

G.O Thrones 381

Chapter 381: Dornish Invasion!

A Topless Tower, was a special building in ancient Valyria.

It was rumored to be dedicated to the forty Dragonlord families, housing the best Bloodmages and Pyromancers. These experts studied magic day and night, guided the armies of the expedition, and taught the Dragonlord heirs their knowledge.

Rhaegar's heart thumped, and he asked slowly, "You have similar drawings?"

Constructing a Topless tower was a monumental task, akin to the grand high towers of House Hightower in Oldtown, nearly impossible for Westerosi craftsmen to replicate.

Varys smiled knowingly. "Essos has a long history, and much of its knowledge is intentionally buried. I happen to be good at unearthing it."

Rhaegar pondered for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Both Westeros and Essos were steeped in legends and secrets, often jealously guarded and hidden away. Those grounded in their land's history preferred to bury such knowledge rather than share it.

After a brief smile, Rhaegar adopted a serious tone. "I will hire you, but for now, you must stay in Lys. You are not permitted to set foot in Westeros."

Rhaegar was cautious by nature and wary of potential threats. Rhaenyra and the unborn child she carried were his life, and he couldn't risk having a dangerous Bloodmage nearby.

Varys dropped to one knee and said humbly, "Thank you for your trust, Prince Rhaegar Targaryen."

Rhaegar scrutinized him and stated bluntly, "I'm considering building a topless tower in the future. You'll have your hands full."

Glancing at Johanna, he added sharply, "The Magister's political structure is flawed. Slavery must be dismantled, and a new system established, or there will be great trouble."

Rhaegar, an exceptionally gifted dreamwalker, had experienced countless dreams and understood the harm and cruelty of slavery.

The end of slavery represented the birth of monarchy. The Iron Throne of the Targaryens could rule the city-state, but the placement and survival of freed slaves would constantly threaten the rule of those in power.

With slave masters, slaves had oppression but also meals. Without slave masters, slaves would lose their basic sustenance and might try to overthrow their new rulers.

Johanna, momentarily stunned, responded quietly, "I've recruited many slaves to join the city-state's construction team, and there's a growing demand for various occupations."

In the nine free trade city-states, excluding a few inland and northernmost cold city-states, harbor cities like Pentos and Braavos were very wealthy. Braavos, with its unique system, powerful fleet, and "Iron Bank," controlled the world's economy and hated slavery.

The other city-states, including the Triarchy, Volantis, and Pentos (which signed the "Abolition of Slavery" after its defeat), required many slaves to work. These city-states were elective, with citizens having voting rights, but their land was insufficient to be divided among everyone.

Thus, slavery was born and used extensively. Slaves had no rights and weren't eligible to vote. They didn't need land, just sustenance, and performed over 80% of the labor in the city-states. Over time, the number of civilians dwindled while the number of slaves increased, except for the small group of "rich" people at the top.

Rhaegar aimed to disrupt this pyramid, pulling the rich from their pedestals and integrating the slaves into the commoners. The land and work in the city-state weren't enough to support so many commoners, so earning wealth through seafaring trade was essential.

Rhaegar thought about it and joked, "If it's not feasible, we might consider moving some of the population back to Westeros to reclaim the unclaimed wastelands."

"Your question is very prescient. I will give it serious consideration."

Johanna's eyes dropped and she fell into deep thought. The complete abolition of slavery would mean a great cleansing and change for Lys. Change meant danger and could easily overthrow the existing rule. However, Rhaegar had suggested maritime trade and industrial development, so she might be able to take a chance.

The conversation ended, and Johanna and Varys left one by one. Before leaving, Varys hesitated and said, "Prince, I wish for the safe birth of your heir."

His words were strange, and his eyes glanced vaguely at Rhaegar's face, leaving him confused.

Rhaegar froze for a moment, then became extremely alert. The Bloodmage's knowledge covered many fields, and it was possible he had insights into healing or divination.

Rhaegar lost his appetite and ordered the elite of the Second Son Regiment guarding the gate to summon someone.

In less than a quarter of an hour, Syrio arrived with a dozen figures in black robes, walking silently.

"Prince."

Syrio saluted respectfully, raising his hand to point at the black-robed men. "They are members of the Shadow. What can I do for you?"

Rhaegar glanced at them and asked casually, "News from Dragonstone Island?"

Syrio, once the chief swordsman of Braavos and proficient in the "Water Dance" sword art, was skilled in assassination. Over the years, he had trained dozens of "shadows" to serve as intelligence scouts in various places.

Hearing the prince's inquiry, Syrio replied, "Dragonstone Island is guarded by Dragonkeepers. The Princess is safe, and the fetus is stable, Lady Laena's is also in a normal condition."

"That's good."

Rhaegar felt slightly relieved and asked, "Has Aunt Rhaenys left?"

"Yes. The people of Myr were causing trouble and needed to be suppressed by a Targaryen dragon," Syrio said.

Myr differed from Lys. Both civilians and slaves had been spared by the dragons, and those with intentions to create rebellion had provoked unrest. Once Lys was stabilized and Tyrosh was conquered, it would be time to address Myr's political structure.

Having asked what he needed, Rhaegar held his forehead helplessly. "Keep an eye on Braavos and Dorne. I always feel unsettled."

An enemy hiding in the shadows and not making a move could be more terrifying than an active threat. It would soon be time to return to King's Landing to face troublemakers from all sides.

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Dornish Territory

Sunspear, Fortress of House Martell and Political Capital of Dorne

Located on the southeastern coast of Westeros, Sunspear is surrounded by the sea on three sides, just north of the Greenblood River. The castle, built of brownish-brown clay and straw, is surrounded by a triple-curved wall, giving it an imposing and beautiful appearance.

In the center of the citadel are several tall towers, including the Tower of the Sun - a magnificent structure with a golden vault and leaded glass. In the throne room, two large carved lances and sun tattoos stand side by side.

A figure sits on the seat of the carved lance, murmuring, "Lys has fallen as well."

The voice, magnetic and filled with the experience of a middle-aged man, belongs to Qoren Martell, Prince of Dorne. As he sits up straight, his handsome features come into view: long, dark hair, firm muscles under brown skin, and that exotic allure that is unique to the Dornish people, as if carved by knife and axe. He wears a thin yellow-brown robe with a low neckline, revealing his large pectoral muscles and exuding a strong masculine charm.

Qoren snorts and leans back in his chair, sneering, "That fool Bambaro, does he really think that taming a wild dragon is enough to fight the Iron Throne?"

After more than a hundred years of development, House Targaryen is in its prime, boasting six adult dragon riders, not counting the Velaryon siblings.

As Prince of Dorne, Qoren is known as an idle adventurer. He once slipped into King's Landing as an herbalist during the failed First Battle of the Stepstones. At the entrance to Dragonpit, he had caught a distant glimpse of the teenage Heir Prince - a handsome young man with a boyish look who treated his men kindly.

Qoren marveled at the diversity of the gods, recalling how this boy, half his age, had tamed the world's largest wild dragon, Cannibal, at just six years old.

When the battle went badly, the boy mounted the dragon and launched a surprise attack on Lys, burning the city-state of the Triarchy to the ground.

Three fires in a row killed more than ten thousand people. Thinking about it, Qoren felt a chill at the back of his neck. He had no desire to cross paths with such a "Dragon Executioner."

Tap...

Light footsteps echoed outside the throne room, and a little girl with dark, curly hair ran in.

"Father!"

The little girl smiled brightly, her brown skin soft and her eyes with an expression that belied her age.

Qoren crumpled the letter he was holding out of habit and replied with a smile, "My daughter, who brought you here?"

Aliandra climbed deftly onto the carved sunburst seat and raised her chin proudly. "I come when I want to. No one can stop me."

