

G.O Thrones 361

Chapter 361: Alright, Let's go to War!

"Prince Rhaegar, don't you think you're being too aggressive?"

Khaeldor interjected from the sidelines, his fat, tanned face taut with tension.

Rhaegar looked down at him with disdain. "In what capacity are you speaking to me, my lord?"

"I am the general representative of the Triarchy, and I am in charge of these negotiations," Khaeldor replied, straightening his clothes.

Myr had suffered greatly since the defeat at the Second Battle of the Stepstones, and Khaeldor was now the only magister left. He had made a fortune rebuilding the city, becoming the richest merchant in the city-state.

Rhaegar snorted. "A 'general representative,' indeed." He swept his gaze over the Triarchy representatives, finally fixing his cold stare on Khaeldor. "I'm asking you one thing: will you return Morghul or not?"

Under Rhaegar's violet gaze, Khaeldor's nerves tightened, and he swallowed hard. His heart raced, but the prospect of taming a dragon outweighed his fear. It was a businessman's nature to seek profit.

Khaeldor straightened his back, his large belly protruding, and said in a deep voice, "Morghul is a wild dragon. It has no master or rider and now belongs to the Triarchy!"

"Rubbish!" Rhaegar's face darkened. "My great-grandmother Queen Alysanne's mount Silverwing still resides on Dragonstone Island without a rider. Does that mean you can capture it as well?"

Khaeldor gritted his teeth. "Targaryen has never had an adult dragon named Morghul. It is fundamentally a masterless dragon."

"If you refuse to hand over Morghul, then prepare to see fire and blood!" Rhaegar's patience snapped, and the negotiations collapsed.

The tension around the stone table was palpable. Helaena clenched her fists nervously, while excitement flashed in Aemond's eyes as he glanced at his brother.

Seeing the confrontation escalate, Ferrego hurriedly stood up, laughing brightly. "Let's not rush into anger. We can negotiate the ownership of the wild dragon."

Bang!

Rhaenys slapped the table and turned her cold gaze to Ferrego. "Sealord, The Targaryens will not allow any dragons to be taken, nor will we tolerate anyone who dares to try it!"

The temperature in the room seemed to drop to freezing. Everyone knew that the Sealord of Braavos had been insincere, secretly aiding the Triarchy to suppress the Targaryens.

Rhaegar's eyes were icy. "Sealord, can I take it from your words that you have allied yourself with the Triarchy to declare war on Targaryen?"

Ferrego was momentarily speechless. He glanced at Khaeldor and then said with forced resolve, "Prince Rhaegar, the wild dragons do not belong to the Targaryens."

Rhaegar laughed derisively. "I didn't know there were dragons in the world that didn't belong to the Targaryens."

He crossed his arms and said, "Very well, then let's go to war."

Rhaegar's patience was exhausted, since they wish for war, he will grant them a song of blood and fire that will be remembered in history!

Khaeldor, his face flushed with anger, stood up violently. "Liar! Do you think this is still the Freehold era? Targaryens was just a poor Dragonlord family. Many lineages in Essos are more noble than your bloodline!"

The representatives of Lys and Tyrosh stood up as well, turning the negotiation into a confrontation. Crunch.

Rhaegar's chair scraped against the floor as he stood, the harsh sound echoing through the room. Khaeldor's face was grim as he stared at the silver-haired prince rising before him, his large belly heaving with each rapid breath.

Khaeldor's confidence was bolstered by the five hundred Unsullied soldiers under his command and the alliance with the Sealord of Braavos. This alliance was the backbone of his courage to challenge the Targaryen heir prince. His breath grew heavier, and he glanced at his ally Ferego, puffing out his chest with a proud demeanor.

But as his gaze returned to Rhaegar, a pale, jade-like hand shot out before his eyes.

Bang!

Khaeldor's head slammed into the stone table. He tried to scream, but his throat was crushed in Rhaegar's iron grip.

"My lord, I admire your courage," Rhaegar sneered, lifting Khaeldor up like a small chicken and slamming his dark face into the table again and again.

Boom. Boom. Boom.

The relentless blows sent blood flying, an unbridled release of Rhaegar's pent-up rage. A lowly slaver who dared to defy him was beyond reproach.

"Stop!"

The sudden violence stunned the Lys and Tyrosh representatives, who shouted in alarm.

Swish.

Helaena, her face tense, drew a small, pocket-sized sword from her sleeve and pressed it against the Lys youth's solar plexus. "Don't move."

Simultaneously, madness flashed in Aemond's eyes. He smashed a ceramic cup from the table and held a sharp shard against the Tyrosh youth's neck, nearly severing his throat. Blood flowed freely.

The Qohor representative's face turned white with panic. "Targaryens, please, let's talk this out!"

As the old man tried to rise, Aegon sprang up, grabbed his head, and slammed it against the table. "Old fool, stay down!"

The meeting room transformed into an execution ground. One by one, the four Targaryen heirs unleashed their fury, having waited for this moment.

"Stop! Stop this at once!"

Ferrego's face was pale with shock. His gaze shifted from the cold-faced Rhaenys to the executioner-like Rhaegar. Rage and fear mingled in his eyes.

The lean swordsman beside Ferrego drew his blade, stepping forward to protect the Sealord.

Clatter...

Hearing the commotion outside, a group of guards quickly rushed into the conference room, their spears and swords raised as they surrounded everyone. Rhaenys stood haughtily, holding her sword, Dark Sister, as she gazed at Ferrego, who cowered in the doorway.

Only the Pentos representatives and Daemon remained at the conference table.

"Gentlemen..." the stunned Pentos representative began, trying to make peace.

Daemon squeezed his shoulder, keeping an eye on his nephews and nieces, and smiled slightly at Ferrego. "What, you still think you can keep us here?"

Ferrego's face turned red with anger. "Prince Daemon, you openly attack a guest in my palace. Do you think Braavos is easy to bully?"

"Oh?" Daemon rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Wasn't it you who first thought the Targaryens were easy to bully?"

Ferrego's anger boiled over, his beard trembling as he pointed at Rhaegar, who was methodically smashing Khaeldor's head into the table. "He's committing murder!"

Rhaegar paused and turned to give a cold warning. "If you don't want to lose that finger, put it down."

"You..." Ferrego stuttered, unable to comprehend the Iron Throne's newfound audacity.

Suddenly, a dragon's roar echoed through the room, loud and piercing. The floor-to-ceiling windows darkened as a shadow fell across them.

Ferrego's eyes widened in horror as a massive, pitch-black dragon's head slowly emerged, its green vertical pupils glowing with a cold light, like an evil god watching over them.

The dragon bared its teeth, revealing interlocking sharp fangs, and exhaled a mouthful of ghostly green dragonfire. The intense heat shattered the glass window, sending a torrent of searing air into the room.

Even from over ten meters away, Ferrego's hair and beard began to singe, the acrid smell of burning hair filling the room.

Rhaegar stood with his back to the dragonfire, his silver hair blowing in the wind, his purple eyes glowing with fury. With one hand, he dragged the half-dead, bloodied Khaeldor toward Ferrego.

"Stop!" The thin swordsman cried, his fear evident as he glanced at the dragon.

The guards surrounding the chamber broke ranks, screaming and wailing in terror as the heat washed over them.

Rhaegar stopped in the middle, his expression fierce. "I said it was war!"

With that, he slammed his fist into Khaeldor's throat, then used his other hand to rip out part of the man's throat, the gruesome act silencing the room.

"Ho ho..."

Khaeldor couldn't even scream, his face contorted in agony as he clutched his throat, his black, fat body writhing like a dying maggot. Slowly, painfully, he succumbed.

Rhaegar glanced at Ferrego and scornfully declared, "Sealord, the first blood of the war has been shed."

He raised his blood-soaked palm, and the severed throat flew out, snapping off like discarded garbage.

The grisly piece slid across the white stone floor, leaving a vivid trail of blood, and came to a stop at Ferrego's feet.

Ferrego was stunned, his chest heaving with a mixture of rage and fear, unable to utter a word - neither to curse nor to spit venom.

Unconcerned, Rhaegar stooped, pulled a silk handkerchief from Khaeldor's breast pocket to wipe his hands, and headed for the door. "Dragonfire will first fall on Lys. Please, expect it."

His words echoed and drew an immediate response from his siblings.

Helaena glanced timidly at the Lys representative, and with a firm thrust, drove her small sword through his temple, the blade piercing his entire head.

Stab!

Aemond moved even faster, the porcelain shard slicing through the Tyrosh representative's throat, blood spurting three feet away.

Not to be outdone, Aegon laughed wickedly and grabbed the old man's head from Qohor, intending to smash it against the table.

The old man immediately pissed himself and yelled, "I'm not one of them!"

"Hm?"

Aegon hesitated, glanced at Helaena and Aemond, who had already completed their tasks, and scornfully released the old man.

With Rhaegar leading the way, the four young Targaryens walked out the door one by one.

"Heh, a good show," Daemon grinned as he rose, tugging the Pentos representative along. This was how wars should be fought—the more intense, the better. His brother's son was much more bloodthirsty than his father.

Rhaenys frowned, refraining from commenting on her cousin's approach, and turned to leave the conference room.

After the Targaryens exited, Ferrego looked at the field of corpses and the screaming guards, trembling in a daze.

Taking a few labored breaths, he turned to glare at the silver-haired figures walking down the corridor, unable to control his urge to curse.

Swish—

Sensing the malice behind them, the silver-haired figures turned their heads in unison, staring back with cold, unyielding eyes.

The corridor's dim light cast shadows on the white stone walls, and six pairs of violet eyes shone with a cold, deadly aura.

Ferrego hiccupped in surprise, the words dying in his throat.

A phrase came hastily to mind:

"Blood and Fire!"

Chapter 362: Valyrian Steel Sword – Long Summer

Seven days later.

Dragonstone Island, Chamber of the Painted Table.

"Gentlemen, since we are all here, it's time to formulate our strategy," Rhaegar announced solemnly, looking around the room.

Present were members of the Targaryen and Velaryon Houses, Small Council members, Bartimos Celtigar of Claw Isle, and Royce Caron representing the Stormlands, among others.

Corlys Velaryon unrolled a two-meter wide, five-meter long map of the Narrow Sea, pointing to the Stepstones Islands. "The Iron Throne has officially declared war on the Triarchy. They've been preparing for this and will likely aim to capture the Stepstones first to control the shipping lanes and trade."

Daemon's eyes sparkled as he pointed to Lys on the map. "Lys has captured Morghul and is the strongest of the Triarchy, also the closest city-state to the Stepstones. We should send out the dragons to burn them en masse, coordinate with our fleet to seize the route, and attack the harbor."

Both men, with their battlefield experience, had been preparing and planning diligently.

"Not a bad proposal," Rhaegar nodded, considering the sea charts. "But there's an issue: we don't have as many battle-ready dragons as we need."

He glanced around the room.

Rhaenyra, hands caressing her growing belly, sat nearby. Laena, assisted by Celine, was surrounded by her twin daughters. Helaena, Aemond, and Daeron were too young to fight. And his father, sitting across the table, was too ill to ride a dragon into battle.

Bartimos of Claw Isle leaned forward, eyes gleaming with shrewdness. "Prince, the dragons we can field aren't as few as you think."

Daemon took over, listing the dragons. "We have Cannibal, Caraxes, Meleys, Seasmoke, and Sunfyre ready for battle. Five dragons can devastate any free city."

"If I command the battlefield, Lys will fall within half a month," he asserted confidently.

Viserys, glum, interjected, "But we face more than one enemy city-state."

He had hoped negotiations would prevent war, but the young Targaryens had brutally ended that hope by slaughtering the Triarchy's representatives.

Lyonel Strong agreed, "The Triarchy's fleet is strong, and they've borrowed money from the Iron Bank to hire many mercenaries. Plus, Braavos and Dorne will likely interfere, threatening our rear."

"War has already begun; we can't afford to hesitate," Daemon said firmly. "Gather the fleets of Velaryon, Celtigar, Gulltown, and Storm's End. With the Five Dragons leading the charge, Lys will fall."

Otto Hightower frowned, worried. "Prince, you know the Triarchy has amassed a large force. A direct assault risks heavy losses for our army."

The conversation highlighted a critical issue: battlefield command.

The fleet from Oldtown was still en route, but their arrival was imminent. If the reckless Daemon led the strategy, Hightower's soldiers might not survive to return home.

Daemon's face grew cold as he stared at Otto, the two old enemies locking eyes in mutual disdain.

Knock Knock...

As the tension rose, Rhaegar knocked on the table, steering the conversation back on track. "A frontal assault with too many casualties isn't what the kingdom needs. And we must remember, Lys still holds an untouchable weapon."

He glanced at Tormund, who promptly pulled out a letter. "The wild dragon Morghul is in the hands of Lys. The Triarchy has summoned all Valyrian descendants of Essos to tame the dragon in what they call the 'Red Sowing'."

Half a month had passed, and every day saw dozens or hundreds attempting to tame the dragon, only to end up as its victims.

The hall fell silent, the gravity of the situation sinking in.

Viserys grimaced, teeth clenched. "A bunch of despicable thieves, trying to steal House Targaryen's dragons!"

The implications were clear. If someone succeeded in taming Morghul, it would not only shift the battlefield but also inspire others to covet their dragons. The possibility of someone stealing dragon eggs or taming a wild dragon on Dragonstone increased, a potential disaster for the Targaryens.

Daemon's face hardened. He pounded the table. "That's why we need to strike quickly, break through Lys, and recapture the wild dragon."

Rhaegar nodded in agreement. "The sooner the war is decided, the better. But, Uncle, your strategy is a huge drain on the nation's resources."

He looked directly at his father, stating, "I propose that I serve as commander-in-chief, with Lord Corlys commanding the sea and Daemon as vanguard officer."

