead, its contents were chilling.

"The King wants to tame a dragon ... Targaryen Revival ... World Without Magic ..."

The lines, written in small, precise script, alarmed Rhaegar more with each word he read. The note detailed the father's thoughts on dragon taming, expressing a strong resistance to and unease with the practice among the Targaryens.

At the end, there was a reference to the Citadel's pursuit of truth and the belief that magic did not exist.

Rhaegar's eyes darkened as he glanced at the headless corpse, spitting, "You didn't die unjustly."

It was well known that the Targaryens had always been at odds with the Seven Gods' beliefs and the philosophy of the Citadel. However, Rhaegar had not expected the Grand Maester to harbor such severe prejudices.

The Conqueror had relied on three dragons to conquer the Seven Kingdoms. Without dragons, was a Targaryen truly a Targaryen?

"Alys Rivers! Get out here!"

A rush of footsteps followed, accompanied by Daemon's exasperated growl.

Rhaegar turned to see Daemon, wearing only a white lining, huffing and puffing, his silver hair disheveled, a clear sign of his anger.

Many within the Stone Drum Tower were startled. Rhaenyra, her face worried, came quickly, holding her adopted daughter's hand.

Aegon, Helaena, Lyonel...

Even the timid Alicent emerged, accompanied by her father, Otto.

"Alys Rivers, you bitch!" Daemon's eyes were fierce as he muttered invectives under his breath.

Rhaegar glanced at him and said calmly, "Stop yelling; they've been gone for a while."

Daemon's gaze landed on the headless corpse, his anger gradually subsiding. He had wanted to leave Dragonstone before dealing with this traitor. Instead, she had escaped while he was sleeping.

Rhaenyra, surprised by the scene, asked, "Rhaegar, didn't you go back to King's Landing?"

"I'm back again," Rhaegar shrugged, turning to look at Alicent, who had just stepped outside. He wanted to see how this so-called Queen handled herself in such situations.

Alicent appeared apprehensive, biting her lower lip.

Otto stepped forward, shielding his daughter. "Prince, you killed the Grand Maester," he said solemnly.

"Didn't you see it when you were hiding behind the door?" Rhaegar replied blandly, holding the Truefyre sword thrust into the floor. He had come for Mellos and Alys Rivers and had accomplished his purpose.

Lyonel and the others arrived shortly after, shocked by the scene in the corridor.

Rhaegar handed Lyonel the note left by Mellos. The note, combined with the Grand Maester's previous lack of dedication to treatment, was enough to convict Mellos of treason.

"Roar!"

A dragon's roar, as fierce as a war drum, echoed through the night and reverberated within the castle walls.

A flash of realization struck Rhaegar, and he quickly ran out of the corridor, rushing to an open-air balcony.

Under the night sky, dark clouds shrouded the moon, hiding the stars. In the direction of the towering Dragonmont, a massive dragon soared into the sky, spewing brilliant golden Dragonfire.

"Roar!"

The giant dragon hovered in the night sky, its violent roars unceasing, and the dark sky frequently lit up with dazzling fire.

As Rhaegar moved, the rest of the group followed, looking out at the rioting dragon together.

Rhaenya's almond eyes widened, and she covered her small mouth, "Vermithor! Who is it?"

The massive dragon could only be Vermithor, but it was unclear who was attempting to tame it.

Rhaegar's expression was grave, "Father, or Aemond."

Soaring into the sky with a dragon marked the near completion of a successful taming, a crucial part of bonding with a masterless dragon. There were no weak cowards on the back of any adult dragon.

"Roar!"

In full view of everyone, Vermithor, far from Dragonmont, suddenly stormed out, spewing Dragonfire chaotically, drawing closer to the castle.

The castle, built on a rock wall near the sea, was not far from Dragonmont. At Vermithor's speed, it would take only a few minutes to shower the crowd with golden Dragonfire.

"Roar!"

"Roar..."

Sensing the approach of the furious adult dragon, the dragons resting around the castle were startled, shrieking and flapping their wings to rise into the air.

First, Syrax spread its wings in the back garden, followed by Dreamfyre and Sunfyre, resting on the cliffside, and finally Tessarion, curled up on the beach. Four dragons in all, they flew over the castle, roaring restlessly at each other, a clash imminent.

"Oh no, Vermithor has triggered a dragon riot!" Rhaenya exclaimed, trying to communicate with Syrax.

But all four dragons were on high alert, miles away, occasionally glancing at the frenzied Vermithor in the night sky.

Rhaegar frowned slightly, sensing the location of the Cannibal. The Cannibal hadn't left Dragonstone Island and was wandering around the east coast. He suspected that Vermithor's riot was somehow connected to the Cannibal, given their long-standing grudge.

The chaos lasted for a few moments before a massive silhouette crossed the night sky.

"Roar..."

Under the cover of darkness, the Cannibal appeared silently over the castle, letting out a muffled, thunderous roar. It sensed the provocation of its old rival and returned at top speed.

"Cannibal, come here!" Rhaegar shouted from the balcony, his voice carrying over the tumult.

The rioting dragons had to be dispersed quickly, or disaster might strike.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal let out a low roar, its green vertical pupils searching for its rider as it closed its wings and landed.

The stone drum tower was large, and the spacious back garden provided just enough room for the pitch-black dragon to temporarily land.

"Communicate with your dragons as best you can. Don't go out and run around," Rhaegar instructed, then, without looking back, leapt forward and landed on the Cannibal's spine.

Plop—

When the Cannibal stretched its neck, it aligned perfectly with the height of the stone drum tower, allowing Rhaegar to easily leap onto the dragon's back.

