

G.O Thrones 341

Chapter 341: Internal Factors of House Targaryen

Uncle and nephew left the high platform one by one, causing a shift in the seating arrangement.

Rhaenyra, lifting the hem of her skirt, approached Laena. The two women began to chat and share pastries.

"Rhaenyra, your appetite has grown lately," Laena remarked, her smile reflecting her amazement. She had never seen her best friend eat so quickly, except when cake was involved.

Satisfied, Rhaenyra narrowed her eyes and replied, "I skipped breakfast," a little lie to retain respect

Baela, one of Laena's twins, quickly exposed her, saying, "The princess often gets hungry and scolds cousin."

The "cousin" referred to Rhaegar, as Targaryens typically deferred to paternal relationships.

"Baela!" Rhaenyra cried, covering her face. She had been betrayed by her adopted daughter.

Laena patted her daughter gently on the head and asked worriedly, "Rhaenyra, if you're constantly hungry and anxious, perhaps you should see a maester."

"Orwyle said there's nothing wrong," Rhaenyra shrugged, taking a small sip of the Arbor Island's golden wine. She was confident in her health.

Laena's red lips curved into a knowing smile as she stroked her own swollen belly. "When was the last time you and Rhaegar were intimate?" she asked suggestively.

Rhaenyra's eyes flickered with disappointment. "The Maester said I wasn't experiencing pregnancy symptoms."

"The Maester isn't a woman!" Laena countered, sharing her experience. "The first trimester is very unstable, and reactions vary greatly."

Laena spoke in detail, explaining everything from carrying twins to her current pregnancy. Rhaenyra listened in silence, realizing she hadn't had her period this month. Usually gentle with Rhaegar, her recent prolonged bad temper was unusual.

Her heart pounding, Rhaenyra subconsciously took a large sip of wine. The alcohol's strong flavor triggered a rush of nausea.

"Vom~~"

A wave of nausea hit Rhaenyra. She turned away, covering her chest as she dry-heaved.

"Princess!" Baela and Rhaena were startled and gathered around their foster mother.

"I'm fine...vomit..." Rhaenyra managed to say before she heaved again.

The thought of a possible pregnancy made her body react instinctively.

Laena's face lit up with joy. She grabbed her friend's hand excitedly. "Look, Rhaenyra! There really might be a baby."

As someone currently pregnant herself, Laena's intuition told her that Rhaenyra was expecting.

Rhaenyra put her hands on her still-flat belly, her mind blank. The sudden realization was overwhelming.

...

On the martial arts field, Rhaegar selected a white warhorse and began practicing with a wooden lance. Around him, the competitors in the prep area bustled about, eager to show off their skills. Amid the hustle and bustle, Daemon surveyed a couple of men as if judging prey: Ser Cole and two Baratheon bastards.

Sensing his nephew's gaze, Daemon rode over and lightly suggested, "Shall we race to see who can eliminate more contestants?"

Rhaegar politely declined, "Let's give the knights their chance; that's what they're here for."

Daemon's sharp eyes narrowed as he probed further, "Are you interested in going beyond the Narrow Sea?"

A few years earlier, a letter from his brother Viserys had warned Daemon against private raids on the Triarchy's ships. Though he had heeded the warning, Valyrian pirates had since taken over the raids and imposed heavy taxes. Daemon was certain that his nephew understood his intentions.

Rhaegar did. He had informants among the Stepstones garrison and connections to the three Archons of Volantis that provided a steady stream of information.

"Uncle, this is not the time to attack the Triarchy," Rhaegar said, suppressing a smile. He firmly believed that wars of aggression across the seas were unwise. The strongest navy in Westeros belonged to House Velaryon, and many dragonriders had close ties to the Sea Snake.

A royal war effort would be severely limited by naval power. Even if they conquered the Triarchy, managing the rewards and governance of the city-states would strain the crown, as history had shown with Aegon the Conqueror's invasion of Dorne.

Daemon's face darkened as he replied, "The Triarchy was originally colonized by the Valyrians. It is only right that we reclaim our territory."

"That is not for me to decide," Rhaegar replied. "You can try to discuss it with the Small Council." Then he rode his white horse into the field.

While Rhaegar desired to conquer the Triarchy and expand its territory, he understood that the Seven Kingdoms had enjoyed years of peace. The ongoing conflict in the disputed lands had already frayed too many nerves, making any new invasion across the Narrow Sea impractical. Despite their dragons, the Targaryens were internally divided into four distinct factions.

First was the Greens, made up of Alicent's children and backed by the powerful Hightower House. Though Aegon's behavior was problematic, Helaena, Aemond, and Daeron maintained close ties with Rhaegar, but the Green Faction's influence was undeniable. Rhaegar knew he had to break their unity to avoid future conflict.

Opposing them was the Black Party, or the "orthodox" faction. Rhaenyra and Rhaegar, as the eldest children of Queen Aemma, naturally had inheritance claims under Westerosi law.

They controlled vast territories such as Harrenhal, Dragonstone, and much of the Prince's Palace, with numerous followers and influential allies such as Jeyne Arryn and Lord Tully.

Their father, King Viserys, was still in his prime, ensuring a smooth transition of power.

Outside of these two major factions were Daemon and House Velaryon. Daemon, with his dragon Caraxes, had great leadership appeal and war experience. His wife, Laena, had Vhagar, and their twins had already hatched dragon eggs.

Though they appeared to be a small faction, relying on royal and Velaryon support, Daemon's lineage made him a significant player. The Velaryons, under the Sea Snake, possessed considerable wealth and military power, including half of the kingdom's navy.

Though the Sea Snake's power could rival Rhaegar's, he had no intention of opposing him. The Targaryens' interconnected bloodlines ensured their alliances remained firm. Rhaenys, being the Master of Dragons, had her daughter married to Daemon and her granddaughters raised by Rhaenyra, linking the two families by blood.

The Sea Snake and the Daemon may be close, but each had their own agenda, just like Rhaegar is close to several of his younger siblings.

In this intricate web of alliances and power, Rhaegar recognized that while the Targaryens had more than a dozen dragons, internal divisions and external pressures made any aggressive expansion a complex and delicate matter.

...

The Knight Duels had officially begun.

Daemon faced off against a knight from House Tully. Rhaegar watched from afar, his mind filled with thoughts of the future.

Families, wars, divisions, governance...

His father, Viserys, may not have been a great king, but he had been a steady one. Under his reign, the treasury was full, the people were content, and a strong foundation was laid for future generations.

In terms of family, Viserys had fathered six children, including four male heirs—an advantage even over King Jaehaerys, who had only three sons.

"Vaegon the Dragonless," Rhaegar murmured softly.

A large, thriving family was a blessing, but it also brought complexity. Among King Jaehaerys's sons, Aemon and Baelon had a close bond, serving as king and Hand of the King respectively, while Vaegon renounced his inheritance to become a maester in Oldtown. The balance seemed perfect, yet none of them ascended the Iron Throne.

In Rhaegar's generation, he was the main line, with his uncle Daemon, Aegon and his brothers forming the branches. The Targaryens were a chaotic family, and all of them were dragonriders. Keeping them in King's Landing without purpose was troublesome, but sending them away could also incite chaos.

Rhaegar rubbed his brow, feeling a headache coming on. "War and division..."

When internal problems afflict a realm, external pressure is often the best remedy.

...

Ding!

The referee struck the gong, signaling the end of the duel.

Daemon, clad in black armor with a fluttering crimson cape, had effortlessly defeated his opponent in two rounds. As he left the arena, the referee turned to the crowd and exclaimed, "Next, please welcome Prince Rhaegar of House Targaryen and Ser Gwayne, eldest son of Lord Otto, Master of Civil Affairs!"

As his focus returned, Rhaegar's eyes lost their earlier distraction. He mounted his white horse and entered the arena, aware that idle thoughts were futile. True power lay in action.

If Daemon wanted war, he would have to convince the Small Council and their father, King Viserys. As the Heir Prince, Rhaegar had his own responsibilities: producing an heir, changing the perception of the royal family's weakness, and controlling the dragons and their eggs.

"Hyah!" Rhaegar spurred his horse to one end of the fence and looked at his opponent on the other side - a slender knight in silver armor bearing the sigil of House Hightower.

"Otto's son," Rhaegar murmured, glancing sideways at the silent Otto on the raised platform. Otto was a widower with an eldest son, Gwayne, and a daughter, Alicent, by his late wife.

On the raised platform, Viserys watched with interest, glancing from side to side at his wife and Otto. "Look, Rhaegar's fighting Gwayne," he remarked with a laugh.

Alicent smiled helplessly and walked over to Rhaenyra, who was stretched out over the fence watching the duel. Her brother had a few tricks up his sleeve, but not many.

Otto's face remained calm as he matched the king's chatter and laughter, though he could not hide his concern. His foolish brother had disrupted their plans, and now, as things began to unravel, Otto had to be prepared for a counterattack from both the Heir Prince and the Hand of the King, Lyonel Strong.

Chapter 342: Wild Dragon's Unusual Features

On the Martial Arts Field

Rhaegar's expression remained calm as he tugged at the reins of his white stallion, preparing for the match. At the other end, Gwayne buckled his top armor and patted the bay mare beneath him. He had deliberately chosen a mare in heat to distract and destabilize Rhaegar's stallion.

Dang!

The gong sounded and the knights' duel began.

"Hyah!" Rhaegar yelled, urging his horse forward. The white stallion raced ahead, his temper growing increasingly restless.

As the two warhorses drew closer, Rhaegar raised his spear and steadied his shield, aiming to take his opponent down with a single blow.

"Phew~~" The white stallion whinnied and swayed momentarily, breaking Rhaegar's rhythm.

Bang!

The riding spears collided, sending a spray of wood shavings into the air. Rhaegar glanced back to see his opponent galloping away, unsteady but still on horseback. Gwayne's spear had struck with surprising force, aimed directly at Rhaegar's chest. Rhaegar's quick reaction had shattered Gwayne's spear, but the impact was undeniable.

His stallion came to a halt at the end of the fence, its hooves kicking the ground restlessly. Rhaegar noticed the horse licking its wet nose - a clear sign of courtship. His gaze shifted to Gwayne's mare, panting and foaming at the mouth.

Understanding the ruse, Rhaegar grinned coldly. "Such underhanded tactics," he muttered, switching to a new lance. His eyes flicked to Alicent and Otto on the high platform, realizing they were using every trick in the book.

"Then let's see how you handle this," he murmured, his resolve hardening.

The second attack began.

Gwayne's expression, hidden beneath his helmet, was one of intense concentration. He had been a member of the City Watch since 111 AC and now served as its second-in-command. With Harwin Strong injured and sidelined for over a year, Gwayne saw this tournament as his chance to earn glory and possibly remove the "Second" from his title.

"Hyah!"

Gwayne shouted, urging his scarlet horse forward. He aimed his lance at the Prince's shoulder armor, confident and unafraid. His father was a royal adviserr and his sister was the queen, so offending the Heir Prince in the tourney seemed like a small risk.

"Hyah!"

Rhaegar's eyes narrowed and his white horse charged forward. The horse, untamed and wild, seemed to charge of its own accord, but Rhaegar didn't care. A Targaryen who had tamed dragons from a young age had little to fear from a spirited horse.

Within moments, the red and white horses collided. Gwayne's eyes lit up with excitement. He leaned forward, his arm steady, and aimed his lance at the Prince's unprotected shoulder armor. Just as he anticipated victory, a flash of cold light flickered in Rhaegar's eyes.

With a sudden burst of strength, Rhaegar straightened in his stirrups, leaned forward, and drove his lance downward with tremendous force. His lance struck first, hitting Gwayne's chest armor with a powerful impact.

In an instant, the wooden lance shattered. Gwayne grunted, thrown backward along with his horse. They crashed to the ground, the horse landing on him with a sickening crunch.

"Quick! Get the horse off him!"

The obese referee shouted, his voice desperate, his face quivering with urgency.

Rhaegar reined in his white horse, forcing it to a halt. He circled the arena, surveying his opponent's predicament. Gwayne lay sprawled, crushed beneath his horse. His legs, caught in the stirrups, were grotesquely twisted, the bones of his right leg protruding through his skin.

The maester rushed over, removing Gwayne's face armor to reveal a pale, flushed face. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he struggled to breathe.

Rhaegar took one last look, then spurred his horse away from the arena. He knew the result of his strike: Gwayne's collarbone was shattered, his lungs likely punctured. The wooden lance had spared his life, but only just.

On the high platform, Alicent covered her mouth with both hands and stifled a cry of shock. Beside her, Otto rose from his seat, his face etched with concern for his eldest son.