Daemon retorted immediately, "You've hardly ever commanded a large legion in battle, and you were soft a few years ago."

Rhaegar shot back, "I commanded the Second Battle of the Stepstones, leading us to victory."

He left unsaid that Daemon had been imprisoned in the Red Keep at the time.

Uncle and nephew glared at each other, the room thick with tension.

Viserys, plagued by a headache, glanced at the calm Corlys and made a decision. "I agree with Rhaegar's proposal. It makes sense for the Heir Prince to be the commander."

He couldn't risk giving Daemon and the Sea Snake too much power.

Rhaegar smiled. "Then I'll outline a plan, and you can all suggest improvements."

"No objections, Prince," came the chorus of agreement from the advisors.

Rhaenyra smiled softly, leaning towards Rhaegar. He returned her smile, gripping the back of his chair.

The siblings were firmly in command.

There were only two people seated in the Painted Table: Viserys and Rhaegar.

There were only two people sitting in the great chamber of the Painted Table: Viserys and Rhaegar.

Rhaenyra, late in her pregnancy, had given up her chair to Rhaegar. Meanwhile, Laena, even further along in her pregnancy, had to rely on Celine for support as she stood.

Rhaegar, adopting a serious tone, began, "The Triarchy covets the Stepstones. With war imminent, they will likely make it their main battleground to block our armies."

He continued, taking the discussion in a new direction. "To achieve a quick victory, the strategic importance of the Stepstones themselves is secondary. Capturing the city-states of the Triarchy is critical."

"I propose that we abandon the defensive forces on the Stepstones and assign Daemon to lead the Stormlands fleet in an attack on one of their city-states."

"Lord Corlys will command the fleets of Velaryon, Celtigar, and Gulltown, splitting our forces to take another city-state with the support of our remaining dragons."

Rhaegar laid out a strategy to divide and conquer, aiming to minimize casualties. "Braavos and Dorne will cause trouble. Sunfyre will guard Gulltown, Dreamfyre will protect Claw Isle, and these two dragons will assist in securing the Narrow Sea."

Turning to Aemond, who was listening intently, he said, "Sheepstealer will be stationed at Storm's End to monitor movements at Cape Wrath and Boneway. You're authorized to take temporary measures, but avoid direct engagement."

Viserys, looking perplexed, hesitated. "Do we really need to involve Helaena and Aemond in these missions?"

Rhaegar glanced at his younger siblings and nodded. "This negotiation has shown me their growth. Besides, they ride two formidable dragons and are capable of defending themselves."

Dreamfyre and Sheepstealer were substantial enough to significantly impact a flanking battle, second in size only to true adult dragons.

"Father, leave the Stormlands to me!" Aemond spoke up eagerly, his eyes shining with the desire for recognition.

Helaena added, "Dreamfyre and I can hold Claw Isle and fend off any harassment from Braavos."

Bartimos, nodding in agreement, remarked, "The middle of the Narrow Sea is lightly defended. Two dragons can alleviate a great deal of pressure."

Viserys, still uncertain, glanced at his youngest son Daeron, who was playing at his feet, and sighed. He felt confident in Aegon, who had already seen battle. Helaena and Aemond, however, were a different matter.

Yet, with Claw Isle's proximity to Dragonstone and Driftmark, and Aegon guarding Gulltown, the risks seemed manageable for Helaena. But Aemond, potentially facing the Triarchy's pirates or a Dornish invasion, caused him more concern.

Finally, Rhaegar reassured him. "Father, they are ready. They can shoulder significant responsibilities on the flanking battlefield, easing the burden on us."

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Near Dragonmont.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre roared proudly, his golden scales gleaming brightly. His broad wings spread wide against the ground, the light pink membranes translucent and splendid.

More than ten meters away, Dreamfyre lay prostrate, its light blue scales mimicking the clear sky, and its silver back scales dotted like white clouds.

Nearby, beneath Dreamfyre's neck, Helaena stroked the dragon's scales and glanced sideways toward the back.

Rhaegar smiled, gripping a one-handed sword with a dark green scabbard. Its hilt was silver and white, adorned with a delicately carved budding stamen, and a spiral blade that complemented its elegance.

Aemond was already impatiently riding Sheepstealer to Storm's End Castle to compete with Aegon and Helaena.

Rhaegar reached out, gently rubbing Helaena's head, and asked with a smile, "Where's your sword?"

Helaena's large, bright eyes flickered as she gazed at the one-handed sword and replied candidly, "It's stuck in that Lysene's head."

"Uh..."

Rhaegar's eyelids twitched, taken aback by the young girl's blunt admission.

He handed her the sword, saying earnestly, "Remember? This is the gift I promised you when you learned swordsmanship."

"Thank you, brother."

Helaena, excited, reached out her small, plump hand to grasp the sword and drew it smoothly.

Swish—

A cold light flashed as the silver blade, two fingers wide and engraved with petals that resembled dragon scales, was revealed. The straight, slender blade shimmered with water ripple patterns, unmistakably made of Valyrian steel.

Rhaegar chuckled. "This sword was forged in the same furnace as Truefyre and Realm's Delight. You may name it as you wish."

These three swords were his pride, forged from the rare steel of Brightroar and Truth.

Sniffing the blade affectionately, Helaena's round eyes sparkled as she carefully declared, "This sword will be called Long Summer."

Rhaegar, known as the Summer Prince and recently knighted, smiled at the fitting name. "The ancient lands of Valyria were known as Long Summer—a good choice."

Helaena treated Long Summer as her prized possession, waving it several times before sheathing it and strapping it to her waist. Standing about 160 centimeters tall at 13 years old, she was well-suited to wield a one-handed sword.

"Brother, I'm leaving."

Helaena hugged Rhaegar reluctantly and then descended the soft ladder, grasping Dreamfyre's scales.

"Be cautious in all matters, and let Aegon take the lead if needed."

Rhaegar adjusted her green cloak and watched her mount the dragon.

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre and Sunfyre roared as they competed in spirit, soaring away from Dragonstone Island with their riders.

With hands clasped behind his back, Rhaegar watched the dragons depart.

"Prince, the people you asked have arrived," announced Tormund, clad in black and white robes. He was followed by a dozen young men and women with silver hair and purple eyes.

Chapter 363: Red Sowing

"Roar--"

Atop the towering Dragonmont, a colossal dragon, black as charcoal, soared through the sky. It flexed its burly frame, stretching its vast wings.

As it elevated its wings, the dragon dipped its head and swooped down, its green eyes fixed on the open space below.

Rhaegar stood with his arms crossed, his black robe billowing in the wind.

A few meters behind him, a group of ragtag bastards, clad in coarse linen, huddled together for warmth.

"Roar..."

Cannibal circled the sky, gradually folding its wings before landing heavily on the ground with a thunderous thud. Debris scattered and dust billowed in all directions.

Cannibal emitted a low growl and rose, wings bracing against the ground, its formidable head obscuring the figure of its rider.

"Well done."

Rhaegar smiled, reaching out to stroke the dragon's pitch-black scales, cold as steel under his touch.

He slowly turned, eyeing the dozen or so bastards, and asked softly, "Do any of you desire a dragon?"

Awe-struck, the bastards gasped, their eyes locked on the immense, mountainous form of Cannibal, their longing almost tangible.

This was a dragon!

For bastards born to fishermen and herders, it represented the ultimate power and wealth.

Yet, this symbol of ascendance was usually out of reach, merely a distant dream.

They weren't even deemed worthy of touching it.

Rhaegar's expression remained impassive, waiting for a volunteer.

Knowing well what this opportunity meant, the first to step forward did so without hesitation.

"Prince, I want a dragon!"

From the crowd emerged a towering, silver-haired man with broad shoulders. His stride was confident as he made his way forward.

This man bore the visage of youth, his arms thick and scarred from years of blacksmithing.

"What is your name?" Rhaegar asked, scrutinizing him.

The man approached, kneeling before Rhaegar, his voice gruff: "My name is Hugh Waters, a humble blacksmith from the town."

Rhaegar nodded slightly and surveyed the others, asking flatly, "Is he the only one?"

Rhaegar nodded gently and looked at the group of bastards once more, saying blandly, "Is he the only one who wants a dragon?"

"And me!" shouted a dry, thin man with silvery blond curls, struggling to push his way out of the crowd despite his unkempt beard.

With him was a pale-haired, wobbly-footed young man.

Rhaegar looked at the man and asked for his name.

The skinny man knelt on one knee, lifted his slightly handsome face, and said excitedly, "Prince, my name is Silver Denys, and I participated in the Second Stepstones War."

He tapped his somewhat sloping left leg, proving, "This is the injury I received from fighting with the pirates of the Triarchy, and I was left with a disability."

Rhaegar looked him over and frowned slightly.

His body was dry and thin, reeking of alcohol. His left hand was missing his ring finger and pinky, and his right hand was missing its pinky. He did not look like a respectable person.

Tormund whispered in Rhaegar's ear, "An old gambler with debts and chopped-off fingers, but with a respectable battlefield performance."

Rhaegar nodded and turned to the other white-haired youth.

"Prince, my name is Ulf. I also participated in the Second Stepstones War," the youth introduced nervously, gulping with trepidation.

Tormund continued, "A drunkard who went to war for money."

Rhaegar remained impartial. Regardless of the bastards' characters, as long as they could bring back the wild dragon Morghul, he would give them their reward.

Rhaegar surveyed the group one by one and said sternly, "I believe you have heard that the kingdom is once again at war with the Triarchy."

The bastards looked at each other, unsure of how to react.

Without hesitation, Rhaegar said loudly, "There is a Targaryen masterless dragon in Lys, and your task is to bring that dragon back to me!"

Didn't you want Red Sowing?

Then he also included some bastards with stronger bloodlines, giving them the same probability of taming Morghul. The difference between the Valyrian descendants of the Triarchy and the bastards was not much.

At least the bastards were still beholden to the Targaryens, who provided them with shelter and money. If successful, titles and fiefs could be awarded.

All he had to do was wait for one of the bastards to return with dragons to claim his reward. Just one thing: the moment the dragon landed in Westeros, its lair was to be secured immediately.

When the bastards heard that they could tame a dragon openly and honestly, with gold, silver, and treasure waiting for them, their eyes lit up.

Not only the three who introduced themselves, but a dozen bastards fell to their knees and eagerly volunteered to go to Lys. A bastard's life was cheap, and they did not care whether they lived or died. Whoever could tame the dragon would immediately become famous. This deal was worth it!

The corner of Rhaegar's mouth curled into a smile. He signaled Tormund with his eyes to proceed, and then he stepped onto the soft ladder and climbed onto the dragon's back.

"Roar..."

Cannibal roared with its head held high, its wide, pitch-black wings spreading out hundreds of meters as it leapt into the sky.

In front of a group of bastards, it perfectly demonstrated what a true dragon was.

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Time passed and three days passed.

Stepstones, Gray Gallows Island.

"Roar..."

A dragon's roar, as loud as a bell, echoed across the entire island. A pitch-black dragon soared in the sky, swooping down to spray ethereal green Dragonfire.

"Dracarys!"

At the young man's command, the Dragonfire flowed continuously, splashing like ink.

Beneath the Dragonfire, a dozen pirate ships flying the flag of the Triarchy suffered a destructive blow, instantly igniting in a forest of green flames.

On the beach, the pirates who had landed earlier swarmed. Fortunately, the island had a watchtower and stationed archers, who briefly held off the pirates with a barrage of arrows.

"Dracarys!"

Rhaegar, riding on the dragon's back, gave the command with an expressionless face.

"Roar..."

Cannibal turned back, its pitch-black body swooping down against the steel spears launched by dozens of scorpion crossbows. It unleashed another torrent of Dragonfire, turning iron into molten slag.

Occasionally, a steel spear would strike its pitch-black scales, but they crumbled away upon impact, failing to penetrate the dragon's defenses.

The green Dragonfire incinerated the pirate ships in a series, burying the pirates and scorpion crossbows in a sea of flames. The dragon's thick, long tail snapped a ship's mast, sending waves crashing as it smashed into the sea.

Head held high, the dragon soared over the beach, sweeping the pirates' remnants away with dragonfire.

After half a dozen sweeps, it began to clean up the battlefield.

Cannibal landed on the beach, and Rhaegar, still on his back, overlooked the busy soldiers below.

Robb, dressed in silver and gray armor, approached.

Rhaegar asked, "How many men do we have left?"

"Less than five hundred on the two large islands combined," Robb replied, his face heavy.

If it weren't for the Prince and Cannibal, this amount of manpower would never have been able to repel the relentless attacks from the Triarchy.

Rhaegar exhaled and said, "It doesn't matter. Daemon is attacking Tyrosh, and Lord Corlys is leading the main fleet to attack Lys. We'll soon see the results."

"I hope so," Robb nodded heavily and turned to command the nearby soldiers to carry away the corpses.

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In Lys, white and gray stone buildings dominated the landscape, giving the city-state a stark, fortified appearance. Watchtowers were spread strategically across the city, adding to its defensive posture.

On the west side of the harbor stood a domed structure, originally an arena, now repurposed and sealed off with bronze gates.

Inside, the atmosphere was a stark contrast to the bustling city outside. The space was dimly lit, illuminated only by a series of bonfires, creating an enclosure where the wind scarcely entered.

A low, resonant roar echoed intermittently, each time sending waves of scorching air mixed with a pungent sulfur stench through the space. At the heart of this enclosure lay Morghul, a behemoth of a dragon nearly sixty meters in length. Its immense body sprawled across the stone floor, huge head drooping, nostrils flaring with heavy breaths. The dragon's scales shimmered silver and black, its wing membranes a misty gray.

The creature's head was adorned with two backward-curving grayish-white horns, and its long, thick tail was notably missing a piece. Despite its majestic appearance, the dragon was restrained; dense chains encircled its neck and limbs, tethering it to the ground and rendering it powerless.