Aliandra Martell had just turned six that year. As Qoren's firstborn daughter, she was the legal heir and future Princess of Dorne.

"Aliandra, you're being a bit disobedient," Qoren said, doting on his eldest daughter and resting his chin on one hand. "The Targaryen brats have taken Myr and Lys. When will you take a territory for your father?"

Aliandra, with her spirited personality and bright blue eyes, replied boldly, "Then marry me to that brat and my children will inherit all of Westeros and the overseas city-states!"

Qoren froze for a moment and then laughed. It was typical of his daughter to see things from such a unique perspective. It was hard to imagine a child saying such things.

Knock, Knock...

The heavy door of the throne room was knocked, and a tall figure with blond hair and blue eyes entered.

Seeing the visitor, Qoren's smile faded and he addressed him seriously, "Is the fleet ready?"

"Yes, Prince."

The visitor ignored the guards' warning glances and stepped onto the marble floor inside the hall. He was a dry, slender man who looked to be about 40 years old, with slightly rough skin and sparkling blue eyes, like a hawk waiting to hunt.

On his white frock coat, he wore a black gate House crest on the sand—the emblem of House Yronwood, the most powerful ancient family in Dorne besides House Martell.

Qoren looked at him and explained, "Lord Olyvar, the fleet in the harbors of Sunspear and Planky Town must be ready to attack the Stormlands."

Olyvar bowed his head respectfully. "Braavos has sent a large amount of armaments, enough for a frontal assault on the Stormlands."

"The Sealord of Braavos is a fool, but a generous one," Qoren judged, then pointedly reminded, "Send a message to the vultures in the Red Mountains to hurry. Do not let the Iron Throne take the Triarchy so easily."

The Free Cities' greatest strength was their control of the ports. Now that the Stepstone Islands had fallen to the Iron Throne, the Triarchy was being occupied one by one. The ports in the southern part of the Narrow Sea, such as Sunspear and Planky Town, would not be able to trade smoothly in the future, their routes would likely be blocked.

Olyvar nodded gently and said solemnly, "Prince, don't worry. The armies of the Riverlands and the Reach are traditionally weak, and the Lord of Highgarden is an old man. The vultures will gnaw at him."

After a few more pre-battle preparations, he excused himself and left.

Qoren watched his back, licked the corner of his lips, and grinned. "Be careful, but don't die at the hands of the Stormlands army."

Dorne had been silent for a long time, reaping the benefits of Braavos and the Triarchy. Internally, Dorne was not united; there were always radicals and conservatives.

The radicals believed they should attack the Stormlands and the Riverlands, plundering wealth to feed the barren lands. The conservatives thought the radicals were too timid and advocated joining forces with Braavos and the Triarchy to attack the Iron Throne and conquer richer lands.

Caught between these factions, Qoren's sensible decisions were often not accepted, leading him to instigate a war to placate both sides. Without war, the nobles under his rule grew stronger daily, eventually threatening House Martell's dominance.

Chapter 382: Aemond at Storm's End

That night, the moon and stars were sparse.

Planky Town, once a bustling harbor, now lay empty, with crimson bonfires lighting up the dark night.

Qoren stood at the forefront, leading a group of Dornish soldiers clad in tawny armor, gazing out at the lights on the pale sea.

In the distance, hundreds of warships sailed into the mist, resembling a swarm of sandy scorpions emerging from their nests.

The Dornish, known for their exuberant character, acted swiftly and decisively. Having agreed to fight during the day, they went directly to war by night.

Qoren stood with his arms folded, a smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "Lys has reenacted the Battle of the Hundred Candles, creating unprecedented conditions for Dorne."

With the Iron Throne's main army outside the Narrow Sea, the garrisons were cut off from support.

Daemon, the madman, was in the disputed lands with the Young Heir Prince, leaving Westeros under the care of women, children, and old men unseasoned in battle.

Braavos would join forces with other free-trade city-states to pressure the Iron Throne.

The chaos in Myr and Lys, with their repeated rebellions, kept the Queen Who Never Was and the Heir Prince occupied.

As long as Tyrosh withstood the pressure from the Iron Throne's besieging army, the Dornish forces could launch a three-front attack into the Stormlands and the Riverlands.

The Iron Throne would then face a dilemma, unable to decide whether to attack Tyrosh or support Westeros.

A dangerous glint flashed in Qoren's eyes as he murmured, "Bambaro, you died well. If Lys hadn't fallen, Dorne wouldn't have had the chance to send out troops."

The Iron Throne's seizure of two city-states was a hot potato.

The nine Free Trade city-states, former colonies enslaved by Ancient Valyria, were surprisingly resilient once their ports were controlled.

Destroying the political structure and occupying the city-states was one thing, but as long as there were wealthy people and civilians resisting colonization, the fight against invaders would never end.

Seizing this opportunity, Dorne was able to sweep through the Stormlands and the Riverlands, throwing the Iron Throne into chaos.

This unyielding will to harm the enemy, no matter the cost, was the fundamental factor that allowed Dorne to gain its independence in the First War of Conquest.

"Father, my brother is freezing. Let's go back."

Aliandra, clad in a thick ermine cloak, tugged at her father's sleeve.

When Qoren looked down, he saw his daughter's indignant little face.

Behind Aliandra stood a four- or five-year-old boy with dark hair and brown skin, shivering and blue from the sea breeze. This was Qoren's eldest son, two years younger than Aliandra. He also had a three-year-old daughter who was too weak to be brought along.

"Prince, let's go back," spoke a middle-aged man with black hair and gray eyes.

He was tall and bulky, with thinning black curly hair and a full beard. His gray eyes sparkled with intelligence. On his chest, he wore the yellow and crimson interlaced flame pattern of House Uller from Hellholt, one of Dorne's ancient and well-known families.

Qoren playfully grabbed his son's face, smiling. "Olyvar has left. Let's go too."

Harmen Uller, with his big belly, followed behind and asked, "Prince, Storm's End has nothing but a bunch of cowards left. You let Olyvar send troops-aren't you just giving him the glory?"

There was a hint of complaint in his voice, disguised as a casual question.

Before Dorne was unified by House Martell, House Yronwood was recognized as the strongest house, known as the "Lords of the Stone Way", the Uller House were bannermen to House Yronwood.

When Nymeria, the warrior queen of the Rhoynar, crossed westward with ten thousand ships, she married Mors of House Martell and initiated a war to rule Dorne. Mors Martell died in the War of Unity, but Nymeria completed the conquest by capturing the then king of Yronwood.

At the start of the war, House Uller betrayed their liege lords, House Yronwood, dealing them a significant blow. This conflict persisted, still simmering under Martell's rule.

As he listened to Harmen, Qoren's eyes grew intense. "Take the long view. We have more battle lines than just the Stormlands."

Harmen choked on his words and followed the group quietly.

Prince Qoren was a ruler who met the expectations of the Dornish people admirably. Brave and skilled in battle, highly intelligent, and crucially, he was willing to heed his bannermen's advice to start a war, maintaining the martial honor that defined Dornish culture.

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Cape Wrath, Clifflands by the Sea

Clash...

A three-masted warship rode the wind and waves, Dornish flags—such as the A red sun pierced by a golden spear and the black gate—flying high from the cabin.

At the prow of the magnificent vessel, Olyvar, clad in iron armor, stood on the deck, his eyes fixed on a sea cliff.

His blue eyes smoldered with a cold aura, as if he were the night lord in the darkness.

"Lord Commander, there is only one watchtower on the cliff bank. We can climb it using hook locks," a dark-skinned youth in full armor reported respectfully.

Olyvar looked around the surrounding waters. A blanket of fog had risen, reducing visibility to a mile. They had avoided House Swann's patrol fleet and abandoned plans to attack from the pier near the family's estate.