"Otto, stay calm," Viserys said, raising his hand in a gesture of reassurance. "I will summon Orwyle to tend to Gwayne."

Gwayne's armor was removed, revealing his grotesquely deformed legs, bones protruding through his flesh. Though his life had been spared, the severity of his injuries suggested that he might never walk again.

Otto's sharp eyes took in his son's dire condition. He took a deep breath and addressed the king, "Your Grace, forgive my breach of etiquette, but I must see to Gwayne."

"Of course, go ahead," Viserys replied, looking somber.

Otto grimaced and made his way down from the high platform, pushing through the crowd with urgency.

Injuries were common in tournaments, and it was accepted that Gwayne's fall, though serious, was a result of his lesser skill.

Alicent approached Viserys, her voice filled with concern, "Viserys, don't you think Rhaegar was too harsh?"

Viserys, clearly uncomfortable, searched for words of comfort, but Lyonel interjected, "Queen Alicent, such collisions are inevitable in tournaments. The prince meant no harm."

Alicent glared at the Hand of the King, her tone biting, "Lord Lyonel, Gwayne is my brother, and this is a family matter."

Lyonel remained calm. "As Hand of the King, I oversee all matters concerning His Grace, be they family or state."

He had already suspected a connection between his second son, Larys, and House Hightower, solidifying his support for the Heir Prince's faction. In contrast, Harwin's provocations had been met with only a few blows, while Gwayne had barely survived his encounter with Rhaegar.

Viserys looked at Lyonel with approval, grateful for his unwavering support at a critical moment. Turning his attention back to Alicent, who was now in tears, he gently put his arm around her, offering her comfort.

...

After incapacitating Gwayne, Rhaegar did not immediately retire. Instead, he changed his warhorse and participated in a few more knightly duels.

There was a saying that the nobles of the Seven Kingdoms had been at peace for too long. The knights who had not experienced war were often mediocre and untested.

Rhaegar, riding with skill and determination, swept away five or six contestants, drawing enthusiastic cheers from the nobles in attendance. Realizing that his horse was starting to pant, Rhaegar took the opportunity to exit the field.

He could have continued to fight, but there was no need to dominate the entire tournament. Knights from across the realm had come to make a name for themselves, and it was only fair to give them a chance.

At noon, the summer sun cast a warm glow, and a light breeze brought a slight coolness to the air.

In the Flowstone Yard, inside a white stone palace, a golden-scaled dragon lay on the ground, its head resting lazily on its tail.

"Syrax, don't roar," came Rhaenyra's voice, like a mother scolding a disobedient child.

The dragon's throat rolled, emitting a low growl. Syrax shook its body, its golden scales rubbing against the floor as if throwing a temper tantrum.

On one side of the dragon's body, the floor was covered with many fluffy cushions. The silver-haired and black-clad Rhaegar and Rhaenyra were cuddled up together.

The two siblings had left the tournament grounds, retreating to the quiet of Harrenhal.

Rhaenyra leaned into Rhaegar's arms, wrapping her hands around her waspish waist. Rhaegar buried his head in the nape of her neck, inhaling the fragrance of Soul Restoring Orchid from her hair, and gently stroked her flat belly with his hand.

"Rhaenyra, when the tournament is over, let's return to Dragonstone to arrange the ceremony," Rhaegar said, his eyes filled with indescribable tenderness, his face nuzzling her hair, his tone joyful and solemn.

After they left the field, Rhaenyra had told him about her possible pregnancy. They had ridden Syrax back to Harrenhal Castle to discuss their future.

Rhaenyra's violet eyes sparkled with a touch of seductive charm as she smiled, "Good, according to the old Valyrian custom."

Following family tradition, they had made an "agreement" beforehand. Now that she was pregnant, they needed to hold the official ceremony to avoid having a child born out of wedlock.

"Roaring..."

Syrax tilted its head, its vertical pupils fixed on the two with a look of disbelief.

"Rhaegar, it's looking at us," Rhaenyra said amusedly, tightening her embrace.

Rhaegar rested his large hands on the small of her back and laughed softly. "Syrax is very protective of you. With the Cannibal not around, I should be careful."

"It seems to have grown quite a bit," Rhaegar observed, scrutinizing the dragon carefully.

Syrax was a third-generation dragon, roughly between 20 and 30 years old, with a body length exceeding a hundred feet. Sunfyre and Seasmoke, dragons of the same generation, were similar in size, while Grey Ghost was slightly smaller.

Rhaenyra pondered, raising her eyes. "I followed your advice and let Syrax hunt on its own. It seems to have grown up a bit."

Normally, dragons were kept by dragon keepers who fed them livestock and kept them in a dormant state in the dragon's lair. However, the three adult dragons - Vhagar, Cannibal, and Vermithor - were too large for the Dragonpit in King's Landing and had to be released into the wild.

Apart from these, only Syrax and Sheepstealer roamed freely. Sheepstealer was unique among dragons, often ignoring Aemond's commands and capriciously flying around, poaching sheep from herders.

Syrax, on the other hand, enjoyed Rhaenyra's favor, flying around carefree all day and returning to the garden of the Red Keep to rest at sunset.

"Dragons should not be kept in caves. They lose the spirit of wild dragons," Rhaegar mused, pulling out a newly acquired ancient book.

"What does the book say?" Rhaenyra asked, her head resting on Rhaegar's chest as she curiously turned the pages.

Rhaegar gently took her small hand and explained, "This is a miscellany, the record of a learned man from the time of the Freehold. It contains many references to the Dragonlord family's knowledge of raising dragons."

For example, wild dragons and tamed dragons were often raised in a loose manner, with nesting areas on the fourteen flames. One key piece of information recorded in the book was that the top dragonlord families never imprisoned young or adult dragons, only young dragons.

"The dragons and their riders would continue to refine their compatible personalities over the years," Rhaegar continued, agreeing with this point.

Compare the three wild dragons on Dragonstone: Cannibal had a cruel nature and liked to eat dragon eggs and young dragons. According to Rhaegar, Cannibal had traveled inside and outside the Narrow Sea after reaching adulthood, exploring various islands until it was about 60 years old.

Sheepstealer had a playful personality, obsessed with lamb and the thrill of poaching. Grey Ghost was a shy dragon who hid in the clouds when it saw fishermen.

In contrast, Vhagar, Vermithor, and even Caraxes and Sunfyre, who had been imprisoned in the dragonpit since childhood, lacked the unique proclivities or habits of wild dragons. Their characters seemed ferocious, but without the special traits that made wild dragons unique.

Chapter 343: Ambitions of War

"Roar..."

Syrax twisted its neck and roared again, poking its dragon head out to nuzzle against Rhaenyra curled up on the ground.

"Syrax, be careful of the baby in my belly," Rhaenyra warned gently, smiling as she wrapped her arms around the massive dragon's head and stroked it tenderly.

Syrax stepped back a little, its amber eyes filled with confusion, as if to ask, "Are you going to lay dragon eggs, too?"

Sensing its thoughts, Rhaenyra smiled and rested her forehead against Syrax's upper jaw. "It's a good fit for you," Rhaegar chuckled.

Among the current Targaryen and Velaryon families, Rhaenyra held the record for mastering dragon riding at the youngest age, surpassing even her Uncle Daemon.

"Syrax has been with me since I was a child. It's much more loyal than you," Rhaenyra teased, giving Rhaegar a playful look.

Rustling footsteps on gravel interrupted their moment. Grey Worm stopped outside the palace and said solemnly, "Prince, Lady Jeyne requests to see you."

Rhaegar's face stiffened. The timing was impeccable. After a moment's thought, he inquired, "Does Lady Jeyne have something important to say?"

"She insisted on seeing you," Grey Worm replied with a flourish.

Rhaegar's eyes narrowed slightly. He rubbed the nape of Rhaenyra's neck and whispered, "I'll go check it out and be right back."

Rhaenyra tilted her head, grabbed his face, and snickered, "The fox is cornered and planning to beg for mercy again."

Discovering her pregnancy had brought a new steadiness to her emotions.

Rhaegar gave her a light peck and said helplessly, "I'll just take a look. I won't linger if there's nothing important."

It's reasonable to meet her at this moment.

Rhaenyra rolled her eyes in mock disgust. "Fine, get lost. I'm going to the Godswood Forest for a break."

Ensuring the smooth delivery of the baby in her belly was her top priority now.

...

Rhaegar didn't have to go far; the meeting was set at a viewing pavilion in the gravel garden.

Jeyne stood at the edge of the gazebo, wearing a waisted honey-colored dress, her chestnut hair cascading down her back. She gazed quietly into the distance until Rhaegar arrived. Seeing him, she momentarily looked wistful before smiling and saying, "Rhaenyra is pregnant. Congratulations."

"Indeed, it's a happy event for everyone," Rhaegar replied calmly. He took her hand, guiding her to sit on a nearby chair. "You have something on your mind. Tell me about it."

The moment he saw Jeyne, Rhaegar understood the nature of this meeting. The relationship they'd shared had always been on borrowed time.

Jeyne smiled and bowed her head. "I mean my congratulations."

She had been hiding in the Vale for three years out of guilt for Rhaenyra, unsure if she had made the right choices.

Originally, she had hoped to use the turmoil of the Battle of the Stepstones to separate Rhaegar from Rhaenyra and capture both his body and his mind. She had succeeded in becoming a part of his life, but she hesitated when it came to driving a wedge between them.

"Jeyne, speak to me frankly. You are not a woman who is afraid to speak her mind," Rhaegar encouraged.

Jeyne was a woman of inner and outer beauty, her intellect and strength surpassing most men. The Vale flourished under her rule, showcasing her political acumen and the talents of House Arryn.

Jeyne's eyes grew misty as she looked at him. "Have you ever thought of having a child with me?" she whispered.

Realizing the potential bitterness in her tone, she quickly added, "Even if it's a bastard!"

"Of course!" Rhaegar nodded without hesitation. "But not a bastard. I've seen the fate of most bastards, and I would never want my child to be looked down upon."

Jeyne looked up in awe. "But you can only have one wife."

"No!" Rhaegar's eyes sparkled with resolve. "The Conqueror married both Visenya and Rhaenys, and no one dared object."

"You want to start a war?" Jeyne's face changed drastically, her keen political sense immediately alert.

Rhaegar gazed out at the garden beyond the pavilion and shook his head. "It's not that I want to start a war; the war will come on its own."

He wouldn't start a war just for the sake of love. The strength of the family was growing, and a dozen or so dragon riders felt oppressed and constricted.

There were few Targaryen heirs in Maegor I's time, and it wasn't because of the Battle Under the God's Eye.

If Rhaegar were in Daemon's or Aegon's position, he wouldn't be content to keep his dragons locked away and live a miserable life.

War is a place to vent anger and fulfill desires. Invade a piece of land, divide it, and spare a group of dragon riders who otherwise would only see the Iron Throne as their destiny.

Jeyne's eyes fluttered and she asked hesitantly, "Where is your sword pointing at?"

"Dorn!" Rhaegar replied bluntly.

Jeyne's concern was obvious. "Dorne is a desert. The people are unruly and not even the Conqueror have been able to subdue them."

"The Conqueror only had a few dragons, and how many lords were truly loyal to him?" Rhaegar countered, his tone pragmatic. "Balerion during Aegon's time was only about a hundred years old, not much bigger than the Cannibal. Meraxes and Vhagar were only in their sixties, comparable to Caraxes and the Red Queen now."

He continued, "Once the war starts, Sunfyre, Seasmoke, and Grey Ghost can all be deployed."

The current nobles of the Seven Kingdoms were far more supportive of Targaryen rule than during the Conqueror's era.

"Rhaegar, war is not a trivial matter. The king would never approve," Jeyne cautioned, her heart pounding.

"I know," Rhaegar's eyes were deep, a smile playing on his lips. "Someone will ask for it, and I'll just need to go along with it."

He wanted a war, and his uncle Daemon was even more eager for an invasion. The difference was that Rhaegar didn't want to venture across the Narrow Sea to invade lands like Ursus. The Kingdom of the Three Daughters was one of the nine free cities, and attacking it would essentially declare war on all the free cities.

Two hundred years had passed, but the fear of being enslaved by ancient Valyria had not faded. The war had gone well, rapidly capturing the Three Daughters and organizing a strategy. However, any misstep and the Martells of Dorne would intervene, possibly sending troops or a fleet to disrupt their plans.

Jeyne didn't fully grasp the situation, but she understood the implications. If the Dornish War broke out, the crown had a good chance of succeeding. Capturing Dorne would mean unifying the Seven Kingdoms completely, and Rhaegar's prestige would rival that of the Conqueror.