A middle-aged man with flowing silver hair, visibly nervous, approached the dragon with a goat in tow, hoping to curry favor by feeding it.

"Morghul, heed my command," he murmured in a shaky voice, trying to get the dragon's attention.

Unmoved, Morghul lay still, eyes closed, ignoring the man's advances.

"Good dragon... let me touch you," the man whispered, moving closer.

At that moment, a shadow suddenly loomed over him. The air stirred violently, and he froze, slowly looking up.

Above him hovered Morghul's massive head, black vertical pupils staring down indifferently. With a heavy snort and an ominous growl, the dragon opened its jaws wide.

"Roar!!"

A blast of grayish Dragonfire engulfed the man in an instant, incinerating him along with the unfortunate goat that had managed to flee a short distance.

Outside the building, a man and woman watched the scene unfold, blocking a dozen mercenaries at the entrance.

The man, Bambaro Bazane, a magister of Lys, had a stern look. "Bring another dragon seed," he commanded.

A mercenary quickly ushered in a skinny teenager with short silver-blond hair, visibly frightened, holding a raw fish as an offering to the dragon.

The only beautiful woman present turned away and murmured, "Another snack for the dragon."

She was delicately built, her slender form enveloped in a flowing silk robe that subtly outlined her petite curves.

Her hair, a cascade of waist-length black curls, contrasted starkly with her pale, tender skin, framing an ethereally light and pure visage.

Bambarro chuckled. "Hard to believe the Black Swan still harbors any tenderness."

Johanna gave him a fleeting glance and said quietly, "The Iron Throne's fleet has split in two. The formidable Velaryon fleet is making a beeline for Lys. It's time you devised a strategy."

Bambarro's eyes hardened as he responded, his voice deep, "Scorpion crossbows stand ready both inside and outside the city-state. A hundred warships wait beyond the harbor, and with the fortune I've borrowed from the Iron Bank, I must tame that wild dragon!"

To conquer a dragon, he had invested heavily, spilling blood money.

Seeing her words were in vain, Johanna smiled wryly and said, "I'm returning to the Perfume Garden. The Archon of Volantis awaits my company."

"Very well," Bambarro dismissed her, gesturing impatiently.

With a graceful curtsy, Johanna exited the building with poise.

As the bronze doors closed, faint, mournful cries echoed from within.

Shaking her head slightly, Johanna stepped into her elaborate carriage.

Inside, a voluptuous woman in a diaphanous veil knelt on the floor, her head bowed in submission.

Johanna reclined on the plush couch, idly twirling a black and white rose. "Can you reach Dragonstone Island?" she asked quietly.

Johanna Swann, once captured by pirates before the initial Battle of the Stepstones Islands, had been abandoned by her uncle, Lord Swann, who refused her ransom. Taken to Lys's Pleasure House, her beauty and cunning soon allowed her to navigate and eventually dominate the elite circles of Lys, earning her the moniker "Black Swan."

Chapter 364: The Battle of Myr

Several days had passed, the conflict escalating mercilessly.

A fleet of dozens, launched from the Stepstones Islands, bypassed the disputed lands near Tyrosh and sailed into Lysene waters with the precision of a sharpened blade.

At Lys harbor, a hundred pirate warships emerged, marshaling tens of thousands of mercenaries and preparing an army to confront the advancing enemy fleet.

From a distance, the two forces eyed each other, the brink of battle looming.

With a piercing shriek, a scarlet dragon, its wings broad and neck serpent-like, cleaved through the clouds and descended over the sea, initiating its attack.

Suddenly, a blast of dragonfire streaked from the skies, targeting a pirate ship of the Triarchy.

The haunting sound of a war horn echoed as dozens of warships, adorned with seahorses and red crabs, aligned impeccably. Catapults loaded with oil-soaked stones stood ready on their decks.

"Counterattack! Surround them!" bellowed voices from the Triarchy, as scorpion crossbows, laden with steel bolts, aimed at the assaulting fleet and the dragons above.

"Dracarys!" Daemon, astride Caraxes, commanded. His attire, a pitch-black dragon scale armor with a crimson cape, marked him as the battlefield commander of the Lys Sea engagement.

Caraxes let out a high-pitched scream, its echo a sonic wave, as it elegantly soared, unleashing continuous torrents of dragonfire on the pirate ships below.

"Release the crossbows!" shouted a robust man with red curls and olive skin, wielding a scimitar as he directed the mercenaries in a calculated counter.

This was Sharako Lohar, a famed mercenary leader from Myr and the Navy Commander of the Triarchy.

Daemon's eyes gleamed with sarcasm as he ordered another onslaught of "Dracarys!"

Caraxes responded with continuous roars, its wide, scarlet wings flapping vigorously as it spewed fire over a pirate ship.

The dragon, seasoned in naval combat, adeptly dodged incoming bolts, safeguarding both itself and its rider.

Despite their numbers, the mercenaries were clearly at a disadvantage, their inexperience with dragons causing disarray and panic.

"Crossbows on that dragon! And if you miss, use the crossbows on yourselves!" Sharako roared as he shoved aside panicking crewmen, seizing the ship's wheel to take aim at the looming Blood Wurm.

At just the right moment, as the Blood Wurm dove to release its fire, Sharako's eyes hardened and he triggered the launcher.

The steel bolt shot forth, narrowly missing the unsuspecting Blood Wurm.

Daemon, commanding the fleet's advance, felt a chill as danger approached.

"Roar..." Caraxes sensed the peril, swiftly curling its body to ascend, instinctively seeking cloud cover to evade the enemy.

The bolt grazed its slender tail, causing no damage. Daemon's gaze turned icy as he watched the enemy ship that had fired.

"Fire!" he commanded, as a barrage of steel spears rained down, forcing Caraxes to retreat once more.

"Damned fools!" Daemon cursed, maneuvering his dragon into a defensive loop.

Meanwhile, warships flying the flags of the Houses of Velaryon and Celtigar rammed the Triarchy's ships with suicidal fervor.

The impact was catastrophic: wood splintered, screams filled the air, and the sea became a chaotic mess of men and debris. The battle became a brutal melee.

That night, under the eerie glow of torchlight, the makeshift Dragonpit in Lys echoed with the unsettling sound of a dragon's roar.

The low, guttural call of Morghul reverberated through the chamber, mingling with the harsh clank of chains. The captive dragon, in a fit of fury, snapped violently, unleashing a blast of smoky gray dragonfire, desperate to incinerate the confinements of its prison.

The creature was plagued by incessant disturbances from the mercenaries, growing weary of the meager fare it was forced to consume.

Outside the bronze gates, a group of mercenaries watched the masterless beast's rage with a mix of fear and fascination.

"We're close to breaking its will," Bambarro declared, barely containing his excitement.

Beside him, a gaunt old man with a white beard and hair, his eyes clouded and distant, peered intently at the dragon. Draped in a blood-red robe and leaning on a gnarled scepter, he rasped, "After sacrificing hundreds from Valyrian blood by feeding it, we've finally seen the dragon's resilience wane."

Known as Priest Roth, this blood wizard had journeyed across the vast Dothraki Sea to serve in this grim endeavor. His methods involved blood sorcery intended to sap the will of dragons.

With reverence, Bambarro asked, "Priest Roth, shall we attempt another taming tonight?"

Roth shook his head, his voice gravelly, "This dragon's intellect rivals that of man. Giving it a rest tonight may make it easier to control later."

After a few final instructions, the old priest limped away on his staff.

Rubbing his hands in eager anticipation, Bambarro then received reports from his subordinates. "The Iron Throne's fleet was defeated at sea, and Daemon Targaryen refuses to unleash the dragons for another strike, fearing a second confrontation."

Chuckling, Bambarro mused, "We've secured the Stepstones Islands and blocked all trade through the Narrow Sea. Do the Targaryens really think a few dragons can take Lys unaided?"

Despite his bravado, a flicker of concern crossed his mind. "Keep your eyes on Volantis, those territories are watching Lys closely."

"Yes, Magister."

"Send word to the Archon of Tyrosh. The Iron Throne may be splitting their forces for a pincer attack. Tell them to strengthen their naval defenses."

Bambarro's strategies had been shaped by whispers and warnings of Targaryen tactics, including their previous stealth attacks on Lys, proving that he was as cunning as he was ruthless.

...

As Bambarro anticipated, the waters near Tyrosh were not spared from conflict.

A fleet of ten warships bearing the seahorse flag boldly initiated an assault on Tyrosh's patrol vessels, triggering a fierce skirmish at sea. The Velaryon ships, adept in their maneuvers, dominated the encounter, seizing control of the disputed waters and systematically targeting isolated patrol ships.

Archon Milov Strobe of Tyrosh, infuriated by the audacity and success of the Velaryon fleet, took matters into his own hands. With a fiery resolve, he commanded a squadron of thirty ships to pursue and engage the enemy.

In a relentless battle on the turbulent seas, Strobe's forces decisively defeated the Velaryon fleet, sinking their ships and quelling their threat.

This victory marked the downfall of both fleets from the Iron Throne that had ventured forth from the Stepstones Islands, each being systematically dismantled in their respective encounters.

...

Myr.

Nestled in the Bay on the continent of Essos in the Sea of Myrth, this city-state enjoys a strategic location.

Inside the Magisters' Palace, the Council Chamber feels emptier than usual without Khaeldor Astor. Only an elderly man and a young man remain.

Their conversation does not revolve around taming dragons or repelling an attack from the Iron Throne. The fate of the Valyrian descendants sent to Lys is now in the hands of the gods.

Geographically, Myr stands independently on the continent, meaning any assault from the Iron Throne would require circumventing the Tyrosh blockade and traversing the entirety of the disputed lands.

The elder, his skin dark and hair dyed purple, spoke in a resonant tone, "We need to choose a new Magister to replace Khaeldor. The wealthy merchants of the city are already vying for the position."

The young man, with dark hair, nodded, "The Corhos Houses has proposed a significant gold offering to settle our debts with the Iron Bank. They're quite generous."

At the mention of the Iron Bank, the elder's expression darkened, his voice tight with frustration, "It's regrettable that our Unsullied were intercepted by the Braavos Sealord." This legion of five hundred Unsullied would have been more cost-effective than hiring five thousand mercenaries.

The discussion continued unabated, even delving into the estate of the late Khaeldor, considering selling his concubines and offspring to raise funds.

Soon a servant interrupted with a letter and handed it to the elder. He squinted at the contents with obvious disdain: "Bambaro is a fool, Myr's position is not that easy to attack, we would be the last standing at the end of this war."

The young man scoffed as he read over the letter, "With dozens of warships at our harbor, what threat does the Iron Throne's fleet pose?"

Their only real concern was a potential attack by dragons.

"If the Iron Throne's King rashly decides to unleash several dragons to incinerate our city, their losses would be catastrophic. Yet, our scorpion crossbows are formidable too," the elder mused, confident that the King's timidity would prevent him from risking his dragons against their fortified city.

Just as they were reassuring themselves of their preparations, a terrifying dragon roar shattered the silence.

"Roar--"

A colossal evil dragon, its scales as dark as charcoal, erupted into the sky above Myr. It blotted out the sun, its thunderous roar echoing across the city and beyond.

On the northern city walls of Myr, Rhaegar stood with an icy gaze, draped in a black cloak. Riding the dragon Cannibal, he commanded in a steely voice, "Dracarys!"

With a ferocious roar, Cannibal, its wings vast and dark as night, swooped toward the towering stone fortifications. As it descended, a torrent of eerie green dragonfire spilled forth, engulfing the defenses. Soldiers scrambled desperately, their screams piercing the chaos as they fled from the consuming flames, as ephemeral as autumn leaves in a gust.

Unmoved by the fleeing figures below, Cannibal glided at a low altitude, its fiery breath relentlessly melting the stone walls which sizzled and hissed under the extreme heat. The stone and steel, no match for the dragon's breath, melted away, distorting and collapsing into molten pools.

Outside the city, an imposing force was assembled. Five hundred Unsullied stood at the ready, backed by two thousand black-armored Fearless. Behind them, Robb led eight hundred heavily armored Second Sons atop warhorses, followed closely by two thousand knights of the Vale, their banners of the Sky-blue falcon fluttering above.

The rear was bolstered by a 5,000-strong contingent from Pentos, a mixed force of mercenaries, sellswords and hired Dothraki cavalry, all united in dread and awe of the black dragon overhead.

This siege tactic was unprecedented, awe-inspiring and terrifying in its execution.

As a significant portion of the city walls crumbled under the dragon's assault, the cries of despair from the defenders filled the air. Returning to the fray, Cannibal roared menacingly. On its back stood a silver-haired young man, bathed in sunlight, his presence almost godlike.

With all eyes upon him, Rhaegar's purple gaze pierced the chaos below as he raised his arms commandingly and roared, "Send the troops, attack Myr!"

At his signal, over a thousand Dothraki cavalry responded first. With wild shouts, they drew their swords and charged, leading the charge. The rest of the army followed in a relentless wave, cavalry thundering ahead, infantry close behind.

Cannibal roared again, its massive form casting a shadow over Myr as it dove towards the city center, unleashing more torrents of green dragonfire to clear a path.

Above, the sky filled with the roars of dragons—Red Queen Meleys, Blood Worm Caraxes, the light silver Sea Smoke, and the light gray Gray Ghost. Together, they descended in a devastating cascade, their dragonfire painting the city in spectral hues.

Despite the Triarchy's naval prowess, the strategic infiltration of the Pentos army through the coastal route rendered the city-states' defenses as fragile as parchment-easily shredded.

The strategy was cunning: divide the forces into three, two to distract and one to stealthily breach the defenses. As the foot soldiers charged through, the dragons above orchestrated a ballet of destruction, their fiery onslaught ensuring that Myr would soon surrender to their combined might.