A direct assault would result in wasted casualties; avoiding the enemy was the best strategy.

After reviewing the situation in his mind, Olyvar drew his sword and ordered, "Elite forces, climb the cliff and destroy the defenders in the watchtower!"

"Yes, Lord Commander!"

The officer relayed the command, and several small boats silently approached the cliff, their occupants flinging hook locks to secure themselves to the towering cliff face.

With everything ready, dozens of Dornish elites began to climb.

Olyvar watched from afar. The fog obscured his vision, and he could only make out a cluster of fires in the watchtower.

Half a bell later, the fires dimmed and then two clusters of lights crossed, signaling a successful invasion.

Olyvar felt a surge of satisfaction but remained composed. "Climb the cliff with me and circle around to attack Stonehelm!"

Two dozen warships approached the cliff, and thousands of Dornish soldiers began scaling the rock.

The rest of the fleet pulled anchor and sailed towards the docks of Stonehelm.

A dual attack—one by land, one by sea—was underway.

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The Next Day, Before Dawn

The battle at Stonehelm Pier had concluded, and all the defenses along the road had been neutralized by the surprise attack.

The garrison soldiers were routed, retreating to the stronghold of House Swann in Stonehelm to fend off the Dornish siege.

The Dornish forces, nearly at full strength, executed their cunning strategy with such precision that the original defenses were overwhelmed.

In the end, tens of thousands of Dornish soldiers converged from all directions, surrounding Stonehelm, a city made of green-hued rocks.

Lord Swann guarded the city gates with strict vigilance, releasing a dozen raven messengers to plead for aid.

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Storm's End Castle

"Roar..."

In the castle's courtyard, an ugly, brown, clay-colored dragon lay prostrate on the ground, its withered head turned east.

"Baa~~"

A dozen goats bleated and wiggled their fat butts as they were herded nearby.

With a sour expression and a goat whip in his hand, Aemond muttered to the dragon, "Eat, eat, eat, you ugly thing."

"Roar..."

The Sheepstealer, as the dragon was called, rose, its mud-colored wings spread wide and its neck stretched out. Its vertical pupils gazed condescendingly at the silver-haired boy before opening its jaws and spewing dragonfire to roast the sheep.

The dragon crawled slowly to the ground, wings outstretched, then lowered its head to pick up the charred lamb and began to nibble.

Aemond pursed his lips and took a few steps closer to touch the dragon's scales. The Sheepstealer's scales were rough and lumpy, like jagged stones.

However, with no other dragons to touch, he made do.

Snap!

As soon as he got close, the dragon's thick, long tail whipped around and knocked him to the ground.

Aemond saw the blue sky spinning above him before landing hard on his back.

"Sheepstealer!" he yelled furiously.

"Roar..."

The Sheepstealer shook its head, finishing the lamb in one gulp, completely ignoring the irate silver-haired boy.

Frustrated by the lack of response, Aemond scrambled to his feet, pointing angrily at the ugly dragon before stomping back into the castle in indignation.

Entering the castle gate, he ran into Cassandra, who was dressed in a long pink and white dress.

"Aemond, where are you going?"

"None of your business, stupid woman!"

Cassandra had just opened her mouth and was almost left breathless by her fiancé's harsh retort.

As the two brushed past each other, Aemond huffed and puffed his way up the stairs without a thought of conversation.

Cassandra looked back at him, tears welling up in her eyes.

Aegon Targaryen had been a notorious prodigal who didn't want to marry the sisters. Yet, she hadn't expected for him to be replaced by Prince Aemond, who, though gentle and generous on the surface, revealed his true colors as soon as they were betrothed.

A political marriage, devoid of any genuine emotion.

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Aemond returned to his room and slammed the door shut with a bang. He didn't care if his so-called fiancée was sad or angry. His mission was to fulfill the marriage contract, not to be a doting husband.

Not to mention that Cassandra was a self-righteous, foolish woman, even worse than her older sister, Helaena, who always had a dopey demeanor.

Walking over to the bed, he tilted his head back and plopped down onto the soft goose feather mattress. As soon as the white skin of his neck touched the fabric, a damp coolness hit him instantly.

"Damn this place!" Aemond cursed, flopping onto his side in annoyance.

Although the Red Keep was also built by the sea, it had been restored by Maegor I and Jhaerys I, boasting an atmospheric appearance and comfortable living conditions.

Storm's End Castle, on the other hand, was a thousand-year-old fortress perched above the sea and surrounded by rough waves on all sides. When it rained, water seeped from the chimneys and the dampness was everywhere.

After tossing and turning for a while, Aemond lay on his back, staring lifelessly at the green ceiling.

Storm's End was a strategic location, receiving countless letters daily. He learned of the construction of the Twin Castles on the Stepstones Islands and of his older brother Rhaegar's overwhelming conquest of Myr and Lys. It seemed that Tyrosh would soon submit to Rhaegar as well.

"I want to go to war," Aemond muttered, full of grievances. "Aegon has a castle, but I still have to guard this miserable place."

His brother Rhaegar had single-handedly built a dragonstone castle, or rather two twin castles in one. Aemond was full of envy.

Knock, knock...

A knock sounded on the door, and Maester Fett's urgent voice came from outside. "Prince, a distress letter from Stonehelm Castle."

Aemond's eyes lit up at the words, and he jumped up quickly, shouting, "Come in!"

The door opened and the young Maester Fett entered, handing him an unsealed letter. "The Dornish have invaded in force. Stonehelm City is under siege, and the Lady has asked me to summon you for a meeting."

Aemond snatched the letter and examined it with a furrowed brow. It was a plea for help from Lord Swann, stating that the Dornish had taken advantage of the night to land and were now beseiging Stonehelm. He hoped that Storm's End would mobilize troops to support them.

"Heh," Aemond scoffed. "The Swann House is finally afraid?"

He hadn't forgotten about Lord Swann supporting that bastard son's rise to power.

"Prince, it is better for you to go to the hall to join the Lady first," Maester Fett advised cautiously.

"Of course," Aemond said, jumping out of bed and strutting out. "Finally, something useful for me to do."

Chapter 383: Viserys' Dream of Going to War

Noon, with the sun in full bloom

King's Landing

The streets and alleys were packed with people, blocking the main path from the Red Keep to the River Gate.

Five shiny black warhorses pulled a cart, draped in a black veil, inside which lay the enormous black and silver dragon head.

In just a few short days, news of Rhaegar's glorious victory over Lys and the liberation of over 100,000 slaves had spread throughout King's Landing.

The people were filled with pride and excitement, eager to witness the triumphal procession with their own eyes.

They hoped that the Heir Prince would soon capture the entire Triarchy.

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Red Keep, Council Hall

Viserys sat at the head of the table, his elbows propped on the tabletop, smiling with the weariness of old age.

Hand of the King Lyonel Strong rose to report, "Your Grace, Morghul's dragon head has been transported from the harbor. Shall it be paraded?"

Lyman, seated at the end, nodded and looked at the king inquisitively.

The ferocity of the Lys attack had been widely rumored back to the Red Keep, and they had all heard of the difficulties involved. Hundreds of well-equipped mercenaries had driven warships, and

tens of thousands of defenders had died defending the harbor. Lys had even tamed the wild dragon Morghul, forcing a dragon battle.

Thanks to Prince Rhaegar's valor, he defeated Morghul with his Cannibal, crushing the last hope of Lys. The Battle of the Dragons was rumored to be the "Battle of the Mad Dragons" both inside and outside of the Narrow Sea.

The names of Rhaegar and Cannibal were now renowned, and the titles of Ruin Maker and Deathwing could stop a child from crying.