No one would dare oppose him marrying another wife, given his war achievements. But Rhaegar's thoughts were more strategic. He planned to make a deal with the Faith of the Seven, supporting its spread in Dorne in exchange for their approval of his second marriage.

If they refused, he might consider aligning with the Red Priests, introducing the faith of R'hllor to challenge the Faith of the Seven and diminish the divine right of kings.

After their conversation, Jeyne left in a hurry, excitement and hope written on her face as she digested the negotiation. Rhaegar had made her a promise, and she was eager to see it fulfilled.

As Rhaegar sat quietly watching the stream outside the pavilion, his former confidence was replaced by a calm, thoughtful demeanor. He reflected on their conversation, recognizing the subtle manipulation in his words.

His emotions aside, his primary focus was on Rhaenyra and his family. Jeyne was vital to her political support as Lady of the Vale. Her child would inherit the Vale, just as Aemond and Cassandra's child would inherit the Stormlands.

In his mind, he considered deeper strategies. If Aegon were his true brother, he would arrange a marriage between Aegon and Margaery to secure the loyalty of the Riverlands. With his brothers in power in separate realms and the Crownlands and Riverlands united, they could upend the status quo in Westeros.

After much thought, Rhaegar sighed, "It is also a skill for a woman to be able to give birth."

He despised Alicent's pettiness, but he had to acknowledge her fertility. A growing family needed such capable women.

...

Not far from the pavilion, in a tuft of grass clinging to the underside of the wigwam, two small heads huddled together - one with silver blonde curls, the other with long dark hair.

Helaena lay on the ground, her large, watery eyes fixed on the pavilion, slightly lost in thought. "The Conqueror and his sisters..."

Maris covered her mouth with both hands, her face pale with panic. "An invasion of Dorne!"

The two had flown back to Dreamfyre after Jeyne left the table. Maris had heard rumors of Lady Jeyne's affair with the Heir Prince and dragged Helaena along to see for herself. They had followed and hidden in a single shot, not expecting to overhear such violent information.

"Helaena, we should go," Maris urged, shoving her little sister in horror.

Helaena, dazed, replayed Rhaegar's conversation with Jeyne in her mind. Suddenly, the people in the pavilion seemed to sense that someone was eavesdropping and stared sharply in their direction.

Maris stifled a gasp, pulled Helaena with her, and tried to run, fearing they would be silenced. But a shadow loomed over them, and a voice said, "Eavesdropping is a bad habit."

Grey Worm's face was expressionless as he looked down at the two girls.

The scene shifted. The two girls now stood in the pavilion, heads down, not daring to look directly at Rhaegar.

Rhaegar's eyes were full of helplessness, momentarily speechless. Especially Helaena, who wore a confused expression as if she wasn't the one eavesdropping.

"Prince, we won't say anything," Maris promised, nudging Helaena and speaking with a trembling apology.

Rhaegar rubbed his brow and said, "It's not exactly a secret, but your behavior goes against the education and status you've received."

He pondered the situation. The desire for war was Daemon's, more eager than his own. There was no telling if Daemon would seek out their father for a big fight before the tournament was over. Rhaegar was grateful he didn't have the habit of talking to himself; what was in his heart remained hidden.

Chapter 344: Aegon Loyalty

Maris hastily apologized, "We let our curiosity get the better of us. I'm really sorry."

Rhaegar looked at her, then at Helaena, who seemed lost in her own world, and couldn't help but feel despondent about Alicent. After a moment of thought, he said seriously, "You need to keep this a secret. Can you do that?"

"Of course," Maris agreed immediately.

Helaena: ...

Rhaegar looked at the seemingly shrewd Maris and said quietly, "Aemond is engaged to your sister, but they don't seem to get along very well, do they?"

Maris, choosing her words carefully, replied, "Prince Aemond is a proud dragon rider, and my sister is just a simple maiden."

"They're just betrothed, and there are still some lords with bastards sniffing around," Rhaegar remarked, emphasizing the word "bastards."

"Those lords are just vultures who want a taste of the flesh and blood of House Baratheon," Maris muttered indignantly. "Prince Aemond said he didn't care about the threats from these lords and bastards, and he's right."

Rhaegar sensed there was more to it and continued, "Cassandra inherited Storm's End. You might want to help ease her relationship with Aemond."

He wanted to see what the wisest of the Four Storms had to say. Cassandra had inherited Storm's End Castle as the eldest daughter, and Maris was only one step away from becoming a lady.

"Prince, don't you think..." Maris hesitated, her black eyes darting nervously. Finally, she lowered her head and whispered, "Prince Aemond and my sister might not be a good match?"

Rhaegar remained calm outwardly, but smiled inwardly. The young girl's insight was extraordinary.

If Aemond and Cassandra's marriage was not harmonious, the royal family would not jeopardize the benefits. Rather, Rhaegar would be the beneficiary. If their relationship soured to the point of enmity, like Daemon and the late Lady Rhea, Rhaegar could adopt and personally raise the Lord of Storm's End.

But such thoughts could not be discussed openly. After a moment of reflection, Rhaegar said sternly, "Lady Maris, I hope the marriage between your family and mine goes well, and I believe you will be a loyal supporter of the royal family."

"Yes, Prince," Maris nodded, her eyes averted. She wondered if the Prince wanted her to be an obstacle or a replacement in the marriage.

Rhaegar refrained from further explanation and motioned for Grey Worm to escort her away. No matter how she interpreted it, as long as the seed of doubt about Cassandra was planted in her heart, she would be a thorn in Storm's End's side.

Once the outsiders were gone, Rhaegar pulled the bewildered Helaena closer and pinched her rosy cheeks.

"Even if you eavesdrop yourself, how dare you bring outsiders to listen?" he scolded, though there was a hint of amusement in his voice. "You've certainly grown bold."

"Ow!"

The pain brought Helaena to her senses. Her bright purple eyes filled with pleading as she stuttered and struggled. After a moment, Rhaegar let go, feeling a bit remorseful.

Helaena covered her stinging face and pulled back, tears welling in her eyes. "It hurts!"

Rhaegar leaned against the pavilion pillar and asked directly, "Have you ridden Dreamfyre lately to do something you shouldn't?"

Helaena's face stiffened. She glanced at her brother and replied hesitantly, "No... no, I haven't."

Her guilty look and uncertain tone betrayed her words.

Rhaegar's frown deepened and his voice grew stern. "Tell me the truth."

Helaena's face turned pale, and she spoke with a tremor, "Yes, I did."

Seeing her fear, Rhaegar's eyes softened. He gently stroked Helaena's head and whispered, "Don't be afraid. If you tell me honestly, no one will blame you."

Helaena nodded repeatedly and began her confession.

During the Larys incident, Helaena had used Dreamfyre to burn the night watchman and prisoners to death. Dreamfyre, being an adult dragon, had unleashed a devastating fire. The person who prompted Helaena to act was her mother, Alicent.

One night, Alicent had confided in Helaena, explaining that Larys knew too many secrets and couldn't be left alive. Unable to resist her mother's pleas, Helaena agreed. Alicent instructed her to act as soon as the prison wagon reached the Goldroad, fearing someone else might rescue Larys first.

As Helaena spoke, Rhaegar's mind raced with thoughts. Based on Larys' confession, it was clear that Otto and Alicent had premeditated the rescue, with Ormund Hightower executing it.

Helaena's words suggested that Alicent had changed her mind and decided to eliminate Larys entirely, fitting her anxious and suspicious nature. Given that Aemond was already engaged to Cassandra at the time, Larys was safer dead than alive.

Helaena and Dreamfyre's involvement corroborated Larys' account, making it likely that Aemond and the Sheepstealer rescued Larys afterward and turned him over to Ormund Hightower. However, since Helena had acted first and Aemond appeared later, someone else must have rescued Larys first.

Rhaegar's head spun at the possibilities. Could a third dragon have been involved?

"Brother, that's all I know," Helaena said timidly, her eyes pleading for understanding. "I wasn't lying."

Rhaegar frowned and pinched her cheeks hard. "Next time, think before you act. You risked burning the whole wagon full of prisoners, and I had to take the blame."

He realized that neither Alicent, Otto, nor Ormund cared about the aftermath of their actions, expecting him to bear the consequences.

"I'm sorry, brother," Helaena whispered, her cheeks red from his grip and tears in her eyes. "Mother insisted I do it. I couldn't sleep for several nights afterward without Dreamfyre."

Rhaegar could not bring himself to punish Helaena. He raised his hand to pull her into a comforting embrace, but hesitated. Instead, he gently stroked her long hair and said softly, "You should not interfere in adult matters unless you are mature enough to understand them."

Helaena, seeking comfort, jumped into his arms and murmured, "Mother needed me. For the first time, she held me with such an expectant look, and then she fell asleep."

Rhaegar felt a twinge of uncertainty. He could not fully comprehend the maternal bond because he had never experienced it himself. He thought of Rhaenyra, who had always played a motherly role for him.

A sudden, unpleasant raven interrupted the moment.

Rhaegar snapped out of his thoughts to see a familiar raven land on a nearby willow. He patted Helaena's back, trying to be gentle. "Just be more careful next time."

Helaena shook her head and whispered, "There won't be a next time."

"Don't cry. Go and play," Rhaegar said, fully embracing his role as her older brother.

Helaena looked up with teary eyes and said, "I can ride Dreamfyre to help you."

"What?" Rhaegar didn't understand what she meant.

Helaena cupped his cheeks with her small hands and kissed him on the cheek. "I will help you!" she declared before walking away, her cheeks flushed.

Rhaegar sat frozen, his mind racing. What had Helaena meant?

A few moments later, he ran his hands through his hair in frustration and muttered, "Rhaenyra and Alicent are going to kill me!"

Despite Rhaenyra's pregnancy, he had no improper thoughts about Helaena. The Targaryens valued kinship above all else.

The raven flapped its wings and flew into the summerhouse, cocked its head and offered a mailbox strapped to its claw.

Suppressing his strange feelings, Rhaegar took the letter out of the box. The raven was Tormund's messenger, so the letter was from him.

Rhaegar opened it and read. After a long moment, his furrowed brow relaxed slightly, though a sense of irritation remained.

Tormund had discovered that Alicent's personal handmaiden was an eyewitness. Using the network of information Larys had left behind, he had extracted information from her. The handmaiden confirmed Rhaegar's suspicions.

Alicent and Otto had originally conspired to rescue Larys. Otto, serving as Master of Civil Affairs, had long been thwarted by Lyonel and Syrio. He hoped to use Larys to regain his intelligence network.

The plan was to find a replacement for Larys during the night and use a dragon to burn the convoy the next morning. Ormund Hightower carried out the plan, with Aegon and Sunfyre as the main force. Of course, they expected Rhaegar to take the blame.

Alicent feared that more might come out of Larys' mouth.

Before Ormund Hightower could make a move, she first asked her daughter Helaena to ride her dragon and take action. In the midst of these plans, an unexpected event occurred.

The younger sons of House Tully, seeking to gain favor through the Faith of the Seven, approached Ormund Hightower. Ormund, aiming for an alliance, discussed this with his brother, Otto. However, Otto, wary of crossing Rhaegar's jurisdiction, was reluctant to get involved.

Undeterred, Ormund secretly contacted Aegon, proposing that he bring the Tullys to him instead of Otto. Aegon, likely uninterested, refused. Ormund then turned to Aemond, stationed at Storm's End Castle.

Aemond, weary of dealing with the constant troubles from two bastards, saw an opportunity in Ormund's offer. Ormund promised to help Aemond deal with them after the mission, securing Aemond's cooperation.

The plan was set.

Before Aegon's departure, Ormund dropped Larys under the cover of night, sneaking in undetected. Helaena, anxious not to lag behind Aegon, rushed out before dawn, burning down her path in vain. According to plan, Aemond set off slightly later, arriving at the scene of a charred corpse to find the hidden Larys, completing the scheme.

As for Aegon, he ignored the intricacies and flew back to King's Landing on Sunfyre, seeking solace with prostitutes.

Never would he have guessed that the most loyal of several younger siblings was actually Aegon!

Rhaegar, overwhelmed by the convoluted machinations, held his forehead in exasperation. Despite his frustration with House Hightower's conspiracy, he felt a twinge of guilt for doubting Aegon. Amid the chaos, Aegon proved to be the most loyal, though he simply wanted to enjoy life without entangling himself in schemes.

Aegon is a simple man after all, he simply wants to enjoy himself. He also seems like a good brother raised by Rhaegar, who beat him constantly since they were children.

Laughing at the absurdity, Rhaegar's expression grew serious as he clenched the letter. "Ormund Hightower, the Faith of the Seven..." he muttered, feeling a surge of anger.

The interference of Oldtown was intolerable. Otto was involved as well.