Chapter 365: Deathwing – Cannibal

"Roar--"

Cannibal dove aggressively, unleashing dragonfire that swept across several nearby tower buildings.

Inside those towers were scorpion crossbows, their steel bolts glowing with deadly intent.

"Aim! All of you, gather your strength!" bellowed the guard commander, his voice hoarse as he rallied the terrified soldiers, urging them to prepare their crossbows and fire.

Boom!

No sooner had the order been given than a wave of ghostly green dragonfire engulfed the tower, reducing it to rubble and ash.

As the Dothraki cavalry charged through the breached and melted city walls, their war cries mingled with the eerie sounds of destruction. Wielding swords, they surged forward, following the shadow of the pitch-black dragon into the heart of the city.

Still, scattered remnants of the city guard dared to mount a defense. As swords clashed and heads rolled, their desperate courage mirrored that of the barbarian savages.

"Attack! Storm the city towers!" shouted Robb, leading a squadron of Second Sons. The Dothraki cavalry thundered through the streets, their presence signaling the beginning of a ruthless assault.

As was typical in the cities of the Triarchy, the landscape was dotted with densely packed crossbow towers, usually the first target to cripple the city's defenses.

"Roar..."

The city's gates were overwhelmed as more cavalry and infantry poured in. The four colossal dragons roared in unison, spreading chaos as they blasted towers with dragonfire.

Rhaenys, clad in red battle armor and wielding Dark Sister, reveled in the fray. Her excitement was palpable, the thrill of battle lighting up her visage—the Queen Who Never Was, was fearless in the face of war.

"Dracarys!" she shouted.

Meleys responded with astonishing speed, streaking across the sky like red lightning. Scarlet dragonfire rained down in deadly arcs, sweeping through the bustling inner city.

Caraxes and Sea Smoke moved in concert, capitalizing on the momentary disarray of Myr's defenders to deliver devastating blows, effectively crippling the city-state's defensive capabilities.

The Grey Ghost, flapping its wings erratically, unleashed a barrage of orange fireballs. Its vertical pupils locked onto targets below, creating a bombardment that felt apocalyptic.

Within moments, the combined fury of the dragons had obliterated a third of Myr's outer city.

From above, Rhaegar's purple eyes focused on a tower armed with a scorpion crossbow. "Cannibal, Dracarys!" he commanded coldly.

"Roar--"

Cannibal's green eyes blazed with tyranny as it swooped low, scattering green dragonfire that enveloped everything in its path.

The fire, relentless and indiscriminate, devoured both stone structures and fleeing civilians alike, reducing everything to charred remains.

Screams of agony rose from the streets as those touched by the dragonfire writhed helplessly, their fate sealed by the infernal blaze.

The city, now a veritable hell on earth, echoed with the cries of the damned.

In the midst of the chaos, amidst the sea of green flames, countless slaves broke free from their chains. Overwhelmed by a mixture of terror and reverence, they fell to their knees before the majestic terror of the pitch-black dragon, hailing it as the "Breaker of Shackles."

Three years had passed, yet they vividly remembered the Black Dragon and the silver-haired youth—hailed as the Breaker of Shackles, a liberator in the eyes of the enslaved across the Triarchy.

"Roar--"

Cannibal, the dragon, thrashed its head, sending swirls of green fire cascading down as its body cut through the air with reckless abandon.

In a high tower, the garrison scrambled to their posts, hurriedly aiming their scorpion crossbows at the menacing black dragon.

The next moment was disastrous.

A huge, pitch-black wing unfurled and struck the tower like a siege hammer. The impact resounded with the force of thunder, splitting the towering spire in two.

"No, no..." The garrison's efforts were in vain; the tower shook violently, and falling masonry buried the soldiers before they could fire a single bolt.

"The evil dragon is here..."

Freed slaves poured from the streets, prostrating themselves in worship. As they witnessed the dragon's wings demolish the stone tower, cries of "Death Wings!" echoed through the chaos.

"Deathwing..." The name spread quickly among the slaves, who gazed upon the dragon and its rider with a mixture of fear and awe, as if they were gazing upon gods.

"Roar..."

Cannibal's roar was one of fury as it collided with another tower, its thick tail smashing the top with a resounding crash. The dragon's pitch-black wings spread wide, casting shadows that mingled with green streaks of fire.

Rhaegar, observing from his mount, saw thousands of cavalry flood into the city. They obeyed his orders, cutting down guards in a brutal onslaught.

His gaze swept over the white stone buildings of the inner city, the architectural grandeur clearly marking the administrative heart of Myr.

Patting Cannibal's back, Rhaegar directed, "Cannibal, look there!"

In unison, the dragon turned its gaze toward the white stone complex and roared, soaring towards it with lethal intent.

Meanwhile, a dozen towers managed to launch their bolts in a desperate attempt to halt the dragon's rampage.

But Cannibal, the insatiable beast, was undeterred; steel spears clattered harmlessly against its scales, igniting mere sparks.

With a casual flick of its tail, Cannibal demolished another tower spire. It then swooped down, unleashing a torrent of dragonfire on the white stone complex.

"Scorpion crossbow! Quickly, aim!"

Inside the complex, thousands of garrison troops scrambled to position their scorpion crossbows, readying for a confrontation, but, they were ill-prepared to win against a fully-grown dragon.

"Roar--"

Dozens of steel spears flew toward Cannibal, only to be met by a fierce blast of dragonfire that reduced them to molten iron droplets.

With a powerful flap of its dark wings, Cannibal descended, its massive feet crushing the ground beneath and raising billowing clouds of dust.

The monstrous dragon reared its head, unleashing dragonfire that incinerated guards and scorpion crossbows alike, reducing the building to ashes.

"Quickly escape!" the survivors cried.

"The fire... it's so intense..."

The dragonfire spread rapidly, engulfing half of the white stone complex. Garrison soldiers and officials alike were caught in its merciless embrace, their cries of agony echoing as they perished.

"Heh, is that all?" Rhaegar remarked, a cold smile playing on his lips as he stood atop his dragon, surveying the chaos around him like one taking a leisurely stroll through a park. Everywhere his gaze landed, people screamed in misery, desperately struggling to survive in the flames.

At this moment, resistance was futile.

Holding the reins firmly, Rhaegar guided Cannibal like a commander leading a siege engine. Wherever they passed, screams of terror followed.

Together, one man and his dragon, they brought about the apocalypse of Myr.

"Charge! Seize the Magister's Mansion!"

As Cannibal scorched the earth, Grey Worm led two thousand five hundred Unsullied and Fearless, their faces set with grim determination as they charged through the fire-ravaged complex.

Rhaegar watched as Grey Worm and his troops charged into the sea of fire, destroying any Myr soldiers hiding in the surrounding towers.

"Roar..."

A roar from Meleys filled the air as it landed forcefully, its talons crushing a tower beneath it as it spread its wings wide.

Atop Meleys, an exhilarated Rhaenys called out to her nephew, "Rhaegar, the southern part of the city is aflame, and the Vale Knights have taken control!"

Married to a fierce warrior, the Queen Who Never Was, who had been to war only a few times, finally unleashed her pent-up rage. This battle reaffirmed her faith in her nephew and ignited her hope for his future reign on the Iron Throne.

Rhaegar nodded in acknowledgement and glanced at the two city centers.

The northern center was overwhelmed by the fury of five dragons, with cavalry rampaging through the streets. He and Cannibal had secured the heart of the city, turning the tide decisively in their favor.

Now it was up to Daemon and Laenor to break through the defenses in the eastern and western sectors. If they succeeded, the fall of Myr would be inevitable, sealing their victory.

...

The next morning dawned, the sun casting its light on the remnants of the night's devastation.

Myr lay in ash, with tendrils of smoke curling into the sky, a stark reminder of the intense emotions - grief and madness - that had consumed the city.

In square, amidst the ruins of the Magister's Palace, lay the once magnificent garden, now a desolate sight. Springs that had bubbled joyously lay dry, and the vibrant foliage was reduced to ash.

"Roar..."

Cannibal stretched its neck and closed its vertical green pupils, its massive, pitch-black wings folded beside its body as it settled into a state of rest.

In front of the dragon, a crowd had gathered. The elite of Myr—the Magister's family, merchants, and those who had profited from slavery and smuggling—were now kneeling, heads bowed in defeat.

They had witnessed their city burn and now faced captivity.

Around them stood notable figures: the Sea Snake, Corlys; Rhaenys; Daemon; Grey Worm; and the Fearless Cavalry.

Rhaegar, cloaked in black and his silver hair cascading naturally over his shoulders, surveyed his captives with a detached curiosity.

There was a murmur of discussion about their fate.

Corlys spoke with a stern resolve, "Prince, the Magister of Myr may have been executed, but this merchants and city magnates should also be rounded up and eliminated en masse."

The battle for Myr had been a tactical success, and he acknowledged the Heir Prince's strategic acumen but it was better to eliminate any potential threats now rather than deal with dissent later.

Rhaegar responded coolly, "Myr now belongs to the Targaryen House now. Keeping them alive serves no purpose."

He was well-versed in power dynamics and did not require guidance on such matters.

Eliminating these leaders will ensure that Myr truly becomes a Targaryen stronghold. There's no point in sparing them if they want to avoid future insurrections.

After all, if he had intended merely to make a show of force without real consequence, he would not have targeted the civilian infrastructure.

If manipulation of power was necessary, the enslaved populace, which constituted half the city-state's demographic, would suffice.

Swish—

With Truefyre drawn from his waist, Rhaegar approached the two governors of Myr. He raised his longsword high, declaring solemnly, "In the name of Viserys I Targaryen, I sentence you to decapitation."

A flash of black light cleaved the air, and heads tumbled to the ground with a dull thud.

Pfft! Pfft!

Grey Worm led the Unsullied forward, their spears thrusting through the chests of hundreds of merchants, drenching the once-dry ground with fresh blood.

"Roar—"

At that moment, Cannibal awakened, its green vertical pupils snapping open as it let out a thunderous roar.

"Roar..."

"Roar..."

The dragons Sea Smoke and Grey Ghost, circling the white stone building, roared in succession, as if answering the call of their king.

Then, the two dragons ascended playfully into the clouds, spewing streams of Dragonfire.

Atop the highest tower of the Magister's Mansion, a majestic three-headed red dragon banner unfurled, billowing in the wind atop Myr's most significant political edifice.

Rhaegar glanced sideways; the white stone tower, now stained with charred black, stood defiant. The three-headed red dragon on the banner seemed almost alive, its body twisting in the sea breeze, its wings flapping, all three heads fixed on him.

A sense of awe overwhelmed him, and his heart skipped a beat.

Rhaegar cleaned Truefyre's blade on the crook of his arm, removing the blood stains. A faint smile curved the corners of his mouth.

What Aegon the Conqueror had failed to accomplish, he had. From that day forward, the blood of the Targaryens would once again claim the lands of Essos.

Corlys' stern voice broke his reverie, "Prince, now that Myr has fallen, we must discuss the garrison and deployment of our forces."

Rhaegar nodded thoughtfully. "How many warships remain in the harbor?"

Despite the fierce inland battles, Myr's harbor had suffered minimal damage, leaving the warships largely intact.

Corlys' expression darkened further as he answered through clenched teeth, "Thirty-four battleships are currently in port, though some have been captured by mercenaries fleeing the battlefield."

Rhaegar assessed the situation. "Combined with the House Velaryon fleet, we have enough to assemble a force of fifty warships."

"That is correct," Corlys replied, inhaling sharply.

In truth, Velaryon House had less than twenty warships left-their main forces had been decimated in the battles at Lys and Tyrosh, where they had served effectively as sacrificial decoys.

Rhaegar showed no sympathy for Sea Snake's losses. "This number of ships is insufficient for a direct attack on Tyrosh. Once Myr is secured, we'll move immediately to retake the Stepstone Islands."

He was indifferent to the casualties of Sea Snake's troops. To him, using the Velaryon fleet as a decoy was a calculated move to weaken a potential rival's base during the war.

"Wait."

Daemon's voice cut sharply through the discussion, his intense gaze fixed on his nephew.

Rhaegar turned to face him. Daemon, clad in blood-stained armor, wore a grim expression. Beside him stood Pentos' trade minister, Rhodes, his golden scales gleaming on his chest.

Meanwhile, Sea Snake fidgeted, twirling his thumb around his ring.

Rhaegar's eyes narrowed slightly. "I propose we reorganize our forces and retake the Stepstones Islands immediately!"

Daemon held his gaze, the weight of the moment settling in silence.

Chapter 366: Braavos' Dragon Eggs

Rod, the Magister of Pentos, broke the silence first. "Prince Rhaegar, now that Myr is under our control, it is time to discuss the division of territory and spoils."

Pentos had contributed significantly to the war effort, shouldering the financial burden of transporting Westeros' armies across the sea. The prince himself had led a formidable contingent of 5,000 men, supported by over 1,000 skilled cavalymen. Given Myr's surrender, Pentos naturally expected a substantial share of the spoils.

Rhaegar looked at him coolly, displeased. "The war in the Triarchy is not over yet, and already you want to divide the spoils?"

He turned to his other commanders, including Sea Snake and Daemon, and continued, "I understand your wishes, but the war continues. Let's not be short-sighted."

The war had been waged for territorial expansion and control over lucrative sea routes. Sea Snake had invested heavily, offering up not only resources but also his family's blood. Now, he demanded clarity on the Iron Throne's position.

Daemon, silent till now, stared intently at the fluttering three-headed red dragon banner above the Magister's Mansion. The night before, he had negotiated strenuously with his brother Viserys over the dominion of the free city-states. Claiming Myr would be ideal.

Observers like Rhaenys, Laenor, and his family watched quietly, their expressions tense. They considered both Sea Snake and Daemon overly eager for gains.

Nearby, a diverse array of forces including Grey Worm, Robb, the Vale Cavalry, and the Fearless watched the unfolding power dynamics with mixed expressions.