Without bothering to sit in the saddle, Rhaegar urgently shouted, "Cannibal, let's go!"

"Roar!"

With a thunderous roar, the Cannibal flapped its pitch-black wings and soared into the air, unleashing a stream of ethereal green Dragonfire towards the four dragons.

"Roar..."

The four dragons, already on high alert due to the Cannibal's presence, scattered in all directions as the ghostly green dragonfire erupted.

Sunfyre and Tessarion fled the fastest, driven by fear. One had already been punished by the Cannibal, and the other was too small to pose a real threat.

Dreamfyre, the oldest and nearly two-thirds the Cannibal's size, roared defiantly.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal turned its head in indignation, spitting dragonfire directly at Dreamfyre and revealing its sharp hind claws, ready to pounce.

"Cannibal, ignore it!" Rhaegar commanded calmly. Now was not the time for fighting.

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre, caught off guard by the sudden onslaught, flapped its light blue wings in panic. A familiar putrid odor triggered its memories.

In its youth, there had been only two young dragons on Dragonstone Island: Dreamfyre and Quicksilver. The arrival of the Cannibal had shattered their peace.

Dreamfyre had been hunted by the Cannibal a dozen times, each encounter ending with a narrow escape and weeks of recovery in Dragonmont.

"Roar..."

Recollecting these memories, Dreamfyre shrieked and fled, abandoning its defiance midway through the Cannibal's charge, rolling awkwardly in its haste to escape.

"Roar..."

Glaring at the retreating Dreamfyre, the Cannibal let out a frustrated low roar, its green vertical pupils filled with annoyance.

It hadn't had a proper meal in a while, and if this continued, it might have to hunt that ugly spiky dragon for food.

"Don't be too hasty, Cannibal."

Rhaegar's eyes flickered as he spoke soothingly, "Let's deal with Vermithor first. We still have two pieces of sea monster meat left from last time."

Having spent years together, Rhaegar and the Cannibal shared a deep bond. Now, he knew the Cannibal's predation on young dragons was not about controlling their numbers but purely for the taste of dragon meat.

A murderous cannibal dragon through and through.

Chapter 317: The King Under the Moonlight

In the dusky night sky, Vermithor sped wildly, spewing Dragonfire erratically, clearly in a state of rage.

"Cannibal, let's lure it away," Rhaegar commanded.

He couldn't tell whether it was his father or Aemond riding Vermithor, nor when they might gain control over the giant dragon. The priority was to ensure the castle remained unharmed.

"Roar..."

Cannibal roared, flapping its wide, pitch-black wings, and rushed towards Vermithor, who seemed to be waiting for a confrontation.

As the black dragon left the castle, the other dragons calmed slightly. Dreamfyre hid on the stone bridge's long steps, Syrax stationed itself atop a cliff, and Sunfyre and Tessarion fled, not daring to look back.

The Cannibal flew swiftly, weaving through dark clouds, closing in on Vermithor. Rhaegar, leaning down on the dragon's back, finally saw the silhouette on Vermithor.

"Vermithor, adjust your flight trajectory!"

Viserys lay on Vermithor, calling desperately for the dragon to obey. His long silver-gold hair, burnt ends trimmed, and thick beard contrasted with his bare upper body, revealing a fresh cut. Despite his injuries, he persisted in taming the raging beast.

"Father, grab the scales on the dragon's back!" his eldest son shouted from a distance.

Viserys looked up in disbelief, but instinctively wrapped his arms around the dragon's spine. He knew he had caused quite a commotion, but he hadn't expected his eldest son to still be on the island.

Suddenly there was a ferocious roar as the Cannibal emerged from the clouds with its ghostly green dragonfire and locked on to Vermithor with vertical pupils.

Boom!

The dark green dragonfire struck Vermithor's head, causing the dragon to scream and fall uncontrollably.

"Vermithor, hold on!"

Viserys, sweating profusely, took the opportunity to give orders. The dragon responded, stabilizing as the dragon-taming ceremony reached its climax.

"Roar..."

The attack swiftly passed, and Vermithor's crimson vertical pupils adjusted as it balanced itself for a counterattack. Despite lacking dragon-fighting experience, Vermithor had plenty of war experience.

It had fought alongside King Jaehaerys in the Dornish Borderland War, the Shipbreaker Bay War, and the Great Wall's defense against the wildlings, displaying an impressive adaptability.

Watching Vermithor fly, Cannibal remained indifferent, flapping its wings into the thick dark clouds.

Before disappearing, Rhaegar shouted, "Father, try to control your dragon! Don't let it stay so mad!"

The fact that his father could ride Vermithor meant the dragon recognized him. However, Vermithor's berserk state was hindering the dragon taming process, and it needed to be brought back on track.

"Roar..."

Vermithor responded with a roar, chasing after the Cannibal with relentless fury. The dragon lashed out unpredictably, like a berserker denouncing the injustice of fate.

Viserys clung tightly to Vermithor's back scales, his gaunt face filled with worry. He understood his son's strategy to use the dragons' feud to tame Vermithor. It was dangerous and could easily escalate into a deadly fight, causing innocent casualties. But there was no better option.

If Vermithor stayed mad much longer, Viserys wasn't sure how long his frail body could endure.

Suddenly, Vermithor dove headfirst into the clouds, tilting its head back to blast golden Dragonfire. Passing through the moisture-laden clouds, Viserys shivered, his depleted spirit instantly refreshed.

Looking up, the bright moon illuminated the sky, guiding the way like a beacon. The world was foggy, thick dark clouds splitting the night sky in two. Moonlight spilled generously onto his face.