"Crippling Gwayne was lenient," Rhaegar thought, a sneer forming.

It was a good thing that the truth came out and the rats that were in the gutter came out.

With the truth unveiled, it was time to eradicate Ormund Hightower and his influence. The Faith of the Seven's subtle manipulations had grown pervasive, even to the point of influencing his father into replacing the ruby on the House's sword, Blackfyre, with a seven-pointed star.

Softly, Rhaegar murmured, "R'hllor Faith," contemplating a shift in alliances.

Chapter 345: Good Friend Laena

Godswood Forest

In the lush garden, an array of willows and pines swayed gently, and a clear stream gurgled melodiously.

Rhaenyra strolled leisurely, pausing before a bed of pale purple flowers to admire their delicate beauty.

Nearby, a group of noble ladies and young maidens loitered, ostensibly there to view the flowers, but mostly to show off their gowns and ornaments.

Noticing Rhaenyra's presence, the ladies exchanged glances and greeted her, but none dared to approach her too closely.

She was accompanied by her handmaiden, Sara, and two Unsullied guards who flanked her like iron sentinels.

Rhaenyra pursed her lips and walked deeper into the forest, careful not to disturb the others.

On the other side of the flower garden, a dozen gardeners were busy trimming the foliage.

Among them was a familiar face: the Green Man of Isle of Faces, Greenhand Gal.

Still resembling a chubby old man, Gal wore a rough robe and led the team in tending to a cluster of lilac trees.

After blocking Rhaenyra's entry to Rhaegar's bath, he had been expelled from the Isle of Faces and now worked as a temporary gardener at Harrenhal.

Though mostly a healer, Gal occasionally took on gardening tasks at Harrenhal.

Rhaenyra watched the gardeners for a while and felt a wave of sleep come over her. She yawned involuntarily.

"Let's go back."

Sleepy and mindful of the baby in her belly, Rhaenyra decided not to push herself too hard.

As she turned to leave, she noticed a small group of two girls weeding in the flower garden.

Their clothes were simple, their hair coiled and wrapped in silk scarves, giving them a slender, slim appearance from behind.

Rhaenyra glanced at them casually as she walked by, not paying them much attention.

Sniffing the air, she frowned in confusion, her nostrils twitching slightly at a familiar scent.

She twisted a strand of her hair and held it up to her nose, sniffed again, and turned to stare at the two heavily covered girls.

Her gaze moved from their hair wrapped in silk scarves to the silver-gold sideburns sticking out from either side of their ears.

Rhaenyra's eyes narrowed and she said in a low voice, "Sara!

...

Nightfall

Rhaegar returned to Kingspyre Tower, feeling slightly exhausted from the day's events.

Rhaenyra had already retired to her room to rest after a busy afternoon.

Old Tully had returned to Riverrun with the remains of his son, Edmure, and Rhaegar had taken the time to see him off on behalf of the royal family.

In addition, he had a lengthy discussion about the faith of R'hllor with a red priestess. Rhaegar's assessment was less than favorable.

The Faith of the Seven, despite its internal issues, presented a pro-people facade with its teachings and traditions, making it unique in Westeros. In contrast, the R'hllor faith seemed burdensome, even within its stronghold in Essos.

For one, the temple of R'hllor engaged in slave trafficking, keeping boys and girls in captivity to be trained as Fiery Hands or bed slaves. Moreover, their practices included frequent sacrifices, using livestock and even slaves sometimes.

Such beliefs would be branded as heretical if they spread throughout Westeros without significant reform.

The red priestess, aware of the conflict between her faith's teachings and the native customs of Westeros, planned to make adjustments.

Rhaegar, however, remained indifferent. The Faith of the Seven was tyrannical and exclusive, and he believed that introducing foreign beliefs could serve as a necessary shock to its dominance.

While he wouldn't actively support the R'hllor faith, he decided not to obstruct it either, allowing it to find its place among the many foreign faiths.

Faith, after all, was a subtle thing.

...

The Lord's Bedroom Door

Knock, knock...

Rhaegar raised his hand to knock on the door, which creaked open almost immediately.

"Finished working?" Rhaenyra, dressed in a light nightgown, smiled as she looked at him.

Seeing her in such a seductive appearance, Rhaegar grinned, "You have exhausted me. Let me in."

Rhaenyra was pregnant and they had to be careful. But some affection was still possible.

Rhaenyra rested a hand on the door frame and whispered, "No! You have to sleep outside tonight."

"Just a corner of the bed will do," Rhaegar pleaded, thinking she was teasing him about Jeyne.

"No way!" Rhaenyra shook her head firmly. "There's no room for you tonight. Laena and I are sharing the bed."

She stepped aside, revealing the dark-skinned beauty on the bed. Laena, also in a light nightgown, lay lazily on her side, her rounded, delicate legs crossed and bare.

"Oh, sorry!" Rhaegar froze for a moment, hurriedly averting his eyes. "I shouldn't be looking."

"Maybe you should get Daemon to sleep with you. Uncle and nephew by candlelight," Rhaenyra said, mildly amused.

Rhaegar shook his head quickly. "I just don't think it's safe for you two pregnant women to sleep together. It's better to go back to your respective mates."

"It's not safe to sleep with you!" Rhaenyra's eyes were full of contempt.

Rhaegar hesitated, feeling uncomfortable. Rhaenyra's slender figure leaned against the door frame, her long silver-gold hair hanging down in front of her chest. Her violet eyes scrutinized him deeply, as if trying to see through him.

Rhaegar took a step back, feeling the intensity of her gaze.

Rhaenyra suddenly said, "Rhaegar, I've noticed your tastes have changed."

Rhaegar cocked his head in confusion.

"You're hiding something from me," Rhaenyra said, her eyes glittering as she wrapped her arms around his waist and buried her head in his chest to listen to his heartbeat.

Rhaegar's scalp tingled, and he hesitantly replied, "I promised Jeyne something..."

"I don't care about that." Rhaenyra tilted her head, staring at him seriously. "Mother once said that a woman's battlefield is the birthing bed. I already have one foot on the battlefield. You should know what happens when you lie in the army."

"I should cut off the liar's head," Rhaegar replied stiffly.

"Uh-huh, but I can't afford to cut off your head," Rhaenyra grunted. She produced an ancient gold coin, reminiscing. "Remember this?"

Rhaegar instantly recognized it as one of the ancient Valyrian gold coins he had found in the space bracelet. When he became Heir, he had given Rhaenyra three gold coins, promising to fulfill three of her wishes.

In an instant, Rhaegar's demeanor shifted, his eyes taking on an unprecedented seriousness.

"Rhaegar, whatever you want to know, I'll tell you everything."

The three gold coins Rhaenyra considered treasures were kept so secret that even he had trouble finding them. Despite his relationship with Jeyne, she hadn't felt the need to use even one of them.

"It seems you still honor your word," Rhaenyra said, her lips curving slightly. Her eyes revealed a glimmer of emotion as she whispered, "It's a small matter, really, but I want to hear it from you."

There was a hint of guilt in her voice, as if she was apologizing for making the request. Though it was a small matter, it needed to be handled carefully.

Rhaegar's mind drifted. He considered his promises to Jeyne, Helaena's strange behavior, and Sara's secret loyalty...

Lately, there hadn't been anything particularly troublesome.

As Rhaegar pondered, Rhaenyra wrapped her arms around his neck, nuzzling against his neck and hair. "Think carefully, or else tomorrow night, Laena will still be sleeping with me."

With that, she pressed the ancient gold coin into his hand.

Rhaegar, bewildered, glanced toward Sara, who stood by the bed. Rhaenyra quickly moved to block his view, warning, "Think for yourself, no prying."

She shot a glare at the innocent Sara.

Sara lowered her head, her hands resting in front of her, silent.

Rhaegar was thoroughly perplexed. He would have preferred Rhaenyra to ask him outright, even if it meant facing her wrath.

Guessing was not his strong point.

Could it be about his agreement with Daemon to attack the Triarchy?

Rhaenyra seemed to sense his frustration. She shook her head, smiling, and stood on her tiptoes to plant a kiss on his cheek.

"See you tomorrow."

The door to the room closed with a thud.

Rhaegar stood there in silence, faintly hearing Rhaenyra and Laena's voices from within.

He turned and walked away silently, deciding to find Tormund to gather more information before seeking out Daemon for a place to sleep.

After all, it was Daemon's wife who had taken his bed.

...

Inside the room.

Rhaenyra and Laena were lying on the bed, huddled in each other's arms.

“Worried?”

Laena's gaze softened as she embraced her friend, caressing her gently.

Rhaenyra shook her head. “Just a bastard woman. I just feel sorry for Rhaegar, watching over him too closely.”

The words were true, but whether she felt good in her heart was another matter.

Rhaegar had betrayed her once more.

Laena saw it differently. "Rhaegar despises vulgar women; it's one of his strengths."

“It turns out he's not the one who can't only have me.” Rhaenyra's voice was muffled and moody.

Laena sighed helplessly. "Even a man as unsmiling as my father still has a mistress in Hull Town, or you can compare that to Daemon's flirtatiousness."

She was not a calculating woman; Daemon was not a discreet man.

She admired Daemon's untamed character and extraordinary experiences, and Daemon saw her beauty and family history.

Rhaenyra looked up at her, her small hand slipping under the hem of the other woman's skirt to caress her bulging belly and said teasingly, "If you say so, I feel much better inside."

"Rhaenyra, you're so annoying!" Laena grabbed the small, mischievous hand and pretended to be angry.

Rhaenyra teased for a moment, her head cushioned against her friend's softness, and said ruefully, "He's my brother, but I often play the role of a mother who doesn't want to be separated from him even for a moment."

Laena touched the small of her back and said soothingly, “You are a mother now.”

Rhaenyra's behavior was the result of her instruction, Rhaegar wasn't Daemon, with his pride and strict upbringing, he disliked trouble and flirtation.

Misunderstandings would arise, but they always found a way to move past them.

...

Two days later.

In the martial arts field, atop the high platform, a scarlet dragon swooped past, its slender, snake-like body moving with remarkable agility. Wide wings beat, stirring up a wild wind.

Daemon, dressed in pitch-black armor, sat with a commanding presence. “Brother, the pirates of the Triarchy Kingdom are becoming more rampant. This is not a good sign.”

Viserys, frowning in frustration, waved him off. “The Triarchy have always been troublesome. You’re overreacting. Let’s discuss it after the tournament. Don’t spoil my mood.”

Daemon scoffed. “You always have a reason to reject me.”

He leaned back, exasperated. Despite his private attempts to persuade Viserys, his concerns were continually dismissed, leaving him with little patience.

Laena, sitting next to him, patted his hand gently to signal decency.

Daemon scowled but reached out to stroke his wife's belly, his gaze burning into his nephew across the field.

Rhaegar, on the other hand, presented a composed figure. His long hair was tied back and he wore a set of silver and white armor designed for defense. The diamond-shaped, mirror-bright breastplate, dragon-headed shoulder armor, and crimson cloak set him apart.

Rhaegar's face was calm as he whispered to Tormund, his eyes never leaving Daemon.

The two exchanged looks of mutual disdain. Daemon's eyes were dark, a cold smile tugging at his lips.

He couldn't fathom what had offended Rhaegar, who had invaded his personal space for two nights. Maybe it was a tactic to unsettle him.

Daemon's gaze shifted to Laenor, who stood behind Rhaenys, watching the fight with a smile. An unsettling thought crossed his mind and his expression grew darker.

Laenor, sensing the ill will directed at him, shivered involuntarily, feeling a chill despite the warm day.

Chapter 346: Everyone Has Their Own Opinion

Rhaegar quickly ended his conversation with Tormund, ignoring the growing tension around him.

"What's going on?" Rhaenyra asked, her eyes bright with anticipation.

Rhaegar shook his head gently, took her small hand and kissed it lightly, raising his voice deliberately. "News from Volantis. It seems someone has incited the Tiger Party to burn Lys' fleet."

Syrio's latest letter revealed that Tiger Party Archon Tesrio had privately targeted Lys's innocent merchant ships for plunder. Lys had condemned these actions and showed signs of a possible counterattack in partnership with Myr and Tyrosh.

Rhaegar's voice was firm and loud, ensuring everyone present could hear him.

Daemon was the first to react, casually pouring himself more wine.

Viserys glared angrily at his brother. “Daemon, have I not warned you against provoking the ships of the Triarchy?”

“This is clearly the Triarchy’s own doing, facing retaliation from Volantis,” Daemon replied lazily, dismissing the connection.

Viserys' face reddened, his chest heaving with anger. "Respect your king, or I'll send you back to the Stepstones to cool off!"