Standing before them, Rhaegar's stance was resolute, his voice cold. "Let's end the war first, and then I will ask the Iron Throne for your rewards."

Looking Rod straight in the eye, Rhaegar continued sternly, "You can withdraw your troops from Myr immediately. The Iron Throne will compensate you. Or, if you prefer, you can stay and help us take Lys and Tyrosh."

Rod's face stiffened for a moment, then turned into a sardonic smile. "Prince, rest assured, Pentos remains committed to seeing this war through. There is no need to question our loyalty."

A storm of thoughts swirled through his mind. Myr was now under the control of the Iron Throne, and Pentos had invested heavily in the conflict, pitting it against other free cities. With the Unsullied, the Second Sons, and the Knights of the Vale implicitly undermining Pentos' standing, he knew that Pentos had to maintain a careful balance.

5,000 troops will be enough to hold Myr, and they cannot risk alienating the Iron Throne.

"The Prince is magnanimous. The Iron Throne values its allies," he added, masking his anxiety.

Rhaegar's reply was a calculated mix of threat and reassurance. He understood the strategic importance of Pentos' naval capabilities in the assault on the island city-states of Lys and Tyrosh.

Returning his attention to Sea Snake and Daemon, Rhaegar concluded, "When this war ends, the Iron Throne will duly reward you. Consider this promise carefully."

As the repairs began on the Magister's mansion, Rhaegar beckoned Aunt Rhaenys and Laenor to join him as they walked towards the main building in Myr. Ahead lay the arduous tasks of restoring the city's infrastructure, aiding civilians, and reintegrating freed slaves—essential groundwork before their next military move.

...

As four hectic days elapsed, the atmosphere at the northern gate of Myr teemed with chaos and noise. A thousand Dothraki cavalymen had assembled, their horses neighing while whispers floated through the air.

A commanding Dothraki, his long braid adorned with bells, sat astride his horse at the forefront of the crowd, his expression solemn under a weathered, dark complexion.

Rhaegar, clad in black robes, approached on a white horse. Trailing behind him were hundreds of cavalymen from the Second Sons Regiment, laden with chests brimming with riches.

Rhaegar held out his hand in a grand gesture. "Rao Khal, your tribe has recently formed. Accept this wealth as a gift from the Iron Throne."

Rao Khal's brow creased as he spoke in broken Common Tongue, "Pentos paid the bounty."

"I'm aware," Rhaegar replied, his smile undiminished. "Consider this chest a personal tribute from me."

Rhaegar held great admiration for the ferocity of the Dothraki in battle. He knew Rao Khal hailed from a vast tribe and had served as a commander within the khalasar to its Khal, who fell in combat and was replaced in a fierce succession battle.

The tribe splintered, leaving Rao Khal with over two thousand cavalymen and their families to fend off constant threats from rival factions.

By offering aid, Rhaegar hoped to secure an alliance.

Rao Khal's expression softened, "Dragonlord, I accept your generosity, but the Dothraki will not cross the salt waters to fight."

"There is no need," Rhaegar reassured him calmly. "You have done enough. Take these treasures and go in peace. Should the future call for it, we may seek your help again."

After securing the Three Daughters, the remaining free city-states would likely retaliate. Allying with one of the most powerful Dothraki tribes on the continent of Essos was a far-sighted strategy. Rhaegar, now enriched by the looted wealth of Myr's merchant houses, was well-positioned to forge such partnerships.

"Thank you, generous prince," Rao Khal responded with respect, urging his warhorse forward and cautiously reaching out to pat Rhaegar's chest in a gesture of appreciation. His serious face lit up with admiration as he added, "Dothraki never wear armor, either."

Rhaegar returned the smile, "Nor am I accustomed to it."

With this exchange, a bond was formed. Rao Khal and his cavalymen, their mounts laden with the gifted chests, erupted into a triumphant cry and rode off towards Pentos to settle their dues.

As the dust kicked up by the departing riders settled, Rhaegar's gaze sharpened. He turned to observe the Unsullied patrolling the city walls. Lacking cavalry, the Unsullied's strength lay in infantry, led by Grey Worm who trained the formidable Fearless.

This newfound alliance with the Dothraki held promise. Though the Targaryens were historically known for their dragons, not their horsemen, this partnership could very well be a game-changer in future conflicts.

...

The harbor bustled with activity as dozens of warships, their sails emblazoned with the three-headed red dragon and seahorse flags, prepared for departure. Pentos mercenaries, clad in vibrant uniforms, boarded the ships in an orderly fashion.

Above them, Meleys roared, her scarlet scales gleaming in the sunlight as she hovered gracefully in midair. On the ground, Cannibal and Sea Smoke lay in repose, their massive forms coiled and ready, awaiting their riders.

Grey Worm, leading a contingent of Unsullied, worked diligently to maintain order and manage the dispersal of the gathered slaves.

Rhaegar approached Rhaenys with a calm demeanor. "Aunt, Myr will now be governed directly as a royal territory, and you will oversee its management temporarily."

With a firm expression, Rhaenys replied, "Don't worry. With Meleys and me here, no one will reclaim Myr."

Rhaegar nodded in agreement. "The Fearless and the Vale Knights will remain as well. They will give you ample support to secure the city-state."

He gestured to Grey Worm, outlining his duties, "Stay vigilant and protect the Master of Dragons."

The upcoming battle would shift to the Stepstones Islands, requiring fewer troops at the front. Maintaining control in Myr was therefore of the utmost importance.

Rhaegar continued to issue brief orders to ensure the stability of the city. "Distribute congee to the suffering civilians and keep the slaves working on reconstruction in exchange for food. Keep everyone busy; idle hands often lead to trouble."

Satisfied that all was in order, Rhaegar, accompanied by Laenor, climbed onto the back of his dragon, ready to take flight.

...

In the attic of the Perfume Garden in Lys, harsh curses shattered the silence.

"Are the Myrmen just pigs? How could the Iron Throne be breached so easily?"

"Reggio of Pentos, collaborating with the Iron Throne to usurp Essosi lands? I swear I will sever his head and throw it into a tar pit..."

The news of Myr's fall had only recently reached Bambaro, the Magister of Lys. The loss of two allies in such a short span was a bitter pill for Bambaro, who hailed from humble origins.

"How could the Magisters of Myr have been so careless?" he seethed, convinced that their minds were only on profit and the slave trade.

In a rage, Bambaro bellowed through the door, "Fetch the Roth Priest, I need this wild dragon subdued immediately!"

Outside the room, a delicate figure with dark hair caught every word before disappearing quietly down the corridor.

Johanna hurried along, her movements swift and deliberate. She returned to her private chamber and quickly locked the door behind her. Her expression was thoughtful as she retrieved pen and paper to write a letter.

The soft cawing of a raven echoed in the room as she placed the letter in its cage and opened the window to release it into the night.

Once finished, Johanna adjusted her low-cut bodice and regained her composed and graceful demeanor.

A knock at the door announced the arrival of a discreet figure. Johanna handed over a key, her voice low and steady, "Transfer all funds from my pleasure house to Volantis."

She was anticipating the imminent arrival of the Targaryen dragons in Lys. The wealth she had amassed over the years, along with her vast network of connections, were her most valuable assets in the tumultuous times ahead.

...

In Braavos, deep within the Hall of the Sealord, an underground chamber exuded a quiet emptiness, its silence broken only by faint, audible breaths.

Oil lamps clustered along the stone walls emitted a soft glow, casting shadows that danced lightly across the surfaces.

"Priestess, how much time remains until the moment you have foreseen?" Sealord Ferrego's voice carried a tinge of impatience as he stood on a grand, elevated platform.

"The descent of the Red Comet, heralding the magical tidal wave, awaits only the alignment of the right moment," replied a dignified woman draped in gray robes. Her silver hair fell straight, and her pale skin seemed to glow in the dim light.

In her hand she held a wooden scepter topped with a delicately carved moon, the symbol of Braavos' revered Moonsingers.

Ferrego's brow furrowed further as he continued. "Priestess, Myr has fallen. I need a timeline."

His alliance with the Triarchy against the Iron Throne had selfish motives, but as the conflict escalated, the great houses of Westeros-White Harbor, Gulltown, and Claw Isle-had united to blockade trade across the Narrow Sea. This stranglehold threatened to cripple Braavos' economy if it lasted more than a year.

As the Sealord of Braavos, he felt the weight of possible assassination if he failed.

After several reminders, the priestess remained unfazed. "The stars indicate it will be soon. I cannot be more specific.," she said with an unsettling calm before turning to leave, ignoring the Sealord.

In Braavos, the Moonsingers held considerable sway, often commanding more respect than even the Sealord himself.

Ferrego's face darkened with frustration. "Damn bitch, you just avoid answering me," he muttered under his breath.

Suddenly, a gust of wind stirred, causing the bonfire on the platform to flare dramatically. The bright orange glow revealed the remains of a colossal dragon. Its massive, pitch-black bones seemed to swallow the light around it.

Ferrego's gaze was drawn inexorably to the spectacle. His blue eyes sparkled with a mixture of awe and greed.

Beneath the imposing skeleton, nestled in a bed of straw, lay three dragon eggs, each a different color and intricately scaled, hinting at the power that lay within.

Chapter 367: The Spring of Viserys

King's Landing

News of Myr's victory spread like wildfire as the ravens returned to the city. Princes, nobles, and commoners alike found new confidence in the Battle of the Narrow Sea. The dragons and princes of House Targaryen had claimed a vast territory for the kingdom.

Red Keep, Council Hall

Viserys was beaming, clutching a letter he had read over and over. He had braced himself for worsening circumstances, but to his surprise, in less than half a month, his eldest son had led the army to capture Myr—one of the most esteemed free-trading city-states in the world.

When the Triarchy rebelled during the reign of Jaehaerys, achieving a fleeting peace had come at a great cost, including the assassination of his Uncle, Aemon Targaryen and the suspected poisoning of his father, Baelon Targaryen.

Now, his eldest son had captured Myr, intending to dismantle the Triarchy's kingdom. "Hahahaha, Myr's lace and dye are the best, and now it's all Targaryen's!" Viserys laughed, his face full of triumph as he glanced at the group of royal advisers. He was eager to announce his son's achievements to the seven kingdoms.

A tall and thin maester in the corner, smiling, said, "Maester Munkun, record the Myr attack in ten thousand details in the brief history of the palace, without a single omission."

A hint of a smile appeared on Munkun's serious face as he answered, "Yes, Your Grace." Opening the heavy palace brief history, he began to write, starting with highlighting the reigning king as "Viserys I," followed by the Regent Prince's invasion of Myr with the dragon.

Viserys was pleased to have Munkun record this event, appreciating his loyalty and diligence compared to that old greaseball Mellos and the mute, uninteresting Orwyle. He often wondered why the Citadel's bookworms hadn't elected Munkun as a Maester.

Flattening the slightly creased letter on the desktop, Viserys raised an eyebrow and looked to the Hand of the King at his left, saying loudly, "How are the preparations of the ports and fleets of the realms? We must not delay the battle at the front."

Lyonel, sitting critically, replied sternly, "White Harbor and Three Sisters Island have formed an interceptor fleet, tightly controlling half of the Narrow Sea and blocking Braavos' fleet and trade. House Grafton in Gulltown has prepared ample supplies and ships to support the prince to reclaim the Stepstones Islands."

Viserys nodded repeatedly, satisfied with the thorough preparations. In the past, war preparations would have caused him a headache. But now, hearing all this made his blood boil, and he wanted to ride Vermithor to the battlefield, spray dragonfire, and return to the Red Keep to enjoy himself.

Lyonel continued, "Lady Jeyne of the Eyrie places great importance on the Narrow Sea War, summoning the Vale bannermen to personally sit in Gulltown, forming a second line of maritime defense with the Celtigar fleet of Claw Isle."

Viserys smiled broadly, saying, "Of course Lady Jeyne values this. House of Arryn never betrays its loved ones."

"Yes, Your Grace," Lyonel agreed.

A flash of helplessness crossed Lyonel's eyes as he said, "The fleets have been leaving for some time. They should arrive one after the other in about half a month."

"Very well." Viserys felt immensely relieved.

Otto, sitting in the first position to his left, suddenly spoke, "Your Grace, I think you should be aware of the situation in the Stormlands and Dorne."

"What's the problem?" Viserys was taken aback, then a little nervous.

There had been times when he faced two particularly troublesome issues: Corlys the Sea Snake and Prince Qoren of Dorne.

With his eldest son, Rhaegar, now carrying the Targaryen banner, and Alicent having given him four children, the Velaryons were no longer a threat. But the Martells of Dorne were perpetually troublesome, often keeping him awake at night with worry.

Otto's eyes deepened as he glanced at Tormund, who sat across from him, and reported, "Prince Aemond is at Storm's End, yet House Swann of Stonehelm and House Dondarrion of Blackhaven are not following orders."

"Are those two houses still bickering over the matter of the bastards?" Viserys frowned in displeasure.

Throughout the Stormlands, Stonehelm and Blackhaven were key border defenses. One defended the sea lanes of the Cape Wrath, while the other had guarded the treacherous Boneway for generations.

Otto nodded, "The two families oppose Lady Cassandra's succession to Storm's End. This act is unlawful and deserves severe punishment."

Viserys hesitated and subconsciously looked at the Master of Whisperers seated to his right.

Tormund, smiling softly, said, "Your Grace, these houses resisted Storm's End's orders but have strictly followed Prince Rhaegar's defense commands. They are diligently guarding Cape Wrath and the Boneway. It's not as dire as Lord Otto suggests."

Houses with long heritages often adhered strictly to rules and beliefs. It was their duty to guard their territories and the kingdom, and they wouldn't endanger their families by defying orders.

Relieved by Tormund's words, Viserys smiled, "That's good. Let's wait until the war is over to address other issues."