"The Seven Gods above! How can it be so beautiful," Viserys murmured, momentarily lost in thought. Any past beauty he'd seen paled in comparison to this moment.

"Roar..."

Unlike its mesmerized rider, Vermithor continued its frantic search, its icy vertical pupils scanning for its opponent.

Rumble—

Dark clouds tumbled and surged as a flash of ghostly green light appeared below Vermithor.

Despite its frenzy, Vermithor's war-honed instincts detected danger.

"Roar—"

With a thunderous roar, the Cannibal burst out of the dark clouds, its maw wide open, spewing ghostly green Dragonfire.

"Roar!!!"

Having been bested once before, Vermithor reacted swiftly, launching a counterattack at the green flames.

Boom!

The two adult dragons' roars echoed as their Dragonfire collided, erupting into a monstrous wave of heat. Under the bright moon, the bronze Vermithor and the black Cannibal faced off, neither retreating.

Vermithor's pupils narrowed with fury, spewing golden flames to suppress the fire from above. Cannibal, head held high and wings sweeping through the dark clouds, stared down its prey with evil green eyes.

The two dragons, one above the other, unleashed surging flames, creating a spectacular night sky.

"Roar—"

The stalemate was quickly broken as the Cannibal's strength overwhelmed the golden Dragonfire. Comparing speed, perhaps only Red Queen Meleys could rival it. In terms of Dragonfire strength, this wild king had no equal.

As Vermithor's flames weakened, its advantage was reversed. The Cannibal roared, its Dragonfire targeting the vulnerable scales of Vermithor's abdomen, climbing towards the more deadly jaw.

"Roar..."

Forced to close its mouth, Vermithor screamed in agony, flapping its wings to disengage from the encounter. Its crimson vertical pupils gradually faded. Vermithor's jaw, once covered in bronze scales, was now scorched black, with many scales cracked and dry.

Viserys lay on the dragon's back, a flash of excitement lighting up his pale face. He sensed a weak connection forming between them, feeling Vermithor's anger abate and sanity slowly return.

"Vermithor, hold your balance! The enemy hasn't flown far yet!"

With eyes glowing with anticipation, Viserys sat up from the dragon's back, hands clenching its scales as he scanned the surroundings. He knew how to seize the moment, even if he wasn't adept at attacking.

Confused but obedient, Vermithor responded to his rider's commands, pulling away from the fight. Rhaegar observed the scene, halting the Cannibal's attack and ascending higher into the sky.

For a moment, the situation was reversed.

Cannibal flapped its wide wings, casting a ghastly shadow against the bright moonlight. Rhaegar, dressed in black robes, stood atop the dragon's back, looking down on the man and dragon below.

Vermithor managed to regain its balance, swooping down against the clouds.

"There will be other opportunities to kill a dragon," Rhaegar murmured, continuing to soothe Cannibal.

With the advantage of altitude, the Cannibal had an 80% chance of tearing into Vermithor's neck with a single bite, hunting down the impulsive Bronze Fury.

Patting the dragon's back, Rhaegar instructed, "Cannibal, let's go below."

The battle was already clear; there was no need to dwell on it. Vermithor was a powerful dragon, not only ferocious but also growing faster than other dragons of the same age. Even the Cannibal, with its enhanced size from Life Essence, was only one-fifth bigger than Vermithor.

Six years apart, the two dragons had fought twice, both times ending in Vermithor's defeat. The Cannibal's wild dragon experience and Rhaegar's high compatibility with it gave them the upper hand. In contrast, Vermithor's temperament and rider were a disadvantage.

Vermithor seemed to suffer from a birth defect, possibly inherited from its mother's Vhagar bloodline, making it emotionally unstable and prone to berserk states. If this flaw could be overcome and paired with a suitable rider, Vermithor's potential would be immense.

"Roar--"

Annoyed at being reduced to a mere bait, the Cannibal reluctantly descended and hid in the clouds. Aside from the dim-witted old dragon, he seldom felt as threatened as he did tonight.

With one man and one dragon gone, Vermithor flew high into the sky, alertly searching for its enemy. Two heavy blows to its head had restored its senses.

"Vermithor, left rear!" Viserys suddenly shouted.

"Roar!!!"

Vermithor instinctively followed the command, releasing a burst of Dragonfire.

Boom—

A ghostly green Dragonfire shot up from below, intercepted by the golden Dragonfire. Dark clouds rolled, obscuring the Cannibal's presence and scent.

Vermithor's vertical pupils were cold as it scanned the dark clouds below, soaring higher into the moonlight.

Rumble—

The dark clouds churned, ghostly green fire flickering in three directions, then disappearing into the gloom. Viserys pointed out the Dragonfire's origin one by one, seizing the moment to command Vermithor.

He understood his eldest son's strategy: use the chaos to help tame Vermithor while the dragon regained his senses.

After a while, the dark clouds calmed and calm returned.

"Roar..."

Vermithor flapped its wide bronze wings and let out a low, reluctant roar. It sensed that the Cannibal had fled.

"Vermithor, don't give chase. We all need rest now."

Exhausted and drenched in sweat, Viserys collapsed onto the dragon's back, putting any thought of pursuit to rest. The harrowing ordeal had drained him, leaving the bruised king unwilling to move a muscle.

"Roar..."

Vermithor shook its head in irritation but complied, hovering obediently in mid-air.

"Oh, I feel your frustration."

Viserys laughed bitterly, communicating with Vermithor while gazing at the bright moon.

As his eyes grew hazy, an old man's silhouette seemed to appear on the moon.

"Grandfather," Viserys whispered, his voice choked with emotion. "I inherited the Iron Throne from you, but I've been anxious and restless, unable to adapt."