He was truly fed up with his rebellious brother, who always sought to provoke and stir conflict, disregarding the kingdom's need for peace.

Stifling his irritation, Daemon pointed at his nephew. "Your Grace, before you lecture me, take a look at your own eldest son. I'm not the only one who expects war."

Viserys, slightly taken aback, looked at Rhaegar. He knew that his son had prepared an army and had made a significant impact in Volantis.

Rhaegar's expression remained calm and he said nothing. He had no immediate plans for war, at least not until Rhaenyra and Laena's pregnancies were over.

Rhaenyra was expecting, and he was not comfortable going to war while she was pregnant. The Targaryens had lost too many children in the past.

Laena, who controlled the largest dragon, Vhagar, could not be absent from a potential Dornish War or conflict with the Triarchy.

Rhaegar's silence could be seen as either agreement or defiance.

Viserys felt a splitting headache, his old wounds aching faintly.

Alicent, worried, took her husband's arm and stroked it gently, trying to calm him.

"Hoo~, I'm fine."

Viserys took two deep breaths, glaring at his brother and eldest son. "I don't care what either of you think; I won't allow anyone to start a private war during my reign!"

He was a king of peace and prosperity, not known for great deeds or conquests. Since inheriting the throne from his grandfather, Jaehaerys I, his rule had been defined by stability and abundance. He didn't want future history books to erase those achievements and instead record only his mediocrity and continuous wars.

Sensing his brother's anger, Daemon, uncharacteristically subdued, rose silently and walked off the high platform.

Rhaegar remained unmoved, pondering how his uncle had discovered his intentions to prepare for war. Clearly, his preparations had not been as secret as he had thought. Either word had leaked out of the Prince's Palace or spies in Dorne had learned of his plans.

"Rhaegar, did you hear what your father said?" Viserys's voice was filled with fury, directing his anger at his eldest son.

Rhaegar's thoughts snapped back to the present, and he smiled brightly. "Father, I have no desire for war. I just want to marry Rhaenyra as soon as possible after the tournament."

Viserys looked puzzled, watching as Rhaegar intertwined his fingers with Rhaenyra's and gently caressed her back under her long red silk dress.

Rhaenyra allowed him to touch her but remained silent.

Viserys's eyes widened with surprise, a smile spreading across his face. "You mean...?"

As a father concerned about his children's reputation, he spoke subtly. Unmarried pregnancy was frowned upon, and discretion was necessary in public.

Rhaegar raised his chin, speaking proudly. "The maester isn't sure yet, but all signs point to it."

He couldn't wait to share his joy with his father, to tell him that his heir would soon have an heir as well. He wanted to scream about how wonderful Rhaenyra was, imagining the possibility of her giving birth to two healthy babies at once. But he held himself back, not wanting to pressure her.

Rhaenyra looked at him, her expression dark with pain. She had waited two days with no explanation from Rhaegar.

It wasn't entirely Rhaegar's fault. When the bastard daughters arrived in Westeros, they were discreetly settled in a Mushroom Set Cavan a dozen miles away from Harrenhal Castle. Rhaegar had made it clear to them, providing a peaceful place to live and enough money to live comfortably, but severing other ties.

Aunt Saera's grandchildren were distant enough in bloodline that it wasn't illegal in Westeros. Rhaegar had initially sought the experience of being with someone his own age, but it hadn't been as satisfying as he had hoped.

Daella gave him a similar feeling to the noble ladies of Westeros, and the process had been boring. He had privately asked Orwyle for advice, who had politely suggested it might be a mental issue rather than a physical one.

Rhaenyra and Jeyne, who genuinely loved him, could give him all-night pleasures. Daella, on the other hand, was a blind admirer and asylum seeker, someone Rhaegar subconsciously resisted.

Back to the topic at hand.

Viserys, overwhelmed with joy upon hearing the great news, couldn't help but exclaim, "Rhaenyra, so it's normal for you to feel uncomfortable lately. I was secretly worrying about you with Alicent."

Alicent paused for a split second before saying with genuine delight, "Rhaenyra, congratulations."

She herself was unsure of her true emotions at that moment, her heart a mix of repressed feelings and vague joy. At least outwardly, she had to offer her blessings.

Rhaenys, Sea Snake, Laenor, and the others extended their congratulations, all with smiles on their faces. The prosperity of the Targaryen bloodline and the news of a successor to the Heir Prince were joyous events worthy of celebration.

Especially Laenor, who was smiling like a fool, unable to stop pursing his lips.

His wife, Celine Setiga, looked gloomy, her eyes full of envy as she forced a smile to match the applause. She longed to conceive a child herself and didn't know how much longer she would have to wait.

Rhaenyra accepted the well-wishes with a smile, quietly shaking off Rhaegar's large, tightly clasped hand.

Rhaegar, smiling without saying a word, let his hand rest on her thigh and stroked it gently.

With keen eyes, Viserys noticed their subtle exchange and called out in warning, "Rhaegar, today is the last day of the tournament. Daemon has already gone down; you are about to fall behind."

The best way to please a woman was to win the crown of love and beauty for her.

Receiving the signal, Rhaegar rose, donning his armor, and smiled confidently. "No problem, let me go and test their mettle."

He glanced back at Rhaenyra, whose eyelashes fluttered slightly, her purple eyes reflecting his silhouette.

Rhaenyra crossed one leg and bashfully picked up her tea, saying perfunctorily, "Go on."

Unsatisfied, Rhaegar leaned down and boldly cupped her face, aiming to kiss her delicate red lips.

He couldn't fathom where the fault lay, knowing only that Rhaenyra could be forgiving.

After a long moment, their lips parted, leaving Rhaenyra with misty eyes and watery strands clinging to her lips.

Rhaegar's eyes were filled with love and a hint of hope. "I prepared a gift for you. I originally wanted to give it to you on the day of the ceremony, but I want you to be happy now."

"Take it out," Rhaenyra said, her eyes shining with ecstasy.

Rhaegar shook his head slightly. "When I win the crown of love and beauty, I will place it in your hands along with the gift."

He kissed her forehead lightly once more before stepping down from the stage amidst the curious gazes of all.

...

The tournament arena buzzed with excitement.

Daemon had already secured a victory by spilling his opponent's guts and breaking several of his ribs.

Rhaegar rode a silver-white warhorse, which now stood facing his uncle.

With only a glance, Daemon reined in his mount and warned, "Dorne is not a good place to live. It is barren and hot, leading to years of protracted fighting."

Rhaegar replied frankly, "If the Seven Kingdoms are not unified, how can we expand our territories outward?"

Daemon, looking untamed, rode his pitch-black warhorse the wrong way and said coldly, "The Triarchy is the preferred choice, not Dorne."

"Uncle, I have to think about the family," Rhaegar sighed.

He knew that Dorne would not be easy to conquer and was much more menacing than the Triarchy. However, conquering Dorne would reassert the Targaryens' might over the Seven Kingdoms. In contrast, most of the nobles in Westeros were unwilling to invade territories outside the Narrow Sea.

With a nod, Rhaegar spurred his horse onto the tournament field.

Danglang!

The obese referee sounded the gong, and Rhaegar's opponent revealed himself: a tall and robust young man wearing tin can armor and riding a brown warhorse.

"This matchup, Prince Rhaegar of Targaryen, against Arno Storm of Stonehelm!"

Dang!

The referee chanted the introduction and struck the opening gong again. Both fighters took the field and sized each other up.

Rhaegar donned a silver helmet with dragon wings on either side and clutched the hilt of his spear.

His opponent was Arno, a bastard son of the House Baratheon. He had participated in the Second Battle of the Stone Islands and had seen the Prince ride a dragon. His heart trembled with fear.

The first charge.

Rhaegar slightly sidestepped, aiming his lance at Arno's abdomen in a moderate test.

Bang--

Arno's riding skills were unrefined. He lifted his shield to block but was almost knocked off his horse. Both sides brushed past each other, and the second round unfolded.

"Heya!"

Ten feet away, Rhaegar's gaze turned cold as he spurred his horse with a low shout.

This bastard dared to covet Storm's End Castle; so he could not live!

As they neared, Arno raised his arm and thrust his spear, aiming it fiercely at the Prince's breastplate.

Rhaegar's horse was even faster. The shield with the three red dragons on it deflected the tip of Arno's spear, and Rhaegar thrust his lance fiercely.

Pfft...

The wooden lance hit Arno's throat accurately. The iron-wrapped tip broke through the thin armor and pierced deeply into his neck.

Rhaegar discarded the lance and rode away.

Arno flew backward, landing heavily on the ground. His eyes filled with blood as he clutched his blood-soaked throat, gasping for breath.

The squire and maester rushed forward to check, but it was too late. Arno was dead.

Chapter 347: Uncle vs Nephew!

The death of a bastard did not cause a widespread sensation.

In truth, the impact was minimal. The members of House Swann in the audience gasped in shock, and the Lord of Swann was so furious that he pounded his thighs heavily. His shrill, mean-spirited wife, however, was more pragmatic. She pulled her husband back, not wanting to cause trouble over a bastard.

Rhaegar scanned the crowd, a grin spreading across his face. He retired for a break, allowing the next match to begin.

The third match pitted Cole, clad in silver-gray armor, against Medrick Manderly, the eldest son of the Lord of White Harbor. The Manderly House had played a minor role in the Battle of the Stone Steps Islands and had avoided much attention in recent years.

Medrick, heir to White Harbor, was handsome and tall, with silver and white armor bearing the crest of the merman, holding a trident. He was known as one of the best knight in the north.

Cole and Medrick fought head to head, their riding skills evenly matched. In the final charge, both fell from their horses simultaneously. Cole landed and quickly swung his morningstar, smashing Medrick's hand-and-a-half sword and claiming victory.

Several more tournaments followed, showcasing the best knights from every realm in the kingdom. All manner of tactics and strategies were on display.

Daemon participated once more, facing Willam Royce of the Vale. Willam was a distant cousin of Yorbert Royce, Warden of the East, and had participated in numerous confrontations and sieges against the Mountain Clans. He was one of Rhaegar's preferred candidates for the Kingsguard.

Unfortunately, Willam's skills were not first-rate. He lacked Daemon's determination and ruthlessness. After a few rounds of charging, he was knocked from his horse.

The tournament entered its final round of competition.

Four knights were chosen to face each other.

Rhaegar versus Cole, and Daemon versus the bastard Bronn Storm.

...

On the high platform, the crowd watched the bout with eager anticipation.

Viserys beamed, his eyes darting between Rhaegar and Cole in the tournament arena. He raised his glass repeatedly, delighted by the match between his eldest son and the former commander of the Kingsguard. He planned to conclude the tournament by discussing Cole's potential inclusion in the Kingsguard at the Small Council.

In the lower position, Rhaenyra sat demurely, Helaena in her lap.

Helaena occupied Rhaegar's seat, her face pressed against Rhaenyra's belly as she tried to listen to the fetus. After a long attempt, all she could hear was a "gurgling~~" sound. Lifting her head, she saw Rhaenyra chewing a pastry with a thoughtful expression.

"Is the baby hungry?" Helaena murmured, sitting up straight.

Behind them, Aemond, who had left his fiancée behind, interjected, "It's Rhaenyra who's hungry."

Having bonded with Sheepstealer, Aemond's confidence had grown, and the gloom in his eyes had given way to a subtle arrogance.

"Boy, no one will think you're stupid if you keep your mouth shut," Aegon said, looking irritated as he held up a half-empty mug, mocking his brother mercilessly.

Aemond raised an eyebrow and retorted, "Aegon, I wasn't talking to you."

"Ha, like you're the only one allowed to talk nonsense," Aegon shot back, smacking his lips.

Since the last warning incident, the relationship between the two brothers had sunk to the freezing point, and they rarely spoke unless it was to exchange barbs.

Distracted by the bickering, Rhaenyra picked up a glass of wine and raised it to her lips, quickly spitting it out and replacing it with a cup of clear tea to rinse her mouth. She could argue with Rhaegar all she wanted, but she was determined to avoid any harm to the fetus in her womb.

...

On the martial arts field, the battle was in full swing.

Rhaegar and Cole had already charged each other several times, their shields shattering from the impact and both eventually being thrown from their horses.

"Sword!" Rhaegar shouted, and his squire promptly handed him Truefyre.

Cole, a melee expert with a sharp mind, spat bloody foam from the corner of his mouth and took a deep breath. "Prince, you better be careful."

"Bring it on!" Rhaegar grinned, eager to test Cole's skill.

Cole's gaze was steady as he stepped forward, closing the distance with measured steps before launching his morningstar in a quick, precise arc.

Dangang-

Rhaegar leaned back, sliced through the morningstar's chain with Truefyre, and shifted his stance.