Viserys took a closer look at Tormund. Dressed in black and white robes, with a young and soft face, the White Falcon and Black Raven stood on his shoulders. His appearance and demeanor starkly contrasted with the older advisers like Lyonel and Otto, yet his competence was undeniable.

Otto frowned slightly, the king's words cutting off any further discussion. Viserys, now satisfied that there was nothing of great importance left to address, decided to end the meeting.

Before leaving, Otto hesitated but still said, "According to my brother Ormund, the Ironborn are prowling the waters between Lannisport and Seagard. This could be problematic."

Viserys waved dismissively, "Lord Jason of Casterly Rock will drive away those pirates."

...

King's Chambers at Nightfall

The bed frame creaked and shook with the rhythm of their movements. After about half an hour, all was quiet again.

Viserys leaned back against the bed, draped in a white-speckled robe, sipping cold water with a flushed face. He felt exceptionally well today; his back did not hurt and his legs were not sore. He wondered if his brother Daemon had already finished his errand.

"Husband~"

Alicent's voice was crisp and clear as she buried her head in her husband's arm.

Viserys put down his glass of water, stroked his wife's locks, and smiled, "Just tell me what's on your mind."

Alicent raised her face, her white skin translucent with a layer of redness. "The Narrow Sea War isn't over yet. Do you think Rhaegar will be able to bring down all three Free Trade city-states?"

"Who can say what the gods have in plan?" Viserys smirked. "But Myr is already in our hands, isn't it?"

There were nine free-trade city-states that controlled half of the richest coastal lands on the continent of Essos. The Triarchy was located in the disputed land, and its overall strength was second only to Braavos. The prestige, population, and wealth of each of the three city-states were comparable to Westeros.

In Westeros, only the Crownlands, the Riverlands, and the Westerlands were truly wealthy. The Vale and the Riverlands were the richest, while the Northern Realm was the most bitter and cold.

Alicent's eyes twinkled as she murmured, "War brings disaster, but I hope Rhaegar can bring down the Triarchy so that the royal family can have more territory."

Though the royal realm was small, the Targaryens were not lacking in territory. What they really lacked were rich lands that could produce enough wealth.

Otherwise, a Targaryen prince of noble birth might be driven out of King's Landing to live frugally in the countryside. It was better to stay in King's Landing and enjoy the honor brought by the royal family.

"Didn't you hate war and killing?" said Viserys in surprise at the implication, looking down at his wife.

"But the war has already begun, and it's not something I, a woman of the court, can control," Alicent said quietly.

Viserys smiled and didn't mind. Even if the Triarchy were defeated, the distribution of the city-states would not be up to him. It would still have to be discussed by Rhaegar and the Small Council.

The couple embraced, each lost in their own thoughts. After a moment of silence, Alicent suddenly said, "Aegon has come of age, and his marriage is still undecided."

Viserys sighed, "That boy doesn't like Helaena. We shouldn't force our children to marry."

It was different from when they had forced Rhaenyra to marry a great noble when she was still the heir. That was to maintain the royal family's rights. Now, Viserys preferred to follow his children's wishes, or at least ensure that their marriages would last. Aemond was another matter, always bullying his fiancée Cassandra—a troublemaker like Daemon.

Alicent sighed lightly, "I know, Aegon is a prodigal son, and Helaena..."

She trailed off, not wanting to speak more about her only daughter. As a mother, she was keenly aware that Helaena had no feelings for her siblings beyond kinship. Instead, she had an inexplicable adoration for her half-brother, Rhaegar, since childhood. It drove her mad!

Viserys wondered, "What's wrong with Helaena?"

He had eyes only for his eldest son and daughter, occasionally glancing at Aegon and young Daeron, paying little attention to the rest.

"Nothing," Alicent replied, steering the conversation back on track. "Lord Jason of the Lannisters has a daughter who might be a suitable match."

Viserys sniffed, "Isn't that Lannister girl eight or nine years old?"

"Age doesn't matter; they can be betrothed first," Alicent said.

Viserys shook his head, "No! Aegon is not fit to marry a lord's daughter. You'd better choose someone else."

The Lannisters had always coveted the Targaryen dragons and power. Not to mention that Aemond was already betrothed to the Lady of Storm's End, and Aegon would be content to marry a common noblewoman.

Alicent didn't give up. "What about Margaery of Highgarden? The Tyrells?"

"I heard the old Lord of Highgarden took a new wife," Viserys said playfully.

During the Tournament of God's Eye Lake, the old Tyrell lied about his health and sent his daughter Margaery to represent Highgarden, while he stayed behind to marry a minor lord's daughter in hopes of producing a male heir. Margaery's path to emulating Jeyne and Cassandra was now ten thousand times harder.

Alicent's eyes flickered for a moment before she said casually, "House Hightower. One of my cousins has a daughter who is well-read and of the right age."

"Hightower?" Viserys hesitated, confused.

He had already married a Hightower and wasn't keen on his second son marrying another. It wasn't that Hightower women were bad - they were very considerate of their husbands. It was just that the second son should marry a daughter of another family to create more potential allies for the royal family.

Chapter 368: Stepstones Islands – Twin Castles

July, the Height of Summer

Stepstones - Gray Gallows Island

"Retreat, everyone! Back to the stone caves for shelter!"

"Hold the defense! Don't let those Pentosi bastards gain an inch!"

On the golden sandy beach, mercenaries clashed fiercely, stone throwers hurling flints as flames and smoke rose.

"Encircle them! Don't let a single Triarchy pirate escape!"

Leading the charge on the attacking side was a tall knight in silver armor and white robes, wielding a morningstar with deadly precision.

Bam!

The morningstar swung with the force of a tiger's wind, smashing the head of a Triarchy pirate, sending a spray of blood like an exploding bottle.

Criston Cole, reappointed as a member of the Kingsguard, was thrust into the Narrow Sea War, once again battling in the Stepstones where he had previously faced disgrace.

Boom!

The battle grew fiercer, with warships attacking each other, scorpion crossbows firing, and ships being blown to pieces. Mercenaries fell into the sea, screaming, only to be shot by enemy crossbows as they tried to climb back up, staining the water red.

Time passed, and the battle became even more intense. Triarchy pirates surged from all directions, attempting to break through the encirclement and retreat to the stone caves.

"Roar--"

Suddenly, a dragon's roar echoed like a bell, and a pitch-black behemoth broke through the clouds.

"Dracarys!" Rhaegar, his silver hair flying, commanded coldly.

"Roar..."

Cannibal roared angrily, swooping down with wings spread wide, unleashing green dragonfire over the beach.

"Dragon!"

"Help! Run!"

The dragonfire fell like smoke and fog, engulfing a group of Triarchy pirates in a torrent of flames, eliciting a chorus of mournful wails.

Cole looked up and shouted, "Retreat! Guard the beach!"

Boom--

Cannibal swooped low, blocking the pirates' retreat to the stone caves, spewing ghostly green dragonfire uncontrollably.

"Release arrows! Quickly!"

On the island's peak, a group of pirates armed with bows tried to sneak attack the dragon.

Rhaegar glanced at the sound and snorted, "Cannibal, slaughter them!"

"Roar..."

Cannibal's green vertical pupils swept over the archers, abandoning the pirates struggling in the fire, and gliding against the mountain, its fearsome jaws grinning.

The eerie green dragonfire shot out like a beam, incinerating hundreds of archers in an instant.

"Roar..."

"Roar..."

Simultaneously, two loud and clear dragon roars echoed from the sea. A light silver and a light gray dragon soared into view, joining the fray.

Laenor's face was agitated, his silver and gray armor glinting as he roared, "Dracarys!"

"Roar..."

Seasmoke's vertical pupils sharpened, and its broad snow-white wings flapped as it swooped down, unleashing Dragonfire upon the sea fleet.

Grey Ghost circled above while Laenor and Seasmoke were surrounded by chaos, with Grey Ghost sporadically spraying orange Dragonfire onto the battlefield below.

Rumble—

A friendly scream pierced the air. Alarmed, Laenor bellowed, "Grey Ghost, attack from the rear!"

He spoke in High Valyrian, making it as comprehensible as possible for the masterless wild dragon.

"Roar?"

Grey Ghost's vertical pupils flashed in disbelief. Its well-proportioned, seemingly slim light gray body zipped into the clouds, quietly observing the battlefield. Without a rider, it struggled to distinguish between friend and foe in the chaos of war.

Below, the pirates sighed in relief as the light gray dragon flew away. The Grey Ghost's appearance was not traditionally handsome; its slim, growing body and wide light gray wings gave it a ghostly look. The dragon's head, adorned with interlocking fangs and a pair of narrow vertical pupils, sported grayish horn crowns curved backward. Perhaps its prolonged contact with Cannibal had influenced its ghastly transformation.

Seeing Grey Ghost shy away, Laenor felt embarrassed but charged into the battle on Seasmoke alone. The Triarchy pirates' numbers were vast, with dozens of warships stationed on the Stepstones Islands, presenting a formidable challenge.

Woooooooooooo—

A high-pitched horn sounded from the sky. A small fleet bearing the stag banner sailed into view.

"Roar..."

Above the fleet, an ugly brown clay-colored dragon soared, its bumpy spine carrying a silver-haired boy. Aemond's eyes glinted as he urged, "Sheepstealer, give them Dragonfire!"

"Roar..."

Sheepstealer roared shrilly, its massive body gliding low, spraying rotten dot-like chunks of Dragonfire. The fireballs struck the pirate ships, igniting brown flames and smashing holes in the decks.

"Haha, well done!" Aemond laughed excitedly, swaying in the saddle. After a period of adjustment, Sheepstealer had become obedient, at least during combat.

"Roar—"

Cannibal roared, diving headfirst through the clouds, spraying ethereal green Dragonfire onto the pirate ships below. Rhaegar, observing the battlefield, maneuvered his dragon to tilt for a better angle.

"Roar..."

Grey Ghosts emerged from the clouds, slowing to join the battle upon seeing familiar allies. With four dragons and two fleets united, the tide of battle quickly turned.

Under relentless bombardment, the Triarchy pirates found themselves trapped. They were unable to escape into the sea, burning along with their ships, as Dragonfire rained down mercilessly.

...

As the day waned, the naval battle finally came to an end.

Gray Gallows Island, Temporary Quarters

Rhaegar's silver hair draped over his shoulders, and his face was stern. "There's still a portion of stubborn defenders on Bloodstone Island. We need to lead the army to clear them out."

Laenor patted his chest and affirmed, "Leave it to me. I'll take Bloodstone Island before dawn tomorrow."

"Pay attention to your safety. There are hidden passages on the island from before. Cole will lead the army to support you," Rhaegar instructed, finalizing the strategy.

Bloodstone Island had been Aegon's fiefdom and under the royal family's control for three years, so they were well-acquainted with its terrain and dark passages. This familiarity was the reason for their confident grip on the Stepstones.

Laenor received his orders and set out, initiating the operation overnight. Rhaegar rubbed his tense brow, considering the terrain of Gray Gallows Island and contemplating, "We lack a sturdy fortress."

There were only two major islands in the Stepstones: Bloodstone Island and Gray Gallows Island. Both islands had moderate fortifications, strained during wartime. Internally perfect military fortresses were essential for stronger defense.

As he mulled over these thoughts, Aemond, clad in a green cloak, hurried in, cheerfully announcing, "Brother, there's a letter from King's Landing."

Rhaegar glanced at him, took the letter, and advised, "Wear armor next time you go into battle."

Aemond scratched his head and smiled sheepishly. He had snuck out, pressed for armor that fit, and had already been caught and lectured by his brother.

Rhaegar quickly read the letter and laughed. "Good news—the fleets from Oldtown and The Arbor will be arriving in the next few days."

In this Narrow Sea battle, Rhaegar aimed for a swift victory to avoid a prolonged conflict. Having captured Myr, one of the three free city-states, and reclaimed the Stepstones Islands, which controlled the middle of the Narrow Sea, the situation was favorable.

Waiting for the reinforcements, Myr and the Stepstones Islands formed a stronghold. Capturing the second city-state would secure the war's outcome.

Aemond's face lit up with excitement. "Brother, when the reinforcements come, I will attack the city with you."

Though young, Aemond's heart yearned for honor and glory.

Snap!

Rhaegar backhanded a slap on Aemond's head and questioned sternly, "What is the punishment for insubordination in wartime?"

"H-Hanging?" Aemond stammered, covering his head.

Rhaegar sneered, "You know the penalty, yet you still dare to disobey orders and sneak onto another battlefield!"

"I have a dragon. Sheepstealer is very strong," Aemond argued.

Rhaegar's eyes narrowed as he raised his hand again.

"Don't!" Aemond retreated quickly.

Rhaegar lowered his hand, leaned down, and pressed his shoulder, his expression serious. "You have your own mission. The Dornish could attack our rear at any time. You and your dragon must hold the Stormlands. Do you understand?"

The main battlefield of the War of the Narrow Sea was in the Disputed Lands, while the Narrow Sea and Dorne were secondary battlefields. Rhaegar had sent Aegon and Helaena to Gulltown and Claw Isle, with Jeyne overseeing the bigger picture.

He felt confident about the Narrow Sea. However, the Stormlands, Dorne, and even the Riverlands were more uncertain.

Dorne, under Qoren Martell, wouldn't stand by and watch their ally, the Triarchy, be destroyed. Prince's Pass, the Boneway, and Cape Wrath would be key attack areas for the Dornish.

Aemond's role was to assist Cassandra in managing the Stormlands bannermen and use his dragon to block critical attacks. Delays could allow Rhaegar to ride Cannibal back from the sea, or his father could lead the king's army from King's Landing to block the way to the fortress.

Aemond's absence was a serious breach.

Aemond's eyes flickered as he lowered his head. "Got it."