The Iron Throne, a chair of swords, only hurt him.

"Roar..."

Sensing its rider's sorrow, Vermithor growled softly.

"Don't worry, I'm just not used to flying so high."

Viserys soothed Vermithor and muttered, "Grandfather, after all these years, I have once again inherited your dragon."

Casting aside his distractions, Viserys prayed silently, "May you and Vermithor grant me strength and resolve."

"Roar!"

Vermithor seemed to understand, gazing at the bright moon and stretching its neck to let out a resonant roar. The dragon's emotions mirrored those of its rider.

Man and dragon soared slowly, in serene unison.

Viserys panted slightly, lying calmly on Vermithor's back, basking in the moonlight.

This scene reminded him of riding Balerion's dragon many years ago. The difference was that his once youthful face was now lined with age, and his status had changed from prince to king.

Yet one thing remained the same.

The vigor of his youth resurfaced, and his tired face now bore a few more determined lines.

Chapter 318: Red Comet!

The dragon fight ended abruptly, and Rhaegar guided the Cannibal away from the battlefield.

Dragonmont.

Vermithor still soared through the night sky while the Cannibal descended swiftly, using the shadows to blend into the rugged terrain.

"Roar--"

The Cannibal landed, twisting its hideous head to roar angrily at its rider.

Rhaegar raised a hand to shield himself from the foul wind and said helplessly, "Hey! Take it easy."

Sharing a bond, he sensed the Cannibal's annoyance and its urge to unleash Dragonfire on him.

"I'm really sorry, but we can't kill each other."

As the roar subsided, Rhaegar stripped off his dragon-saliva-stained black robe and tossed out two massive chunks of dried sea monster meat.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal's throat rumbled with a low growl as it nonchalantly picked up the jerky and swallowed it.

"Good one partner," Rhaegar praised, rubbing its pitch-black scales.

The Cannibal tossed its head, lying down in annoyance, unwilling to engage with its rider.

Rhaegar chuckled, a hint of curiosity forming in his mind. The Cannibal seemed particularly interested in sea monster meat, having devoured most of the remains from the Smoking Sea.

Shortly after, a massive dragon figure emerged from Dragonmont.

The Cannibal snapped its head up, green vertical pupils flickering as it stared at the dragon overhead.

"Roar..."

The dragon roared, flapped its wings, and descended, sniffing around.

It soon landed on a nearby hill, its gaze fixed on them.

Rhaegar, half-squatting on the dragon's back, observed the approaching dragon.

Green scales covered its body, silver-white wings, slender curved horns, and a powerful physique...

"Silverwing?" Rhaegar exclaimed.

Silverwing, as old as Vermithor, Cannibal, and Dreamfyre, had once belonged to Good Queen Alysanne Targaryen. It was large, slightly smaller than Vermithor but more massive than Dreamfyre.

Beneath its fierce appearance, Silverwing had the most docile temperament among the dragons.

"Roar..."

Silverwing glared at Cannibal with hostility, spreading its silver-white wings wide and issuing a sharp, challenging roar.

It had been awakened by its mate's battle with Cannibal.

"Roar--"

Provoked, the Cannibal responded with a warning roar.

The two dragons stared each other down across the mountain, locked in an intense standoff.

Seeing this, Rhaegar sighed, sensing trouble.

Silverwing's arrival was ill-timed, coinciding with the Cannibal's rage.

After a moment of silence, Rhaegar patted the dragon's back and commanded, "Go, Cannibal. Teach it a lesson."

He couldn't keep suppressing the Cannibal's nature and stifling its hunger for combat.

Choosing a worthy opponent would strengthen the bond between man and dragon.

"Roar--"

Cannibal roared with excitement, launching into the air with powerful strides, rushing toward Silverwing like a black meteor.

It wasn't necessary for it to eat other dragons, but the ultimate thrill of the hunt was irreplaceable. The terrified screams of its prey made its blood run cold with exhilaration.

"Roar..."

Seeing the pitch-black dragon charging, Silverwing roared angrily, unleashing a torrent of orange Dragonfire.

Bang...

The exuberant Cannibal didn't bother to dodge, charging headfirst into the Dragonfire, its green vertical pupils gleaming with cruelty.

Pfft--

In an instant, Cannibal reached Silverwing, biting down on its left shoulder blade and tearing out hot dragon blood.

Silverwing roared in pain, flapping its wings to knock Cannibal's head aside, and bit into its opponent's exposed neck.

"Roar--"

Cannibal dodged nimbly, thrusting its feet into Silverwing's abdomen, and unleashed a gush of eerie green Dragonfire.

The Dragonfire blasted Silverwing's head, causing it to roar in agony. It stretched its neck to avoid the flames, then bit back at Cannibal's right leg in a frenzy.

"Roar..."

The two dragons cried out in pain, launching into an even more frantic struggle.

In a short time, Cannibal was covered in bruises, its hot dragon blood splashing onto the steep mountain peaks. Fortunately, the injuries were mostly superficial, tearing through scales but not piercing the abdomen or breaking wings.

In contrast, Silverwing fared much worse.

After the chaotic fight, Silverwing was no match for the larger and more ferocious Cannibal. Its neck was missing a chunk of flesh, its left shoulder blade was shattered, and a deep gash marred its abdomen.

Rhaegar watched in silence from the sidelines.

"Roar--"

Cannibal bit into Silverwing's neck again, pinning it down and shaking its head madly to tear the flesh.

Silverwing roared miserably, struggling with all its might, its claws digging into Cannibal's abdomen, piercing the scales.

Only then did Rhaegar finally speak, "Cannibal, that's enough!"