Viserys listened quietly and then solemnly said, "Don't parade it. Morghul is a Targaryen dragon. Transport it back to the Red Keep for proper disposal and keep it in the cellar."

Lyonel, with a straight face, replied, "The artisans are ready, just waiting for the dragon's head."

Viserys nodded, a hint of pity in his eyes. Morghul was a wild dragon of the Smoking Sea, not originally belonging to the Targaryens. Its nature was like an unclaimed treasure. The Targaryens had lost it, and it had fallen into the hands of the vile Lys.

As a last resort, Morghul perished. A dragon that should have belonged to the Targaryens had become a meal for Cannibal. This way of feeding a dragon to another was very heartbreaking to Viserys.

"It's a good thing the dragon didn't stray, and Rhaegar is safe," Viserys thought, suddenly feeling relieved. In his heart, his eldest son was his most precious asset, with his own dragon coming in second.

Otto Hightower, spoke next, his face solemn. "Your Grace, in the Battle of the Narrow Sea, we have occupied Myr and Lys. Many wealthy individuals have been slaughtered, and civilians and slaves now make up the majority of the city-states' populations. To appease these people, the kingdom will need to supply an astronomical amount of food."

This was not alarmist talk but based on actual experience from the attack on Myr. There was plenty of food in the two city-states, yet much of it had been shipped off by the rich ahead of time for hoarding. As the city-states were overrun, the wealthy either fled or were massacred, leaving the remaining food supplies insufficient.

Myr and Lys, not counting the civilians, had hundreds of thousands of slaves to feed. The fastest and most convenient way was to buy food from other free trade city-states. However, in a war of aggression, other city-states would refuse to provide food.

Even Pentos and Volantis, valued as allies, demanded outrageous prices, more than a dozen times the usual amount, driven by greed and Braavos's influence using the Iron Bank.

Viserys hesitated for a moment and asked, "Approximately how much grain is needed, and can the Riverlands and the Reach be taxed to compensate it?"

Hundreds of thousands of mouths sounded like a lot, but it was actually half as many as the resident population of King's Landing.

The two regions were the high grain-producing areas of Westeros, and temporarily requisitioning 100,000 army rations could be done, ensuring that hundreds of thousands of slaves would have enough to eat and drink.

Otto frowned and muttered, "Your Grace, Braavos has set the price of grain too high, and the nobles may be more inclined to sell to the Iron Bank at such prices."

Braavos and Pentos were the free trade city-states that had the most interaction with Westeros. The great nobles often befriended them to promote mutual trade. Many second and bastard sons of minor nobles traveled to these city-states to become high-priced mercenaries.

Nobles in financial trouble often borrowed money from the Iron Bank. During the reign of Jaehaerys I, a large sum of money was borrowed from the Iron Bank to build the King's Road, which connected King's Landing to various locations. The Iron Bank's influence on the treasury was considerable.

Viserys' face instantly turned stern, his stance firm. "The kingdom is at war. The two regions must be requisitioned for food without compensation. This is not open to discussion."

His children were on the battlefield, and he would never allow anything to go wrong at home.

"I will find a way. Please ask Lord Ormund Hightower to hold a tax meeting in Oldtown." Otto agreed after a moment's thought.

Lyman, who had been silent until now, frowned slightly and interrupted, "Lord Otto, Lord Tyrell of Highgarden is the bannerman. Don't overstep your bounds in the tax meeting."

This old man was born in the Honeyholt of the Reach and was himself the Lord of Honeyholt. In theory, Honeyholt was a direct bannerman of Hightower and should support Otto. However, Lyman, who had been loyal to the royal family for many years, had his own judgment and remembered the word loyalty.

Viserys noted the exchange, looked around at Otto and Lyonel, and reminded them, "Notify Lord Tyrell and Lord Tully as soon as possible, so as not to delay the battle at the front line."

"Yes, Your Grace," Otto replied, grimacing.

Lyman hummed in satisfaction and sat back.

Ever since the king married Otto's daughter as his queen, House Hightower had become increasingly audacious. Meanwhile, the House Tyrell in Highgarden was thin, and the old lord was mediocre. The Hightowers in Oldtown had gained an inexplicable control over the Reach.

Bang! Bang!

Just then, two dull knocks rang out.

Viserys looked up in surprise and saw Tormund, dressed in black and white robes, enter hurriedly with a grave expression.

"What happened?" Viserys inquired.

Tormund walked around the conference table and approached, his eyes heavy. "Your Grace, Dorne has struck, crossing Cape Wrath to besiege Stonehelm Castle."

Storm's End was some distance from King's Landing, so the ravens had taken longer to deliver the message. It had just reached the Crow Tower in the Red Keep.

Aemond explained the situation and delivered the letter.

A storm of thoughts erupted in the council chamber as the gravity of the news sank in.

Lyonel's face tightened as he spoke first, "I propose that a group of King's Landing troops be called up immediately and put on standby."

"The one under siege is Stonehelm; we should mobilize troops from Storm's End," Master of Law Jasper suggested casually.

Lyonel remained calm and replied, "Dorne's invasion of the Stormlands could trigger a shift in the Narrow Sea War. King's Landing needs to have a readily available army for emergencies."

Either to pacify the war or to support the Narrow Sea beyond.

Jasper paused, realizing the gravity of the problem.

Viserys nodded in agreement, "I will order a force of three thousand men to be assembled later."

Otto continued, "The Dornish are coming in strong. The army surrounding the city alone is 10,000 men. Storm's End must send troops as soon as possible.

Stonehelm was only a Lord's territory, with no more than 500 knights and no more than 3,000 infantry, horsemen, and archers under its command. Given the urgency of the Dornish siege, the food within the castle would not necessarily last long.

The Small Council was highly efficient and quickly discussed a detailed response plan. At the start of the Narrow Sea War, Rhaegar had anticipated that the Dornish would send troops and had a pre-planned strategy.

Tormund's face relaxed slightly as he hesitantly said, "Your Grace, Prince Aemond also sent a letter requesting permission to ride the dragon for battle."

"Aemond?" Viserys froze at the words and said with a headache, "How old is he? He's not as calm as Helaena. He should stay at Storm's End Castle."

Helaena's deed of riding the dragon to aid Gulltown had spread widely, and her popularity in the Crownlands and the Vale was only second to Rhaegar. Viserys was impressed with his previously unappreciated daughter.

Tormund sighed and smiled bitterly, "I'm afraid it's a bit difficult. The prince's letter states that he has already gathered the army of the Stormlands to prepare for a counterattack."

As the son-in-law of House Baratheon, Aemond had the authority to do this with Lady Elenda's cooperation.

"Damned boy!" Viserys exploded in anger, saying indignantly, "He hasn't even been on the battlefield. He has no command ability."

In the two Battles of the Stepstones Islands and the Narrow Sea War, only three people showed command abilities: the Sea Snake, Daemon, and Rhaegar. Even Rhaenys, known as the Queen Who Never Was, couldn't command the army and could only cooperate with the three in war.

Tormund remained silent, as he was only in charge of intelligence within the royal family.

Viserys's chest rose and fell in anger, his violet eyes darting around as he proposed, "I will ride Vermithor into the Stormlands and use the power of the dragons to drive the Dornishmen back."

"No!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, Lyonel objected.

Otto raised his eyebrows in surprise. "Your Grace, you are king of a country. It is better not to be in danger."

The rest of the advisors nodded in agreement.

Viserys' cheeks flushed with frustration. "Just because I'm the king, that's all the more reason to fight for the peace of the realm."

He wasn't the same man he had been a few years ago; he had inherited his grandfather's dragon the "Bronze Fury."

Lyonel persisted in his objection. "With all due respect, you are more worrisome than the young and inexperienced Prince Aemond."