"Aha!" Cole bellowed, swinging the morningstar back to strike Rhaegar around the waist.

The morningstar's small iron ball could incapacitate with a single strike.

Danglang-

As the morningstar descended, Rhaegar raised his sword to block it, and the spiked iron ball collided with the dark blade.

"You lost!" Rhaegar shouted, stepping forward and kicking Cole in the abdomen, then slashing at his chest armor.

Sparks flew as the blade cut deep dents into Cole's steel plate-like armor.

Cole's expression darkened. He retreated, twisting his waist to swing the morningstar again.

Rhaegar, anticipating this move, bent his knees to avoid the incoming iron ball, closed the distance, and thrust Truefyre against Cole's throat.

The Valyrian steel blade pierced the neck guard, pressing against Cole's skin.

Cole froze, feeling the sharp blade and the trickle of blood.

Danglang!

The referee struck the gong and announced, "Congratulations to Prince Rhaegar for defeating Ser Criston Cole!"

Cole's bravery was renowned across the Seven Kingdoms. As the former commander of the Kingsguard and a champion in many tournaments, he had won the admiration of countless nobles

and knights. His humble origins as the son of a steward in Blackhaven, and his previous favor with Princess Rhaenyra, made him an object of envy.

When the match ended, Cole remained stiff, Rhaegar's Truefyre still at his neck.

After two tense seconds, Rhaegar removed his helmet and slowly withdrew the sword, a smirk on his lips.

Cole was about to move when the glowing tip of Truefyre came before him again, stopping him in his tracks.

Splat...

The tip of Rhaegar's sword sliced off Cole's faceplate, revealing his still handsome but weathered features.

Rhaegar held his sword at Cole's neck, his eyes dancing with amusement. "Cole, you were breaking bones three years ago. Have you grown old, or has too much sea breeze dulled your martial skills?"

Born in 82 AC, Cole was now 39, only a year younger than his Uncle Daemon.

Cole dropped the morning star and smiled bitterly, "It is you who have grown up, Prince."

He recalled the image of the young Prince venturing out to tame the Cannibal, but now everything had changed.

Seeing Cole's humbled state, Rhaegar's smile became more sincere. "Welcome back. I will discuss your position in the Small Council."

"Thank you very much, Prince." Cole replied, surprise mixed with a complicated expression.

Despite his merits, he should have returned to King's Landing long ago, even if only as a gold-cloaked officer. There was no real conflict in the Stepstones, and dealing with pirates and smugglers felt like a waste of his skills.

Cole had repeatedly asked to be transferred back to King's Landing, only to be denied by the Small Council.

Rhaegar withdrew Truefyre and turned to greet the cheering crowd.

The truth was, Cole couldn't return to King's Landing because of Rhaegar's influence. As a child, Rhaenyra had often boasted to Rhaegar about Cole's handsomeness and bravery, describing him as the Kingsguard of her dreams.

Rhaegar had never been a big-hearted child, clinging to the slightest grievance. Catching Cole in a mistake had been his chance.

After three years of exile by the sea, it was finally time for Cole to return to King's Landing.

...

On the high platform, Viserys applauded excitedly, celebrating his eldest son's victory over Cole.

Though Viserys was not skilled in the martial arts, he judged the skill of his younger brother Daemon and the Kingsguard. He knew his son's martial prowess was remarkable, but he hadn't expected him to be so formidable.

Daemon, a martial artist in his own right, had once been bested by Cole's morningstar.

"Oh! Brother is the best!" Helaena cheered loudly, boldly expressing her admiration.

Aemond clapped alongside his sister, looking at Rhaegar with envious eyes and resolving to intensify his own training.

In contrast, Rhaenyra and Aegon's reactions were muted.

Aegon scoffed, tilting his head back to drink more wine.

Rhaenyra glanced at Rhaegar, her hand caressing her belly, and secretly rolled her eyes.

He had told her that Cole wouldn't return to King's Landing, but if he hadn't played petty games, Cole would have rejoined the Kingsguard long ago.

As these thoughts crossed her mind, a slight smile curled her lips, easing the frustration she had been feeling.

...

Enjoying the cheers of thousands, Rhaegar stepped down from the field with his sword.

Next was the second match of the finals: Daemon versus the bastard, Bronn Storm.

Bronn was a big, burly man with a full beard, reminiscent of the late Lord Boremund. Daemon didn't care who he resembled and treated him as just another opponent.

Their duel was unorthodox, marked by recklessness. Despite his rugged appearance, Bronn was a skilled rider and quickly unseated Daemon.

Daemon refused to surrender and grabbed a longsword and shield to continue the fight. Bronn, wielding a sword as wide as a man's palm, swung with brutal force.

It was less a knightly duel and more a brawl, with Daemon employing ruthless tactics. He cunningly blinded Bronn in one eye and then delivered a brutal kick to his opponent's groin. The men in the audience winced as they heard the sound of the blow.

Watching from below, Rhaegar subconsciously tightened his grip, a slight twitch at the corner of his mouth. His uncle's fierce engagement was both impressive and intimidating.

"Roar--"

A muffled dragon's roar echoed through the arena, as a massive pitch-black dragon pierced through the clouds, stirring up a gust of wind. Rhaegar looked up, shaking his head with a smile.

Danglang!

The referee struck the gong, signaling the final round of the tournament. The squires helped the wailing Bronn off the field, and Daemon, gasping, discarded his shattered shield and remounted his horse.

Rhaegar rode onto the field, eyeing his uncle, who seemed to grow stronger by the minute. "Not taking a break?" he inquired casually.

"Strike while the iron is hot, don't delay," Daemon replied, staring at Rhaegar like a predator eyeing its prey.

"What a big mouth," Rhaegar taunted. "Come on, let me see what you've got."

Danglang!

The referee struck the gong again, and the drummers beat their drums intensely, their shouts blending with the inspiring music:

"Prince Rhaegar of House Targaryen versus his own uncle, Prince Daemon! The old and new noble bloodlines collide!"

"Roar..."

A huge scarlet dragon soared across the sky, spewing Dragonfire at the clouds and letting out an exuberant roar, sensing its rider's frenzied emotions.

"Roar..."

"Roar..."

The Blood Wyrms' roar set off a chain reaction. From the shore of God's Eye Lake, other dragons rose into the sky: the golden Sunfyre, the light blue Dreamfyre, the cobalt blue Tessarion. Each dragon flapped its wings and hovered proudly, their vertical pupils burning as they looked down on the white stone buildings below.

Danglang!

Forcing back their fear and excitement, the referee struck the gong again, pushing the atmosphere to its peak.

"Hyah!"

Rhaegar's eyes were cold as he clenched his horse's belly and sped forward.

Chapter 348: The Summer Prince

"Hyah!"

Daemon's voice was deep and dangerous as he spurred his pitch-black warhorse into a gallop. The uncle and nephew duo charged at each other like two bolts of lightning, one silver and one black. Their red cloaks fluttered behind them as they advanced, and their lances were aimed at each other's chests.

Bang!

The shields, both emblazoned with the three-headed red dragon of House Targaryen, shattered simultaneously, sending shards of wood flying. Rhaegar steadied himself, gripping the reins and holding his seat as his horse trotted to the other end of the fence. Daemon, less fortunate, struggled to stay upright, his black armor clanking loudly.

Rhaegar's strength prevailed. His ancient Valyrian blood coursed with vitality, fortifying every inch of his body.

"Nephew, you impress me!" Daemon's voice was cold as he quickly replaced his shield and charged again.

Rhaegar composed himself and replied, "Uncle, it's not over yet!" The magic in his blood surged, the air around him heated as veins bulged at the corners of his eyes.

Once again, silver and black armor clashed. Daemon's lance was aimed at Rhaegar's chest, and he tossed his shield like a frisbee.

Boom!

Rhaegar blocked the flying shield with his own, then thrust his lance at Daemon's stomach. Both lances hit their targets, and the two combatants were knocked down.

"Phew~~"

The warhorses whinnied in panic, veering off course and out of the arena.

The collision sent the crowd into a frenzy. The nobles stood, their eyes fixed on the fighters sprawled on the ground. The match between the Regent Prince and the Rogue Prince would be the talk of the Seven Kingdoms.

"Roar--"

A pitch-black dragon swooped into the clouds, its massive wings beating the air, green vertical pupils surveying the arena. Other dragons scattered to avoid this fierce and dominant creature.

"Roar..."

A scarlet dragon, serpentine and swift, swooped around the arena, not to be outdone. The fighting fervor of its riders seemed to ignite the dragons' own instincts.

On the platform, Viserys watched intently, his face grave. Though not a warrior, he had seen many thrilling matches. Rhaegar and Daemon, clashing fiercely, seemed determined to unseat each other.

Alicent, beside her husband, looked tense, subconsciously picking at her fingernails. The uncle and nephew fought as if they were mortal enemies, not blood relatives.

On the field, two figures slowly rose from the mud, ready to continue the fight.

"Hiss!"

Rhaegar pushed himself up with one hand, the other gripping his aching shoulder. He took off his helmet and inhaled sharply. The fall had been hard and his left shoulder throbbed painfully.

Across the field, Daemon rolled several times before staggering to his feet, his head spinning. Their fierce exchange had taken its toll on both of them.

Attendants rushed to bring their weapons, and uncle and nephew faced each other once more. Blood trickled from the corner of Daemon's mouth as he picked up a one-handed sword and shield, his preferred weapons even after losing Dark Sister. Swift and ruthless swordplay was his path to victory.

"Uncle, remember the family motto?" Rhaegar grinned, twirling Truefyre, the ruby at its hilt flashing crimson as if fire danced within its core.

Daemon sneered, a cold smile curling his lips. "What trick are you trying to pull?"

"Oh, it's Fire and Blood!" Rhaegar declared, gripping the hilt of his sword tightly. The blackened Truefyre glowed with heat, the air around it shimmering.

He hadn't intended to display his pyromancy in public, but Daemon deserved a taste of his true power. He called upon his inner strength and felt his bloodline stir.

[Rhaegar Targaryen]

Talents: Dreamer (Gold), Pyromancer (Purple), Longevity (Green)

Bloodline: Ancient Valyrian Dragonlord (+48%)

Runes: Serpent (Blue), Bronze (Green)

Blood Sorcery: Enchantment Spell (Blue), Dragonstone (Blue)

Relics: Blood and Fire, True Dragon Blood, Dreamscape

Evaluation: "Ancient and noble bloodline, looking forward to the day when the flame is rekindled."

His bloodline purity had been stagnant at 47% for a long time, despite his contact with Cannibal and other dragons. But now, with Rhaenyra's pregnancy, this duel with Daemon, and the looming war, emotions surged within him. His blood suddenly boiled, showing signs of revival.

"Hooooo~~"

Rhaegar panted heavily, his breath hot and burning, eyes fixed on his uncle. In a flash, he moved like lightning. Truefyre descended with the force of a million pounds, aimed directly at Daemon.

"Roar!"

Cannibal roared repeatedly, its pitch-black wings blotting out the sky as it hovered just below the clouds.

Bang...

Daemon didn't dodge, raising his shield to block. The thick wooden shield cracked instantly under the force.

Seizing the moment, he swung his steel-forged one-handed sword across Rhaegar's waist, showing no mercy.

A green dragon pattern flared in Rhaegar's eyes as his aura peaked. He was more ruthless than Daemon, allowing the sword to cut into his side, slicing through his silver armor and grazing the skin beneath. He knew the armor's thickness well and trusted it could withstand a typical steel sword without issue.

"Uncle, you're getting old!" Rhaegar shouted coldly, kicking Daemon square in the chest and sending him staggering backward.

Taking advantage of Daemon's unsteady retreat, Rhaegar slashed with Truefyre, each strike heavier than the last.

Dang! Dang!

Daemon retreated hastily, his shield already useless. He could only raise his one-handed sword to block, but it was no match for Rhaegar's hand-and-a-half sword. The powerful swings erupted repeatedly, and with a final heavy slash, Rhaegar's blade rubbed with flames and heat waves.

Ka-chow...

The slender one-handed sword shattered, pieces flying everywhere. Daemon's face twisted in grim determination as he drew a dagger from his waist, ready to continue the fight.

"Daemon, admit defeat!" Rhaegar commanded, slashing the dagger away and pressing his sword to Daemon's brow.

In an instant, the winner was decided.

Daemon's body stiffened, his face dark with anger.

"Roar..."

Caraxes, Daemon's dragon, rose into the air, spitting scarlet dragonfire in fury. Cannibal's green vertical pupils flashed with hostility as it swooped down, ghostly green dragonfire blazing.

Boom...

The green flames filled the sky, but Caraxes dodged nimbly, disappearing into the clouds.