Cannibal's biting action halted. It quickly tore off a piece of flesh and swallowed it before breaking free from Silverwing's claws to spread its wings and fly up.

Though a hard-fought tussle was painful, it had to protect its rider and avoid serious injuries. For a wild dragon, serious injury was tantamount to waiting for death.

"Roar..."

Silverwing roared in shock and anger, attempting to lift off despite its injuries. However, the damage was too severe, and its flight was unsteady, exacerbating its wounds and causing more blood to flow.

"Cannibal, let's go!"

Rhaegar's eyes were downcast as he guided Cannibal away. The fierce dragon had torn two pieces of Silverwing's flesh and blood, drinking deeply of its rival's lifeblood.

He sensed that each time Cannibal's mouth tasted blood, its own blood flowed faster and the fire magic within it surged even more.

The Cannibal, now hyperactive, seemed driven by an insatiable desire to devour more dragon meat and blood to satisfy its inexplicable greed.

"Eating dragons accelerates the Cannibal's growth," Rhaegar concluded calmly. Even though the feeling was subtle, he was certain.

Dragons were the pinnacle of magical creatures, and their scales, flesh, and bones contained varying degrees of fire magic.

Cannibal's rapid growth was likely due to its diet of stolen dragon eggs and hunted young dragons.

Rumble-

Suddenly, a rumble came from the sky, signaling something strange was happening.

"Roar..."

Cannibal let out a low, guttural roar, raising his head with alert intensity. Its green, vertical pupils reflected a hint of madness.

Rhaegar looked up as well, tousling his unkempt silver hair as he gazed at the sky.

The dark clouds parted to reveal the bright moon. Suddenly, a massive, blood-red meteor streaked across the sky, cutting through the night.

The meteor was enormous, its bright red color contrasting sharply with the darkness, trailing a long, fiery trail.

"What is that?" Rhaegar's heartbeat quickened, and he stared wide-eyed in awe.

The red meteor moved quickly, its trajectory long and fiery. Its size far exceeded that of ordinary meteors, resembling a small rising sun.

Rhaegar stood up on the dragon's back, his eyes fixed on the meteor as it disappeared into the distance.

He had heard of meteors before, and the blade of the Truefyre was also forged from some meteorite iron. But this huge, fiery red meteor was beyond his comprehension.

"Roar-"

Cannibal roared, spreading its wide, pitch-black wings and spewing eerie green Dragonfire.

It sensed a subtle shift in the world around it.

"Roar..."

"Roar..."

"Roar..."

Not only Cannibal but also Silverwing, injured and grounded, let out a roar, struggling to fly back to its nest.

The four dragons near Dragonstone Island roared in unison, their attention drawn to the red meteor.

From the direction of Driftmark Island, dragon roars echoed.

Vhagar awoke from its slumber, its ancient eyes fixed on the red meteor, releasing a long, deep roar.

Meleys and Sea Smoke emerged from their nests, joining the chorus of dragon roars.

In King's Landing, the dragons in the Dragonpit—Caraxes, Stormcloud—roared in response.

At the Dragon Nest of the Isle of Faces, Grey Ghost, hidden in the clouds, stopped fishing and roared.

Each dragon, startled by the red meteor, roared with various emotions.

They all sensed an unfamiliar element added to their world.

Back on Cannibal's spine, Rhaegar tilted his head back, closing his eyes, his face flushed as he took deep breaths.

He felt an intense heat, hotter than anything he had felt before.

His blood surged faster, rushing into the palm of his right hand. Rhaegar instinctively summoned his magic.

Zira!

A flame ignited in his palm, growing from a small spark to a blazing fire that engulfed his sleeve.

Pfft...

The flames contracted, forming a fireball the size of a faceplate.

Rhaegar's heart raced, and he muttered in disbelief, "The magic tide!"

The magic within him felt thicker, as if a stone had been thrown into still water, creating gentle waves.

"Cannibal, let's return to the castle!"

Rhaegar, filled with questions, wanted to find his family.

"Roar--"

Cannibal roared, abandoning any thought of chasing Silverwing, and soared into the night sky.

...

Under the night sky, an arrogant dragon roar echoed, accompanied by the heavy thumping of a dragon's tail slapping the ground.

"What's the rush? I'm working, aren't I?" A teenager shouted in frustration, a feeling of helplessness evident in his voice.

Outside the town of Dragonstone Island, at a farmhouse that raised livestock, a family of three peered intently through their old wooden door at the commotion outside.

A silver-haired, half-grown boy was yelling and running around a dirty goat pen, driving away a dozen goats. Finally, he grabbed a large goat and, with considerable effort, pushed it outside. "Come on, go sacrifice yourself to that evil dragon," he muttered.

"Baa~~" The goat screamed in terror, bouncing up and down. The boy, using all his strength, dragged the goat out of the courtyard.

"Roar..." An ugly, brown mud-colored dragon watched from the courtyard, one huge claw stomping on the dirt wall. It spread its brown wings, swaying them arrogantly as if to emphasize its stature.

With great effort, Aemond dragged the goat by one leg toward the dragon and yelled, "Eat! You thief!"

He felt humiliated, having to steal a goat in front of everyone.

"Roar..." The dragon glanced at him in disdain. Its dragon breath sprayed scattered brown Dragonfire, roasting the struggling goat into charcoal.

The dragon's tail flicked the silver-haired boy aside as it lowered its head to devour the roasted goat.

"Hiccup~~" Sheepstealer burped and lazily prostrated himself on the ground, its cunning vertical pupils fixed on the silver-haired boy. Despite the boy's slow pace, the dragon appreciated his admiring gaze.