"You are not a warrior," Lyman added from the sidelines.

Jasper nodded thoughtfully. "The Dornish are vile and cunning. Their every move affects the entire realm. It is better not to put yourself at risk."

The advisors spoke one by one, disliking the idea of the king going on the expedition.

Viserys' face reddened further, and he snapped, "Fine, I won't!!"

With that, he stormed out, leaving behind a group of stunned advisors.

The king's outburst had come out of nowhere, and the counselors looked at each other in surprise.

After a while, Lyman asked slowly, "Do we still want Prince Aemond to go to war?"

"Of course. Even a young Targaryen is still a Targaryen, and he has tamed a dragon," Jasper hastened to answer, voting in favor. His house was in the Stormlands as well.

Lyonel and Otto exchanged glances, remembering the image of the king storming out, and silently agreed. It was better for a prince to go to war than for the king himself to march.

Before Rhaegar had traveled farther to the Narrow Sea, he had given Prince Aemond permission to ride his dragon and go to war.

"Alas, I'll write a letter to requisition provisions," Lyonel sighed and got up from his seat.

Rubbing his balding curls, he felt the bare spot in the center growing larger, with a tendency to continue spreading. Mentally, he murmured, "I will do my best."

Chapter 384: Alicent's Resentment

In the evening, after dinner

Viserys returned to his residence in a low mood after reviewing the medals.

"Your Grace."

Inside the room, Alicent had been preparing for a long time. Two romantic red candles were lit on the round table.

"Still not resting?"

Viserys forced out a smile, noticing his wife in full dress and the romantic atmosphere. A slight stirring in his lower body quickly subsided.

With the war, the pressure on him increased with each passing day. The good news of Rhaegar's capture of Myr and Lys and Helaena's swift aid to Gulltown never ceased. The daily surprise and joy stimulated his already fragile nerves.

Bedtime with Alicent had become a rare, once-a-month respite. Despite his wife's beauty, his already injured body was overwhelmed.

Standing still, Viserys felt slightly embarrassed.

Alicent's fine eyebrows raised slightly as she smiled, "Quickly sit down. I specially prepared snake soup for you. The maester said it is very good for the body."

"Luckily, I have you."

Viserys made a perfunctory remark, feeling like he was sitting on pins and needles.

"You are the king, your health is important. Rest well tonight."

Alicent served a bowl of soup herself, subtly easing her husband's worries. She wasn't a lustful woman; her husband's affection was dispensable, and too much of it often backfired.

"That's good. I couldn't resist tasting it."

Viserys sighed in relief, picked up the soup, and slurped it down.

Alicent sat down next to him, ruffled a strand of hair, and asked softly, "Is Aemond going to war too?"

Viserys sipped his soup and remembered the annoyance of being rejected by the council. He replied in a clipped voice, "That boy is eager for war, and I, his father, can't stop him."

One by one, his children were very productive, making him feel mediocre as the father who stayed at home. He also wanted to fly out of King's Landing on Vermithor, recreating the upstart father-son relationship from the time of the King of Jaehaerys I.

Alicent heard the dissatisfaction in his words and pretended to be pitiful, "Aemond is still very young. He just wants to defend the kingdom for his father and gain your attention."

"Uh..."

Viserys was speechless, unable to think of a word in defense. It was true that he didn't care enough for his second sons and daughters, and it was understandable that Aemond wanted to follow Helaena's example.

Alicent's eyes emptied as she said ruefully, "With the exception of little Daeron, all my children have appeared on the battlefield."

The unintentional lamentation was full of worry.

Viserys put down his spoon at that, no longer able to drink the fragrant soup. He put his arm around his despondent wife and gently persuaded her, "The children have grown up and have their own ideas."

"Viserys, I am their mother. How can a mother not worry about her children?"

Alicent broke away from her husband's embrace and said seriously, "Don't you understand? They went to war for you, for Rhaegar, whom you have entrusted everything to."

She had wanted to put on a show to win her husband's sympathy, but her husband was a master at feigning confusion. She couldn't communicate without being blunt. She had to make him understand that their children were in danger because of his decisions.

Viserys' face stiffened and he said sullenly, "Rhaegar is your child, too."

Alicent's eyes were full of aggression as she asked, "When has he ever considered me his mother?"

"Have you ever thought of Rhaegar as your own?"

Viserys felt the conversation turning ridiculous and asked bluntly in return.

"I... at least did my duty."

Alicent's eyes reddened and her hands unconsciously clenched into fists. They say stepmothers are evil, but who knows how hard it is to be a stepmother? Rhaenyra hated her, and Rhaegar, raised by her, was distant.

Compared to them, who were indifferent to her, she, the stepmother, was always tolerant, for the Hightower House taught honor, sacrifice, and nurturing.

Viserys sighed at her words and covered his forehead. "It seems that when the war is over, it's time for us to hold a family meeting."

People with weak personalities tended to be more sensitive to emotions. The conflict between his eldest son and daughter and his wife Alicent had been accumulating over time, and sooner or later, it would erupt.

Fortunately, his eldest son was powerful enough to overpower his half-siblings. Even if the issue was brought out into the open, there was no need to worry about a major conflict.

Alicent was worried and angry, gritting her teeth. "What can be discussed? It's just another form of favoritism."

"I'm doing my best to level the playing field," Viserys said, physically and mentally exhausted, in an aggravated tone. "Until then, stop arguing."

Alicent pursed her lips, took a deep breath and looked away. Arguing was pointless, and her husband wasn't the type to be swayed by a fight.

The bedroom fell into a brief silence.

By the time the soup stopped steaming, Viserys' stiff face had loosened and he reassured, "Look on the bright side. The war is going well and our children are safe."

He emphasized the word "our."

Alicent scoffed inwardly, but outwardly she maintained her gentle image and said, "The Dornish are treacherous and cunning, and they once shot down a giant dragon. Aemond is not safe."

"That was an unforeseen accident when Meraxes flew too low."

Viserys, quite speechless, affirmed, "Dorne invaded the Stormlands. The battlefield is flat, and the dragons are invincible there."

In the War of Conquest, 100,000 allied troops from the Riverlands and the Westlands were incinerated in the fury of a battle on the plains. On the unprotected plains, Viserys had full faith in the dragons.

"Viserys, do you still not understand what I'm saying?"

Alicent slapped her forehead and said helplessly, "My child serves the realm for you, for... forget it."

Her eyes met Viserys' and she insisted, "I'm just saying, don't always focus on your two children. Love my children more."

"They are also sacrificing!"

Viserys' eyes were complicated and silent. He seemed to understand Alicent's thoughts. With the defeat of the Triarchy, the kingdom's territory had expanded, and rewards would become a matter of great urgency. Alicent asked for recognition and rewards for "her children."

Viserys averted his eyes and said, "I've kept it all in mind."

"Words not spoken, you will choose to forget," Alicent said quietly.

Viserys shook his head and smiled bitterly. "Think what you will, I will not mistreat my children and Rhaegar will not mistreat his younger siblings."

The words fell, and there was another moment of silence.

After a good half hour, Alicent wiped the corners of her eyes, unable to pick out her blood-stained fingernails, and helped her husband to get up and go back to bed to rest.

Before extinguishing the candles, she initiated a chat, "Helaena wrote to me. Laena returned to Driftmark Island, and Rhaegar transferred her back to Dragonstone Island to keep Rhaenyra company."

"Are the sisters getting along well?"

"Of course, Rhaenyra is pregnant, and her "servant" is very attentively."

"..."

...

Early the next morning.

News of the Dornish invasion reached Lys, and the letter landed on the table in the Magister's mansion.

"Roar..."

Tyraxes bounced around carelessly, its large head bobbing, flapping its wings as it slowly took off.