"Are you sure?" Rhaegar stared deeply into his eyes.

Aemond pursed his lips and nodded vigorously.

Rhaegar patted his shoulder and encouraged him, "I'll overlook it this time. Return to Storm's End Castle tomorrow morning and watch over Dorne for me."

"Uh-huh," Aemond sulked.

Rhaegar smiled and called Robb, who was arranging the garrison. "I intend to build fortresses on Bloodstone Island and Gray Gallows Island, using black dragonstone."

Robb froze. "Are you going back to Dragonstone to transfer people?"

"That's right." Rhaegar thought clearly and instructed, "Daemon and the Sea Snake are leading an army to harass Lys and Tyrosh. I'll transfer the Sea Snake back, and you will assist him with all your might."

With Myr's collapse, Lys and Tyrosh would cling together for survival, making a breakthrough difficult. The Stepstones needed impregnable fortifications. Black dragonstone, created with dragon feces and stones, could be quickly infused to build sturdy fortresses.

Robb nodded and left.

Rhaegar looked at the scowling Aemond, stroked his head, and muttered, "It's time to build Aegon a castle."

Bloodstone Island was Aegon's fiefdom, but it lacked a decent castle, which was an embarrassment. Before anyone could contest the Triarchy's territory, it was better to establish Aegon firmly on Bloodstone Island.

...

Braavos

Hall of the Sealord, Underground Chamber

In the dimly lit chamber, several figures gathered around a high platform, shadows cast by a massive keel. Ferrego stood with his arms folded, silently gazing at the three dragon eggs nestled in straw.

The dragon eggs, covered with scales and showing old abrasions, seemed to have aged over the years. Fortunately, their shells had not turned to stone and still retained the potential for hatching.

"Sealord, these three dragon eggs may not all hatch successfully," said a middle-aged man in a brightly colored red robe. He was tall, with light purple eyes, a shaved head, and an unusually handsome pale face.

Ferrego's expression was stern as he rebuked, "No matter the cost, all three dragon eggs must hatch!"

The red-robed man's eyes darkened slightly. "Then we need a blood sacrifice, not just dragon bones, but also a true dragon blood."

"Where can we find such a thing?" Ferrego was taken aback.

The red-robed man shook his head. "I am proficient in an ancient blood sorcery. We need to select three pure-blooded children from the Valyrian descendants you have gathered."

As he spoke, his gaze swept over the others, implying, "Praying for the dragon eggs to hatch, preferably with magic supplied, will require more effort on your part."

Ferrego's eyes narrowed, glancing vaguely at the others present. There was a Shadowbinder, clad in black robes with a pitch-green ghostly face, an alchemist in maester's robes with a withered face, a red-robed priestess devoted to the Lord of Light, and even an elderly Pyromancer with a silver beard who was nearly fifty years old.

The last Sealord of Braavos had failed to hatch the dragon eggs despite his best efforts. Learning from this, Ferrego had spent a considerable fortune to bring together these practitioners of sorcery to devise a foolproof plan.

Chapter 369: The Harbinger of a Storm

Lys, Dome Dragonpit

"Roar..."

Inside the bronze gate, a dragon's roar echoed in bursts, filled with a hard-to-conceal exhaustion and indignation.

Bambaro's eyes shone with anticipation as he muttered to himself, "Soon, it must be soon."

According to the Roth Priest, the energy of the masterless wild dragon was waning, just waiting for a suitable bloodline to appear.

"Lord Magister, there are messages from Braavos and Dorn."

A beautiful courtesan crossed the line of mercenaries, gracefully handing over two letters with unbroken clay seals.

Bambaro took the letters and asked, "Where is Johanna? Why hasn't she come?"

The courtesan lowered her head and replied regretfully, "The Lady was infuriated by her last negotiation with the Tiger Party Archon and is still resting at her residence."

"Very well, you may go."

Hearing that his mistress and right-hand aide was unwell, Bambaro's displeasure showed as he waved her away like a bothersome fly.

Once the courtesan was out of sight, he tore open the letters and examined them one by one.

After reading them several times, Bambaro's eyes narrowed slightly and he sneered, "Those two profit-driven men are finally willing to send troops."

Casually tearing up the letters, he led his team back to the Magister's Mansion.

Before leaving, he didn't forget to instruct the Dragonpit guards, "Don't let any of the dragonseeds near the dragons before dawn."

"Yes, my lord," the guards responded promptly, not daring to be negligent.

...

Perfume Garden.

A ghostly song echoed as two silver-haired men, arms draped over each other's shoulders, slipped into a remote attic.

Bang—

No sooner had they entered than the attic door slammed shut. Several armored guards stood watch outside.

The same scene played out in many neighboring attics.

All the participants were carefully screened Valyrian descendants who had voluntarily joined the [Red Sowing].

Inside the attic, the two men stumbled around, drunkenly singing.

Pfft...

As soon as they reached their room, a tall, strong man, over two meters in height, fell headfirst onto the bed, giggling in a daze.

The other, a limp but handsome middle-aged man, with fingers missing, rubbed his face vigorously, eyes glazed.

"Denys, you son of a bitch, you won a lot of money. It's your turn to buy me a drink tomorrow!"

The tall Hugh shook his head and eyed the money bag at his companion's waist.

Denys waved dismissively, pocketed the bulging purse and slurred, "Buy yourself a pot of horse piss. This money has to go home to feed my child."

"Haha, you are a lousy gambler and bastard yourself, and you still want to raise a little bastard daughter."

Hugh mocked mercilessly, as if he had heard the best joke ever.

"Hmph, you know nothing, you stinking blacksmith's apprentice."

Silver Denys hiccupped and staggered back to the bed, grabbing a handful of gold coins and sniffing them vigorously.

Hugh continued his drunken ramblings, "You had a good hand, winning against those rich men. I thought you'd lose your fingers if you couldn't pay up or end up selling your daughter to a brothel in Lys."

Denys rolled his eyes in pleasure, muttering, "I've been gambling since I was a kid. If it weren't for those cheating bastards, I'd be the richest man on Dragonstone Island."

"Haha, a rotten gambler who deserves to go to hell."

Hugh sneered again, but his face fell dejectedly, "Too bad about that lousy drunkard. I heard he was burned by a dragon and his white head was split into three bites."

"An unlucky man who brought it upon himself."

Silver Denys dropped the gold coins on his face and smiled madly, "We're unlucky bastards sent to our deaths, too."

They had been smuggled to Lys, part of a group of about a dozen.

Arriving late, most of them couldn't get in line and had to squat in the perfumed garden and wait bitterly.

The white-haired Ulf was lucky; within two days, he had bribed the guard with drinks and cut in line for dragon taming.

But he was also unlucky, for the next morning he was caught by a hungry dragon and devoured before he could even see it.

Hugh clenched his fist and smashed the bedboard, muttering, "Do you think if I ride a dragon, I can go back and become a lord?"

Despite the generous rewards offered by Lys for dragon taming, the bastard from Dragonstone Island still dreamt of returning home with honor.

Silver Denys glanced at him, smirking, "If you can ride a dragon, not only would you become a lord, but you might even marry the king's daughter."

"Would His Grace agree?" Hugh sat up with a jolt, eyes wide.

He had hoped to become a knight, maybe even get a territory. But now, this lousy gambler was talking about marrying a princess?

"Haha..."

Denys laughed heartily, "Do you have what it takes to marry a princess? I'm afraid the Dragonkeepers would tie you up as soon as you land."

"Scram! Don't spoil my fun." Hugh lashed out, banging on the table in a fit of rage.

Denys stifled his laughter, putting the gold coins back into his money bag one by one, avoiding Hugh's gaze.

After witnessing the cruelty of [Red Sowing], the thought of becoming a dragon rider seemed far-fetched.

Winning some money at the gambling house and returning peacefully to Dragonstone Island was enough.

...

Two days later.

Dragonstone Island, Dragonmont.

"Roar..."

Cannibal sprawled lethargically in a clearing, its throat lightly trembling as it snored, its vertical pupils closed in feigned sleep.

On a distant hillside, hundreds of raggedly dressed laborers climbed up and down, carrying baskets of dragon dung for transport.

Occasionally, they found some faded scales, which they treasured and individually gave to the maester who kept the records.

"Maester Gladys, is there still enough dragon dung in Dragonmont to supply two medium-sized castles?" Rhaegar inquired softly.

Gladys, a half-hundred-year-old man with a kind face, smiled and replied, "Please don't worry, Dragonmont has accumulated dung for more than two hundred years, all used for cleaning and hygiene."

"That's good," Rhaegar said, returning the smile and entrusting the task of carrying the dragon dung to him.

This task, seemingly ordinary at first glance, was actually of great importance.

The laborers were strictly guarded and couldn't trespass into Dragonmont.

Fortunately, there weren't many dragons in Dragonmont, only Silverwing sleeping alone, away from its mate.

...

Two days later.

Dragonstone Island, Stone Drum Tower.

On his way back to Stone Drum Tower, Rhaegar was met by the acting steward lord, Ser Robert, who sighed with relief when he saw him.

"Prince, it's almost lunchtime. The princess is waiting for you."

"Thank you, Ser," Rhaegar replied sincerely as he brushed past him.

Running the island of Dragonstone was no easy task, especially when the highest authority on the island was a late-term pregnant princess.

Climbing to the top floor, Rhaegar noticed the door to the lord's bedroom left open across the corridor.

A slight smile curled the corner of his mouth as he lightened and slowed his steps, quietly approaching.

Standing in the doorway, he peeked inside.

The familiar layout greeted him: a table set with sumptuous food, two elegantly lit candles, and Rhaenyra lying on a soft couch. She wore only a loose nightgown, holding a letter as she read.

Knock, knock...

Rhaegar gently knocked on the door, not wanting to startle her.

"You're back," Rhaenyra said, looking up with a smile.

Rhaegar walked into the bedroom and asked curiously, "What are you reading so intently?"

Rhaenyra's smile faded slightly as she replied, "A letter from King's Landing. The Ironborn attacked Lannisport. Father is busy."

"What is Jason doing? How could he let the Ironborn sneak into the harbor?" Rhaegar frowned, filled with contempt for Jason.

Rhaenyra beckoned him closer and said playfully, "Calm down. Lannisport didn't suffer much damage and can still be stabilized."

Rhaegar shook his head and walked over to sit beside her on the couch.

Rhaenyra moved into his arms, holding up the letter. "The Ironborn aren't acting on their own. They're being bribed."

"A bunch of unproductive pirates, probably instructed by Braavos or Sunspear," Rhaegar mused, tightening his arms around her and burying his cheek in her pinkish-white shoulder where her hair cascaded.

"Isn't it exhausting, having fought all the way to Myr?" Rhaenyra's eyes softened as she stroked his head, just as she had when they were children.

Rhaegar shook his head, taking two deep breaths of her scent. Other than the insomnia and sleeplessness, and eating and sleeping badly, everything was okay.

Rhaenyra rubbed her face against his forehead and murmured, "I want to help you."

"You already are," Rhaegar replied, his large hand caressing her bulging stomach.

The rounded outline was clear through her silk nightgown.

Rhaenyra wrapped her arms around his neck, her cheek pressed against his hair. "I want to support my brother and husband like Queen Visenya, but it seems I can only be useful on the birthing bed."

Once, she hadn't thought that way. But after Aegon, Helaena, and the others were sent to various towns and she heard Jeyne was gathering bannermen in the Vale, such thoughts of self-hatred grew.

Rhaegar, sensitive to her underlying meaning, patted her tightly wrapped arm and rose from the embrace, half-squatting in front of the couch.

Rhaenyra looked at him in surprise, unsure.

Rhaegar placed his hands on her legs and solemnly said, "Rhaenyra, you're already on the most important battlefield. You're more important than anyone else."

Rhaenyra flattened her mouth and naively said, "Your battlefield is more dangerous. I'm worried about you."

Rhaegar's eyes were clear and firm. "My battlefield is full of blood and fire, but my dragons will protect me, and ten thousand people are willing to die for me."

He touched Rhaenyra's stomach with true emotion. "Your battlefield is even more brutal. Ten thousand people can't suffer in your place, and your dragon can't protect you."

"Pray that the Mother blesses me and allows me to give birth to two healthy babies for you," Rhaenyra said, her eyes flushed as she pressed his head to her stomach.

"You'll be as great as Syrax," Rhaegar said with unbridled seriousness.

The topic shifted from personal ability to procreation, and they fell silent.

They recalled their mother, Aemma Arryn, a poor woman who had died tragically in childbirth.

Her death cast a shadow over Rhaenyra, and Rhaegar, the baby of that difficult birth, carried the same darkness in his heart.

After a moment of peace, Rhaegar rubbed her stomach and laughed softly. "Remember the serpent rune power?"

"I didn't learn it. And my bronze rune can only be half inscribed," Rhaenyra whispered.

Creating runes required a lot of magic, and with the scarcity of magic in her blood, she was naturally slower. Not everyone was like Rhaegar, who could borrow his own dragon's magic.

"It's enough that I can," Rhaegar encouraged her.

He glanced around and saw a delicate glass bottle on the table.

The bottle contained a clear, silky liquid that emitted a faint fragrance when the cork was removed.

Pouring some of the liquid into his palms, he rubbed them together to generate heat.

Rhaenyra smiled softly, undoing the buttons on her nightgown to reveal her snow-white belly.

Rhaegar pressed his hands to her belly, sliding and pushing from bottom to top, applying the oil evenly.

This plant-derived essential oil had lubricating and nourishing properties.

Rhaenyra, pregnant with twins, had a rapidly bulging belly. Without the essential oil, her skin would tear, and she'd be left with stretch marks.

Rhaegar had specifically instructed Orwyle to make this oil, and it was quite expensive.

"After the stomach, there's also the thighs and buttocks," Rhaenyra said, closing her eyes and enjoying the dutiful service.