"This asshole!!!" Aemond clenched his fists in indignation, glaring up at the smug Sheepstealer. If it weren't for this ugly dragon abducting him, he would already be on his way to taming Silverwing.

Chapter 319: Groups of Dragons Dancing Together

"Roar..."

Sheepstealer's guttural roar echoed through the cave. The dragon's vertical pupils eyed the silver-haired boy, Aemond, with a mixture of curiosity and challenge. The dragon's slender body swayed, its thick, brown-scaled horns carving deep furrows in the ground.

Aemond, feeling a mix of frustration and disappointment, shouted indignantly, "If you're not going to let me tame you, just leave! Don't waste my time!"

He longed for a powerful, majestic dragon. Missing out on Vermithor was a blow, and now he had to deal with this unruly beast. He turned away, his heart heavy with the thought of his mother's scolding and Aegon's ridicule.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer's roar followed Aemond's retreating figure, the dragon's head tilting in curiosity and perhaps reflection. Though it did not understand the boy's words, the dragon sensed his disappointment.

As Aemond walked away, he muttered, "Vermithor is gone, but Silverwing is still in Dragonmont..."

His thoughts were dark, matching the darkness of the night. The future seemed bleak and uncertain.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer roared again, this time accompanied by a gust of wind from his flapping wings. Aemond stumbled, almost falling as the dragon's breath brushed against him.

"Sheepstealer!" Aemond cursed, but before he could react, his green cloak was torn. He was lifted from the ground, dangling helplessly.

Aemond turned in panic to see Sheepstealer's massive form above him. The dragon gripped his cloak with its fangs, and its great brown wings unfolded.

"Sheepstealer, stop!" Aemond shouted, fear in his voice.

The dragon's vertical pupils flashed with a hint of mischief as it flung Aemond onto its back. Sheepstealer, a dragon of over seventy years of wildness, reveled in the boy's fiery gaze, something it hadn't encountered before.

"Sheepstealer, you villain, put me down!" Aemond yelled, his head spinning as he landed heavily on the dragon's back.

Sheepstealer's robust appearance belied its unique body structure. Unlike typical dragons with strong muscles beneath their scales, Sheepstealer's body was thin and covered in a rough cuticle mixed with mud, forming a lumpy, protective shell.

"Roar..." Uninterested in Aemond's words, Sheepstealer spread its wings, ready to fly. A fiery red meteor streaked across the night sky and caught the dragon's attention. Its vertical pupils swivelled, and it turned toward the black stone mountain inhabited by humans, sensing the presence of other dragons.

"Sheepstealer, where are you taking me?" Aemond shouted, fear gripping his heart as he clung to the dragon's muddy scales.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer responded with another roar, his body rising and falling, deliberately shaking Aemond on his back. The dragon's intent was clear - it had chosen its new rider, and the boy would have to prove himself worthy.

...

On the other side, a red meteor streaked across the sky, startling Vermithor as he hovered above the clouds.

Viserys felt Vermithor's agitation and climbed up, trying his best to calm the dragon. "It's just a meteor. Let's get back to the castle first."

He had successfully tamed Vermithor, and it was time to return to his family.

"Roar..."

Vermithor let out a low, muffled roar before obediently descending through the clouds toward Dragonstone Castle.

With remarkable speed, the dragon reached its destination in no time, carrying its rider with ease.

"Roar!"

Vermithor roared triumphantly, circling the castle twice before slowly landing in a clearing by the cliffside.

The bronze beast's roar caused a great commotion.

People inside the Stone Drum Tower ran out to the cliffside near the coast. Everyone knew someone had tamed Vermithor, but it was unclear if the rider was Viserys, Aemond, or another dragon rider.

"Roar..."

Vermithor crouched, its icy vertical pupils scanning the crowd.

"Vermithor, they are my family," Viserys reassured the dragon, smiling softly.

He rubbed the dragon's rough, bronze-colored scales a few times before carefully climbing down.

"Viserys, you tamed a dragon!"

Alicent, dressed in green, was the first to reach her husband, staring timidly at the bronze dragon.

Raised as a lady, she had always disliked dangerous dragons. Even as a teenager, she had politely declined Rhaenyra's invitations to ride Syrax.

Soon, Rhaenyra, Daemon, and the others arrived, looking at Vermithor in astonishment.

No one had expected the seemingly frail Viserys to tame such a formidable beast.

"Alicent, you should be proud of me," Viserys said proudly, stepping forward to embrace his wife.

This night had been more thrilling than all the previous decades of his life combined.

Alicent, bewildered and wanting to offer tenderness but unsure how, said, "Viserys, you smell terrible."

She immediately regretted her words, realizing she had spoken without thinking.

Viserys didn't take offense. He lowered his head, sniffed himself, and feigned disgust. "I'm covered in sweat and dragon stench."

He noticed his brother Daemon and a group of children approaching.

Patting his wife's back, Viserys released his embrace and asked playfully, "Do I really smell that bad?"

"Hahaha!"

He burst out laughing, enjoying the moment.

Rhaenyra rolled her eyes affectionately and stepped forward to embrace her father. "Father, congratulations."

She had been worried about his safety, but now she was genuinely happy for him. Not just because he had tamed Vermithor, but because of the pure joy in his laughter.

Daemon led his two daughters forward, a complex expression on his face. "Brother, should I say it's an honor for the family to see you ride a dragon again?"

"Perhaps," Viserys replied, his smile unwavering.

"Roar—"

A deep dragon roar echoed from afar as a black dragon's shadow soared above the castle, weaving through the rolling clouds.

"Roar..."

Vermithor's eyes gleamed fiercely, its dragon's maw curling as it gazed into the night.