Rhaegar read the letter and nonchalantly slapped Tyraxes' head with his hand, subduing it instantly.

Tyraxes's hind feet flailed about, and his mist-colored wings flopped down on the tabletop, chirping indignantly.

"Play aside."

Rhaegar tossed out a handful of his tail, leaving the young dragon in midair, struggling to keep its balance.

Tyraxes opened its scarlet dragon's maw, still trying to get back at Rhaegar.

Rhaegar didn't even raise his head, an inexplicable sense of oppression unconsciously released.

Tyraxes was startled and unconsciously closed his mouth.

Poof!

The accumulated fine dragonfire exploded in its mouth, shaking the young dragon's body.

Tyraxes' head swayed, black smoke spewed from its mouth, and it snapped uncontrollably, falling to the ground.

"Hee hee, this little one is so much fun."

Johanna watched the whole thing from the sidelines, a pair of affectionate and amorous eyes flowing between Rhaegar and the dragon.

Having defected to the Iron Throne, her position of power had risen step by step. From the former Magister's lover and intelligence steward, she was promoted by the Iron Throne's heir to Grand Steward of Lys.

Rhaegar glanced at her and said lightly, "Are you done with your work?"

Johanna's smile stalled, and her dignified demeanor barely held steady. More than a hundred thousand mouths were waiting for her to feed; how could she ever be idle?

Rhaegar lazily ignored her and took out a pen and paper to write a letter, one to King's Landing and one to Storm's End.

The Dornish invasion was expected, just not at this point in time. It was thought that they would attack during the assault on Lys, thus triggering a two-front war. From this, it was clear that the so-called alliance between the Triarchy and Dornish was also each running towards their own interests.

Johanna, realizing she had asked for trouble, decided to work diligently and inquired, "Prince, Tyrosh has been under siege for a long time, and Daemon has urged action several times."

"Is the Archon of Tyrosh's attitude still as stubborn as ever?" Rhaegar asked, not pausing from his writing.

Johanna straightened up slightly, "Milov is a mercenary by trade, believes only in his sword, and will not surrender easily."

"And the rich and grassroots of Tyrosh? How are they reacting?" Rhaegar considered another angle.

The fleet blockaded the harbor, halting all trade. Whether it affected the wealthy or the anxious civilians and slaves, there should have been some reaction.

Throughout the sieges in Westeros, as well as various wars in Essos, it was always a matter of attacking the heart before attacking the city. He and Aunt Rhaenys sat in Lys and Myr, consuming and pressuring the Archon of Tyrosh.

Johanna frowned slightly, "Milov has used the burning of two city-states to incite the civilians against the Iron Throne army, while the rich and slaves are forced to comply under his leadership."

Civilians have been easily swayed in every age, believing whatever those in power say. However, a handful of wealthy individuals and slaves with no rights were not so easily manipulated and were directly suppressed by force.

Upon hearing this, Rhaegar couldn't help but snort, "Tyrosh relies on the rich to rule the city-state, and he's dying a slow death by suppressing them."

All generations of Tyrosh's rulers had bribed the wealthy to get into the position. This bad habit was ingrained, and the people of Tyrosh saw no wrong in it. According to them, a person who couldn't even bribe was not qualified to lead them to prosperity.

Johanna smiled and agreed wholeheartedly.

Don't underestimate the customs of a place; that's the key to rule.

Rhaegar quickly finished writing the letter and instructed, "If Braavos doesn't make a move, Tyrosh can't hold out for long. Notify Daemon to lay siege for another half month."

This was probably the time limit for Tyrosh's wealthy, who could not stand the blockade and would rebel against Milov's tyranny.

Rhaegar pondered, "The Dornish are tough, and their soldiers have a high fighting spirit. I fear that Aemond will not withstand the pressure."

The Narrow Sea War had reached a critical moment, and it was prudent for his father and Helaena to guard King's Landing and Dragonstone Island. Beyond the Narrow Sea, there were a total of five dragon riders.

He and Aunt Rhaenys were guarding one castle each and could not be moved easily. Aegon guarded the Stepstones Islands and oversaw the transportation of supplies, playing a pivotal role. Daemon, needless to say, was constantly besieging Tyrosh and could not be distracted.

Scratching his silver hair, Rhaegar thoughtfully said, "Write to the Sea Snake and transfer Laenor back to the Stormlands. There's no future in just patrolling the seas."

Johanna's eyes twinkled as she obediently replied, "Yes, Prince."

She appreciated a smart partner, especially one like the prince, whose calm demeanor and strategic mind were far superior to her previous alliances.

Chapter 385: Daemon's Determination, Blood Wyrms Burning the City

It was dusk.

The setting sun painted the Tyrosh sea in a brilliant reddish hue, like an ink drawing come to life. Dozens of warships were anchored, forming a solid line of defense. On a small island, a temporary camp was set up.

Daemon stood facing the setting sun, his deep eyes reflecting a complex mix of emotions. His pitch-black armor was marked with scars, and a crimson cloak draped over his elbows. At first glance, he seemed like a general savoring a moment of tranquility.

However, the letter clutched in his hand, now crumpled, and the incessant chatter of the soldiers behind him disrupted the serene scene. Ignoring the noise, Daemon called an adjutant and asked calmly, "Laenor rode off on Sea Smoke?"

"Yes, Ser Laenor was heard supporting the Stormlands," the adjutant replied, his voice trembling slightly as he stole nervous glances at Daemon's face.

Even though Prince Daemon's voice was calm, a bone-chilling coldness emanated from him, making the adjutant uneasy. Daemon paid no heed to the nervous adjutant, instead focusing on the letter with its clear handwriting.

[Surround and do not attack, wait for Myr and Lys to draw troops to support...]

"Still have to wait," Daemon murmured, shaking his head with a sneer.

He had followed his nephew's orders, helping to capture the city-states of Myr and Lys, achieving significant success in battle. Before the war, he had discussed with his brother the promise of a share of the titles if he captured a city. Now, despite taking two city-states, his nephew had shown no intention of honoring that promise, not even mentioning a word about dividing one city-state to him.

Well then, if his nephew didn't recognize his achievements, he wouldn't bother with them. He had personally led the army to besiege Tyrosh, only to be told to wait, day after day. And now, with the Dornish invasion of the Stormlands, Laenor, who had been assisting him, was also reassigned.

"Huh..."

Daemon shook his head, a sarcastic smile forming on his lips as he handed the letter to his adjutant. "Exactly how long am I supposed to wait?" he asked casually.

The adjutant's face tightened, and his voice trembled as he replied, "Prince, the letter says half a month..."

"Half a month?" Daemon's eyes sharpened, cutting through the adjutant's timid facade like a blade.

In one swift motion, Daemon tore the letter to shreds, sending the confetti scattering and catching the reddish hues of the setting sun.

Clattering sounds filled the air as Daemon pulled the dragon-winged helmet from under his arm and walked expressionlessly toward the boisterous group of mercenaries.

The dyed-haired, leather-armored mercenaries were unmistakably Tyrosh. Unaware of the impending danger, they continued their aggressive chatter.

"Prince Daemon, I advise you to retreat quickly. The Archon will offer you gold equal to your body weight."

"If the Iron Throne army does not retreat, Braavos and Dorne will destroy the Iron Throne..."

"A bunch of brawling clowns, what a racket," Daemon muttered in disgust. He grabbed one of the mercenaries by the head and swung the dragon-winged helm with a sickening thud.

Boom! Boom!

The deafening sound abruptly silenced the chatter, replaced by the splatter of blood.

Daemon threw the lifeless body to the ground, skull crushed. His face, now stained with blood, wore a devilish smile. "I will personally strike down Tyrosh and claim a city-state in my name."

The remaining henchmen tried to flee in terror.