"Roar--"

Cannibal landed on the north shore of God's Eye Lake, his head held high in disdain. It announced a truce; now was not the time for a hunt. Caraxes, hidden above the clouds, left a faint scarlet trail across the white clouds.

In the martial arena, the brief clash between the dragons was a stunning spectacle. The nobles watched in fear, knowing they would be the first to suffer if a dragon fight broke out.

On the platform, the Targaryens were equally alarmed, standing and staring at the duel below.

Rhaegar stood over Daemon, sword poised, demanding his surrender. His cheeks were flushed, and his forehead glistened with sweat, but his violet eyes shone brightly.

Daemon, with Rhaegar's sword pressed to his forehead, forced a smile. "Not bad, you are strong."

"Enough to deal with you," Rhaegar retorted, his tone devoid of manners. Trained by Syrio in the art of fast swordplay since childhood, his speed and strength had reached an impressive level.

Dang!

The portly referee struck the gong with vigor, his red robes fluttering as he announced loudly, "Congratulations to Prince Rhaegar of House Targaryen! He has defeated all his opponents and is the champion of this tournament!"

Drummers beat a lively rhythm and trumpeters played celebratory tunes, filling the air with joy. The nobles in the audience erupted into cheers, their excitement palpable.

"Prince Rhaegar..."

"Long live the Hier Prince..."

The nobility of Westeros, known for their admiration of strength, couldn't contain their enthusiasm for the victorious prince.

In the arena, Rhaegar smiled and raised his hands to acknowledge the cheers. Though he didn't like the noise, he accepted it as his reward for winning.

The referee, still in high spirits, continued, "Prince Rhaegar has triumphed! This summer belongs to him. The land flourishes, wisdom and wealth greet all!"

His words, full of praise, resonated with the crowd. Inspired, the nobles began chanting Rhaegar's titles, each more grandiose than the last. Known as the Good Prince, Breaker of Shackles, and Ruin Maker, Rhaegar's accolades echoed across the Narrow Sea.

Yet, none seemed fitting for the moment. The title "Young Dragonlord" felt out of place. As thoughts turned to the lushness of summer and the promise of a bountiful harvest, someone remembered Rhaegar's grandfather, Baelon Targaryen, known as the Spring Prince.

In the midst of the seasonal shift from spring to summer, a voice called out, "The Summer Prince!"

Summer, representing the height of June and the blazing sun, seemed perfect. Rhaegar accepted the title with a nod, mounting his silver-white warhorse and riding slowly around the arena.

The cheers grew louder, with the nobles embracing the new title.

"The Summer Prince..."

"Long live the prince..."

On the high platform, Viserys clapped his hands and laughed, overjoyed at his eldest son's victory.

Hearing the title of "Summer Prince," his joy was palpable, and tears glistened in the corners of his eyes. His father, Baelon, had been known as the Spring Prince, a symbol of hope, glory, and the coming of the spring. Baelon was also a remarkable Targaryen, having tamed the largest dragon of his time, Vhagar.

Viserys caught a glimpse of Alicent and suddenly remembered something. He motioned for the Kingsguards, the brothers Erryk and Arryk Cargyll, to enter the field.

Rhaegar was still basking in the cheers when the Cargyll brothers approached, one carrying a wooden lance and the other holding a crown of flowers.

"Prince," Arryk said, his face alight with excitement as he offered the lance.

"Thank you, Ser," Rhaegar replied, smiling as he took it.

"Your laurels, Prince," Erryk said solemnly, presenting the flower crown woven with purple stamens.

Though the flower crown was simple, it symbolized the highest honor. Rhaegar smiled brightly and declared, "I will give it to my loving and beautiful queen."

"Roar!" Cannibal soared above the arena, letting out a high-pitched roar, sensing the emotions of its rider.

"Haha, thank you partner," Rhaegar laughed, raising his lance high. He urged his silver-white warhorse into a gallop, circling the arena to bask in the glory.

The shadow of the dragon swooped down, spraying ghostly green Dragonfire that dotted the blue sky, creating a dramatic backdrop.

Finally, he reined in his horse beneath the high platform. His handsome face, framed by silver-gold hair, gleamed in the sunlight, his violet eyes sparkling. The black dragon hovered above, his shiny silver armor gleaming and his red robes billowing.

The fence of the high platform was lined with figures-exquisitely dressed noble ladies, eyes bright with admiration, hoping to receive the "Crown of Love and Beauty".

Rhaegar held his lance high, his gaze fixed on one person. Her long silver-blond hair flowed to her waist, pulled back in a thin braid. She wore a light purple gown and a Valyrian steel pendant with three dragon heads around her neck, the simplicity of the ensemble accentuating her beauty.

Rhaenyra leaned against the fence, hands in front of her, watching him with a smile. Rhaegar approached, offering the purple flower crown at the tip of his lance, and said sincerely, "Rhaenyra, you my true queen of love and beauty."

Chapter 349: Valyrian Steel Sword – Realm's Delight

"Uh huh~"

Rhaenyra looked at him quietly without saying a word.

Rhaegar's smile remained steady as he lifted the mounted spear higher and said tenderly, "Rhaenyra, it belongs to you."

The noble ladies looked on, filled with envy and jealousy.

Helaena pulled Maris over, staring intently at the purple wreath.

Jeyne, Margaery, Alicent, and other women also gazed at the scene, knowing that being gifted with a crown of love and beauty was an honor women cherished for the rest of their lives.

Rhaenyra shook her head gently, her eyes shifting from Rhaegar to her flat belly.

Rhaegar hesitated for a moment, his movement with the mounted lance stiffening slightly.

"Phew~~"

The white horse beneath him neighed, carrying the young prince away from the high platform.

Rhaegar's eyes flashed as he held the reins, letting the horse walk away. The white horse moved briskly, kicking its hooves as it circled the arena, receiving more congratulations from the nobles.

As he rode, Rhaegar pondered the situation and soon understood what had gone wrong. Not long after, he stopped below the high platform once again.

"Prince, hand over the crown of love and beauty!"

A bold girl cried out, squeezing to the edge of the fence and waving vigorously.

The noble ladies swarmed around, their eyes fixed on Rhaegar as if he were a prize to be claimed.

"Brother, here!!!"

Helaena stood on her tiptoes, her face beaming with a smile.

She wasn't alone. Jeyne and Jessamyn also raised their hands, their eyes burning with anticipation.

Since Rhaenyra wouldn't accept the laurels of love and beauty, they hoped to receive them instead.

Rhaegar stopped beneath Rhaenyra, smiled, and raised his riding lance. "Rhaenyra, I've prepared a gift for you."

He reached into his crimson cloak and, with a flourish, pulled out a sheathed fine sword.

The sheath was made of black cowhide, the hilt as bright as the moon, and the blade was engraved with a gorgeous pattern of the dawn.

Seeing it was a lady's one-handed sword, Rhaenyra's eyes were puzzled, but she did not move.

With a light shake of his left hand, Rhaegar unsheathed the sword, revealing a two-finger-wide blade with a moonlight-white luster embellished with water wave patterns.

Holding the scabbard high, Rhaegar said seriously, "Rhaenyra, I forged it for you, a Valyrian steel sword like like Dark Sister."

Rhaenyra had admired the Warrior Queen Visenya since she was a child, even styling her hair to mimic Visenya's fine braid pulled behind her head.

Dark Sister had been gifted to their aunt Rhaenys, stipulating it was a legacy of the Master of Dragons.

For this lady's one-handed sword, Rhaegar had melted down the cherished Valyrian steel sword "Truth" to gather the necessary materials.

With the precious Valyrian steel sword before her, Rhaenyra was lost in thought for a moment before she finally spoke. "Does it have a name?"

"Valyrian Steel Sword - Realm's Delight," Rhaegar said, his gaze deep with meaning. "It belongs uniquely to you, as the third official House Sword, carrying your title from generation to generation."

The introduction of a brand-new Valyrian steel sword instantly captured everyone's attention. Throughout the vast arena, Valyrian steel swords were a rarity, with only a handful known to exist.

The Targaryen House was famed for possessing two such swords: Blackfyre and Dark Sister. Well-informed nobles were aware that the Crown Prince had acquired and reforged a Valyrian steel sword, naming it "Dragon's Claw," during the War with the Triarchy.

In the martial arts arena, the distinctive "Dragon's Claw" was conspicuously absent, replaced by a new black Valyrian steel sword, now named as "Realm's Delight."

The appearance of this new sword stirred speculation among the spectators about how many Valyrian steel swords the royal family had secretly acquired.

Rhaenyra, recognizing the significance, leaned down to accept Realm's Delight, cradling it tightly.

The sword, named after her title, delighted her beneath her composed exterior.

"Rhaenyra," Rhaegar called, spreading a smile, expecting her to accept the laurels again.

Rhaenyra glanced at him, hesitated, then said nonchalantly, "My return gift."

She angled her hands around her sword but did not touch the crown.

Rhaegar, puzzled, noticed a light object fall into his palm.

It was a strand of silver-gold slightly curly hair tied with a red ribbon.

Rhaegar frowned slightly, his gaze shifting to Helaena on the high platform. She was smiling at him, surrounded by Aegon, Tormund, and Daeron.

Filled with doubt, Rhaegar withdrew his gaze. The silver-gold hair and purple eyes were characteristic of Valyrians, and most Targaryens shared these traits. Yet, there were subtle variations within the family, such as platinum blonde or honey-colored hair, and blue or light purple eyes.

Pure bloodlines within the family often featured long, straight silver-blond hair, as seen in great-grandfather Jaehaerys, grandfather Baelon, father Viserys, and uncle Daemon.

The House Arryn in the Vale, including his mother Aemma Arryn, also had long, straight, pure silver-gold hair. Rhaegar and Rhaenyra inherited these pure traits, with long, straight silver-blond hair and violet eyes.

In contrast, Viserys and Alicent's children had slightly different features. Aegon, Helaena, and Aemond had silver-gold curly hair, with Helaena and Aemond having light and dark purple eyes, respectively.

Only little Daeron had long, straight, pure silver-gold hair and violet eyes. This distinction made him particularly favored by both Viserys and Rhaegar.

As he pondered, the white horse at his hip moved its hooves, carrying him away from the high platform. Rhaegar's expression was clouded, as he began to piece together the origin of the strand of hair. It wasn't Rhaenyra's, nor Helaena's, and none of the Velaryons or Celtigars seemed involved.

Considering the entire Riverlands, it could only belong to one of the two bastard daughters placed there. Something must have gone wrong, leading the hair to end up in Rhaenyra's possession. No wonder Tormund had been tight-lipped about his investigation; Rhaenyra had likely warned him to stay out of their sibling affairs.

Rhaegar's smile faded, and his excitement plummeted. He knew that with Rhaenyra's cunning, she was aware of his severed ties with the bastard lady. Handling this matter privately would have sufficed, but to publicly embarrass him at the tournament was harsh.

"Roar--"

A low roar echoed as the Cannibal flapped its black wings, exuding an intimidating presence. The dragon reflected Rhaegar's turbulent emotions.

"Ride!"

Rhaegar bellowed, guiding his white horse in circles around the arena. He casually slung the lance over his shoulder, and his clenched left hand ignited a flame that burned away the trivialities.

In their 16 years together, Rhaegar and Rhaenyra had rarely quarreled. The last time he felt this angry was when Rhaenyra had been lured into a brothel by Daemon, prompting him to instruct the Erryk brothers to stage a rescue.

His emotions were mixed. He was disappointed by Rhaenyra's spiteful behavior and annoyed with himself for getting involved with bastard daughters. In his moment of triumph, he faced shame.

As he rode around the arena, the cheers from the audience noticeably diminished. The nobles weren't fools; the crown prince being twice rejected in offering the crown of love and beauty hinted at deeper issues.

In the stands, Viserys' joy had vanished, replaced by a heavy heart. He never imagined his eldest son and daughter could fall out to this extent. He glanced secretly at Maester Munkun, the court record-keeper dispatched by the Citadel. Every detail of this tournament would be meticulously recorded.

The white horse brought Rhaegar back below the high platform for the third time, the atmosphere tense and uncertain.

Rhaegar restrained his smile and eased his horse into a casual trot around the arena. The white horse moved gracefully, and Rhaegar couldn't help but admire the scenery, including the eager girls on the high platform.

As the horse stopped in front of Jeyne, her hands clasped the fence, and she looked at him with concern. Rhaegar raised his riding crop, revealing the purple laurel crown, and asked with a smile, "Would you be my queen?"

"Of course," Jeyne replied, though her eyes showed a hint of helplessness. She glanced at Rhaenyra before looking back at Rhaegar, but she didn't reach out to take the laurel crown. Jeyne loved Rhaegar and desired the crown of love and beauty, but she knew this was a delicate moment in the quarrel between Rhaegar and Rhaenyra. Taking the laurel now could be problematic for both sides.