"Vermithor, the fight is over," Viserys spoke soothingly, his voice calm and firm.

He understood Vermithor's troubled heart, a raging, irritable beast. Before tonight, he had seen the dragon as an untameable force, but now he sought to calm him, to awaken its senses.

Vermithor looked at Viserys, suppressing his anger and closing his eyes as if to ignore the world.

"Roar..."

Another sharp roar echoed from the direction of the long stone bridge steps.

Boom!

Cannibal was the first to land, its thick feet stamping steadily on the cliffside lawn, wings folding against the gusts.

"Roar!"

"Roar..."

"Roar..."

The four dragons near the castle roared in panic, but instead of fleeing, they hovered, watching Cannibal and Vermithor warily.

Cannibal landed on the southern edge of the cliff, while Vermithor lay to the north. The two dragons were separated by a substantial distance, maintaining a tense standoff.

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre flapped its light blue wings and tentatively approached Vermithor. Seeing no response, Dreamfyre cautiously landed nearby, its eyes locked on Cannibal.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre, anxious, circled once before landing on the opposite side of Vermithor, keeping its distance from Cannibal.

Cannibal's green eyes swept over the two dragons with contempt.

"Cannibal, put me down," Rhaegar patted its scales in amusement and climbed down a soft ladder.

As his feet touched the ground, the golden-scaled Syrax approached slowly, settling behind Cannibal at a safe distance. Despite their differences, these two dragons had grown accustomed to each other's presence.

Above, only Tessarion continued to circle, roaring but hesitant to land. The arrival of Vermithor had disrupted Cannibal's dominance. The two dragons now divided the area, with Dreamfyre and Sunfyre keeping their distance from Cannibal.

Tessarion, young and unfamiliar with both sides, remained alone and excluded.

"Roar..."

A sharp roar once again came from the stone bridge steps, and a brown, mud-colored dragon slowly flew in, adding to the tension of the night.

Chapter 320: Sheepstealer vs Sunfyre

"Idiot, what the hell are you doing!?"

The moment the ugly dragon appeared, a familiar scolding rang out.

"Aemond?" Alicent's eyes widened in astonishment as she searched for her child. When Rhaegar executed Grand Maester Mellos, Aemond was believed to be hiding in his room, but now he was on the back of a wild dragon.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer threw back its head and roared, its dry body twisting and spinning mid-air to shake off the noisy silver-haired boy on its back.

On the edge of the cliff, Rhaenyra and Viserys stood hand in hand, watching the spectacle.

"My boy, thanks to you tonight," Viserys said, looking at his eldest son with relief. If it wasn't for Rhaegar's timely intervention with his dragon, taming Vermithor would have been much harder.

"Father, things are far from over," Rhaegar replied, glancing meaningfully at Sheepstealer in mid-air. "It looks like our family's dragon riders are about to increase again."

"Aemond is a good boy, tough and brave," Viserys said with a smile. All six of his children had become dragon riders, a point of pride for him. Even during his grandfather Jaehaerys's time, only three of thirteen children became dragon riders.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer playfully flew over the cliff edge, his vertical pupils scrutinizing Cannibal and Vermithor, hovering as if in no hurry to land.

Aemond, in a sorry state on Sheepstealer's back, shouted with his eyes closed, "Stupid dragon, put me down!!!" His shawl-length hair covered his cheeks, and there was nothing left in his stomach to vomit.

Hearing her child's shouts, Alicent was instantly alarmed and called out eagerly, "Aemond, are you okay?!"

Aemond looked up at the sound, ruffled his messy hair, and realized that his father, mother, and siblings were all watching from below. Mortified, he covered his face and yelled, "Damn it, you're all seeing this!"

At that moment, Alicent's shocked and angry voice came from below, "Aemond! Who allowed you to climb onto the back of a wild dragon?"

Aemond said nothing, lying on Sheepstealer's back and pretending to be dead.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer glanced back at him and let out a roar of annoyance. If you want to ride, you have to be brave, not cower.

Confirming that the two adult dragons below did not show any hostility, Sheepstealer flapped his wings and landed, stopping in the open space between them.

"Roar..." Vermithor glanced at them with his vertical pupils before turning away disinterestedly.

On the other side, Cannibal changed his posture and lazily closed his eyes, finding the sight redundant. A rotten dragon that only poached livestock wasn't worth his attention.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer, oblivious, spread his wings and struck a majestic pose among the group of dragons. Born wild, he hadn't had much contact with other dragons and considered his physique quite impressive.

"Stupid dragon, put me down or I'll let Cannibal eat you!" Aemond hung helplessly from Sheepstealer's neck, warning sharply and angrily. He swore he was really close to falling.

"Oh, gods."

Viserys paled and tried to run over to catch his third son.

Rhaegar reached out to stop him and said seriously, "Don't worry. Since the Sheepstealer let Aemond ride on its back, he's in no danger."

Although the relationship between Aemond and the Sheepstealer looked strange and not quite harmonious, a dragon was a dragon. Once it accepted a rider, it would do everything in its power to protect them.

"Roar..."

After shaking for a while and seeing that no other dragon paid attention to it, the Sheepstealer roared resentfully and lay down on the ground.

Aemond climbed off the dragon's back with limp arms and legs, staggering and dry-heaving.

"Aemond!" Alicent quickly stepped forward to check on her son.

"I'm fine," Aemond said, spitting out a mouthful of acid. He then amended, "Should be fine."

Rhaegar approached and smiled. "Aemond, congratulations on taming an adult dragon."

He looked at the indifferent Sheepstealer and didn't say anything to dampen Aemond's spirits. Despite its poor appearance, the Sheepstealer was a real dragon, with potential not inferior to Caraxes or Meleys.