Rhaegar obliged, feeling as if he had returned to the days when he had been pampered as a child.

...

The Vale, Gulltown.

At dusk, glowing clouds stretched across the sky.

"Roar..."

A golden dragon soared out of the harbor, gliding halfway across the Narrow Sea.

On the dragon's back, Aegon's head drooped listlessly, his eyes filled with resentment.

"That wretched bitch of the Vale, making me ride a dragon on patrol every day!"

He cursed under his breath, striking his aching back.

Gulltown, one of the five major ports in Westeros, boasted brothels filled with passionate, fiery girls, a different flavor from King's Landing.

Sunfyre, ignoring his rider's foul mood, flapped his pale pink wings, heading across the Narrow Sea.

Aegon hung his head, unable to muster any interest in patrolling.

As they approached the Three Sisters Islands, a sudden thirst struck him.

With a flash of inspiration, Aegon licked his lips. "Three Sisters Islands, I wonder what the brothels are like there."

He had heard that the area was chaotic, with smugglers and thieves fighting daily in the harbor.

Aegon couldn't stand the loneliness and gave the order, "Sunfyre, let's change direction."

He was tired of taking orders from that Vale bitch, as opposed to his constant battles with Rhaegar. Grinning, Aegon excused his laziness. "Nothing to do today, might as well wander through a brothel."

Chapter 370: Dragon's Dream – Dragon's Wrath

Nightfall.

Dragonstone Island, Stone Drum Tower.

In the banquet hall, Rhaegar and Rhaenyra dined with Laena and the twins.

Laena's face was slightly haggard from the effort of caring for her two daughters. She wore a long, loose dress, her seven-month-old belly so large it made movement difficult.

"Roar..."

Halfway through the meal, a low dragon roar resonated, a mournful sound echoing across Dragonstone Island.

Rhaegar put down his knife and fork, listening intently.

Renea, one of the twins, spoke up, "It's Vhagar calling."

"It sounds sad," Rhaegar noted, slightly stunned.

The dragon's roar outside was almost a wail, filled with the sorrow of a weather-beaten soul.

Rhaenyra paused, chewing thoughtfully. "Vhagar hasn't sounded like this in a long time."

Rhaegar looked at the listless Laena, bewilderment in his eyes. His knowledge of Vhagar was mostly theoretical; he had little actual experience with the old dragon. The rider would know best about the dragon's mood.

As he gazed at her, Laena sighed with helplessness. "Vhagar is too old, and the years of loneliness have made it mournful."

As one of the first dragons of the Targaryens, Vhagar was 170 years old. At this age, a dragon begins to decline, growing old and faint. Vhagar had passed through three riders in its lifetime: Queen Visenya, Prince Baelon, and Laena. The first two riders had seen it grow from its prime into adulthood, while Laena had accompanied it into old age. Both previous riders had been brave, fearless warriors who rode Vhagar in battles across the realm, creating countless legendary achievements.

As the years passed, those riders had long since died. Even its childhood companions, Balerion and Meraxes, had fallen. Vhagar had lived too long, outlasting familiar faces and surrounded only by new ones, leaving it a solitary old dragon.

Lost in thought, Rhaegar set down his knife and fork, his appetite gone.

Baela, one of the twins, muttered, "Vhagar hasn't been like this for a long time. It was only when Meleys and Sea Smoke left that it felt lonely."

"It probably wants to go to war," Rhaena added.

Rhaegar remained silent, unable to respond. For an old dragon that had fought for the Targaryens, war was as common as eating and drinking. Vhagar's name was synonymous with war in ancient Valyria. Perhaps it was this legacy that had allowed Vhagar to survive countless battles, still fighting for the Targaryens. Its very existence was a testament to its prowess as a war weapon.

Laena's eyes lowered as she gently caressed her bulging stomach. "I can sense Vhagar's emotions. It doesn't want to be alone on Dragonstone Island."

This bond had begun when she first tamed Vhagar at the age of thirteen. When the War of the Narrow Sea broke out, Vhagar's emotions had resurfaced, constantly affecting her spirit.

Rhaenyra, deeply empathetic due to her own experiences with pregnancy, tugged at the corner of Rhaegar's coat.

Rhaegar drifted off for a moment before joking, "Don't worry, you'll be in labor soon, and then you can ride your dragon to help Daemon guard the free city."

He viewed Lys and Tyrosh as within his grasp and needed to project confidence to reassure his family.

"How is Daemon doing?" Laena asked, smiling as she changed the subject.

Rhaegar grinned. "Not too bad."

Laena's eyes flashed with understanding. "I know him. 'Not bad' means he's causing trouble."

She and her mother had speculated about the ambitions of Sea Snake and Daemon. Even without the incident of capturing the wild dragon, the duo would find ways to start a war and draw all of Westeros into invading the Triarchy.

"He's been giving me trouble since the day I was born," Rhaegar laughed, adding seriously, "War is inevitable. Daemon is doing his best, and Father won't treat his only brother poorly."

Laena forced a smile, fatigue surfacing on her brow. Her hand stroked her stomach unconsciously, reflecting her deep worry.

...

Late at night, the lord's bedroom.

Rhaegar lay shirtless and asleep by the fireplace, his eyes closed.

Outside the Stone Drum Tower, Vhagar's wail had faded, leaving a profound silence.

Inside, the fireplace's incense wood had turned to ash, emitting a faint, pulsing firelight.

Unconsciously, Rhaegar slipped into a brief dream.

A dark bay, sea winds, and orange flames lighting the sky...

Hundreds of warships clashed, projectiles and scorpion bolts flying haphazardly, faceless figures battling amid the chaos.

Under the silent night sky, blood and fire wove a haunting melody.

In his sleep, Rhaegar's brow furrowed, his fingers trembling slightly as they rested on his strong abdomen.

...

Same time.

Three Sisters Islands, Bloody Gallows Harbor. (Gallows Gate)

A group of disheveled bandits with machetes huddled in a corner, shivering from the cold. It was never easy to make a living in this chaotic zone.

"Did you hear? There's a Targaryen on Littlesister Island, riding a dragon cast in gold," a rough hulk with a scarred face said, wiping his nose and smearing it on his companion while inquiring in a gossipy manner.

The companion, a thin man with a mouthful of yellow teeth, moved away and replied nonchalantly, "Nonsense. A lord who rides a dragon would have word spread all over the island as soon as he lands."

Scarface said enviously, "That boy ran to the brothel for a quickie as soon as he landed, more anxious than I was to get off the ship after holding it for half a month."

"I've been to that brothel. It's full of old woman and the prices are high," Yellow Teeth replied.

"What do you know? Maybe he likes older ones."

"I hear all Targaryens are good looking. I wonder if this boy has mixed tastes..."

The bandits bantered roughly, full of envy as they tried to keep warm.

Hoo! Hoo!

In the middle of the night, a fishy sea breeze blew, freezing them to the bone.

Yellow Teeth hugged himself tightly and shivered as he looked around. Suddenly, his eyes caught something in the bay outside.

"Look, there are ships on the sea!"

He hurriedly shoved his drowsy companion beside him.

Scarface opened his eyes in indignation, but as he followed Yellow Teeth's dirt-covered finger, his jaw dropped in shock.

Outlined by the faint firelight on the dim sea was a fleet of warships, their sails decorated with strange and bizarre patterns.

"A fleet of hired mercenaries!" Scarface shouted, jumping to his feet and drawing his weapon.

With half of the Narrow Sea's routes blocked, he wondered where this fleet had come from. Just as the words left his mouth, one of the foremost warships burst into flames, and a projectile hurled a flaming stake towards the harbor.

Boom...

The wooden stake crashed into the harbor with a loud bang, landing right in the middle of the bandits.

They didn't even have time to scream as blood and flesh flew everywhere.

Woouoooooooo--

A solemn horn blew, and bonfires lit up the sea, revealing no less than fifty fine warships.

"Attack! Destroy the harbor!" shouted Braavos' the swordsman, drawing his sword. Battle broke out immediately.

Rumble—

Stone-throwers hurled boulders and stakes, bombarding the already filthy harbor and leaving it in ruins.

The Three Sisters Islands was chaotic, with powerful gangs and smugglers, but they were no match for the well-equipped mercenaries.

A dozen warships docked, and two thousand mercenaries came ashore, burning, killing, and looting with impunity.

"The rest of you, come with me to attack Gulltown!" the swordman ordered solemnly.

He was Pymon, a lean swordsman serving the Sealord of Braavos. His task was to escort the Sealord and lead mercenaries to break the blockade of the shipping lanes in the Narrow Sea, silently attacking several ports in Westeros at night.

The war on the Narrow Sea was worsening by the day, with Myr already captured. Many forces on the continent of Essos sensed the danger and feared the dragons.

The Sealord of Braavos, unable to remain idle, privately hired mercenaries to intervene in the war.

Pymon's fleet had first raided White Harbor, another harbor in the Bite, under the cover of night. After successfully capturing White Harbor, they turned to attack the weaker Three Sisters Islands.

Woouoooo—

The horn sounded again, and most of the warships turned and headed for Gulltown in the middle of the Narrow Sea.

According to the Moonsinger Priest's projection, the next few nights would have a south wind, allowing the warships to travel quickly.

Little Sisters Island, a certain brothel.

Aegon lay on a large, musty-smelling bed next to a mature, voluptuous woman, huffing and puffing with the smell of wine.

Boom...

An explosion rang out at the end of the alley, followed by the clatter of shattering boards.

"Hmmm, a bandit fight?" Aegon mumbled, awakened by the loud noise, and drunkenly climbed to his feet.

He had heard rumors of bandits and smugglers fighting, and with a sense of curiosity, he intended to see what the commotion was all about.

"Kill them and sack the town!"

Suddenly, there was a shout of fighting and killing from outside the brothel.

Aegon froze for a second, then scrambled out of bed in a panic.

The voices outside were not in Common Tongue but in the distinctive Valyrian, an accent that was somewhat familiar.

"Scum, robbing whores of their money!"

Aegon's heart pounded as he hurriedly put on his clothes and ran outside, his quick movements showing he was experienced.

Bang...

As soon as he pushed open the door of the tattered room, he collided head-on with a mercenary in brown leather armor.

Aegon, shocked, raised his knee in panic and slammed it into the mercenary's groin.

"Ahhhh!!" The mercenary collapsed instantly, covering his crotch and screaming miserably, the sound of breaking eggs faintly audible.

Aegon's mouth twitched as he slammed the door, muttering, "Daemon's moves really work!"

"Roar..."

A loud roar echoed as a huge golden dragon soared into the night sky.

Aegon wasn't foolish enough to go whoring without staying close to his dragon. He had chosen a secluded brothel, leaving Sunfyre on the beach.

Overjoyed at the sound, Aegon hastily shoved aside the middle-aged madam, who woke in shock, opened the window, and shouted, "Sunfyre! Come quickly!"

"Roar..."

Sunfyre hovered overhead, its golden vertical pupils flashing viciously as it spat Dragonfire at the chaotic crowd in the street.

"Ah!... Monster..."

The golden Dragonfire, like a pillar of fire, indiscriminately incinerated both civilians and mercenaries.

"On guard, there are dragons on the island!"

"Crossbows at the ready, aim for the dragon's eyes..."

The appearance of the dragon startled the mercenaries who had invaded the island. They scrambled to hide in the shadows, fearing the dragon's flames.

Aegon looked anxiously at Sunfyre and then down at the window. The three-story drop seemed daunting.

He considered jumping but then retracted.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre roared excitedly, the Dragonfire setting nearby wooden buildings ablaze as he shuttled back and forth in the flames, as if dancing.

With Aegon's impatient eyes on him, Sunfyre finally landed, its feet crushing the lit wooden houses across the brothel.

As the dragon descended, the mercenaries dispersed, leaving behind only the shrieks of the prostitutes.

With tears in his eyes, Aegon scurried down the stairs and climbed onto the dragon's back.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre stretched his neck and spat Dragonfire at the fleeing mercenaries, scorching a wide area of the building.

"Sunfyre, let's go!" Aegon urged his dragon to fly.

The Three Sisters Islands had been attacked by mercenaries, likely Braavos' doing.

He had to escape quickly!

Sunfyre, after a final burst of Dragonfire, flapped his wings and took off, flying headlong into the night sky.

Whoosh—

A fine steel crossbow arrow flew in the dark, aimed at the golden dragon.

Ding ding ding ding...

The crossbow arrows struck Sunfyre's chest and abdomen, creating sparks and leaving tiny craters before being crumpled away. However, many arrows pierced the dragon's pale pink wing membranes.

Pfft...

The crossbow arrows created tiny holes, oozing blood.

"Roar..."

Sunfyre roared in pain, its wings raising high as its flight wavered.

"Shoot arrows!"

The mercenaries in the shadows reloaded their crossbows, aiming for the dragon's wings.

Arrows rained down. Sunfyre, furious, elevated his body and flapped his wings, trying to deflect the arrows.

Most arrows were deflected, but a few pierced the wing membranes, leaving holes.

Jab-la—

A crossbow arrow pierced through the tiny scales of the dragon's wings and lodged into the bones beneath the flesh.

"Roar!"

Sunfyre screamed miserably, its body shaking violently it nearly fell.

Aegon's face turned pale with fear. "Sunfyre, hold on, let's fly away!"

"Roar..."

Sunfyre roared lowly, Dragonfire seeping from his mouth. Maintaining his balance, he quickly ascended, escaping the crossbow range.

In the eyes of the pitying mercenaries, the golden dragon disappeared into the night clouds.

...

Claw Isle, Castle.

In one of the luxurious bedrooms, Helaena, with her silvery blonde curls, wrapped her arms tightly around the covers and slept on her side. The little girl was peaceful and quiet, and the bedroom was filled with a faint scent.

Suddenly, Helaena jolted awake and opened her eyes in shock. "Fire..."