Daemon calmly wiped his dirty helmet with his cloak.

Soldiers rushed in, swords drawn, and quickly turned the mercenaries into a bloody mess.

After the bodies were dragged away, the soldiers knelt in a circle around Daemon. Ten years after leaving Westeros, the Rogue Prince's reputation still commanded respect.

Rhaegar had an elite group of sworn Second Sons, and Daemon, his uncle, would not be outdone. Daemon's years in the free-trade city-states had honed his skills at gathering and buying mercenaries to serve him.

By the start of the Narrow Sea War, he had amassed an army of over 5,000 men.

Daemon surveyed his men, his long, disheveled hair now slicked back with bloodstained hands. He put on his helmet without a word.

"Prince, where are you going?" the adjutant asked anxiously.

Daemon didn't look back. "Get the hell back to your master and tell him to return to Dragonstone Island. Tell him Rhaenyra will soon have milk for him too."

He had no patience for waiting for a city-state to collapse from within. He wanted to claim a city-state immediately, paying the price in blood and fire.

"Roar..."

A scarlet dragon shadow cut through the fiery sky, its Roar echoing for miles.

Caraxes descended from the clouds, flapping its wings for a swaying landing.

Daemon climbed onto the dragon's back, leaning down to stare at his men. "Inform the entire army: attack Tyrosh while it's still night!"

"Roar..."

Caraxes's eyes flashed with bloodlust as it carried Daemon into the sky, its serpentine body twisting as it soared out to sea.

...

At night, a bright moon hung high in the sky.

Tyrosh.

The harbor was heavily guarded. Dozens of battleships patrolled in batches, and a massive bonfire illuminated the night as if it were day.

"Patrol carefully! Don't let Westeros' spies sneak into the city!" yelled the bearded mercenary chief, standing side by side with several lookouts. He spat on the ground and glared at his subordinates.

Tyrosh's fleet couldn't venture out of the harbor, but it surrounded the city-state, creating an impenetrable ironclad defense.

Suddenly, thin clouds stirred in the sky as a cool sea breeze blew in.

High above, a slender behemoth was concealed, cold purple eyes observing the defenses below.

Fifty nautical miles away from Tyrosh, dozens of warships converged, lurking in the pale sea under the night, just waiting for an order.

...

The Archon's Residence

Milov, a mercenary by trade, was living a life of indulgence, lounging with two scantily clad beauties, reveling in his temporary peace.

Inside and outside the mansion, two thousand soldiers from his mercenary corps guarded every level of the compound, ensuring that not even a fly could slip through. The mansion was grand, featuring pavilions and attics in the front yard and a garden with flowing water in the back.

In a white stone attic, lit by candlelight, a dozen or so luxuriously dressed men and women were holding a private meeting.

Bang! A bearded man pounded the table and said angrily, "Milov is a bastard! What does he take us for, daring to put us under house arrest!"

"He's just a lowly mercenary, a liar with no credibility," complained a red-haired old woman, her voice shrill with frustration.

Some of the attendees responded, while others remained silent, an oppressive mood filling the room. They were the upper echelon of Tyrosh's wealthiest citizens.

After the Second Battle of the Stepstones, the city-state had been devastated by a dragon attack, and the rich had suffered heavy losses. Milov, a young mercenary, took advantage of the chaos to loot and use his forces to position himself as an Archon, rallying under the banner of avenging the Iron Throne's aggression.

However, Milov's true nature as a cruel tyrant was soon revealed. He exploited the commoners even more than his predecessors, forcibly extracting large sums of money from the wealthy to fund his war efforts. When Myr fell, he demanded even more. With Lys fallen and the Triarchy in jeopardy, Milov tightened his grip, forbidding the wealthy to flee and keeping them under house arrest in his mansion.

"Everyone, perhaps you would like to hear me out," a solemn, middle-aged man with purple hair spoke up.

"What is your idea?" The rich stopped complaining and stared at him in unison.

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The man remained calm and said, "Milov's lack of trust has caused internal and external problems in Tyrosh. I know that everyone here has raised a group of private soldiers. Why don't we slaughter him?"

The red-haired crone scoffed, "If we kill the Archon, who will block the Iron Throne's army for us?"

"Exactly," several wealthy individuals nodded in agreement with uneasy looks.

Despite being under house arrest, they were not completely powerless. If they really wanted to escape, they could join forces with their private forces, but it would cost them.

The purple-haired middle-aged man said, "Myr and Lys have fallen, Braavos and Dorne are watching. Do you really think Milov can stop the dragons?"

Hearing this, the bearded man who had spoken first turned around, forcing him to ask, "What deal did you make with the Iron Throne?"

Immediately, the eyes of the rich people changed and stared at the purple-haired middle-aged man, desperately wanting to know more.

Seeing no point in hiding anymore, the man confessed, "I am a business partner of Lys' Black Swan. We oppose Milov's rule, and Rhaegar Targaryen's forces are open to negotiation."

"Ridiculous, you're a business partner with a whore who owns a brothel," someone replied.

"Don't argue, let's negotiate," the bearded man demanded.

The man persisted, "Milov's cruelty has made Tyrosh a target. The Targaryens need us to keep trade alive and the economy going."

There was a brief pause as the room filled with murmurs of agreement and skepticism.

"Is the news credible?" someone asked.

The man replied confidently, "The Targaryens have occupied two city-states. They need the support of the wealthy to sustain themselves. We can provide food and money."

The reasoning was sound, and the eyes of the rich began to light up with possibility.

"Let's plan," someone finally said.

"I bought out a guard outside the attic; he can tip us off," another offered.

"I've bribed a group of mercenaries at the port; they can send information and maps to Lys," another added.

"Milov's new whore was sent by me. She can slip drugs into his wine," someone else suggested.

The plan was clear.

Seeing the unity, the purple-haired middle-aged man chuckled, "Since we all agree, I'll write the letter."

Wooooooooooooo...

Just as he rose from his chair, a distant, low horn sounded.

"What's the commotion?" someone asked in surprise.

The bearded man's face stiffened, and he immediately ran towards the window, exclaiming, "It's the harbor horn! The Iron Throne's fleet is attacking!"

"Wait... what?" The purple-haired man froze, unable to process the sudden turn of events.

Turning his head, his eyes looked through the glazed window into the dim night sky.

Everything appeared calm and peaceful, as usual.

Suddenly, a flash of scarlet appeared, followed by a sharp roar.

"Roar!"

A snake-like scarlet dragon rushed straight toward the Archon's residence, its wide wings enveloping the attic. In an instant, raging Dragonfire descended.

Boom—

The purple-haired middle-aged man's eyes widened in horror before he was incinerated by the scarlet Dragonfire, his screams cut short.

Caraxes turned and flew away, using the cover of night to target other parts of the mansion, spraying Dragonfire relentlessly.

"Well done, Caraxes!"

Daemon sat firmly on the dragon's back, his gaze coldly fixed on the Archon's bedroom, searching for his next target.

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Daemon climbed onto the dragon's back, leaning down to stare at his men. "Inform the entire army: attack Tyrosh while it's still night!"

"Roar..."

Caraxes's eyes flashed with bloodlust as it carried Daemon into the sky, its serpentine body twisting as it soared out to sea.

...

At night, a bright moon hung high in the sky.

Tyrosh.

The harbor was heavily guarded. Dozens of battleships patrolled in batches, and a massive bonfire illuminated the night as if it were day.

"Patrol carefully! Don't let Westeros' spies sneak into the city!" yelled the bearded mercenary chief, standing side by side with several lookouts. He spat on the ground and glared at his subordinates.

Tyrosh's fleet couldn't venture out of the harbor, but it surrounded the city-state, creating an impenetrable ironclad defense.