"Aemond, you actually did tame a dragon!" Aegon exclaimed, strutting forward.

Aemond glanced at him and then looked away in silence. He didn't want to ride an ugly, rotten dragon and had been forced into the situation by the Sheepstealer.

Aegon squeezed past the worried Alicent and put both hands on Aemond's shoulders. "My dear old brother, why aren't you happy at all?"

"Aegon, it's not my dragon. I had planned to tame Vermithor or Silverwing," Aemond said, covering his face in frustration.

"Don't say that. I see it cares for you," Aegon replied, wrapping his arm around Aemond's shoulders and forcing him to look at the Sheepstealer. He then added, "Look, we've both got dragons."

He waved at Sunfyre in the distance, suppressing a laugh. "Sunfyre, come over and let me brother see you!"

"Aegon, what do you want?" Alicent's face sank slightly.

Aegon, full of concern, held Aemond firmly and said calmly, "We are both dragon riders so let's compare our dragons."

"Roar..."

Sunfyre roared, seeing the Sheepstealer comfortably settled in the center. He flapped his wings and flew over.

Aegon pointed at the landed Sunfyre and asked in an exaggerated manner, "Aemond, see these golden scales and pale pink wing membranes?"

"Yes, it's beautiful," Aemond responded, breathless.

He had guessed what Aegon was up to.

"That's right, a gorgeous golden dragon! The maesters of the Citadel say that Sunfyre is the most majestic and beautiful dragon ever!"

Aegon's words brimmed with pride. He then twisted his head to point at the wagging tail of the Sheepstealer and pretended to comment with admiration, "Aemond, you are truly my brother, taming dragons but seeking the other extreme, choosing this one..."

"Oh, no. I mean, that dragon looks like a piece of shit!"

As he spoke his true thoughts, Aegon could no longer hold back his laughter. Laughing uproariously, he slapped Aemond's shoulder recklessly. "Hahaha, a Shit Dragon!"

Aegon's tears nearly came out from laughing so hard, completely disregarding his brother's feelings.

"Aegon, put away your useless mockery. Your brother is lucky to be back safe and sound!" Alicent, their mother, could not stand to hear it and pushed the debonair Aegon away, sternly admonishing him with a face full of anger.

"Mother, it was just a little joke between brothers," Aegon defended himself indifferently.

"You! ..." Alicent was furious.

"Mother, forget it," Aemond interrupted in a low voice. "I will find a real dragon and prove myself to everyone."

"Don't be silly, you should be happy to have any dragon looking at you," Aegon couldn't stop snickering, inserting another knife.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre, seeing the ugly Sheepstealer, raised its head condescendingly, flaunting its wings and flapping them.

With both Aegon and Sunfyre taunting him, Aemond's fragile resolve shattered. His face contorted with anger as he pushed Aegon away, roaring, "Aegon! It's not my dragon, and I will tame one that fits my status!"

The conflict escalated rapidly, taking everyone by surprise. Rhaegar and the others were still on the sidelines when the brothers erupted into a full-blown fight.

"You bastard, how dare you push me!" Aegon nearly fell over, then backhandedly yanked on Aemond's collar, glaring. "You came back riding this rotten dragon, and it's your dragon."

"So what? That's no reason for you to mock me endlessly!" Aemond shot back without showing any weakness.

"There's nothing unspeakable in the world," Aegon sneered.

"Aegon, release your brother," Alicent commanded.

"Let go of Aemond..." Helaena and young Daeron, who had been close by, were the first to intervene, one shielding Aemond and the other trying to shove Aegon's leg. The altercation escalated instantly.

"Roar..."

Seeing that its rider was surrounded, Sunfyre's eyes showed a fierce light as it gradually bared its fangs.

"Aegon, you've been mocking me. You should apologize!"

"I'm just telling the truth. It is you, the coward, who lies to yourself."

"....."

The chaos continued as Aegon and Aemond turned on each other, pushing and shoving violently.

"Aegon, Aemond, stop this at once!" Viserys rushed over, trying to separate his two sons.

But the brothers were too consumed by their quarrel to heed his words.

"Roar..."

The commotion drew the Sheepstealer's attention. The ragged dragon cocked his head, looking east and west in surprise.

Was the silver-haired child being held hostage?

"Roar..."

Sunfyre crouched low, its vertical pupils cold as it issued a warning growl.

The Sheepstealer twisted its head, locking eyes with the golden dragon.

"Aegon, you're just a bully who picks on the weak," Aemond spat, his eyes red from the rough shoves.

"So what? The stronger is always right," Aegon replied, deliberately goading him.

"You'll regret this!" Aemond hissed.

"Roar....."

As soon as the words left his mouth, a sharp dragon roar split the air, followed by a gust of wind and a cloud of dust.

Seizing the moment, the Sheepstealer pounced on Sunfyre without warning, its jaws clamping ruthlessly around the golden dragon's neck.

"Roar....."

Sunfyre, caught off guard, roared in fury. It struggled fiercely, sinking its teeth into the Sheepstealer's collarbone, tearing at the mud-encrusted scales.

There was a loud crack.

A large chunk of the Sheepstealer's mud-like cuticle was bitten off, revealing intact brown scales beneath.

Pfft...

The Sheepstealer retaliated swiftly, its fangs closing to tear a small piece of flesh. Its thick brown wings pummeled Sunfyre's skull, and it managed to bite into a section of the golden dragon's lower ribs.

With lightning speed, the two dragons, one brown and one gold, became locked in a frantic tussle.

The Sheepstealer, much older and significantly larger, used its massive body to press Sunfyre into the ground, the size difference between them more than double.