Rhaegar sighed and continued leading his horse around the arena. The girls at the edge of the fence watched with burning eyes. The horse stopped again, this time in front of Margaery, the Rose of Highgarden. Dressed in a red gown, her light red curls framed a delicate face, making her look like a blooming rose.

Rhaegar lowered the riding lance before her, and Margaery's eyes sparkled with anticipation. She took a deep breath, her low-cut dress accentuating her figure, and her brown eyes twinkled. She had convinced her father to attend the tournament to catch the Prince's eye.

Margaery was well aware of Rhaegar and Jeyne's private relationship, which, though not widely known, was no secret among the well-informed nobles. Jeyne had relied on Regent Yorbert Royce in her early years of rule, and later allied with Rhaenyra to strengthen her position as Lady of the Eyrie. Despite resistance from some valley nobles, Rhaegar's support had solidified Jeyne's rule.

Margaery, the only daughter of the Old Tyrell after the loss of his male heir, saw an opportunity. Like Jeyne and Cassandra, who had inherited Storm's End, Margaery coveted Highgarden. She aimed to follow Jeyne's example and align herself with Rhaegar, rather than seeking to marry another Targaryen prince, which seemed almost impossible.

The Queen's three sons and Crown Prince Rhaegar shared the same father but different mothers, and having one of them marry a Lady of the Realm was already the limit; there would never be a second.

"Hoo~"

Margaery calmed her nerves, cupped her cheeks with both hands, and said wistfully, "Prince, thank you for looking at it, but I think it already belongs to someone else."

Anyone with sense could see that the laurel was a hot potato.

Rhaegar shook his head and continued to lead the horse forward.

The white horse slowly lifted its hooves and passed Helaena at the edge of the fence.

"Brother..."

Helaena's eyes were full of excitement, but as soon as she opened her mouth, Maris beside her covered it.

Maris wrapped her arms around her best friend's fumbling hands and whispered in her ear, "Stop it, you're not getting any benefits from taking it."

"Ooo~~"

Helaena struggled, whimpering in dissatisfaction.

She wasn't a fool; of course she could tell something was wrong.

But Rhaenyra didn't want it, so what harm was there if she took the flower crown? It wasn't as if it was forcefully snatched.

Rhaegar squinted and, without looking back, turned his horse around and headed back.

It was fine to give it to the other noble ladies, but not to Helaena.

This little girl had impure intentions toward him and he could not respond to them.

Turning in circles, the white horse reentered below Rhaenyra.

Rhaenyra's expression was calm, holding the fine sword in her arms, with no sign of anxiety.

The Targaryen bloodline was rich in magic, and it would attract people close to each other.

No matter how far away Rhaegar went, he would eventually return to her.

Rhaegar looked up, his eyes as calm as water.

For a moment, the two siblings looked at each other, seeing through each other's eyes.

Rhaegar pulled out the ancient gold coin from his bosom, hiding it under his cloak with his hands in the air, his palms lit up with a faint fire.

Utilizing the shaping properties of the [Dragonstone] sorcery, the ancient gold coin melted and was recast.

Half a second later, a dark gold colored dragon ring appeared, barely fitting on the top of the riding spear, along with the purple flower crown.

Rhaegar's eyes cleared and he sighed, "Sister, I remembered it."

From his earliest memories, Rhaenyra had been the person who treated him the best.

In a coma before the age of three, Rhaenyra would hum a lullaby to him.

When he became the heir prince at the age of six, Rhaenyra quietly cared for him as he grew up, regardless of the past.

The siblings were intimate for three years, and now Rhaenyra had a little life in her belly.

Rhaegar really could not think of a reason to break this bond.

Rhaenyra's eyes filled with tears. She leaned over to take off the ring and flower crown, biting her lower lip. "You remember just fine."

She was just angry that Rhaegar always had to be with other women behind her back.

If Rhaegar had just been a man next to her, she would have gritted her teeth and endured it.

But they were connected by blood, born to belong to each other.

Whether they were still connected or not, she saw it as a betrayal in her eyes.

Rhaegar would have to admit fault for that!

Sniffing, Rhaenyra placed the laurel crown on top of her head, the dragon ring on her left index finger, replacing several gemstone rings on both hands.

She loved ornate accessories, whether it was expensive lace or jewels of all colors.

When she was tense, she would twirl her ring to relieve her inner stress.

“Roar—”

Cannibal growled lowly and flapped its wings to slowly lower its altitude, kicking up a gust of wind as it landed outside the tournament arena.

Rhaegar rolled off his horse and quickly walked up to the high platform.

In full view of everyone, he picked Rhaenyra up by the waist and forcefully said, “Let's go back to Dragonstone Island!”

He was going to prepare the ceremony, and the rest of the matter was out of his sight.

Chapter 350: Dragonstone Island Ceremony!

More than a month had gone by.

On Dragonstone Island, inside the Stone Drum Tower, the cobblestoned bath bubbled and steamed, filling the air with a thick mist. A figure lay submerged in the boiling water, long silver-gold hair draped over the edge of the pool, his entire body motionless except for the faint sound of snoring.

Crunch.

The bathroom door creaked open and a silhouette entered. Long silver-gold hair cascaded down her back, a black strapless dress accentuated her figure, and her bright purple eyes shone with a subtle luster.

Rhaenyra bent her knees and sat by the pool, gazing serenely at the person in the water through the steam. After a while, a mischievous smile tugged at the corner of her mouth. She twisted a strand of hair that had fallen into the pool and playfully brushed it against his handsome cheek.

"Rhaegar, you are so boring."

Rhaegar muttered without opening his eyes, ducking sideways, "Rhaenyra, stop."

Letting go of the hair, Rhaenyra reached out to pinch the tip of his nose and teased, "Get up, father and the others are here."

A month had passed. The two siblings had hidden away on Dragonstone Island, spending their days together in seclusion. The tournament had ended, and Viserys and Alicent were busy hosting the many guests and preparing for the great journey to Dragonstone Island for the upcoming ceremony.

"Wake me when we get ashore. I'm exhausted," Rhaegar murmured, turning over in the water. He lifted his arms to wrap around Rhaenyra's waist, resting his cheek against her dress-covered belly. After a month, her once-flat belly was now slightly curved, and the gown that had once fit perfectly was now a little tight.

According to both Grand Maester Orwyle and Dragonpit Maester Maynard, Rhaenyra was indeed pregnant. Her unique physique had made it difficult to detect before, but at the time of the tournament, she was two months along. Now, at three months, the fetus was stable.

Rhaenyra's eyes softened with a mixture of amusement and helplessness. She patted Rhaegar on the back, urging him like a child, "Do not make me repeat myself. We have important business to attend to."

Rhaegar opened his eyes and complained, "What do you mean I wasn't serious? I spent all night looking for that wild dragon and didn't sleep until dawn."

Rhaenyra scowled, her tone dry, "And did you find it?"

"Well, no..." Rhaegar admitted, momentarily speechless. He rubbed her slightly rounded belly, a playful glint in his eyes, as if trying to coax the baby from within.

The elusive wild dragon was cunning, often flying to Dragonstone Island under the cover of night, exploring the towering Dragonmont. The Dragonkeepers couldn't find a trace of it, only discovering remnants of its presence on the mountain.

The wild dragon had startled the dormant Silverwing the previous night. Rhaegar had driven the Cannibal to track it, but after a fruitless night, he had lost its trail in the darkness.

"Get up, don't make me lecture you," Rhaenyra chided, slapping the water to wake Rhaegar fully.

She called softly toward the door, "Daella, come in."

The bathroom door opened, and a figure entered, head bowed over a tray. Silver-blond curls framed a face with translucent white skin, bearing a slight resemblance to Rhaenyra.

Daella knelt by the pool, setting down the tray of laundry and offering a washcloth.

"Get out," Rhaegar said flatly, turning away.

Daella remained silent, glancing timidly at Rhaenyra. With a nod from Rhaenyra, she tiptoed out.

As soon as the door closed, Rhaegar stepped out of the water and wrapped his arms around Rhaenyra, nibbling on her bare neck.

"Rhaegar, don't be mean," Rhaenyra giggled, half-heartedly pushing him away while enjoying the intimacy.

She knew he was expressing his displeasure. The bastard daughters had fallen into her hands, and instead of dealing with them privately or kicking them out, she had kept Daella as her personal maid and given the younger Layla to Helaena as a playmate. It was a constant reminder to Rhaegar to mind his own business.

After some playful splashing, which soaked the hem of her black dress and outlined her delicate figure, Rhaegar calmed himself and began drying off and dressing.

"Rhaegar, carry me out," Rhaenyra demanded, her eyes dreamy and her body tingling.

Leaning down to kiss her glossy forehead, Rhaegar whispered, "You're the queen."

...

In the blink of an eye, several days passed.

Dragonstone Island, Dragonmont.

On a flat open space, several bonfires were lit, and thousands of princes and nobles gathered.

Targaryen, Velaryon, Celtigar—all the Valyrian Houses were present.

Everywhere on Dragonmont, giant dragons were either lounging or flying free.

At the center of the crowd, two figures stood facing each other.

Beneath his long silver-gold hair, Rhaegar wore a red and white outer robe with a wide, thick linen belt. His face was stoic, his long hair worn casually.

Rhaenyra stood with her head bowed, an ancient wooden headdress on her head.

Under the watchful eyes of most of the nobles and lords of the Seven Kingdoms, a ceremony following ancient Valyrian traditions was taking place.

Rhaenyra bowed her head slightly, holding a sharp dragonglass in her hand. She cut her lower lip, releasing a trickle of crimson blood.

Rhaegar held her hand and used the dragonglass to similarly cut his own lower lip.

They each dipped their forefingers into the blood, marking each other's foreheads with a vague symbol.

The marks were ancient Valyrian words.

Rhaegar's forehead bore the symbol for "blood.

Rhaenyra's forehead bore the symbol for "fire."

The black dragonglass continued to move, slicing through their palms and spurting blood.

Rhaegar and Rhaenyra looked into each other's eyes, seemingly impervious to the pain, and clasped their bleeding palms tightly.

A gold silk ribbon on a black background was wrapped around their joined hands, symbolizing the binding of their hearts.

Outside, Maester Maynard of the Dragon's Lair held his walking stick and chanted in High Valyrian:

"Hen lantoti anogar, Va syndroti vāedroma (Blood of two, Joined as one)."

Rhaenyra accepted a bronze goblet and took a slow, shallow sip before handing it to Rhaegar.

"Mēro perzot gihoti / Elēdroma iärza sir (Ghostly flame and song of shadows)."

Rhaegar, without breaking eye contact, took the goblet.

"Izuli ampā perzi, Prumi lanti sēteksi (Two hearts as embers, Forged in fourteen fires)."

Under the eyes of many, he raised the cup to his lips and drank.

Maynard's voice was low as he continued the benediction:

"Hen jeny mazilarion, Qēlossa ozundes (A future promised in glass, The stars stand witness)."

"Syndroro oño jēdo, Ry kivia mazvestraksi (The vow spoken through time, Of darkness and light)."

By the fire, Viserys watched with excitement as the long-awaited scene unfolded. Alicent, supporting her husband, heard him whisper the word "Aemma" and her lips twitched slightly.

The four younger siblings—Aegon, Helaena, Aemond, and Daeron—stood side by side, looking at their eldest sister and brother with solemnity.

This was a traditional ceremony of the ancient Valyrian Dragonlords, transcending the ceremonies of the Seven Gods of Westeros.

The bronze goblet clattered to the floor as the siblings smiled at each other.

Rhaegar leaned forward slightly, his blood-stained lips parting slightly.

Rhaenyra gazed at him fondly, tilting her head closer in response.

In that moment, all resentments vanished, leaving only love and tenderness.

Their silhouettes gradually overlapped, their hands caressing each other's necks, entwined as if intoxicated.

"Roar-"

Cannibal, perched atop Dragonmont, let out a deafening roar, his green eyes watching the ceremony below.

"Roar..."

Syrax roared incessantly, lifting his wings and hovering over the clearing, releasing a mouthful of golden dragonfire.

The dragons did their best to celebrate their riders.

In response, more dragons joined the chorus of roars.

Dreamfyre, Seasmoke, and Caraxes...

Several dragons soared into the sky, while others stood on Dragonmont, participating in this ancient ceremony.

The two figures lingered in their embrace, reluctantly parting after a while.

Rhaegar smiled, and Rhaenyra pursed her red lips slightly.

With their foreheads pressed together, they both thought, "Blood and Fire!"