Suddenly, thin clouds stirred in the sky as a cool sea breeze blew in.

High above, a slender behemoth was concealed, cold purple eyes observing the defenses below.

Fifty nautical miles away from Tyrosh, dozens of warships converged, lurking in the pale sea under the night, just waiting for an order.

...

The Archon's Residence

Milov, a mercenary by trade, was living a life of indulgence, lounging with two scantily clad beauties, reveling in his temporary peace.

Inside and outside the mansion, two thousand soldiers from his mercenary corps guarded every level of the compound, ensuring that not even a fly could slip through. The mansion was grand, featuring pavilions and attics in the front yard and a garden with flowing water in the back.

In a white stone attic, lit by candlelight, a dozen or so luxuriously dressed men and women were holding a private meeting.

Bang! A bearded man pounded the table and said angrily, "Milov is a bastard! What does he take us for, daring to put us under house arrest!"

"He's just a lowly mercenary, a liar with no credibility," complained a red-haired old woman, her voice shrill with frustration.

Some of the attendees responded, while others remained silent, an oppressive mood filling the room. They were the upper echelon of Tyrosh's wealthiest citizens.

After the Second Battle of the Stepstones, the city-state had been devastated by a dragon attack, and the rich had suffered heavy losses. Milov, a young mercenary, took advantage of the chaos to loot and use his forces to position himself as an Archon, rallying under the banner of avenging the Iron Throne's aggression.

However, Milov's true nature as a cruel tyrant was soon revealed. He exploited the commoners even more than his predecessors, forcibly extracting large sums of money from the wealthy to fund his war efforts. When Myr fell, he demanded even more. With Lys fallen and the Triarchy in jeopardy, Milov tightened his grip, forbidding the wealthy to flee and keeping them under house arrest in his mansion.

"Everyone, perhaps you would like to hear me out," a solemn, middle-aged man with purple hair spoke up.

"What is your idea?" The rich stopped complaining and stared at him in unison.

"What's your idea?" The rich stopped complaining and stared at him in unison.

The man remained calm and said, "Milov's lack of trust has caused internal and external problems in Tyrosh. I know that everyone here has raised a group of private soldiers. Why don't we slaughter him?"

The red-haired crone scoffed, "If we kill the Archon, who will block the Iron Throne's army for us?"

"Exactly," several wealthy individuals nodded in agreement with uneasy looks.

Despite being under house arrest, they were not completely powerless. If they really wanted to escape, they could join forces with their private forces, but it would cost them.

The purple-haired middle-aged man said, "Myr and Lys have fallen, Braavos and Dorne are watching. Do you really think Milov can stop the dragons?"

Hearing this, the bearded man who had spoken first turned around, forcing him to ask, "What deal did you make with the Iron Throne?"

Immediately, the eyes of the rich people changed and stared at the purple-haired middle-aged man, desperately wanting to know more.

Seeing no point in hiding anymore, the man confessed, "I am a business partner of Lys' Black Swan. We oppose Milov's rule, and Rhaegar Targaryen's forces are open to negotiation."

"Ridiculous, you're a business partner with a whore who owns a brothel," someone replied.

"Don't argue, let's negotiate," the bearded man demanded.

The man persisted, "Milov's cruelty has made Tyrosh a target. The Targaryens need us to keep trade alive and the economy going."

There was a brief pause as the room filled with murmurs of agreement and skepticism.

"Is the news credible?" someone asked.

The man replied confidently, "The Targaryens have occupied two city-states. They need the support of the wealthy to sustain themselves. We can provide food and money."

The reasoning was sound, and the eyes of the rich began to light up with possibility.

"Let's plan," someone finally said.

"I bought out a guard outside the attic; he can tip us off," another offered.

"I've bribed a group of mercenaries at the port; they can send information and maps to Lys," another added.

"Milov's new whore was sent by me. She can slip drugs into his wine," someone else suggested.

The plan was clear.

Seeing the unity, the purple-haired middle-aged man chuckled, "Since we all agree, I'll write the letter."

Wooooooooooooo...

Just as he rose from his chair, a distant, low horn sounded.

"What's the commotion?" someone asked in surprise.

The bearded man's face stiffened, and he immediately ran towards the window, exclaiming, "It's the harbor horn! The Iron Throne's fleet is attacking!"

"Wait... what?" The purple-haired man froze, unable to process the sudden turn of events.

Turning his head, his eyes looked through the glazed window into the dim night sky.

Everything appeared calm and peaceful, as usual.

Suddenly, a flash of scarlet appeared, followed by a sharp roar.

"Roar!"

A snake-like scarlet dragon rushed straight toward the Archon's residence, its wide wings enveloping the attic. In an instant, raging Dragonfire descended.

Boom—

The purple-haired middle-aged man's eyes widened in horror before he was incinerated by the scarlet Dragonfire, his screams cut short.

Caraxes turned and flew away, using the cover of night to target other parts of the mansion, spraying Dragonfire relentlessly.

"Well done, Caraxes!"

Daemon sat firmly on the dragon's back, his gaze coldly fixed on the Archon's bedroom, searching for his next target.

Chapter 386: Vhagar Descends!

Under the twinkling stars, scarlet fire spread across Tyrosh.

Caraxes soared nimbly, hovering over the Archon's mansion and spewing Dragonfire furiously.

Two thousand mercenaries quickly rushed to their positions, hiding behind buildings and drawing their bows and hurling spears.

Caraxes didn't flinch, spewing fire relentlessly, ignoring the arrows crashing against his scales.

Occasionally gliding low, the dragon's back exposed Daemon.

"Shoot the arrows and target the dragon rider!" a mercenary yelled, eyes gleaming as if he saw a mountain of gold.

Bows and spears fired faster, creating a cage of projectiles.

Daemon looked down and said indifferently, "Fools."

"Roar..."

Caraxes roared harshly, spreading its wide scarlet wings to shield himself, deflecting most of the projectiles.

As a battle-hardened dragon, its scales were strong and wing membranes tough, out of the usual crossbow's damage range.

Turning his icy pupils towards the mercenaries, Caraxes landed violently, stretching its neck and spitting Dragonfire crazily.

The scarlet Dragonfire swept like a broom, leaving behind only screams and wails.

One person and one dragon wreaked havoc; the mansion's emergency bell rang, summoning guards from all directions.

Mercenaries inside the mansion fled, launching their scorpion crossbows and nimbly filling their steel spears.

Realizing the approaching danger, Daemon grimaced and commanded, "Fly!"

Caraxes stopped spitting fire, using his wings to push off the ground, soaring easily and rushing into the night sky.

No matter how the mercenaries aimed, they couldn't cause any damage.

Daemon looked down at the burning buildings below, eyes filled with disdain.

The pavilions were engulfed in flames, white stone walls smoldering and blackened, charred corpses and debris littering the ground.

Seeing the growing number of guards outside the buildings, Daemon's eyes turned cold, and he said, "Support the harbor."

In one fell swoop, they had broken the city's order, drawing the garrison to the mansion and creating an opportunity for the fleet's assault.

Unfortunately, he hadn't found that pig-like Archon to feed him to the dragon.

"Roar..."

Caraxes obeyed, spitting one last mouthful of Dragonfire at the arriving garrison before soaring towards the harbor.

At the same time...

Dozens of warships broke through the patrol ship's defenses and rushed into Tyrosh harbor with great force.

The horn sounded, putting the harbor on full alert and fortifications were manned to defend to the death.

Patrol ships returned, and a naval battle broke out with the Iron Throne fleet.

Within a quarter of an hour, the harbor was in flames.

...

Three days passed in the blink of an eye.

The adjutant, driven away by Daemon, arrived at Lys Harbor on a smuggling ship and reported the information without delay. Daemon had initiated the war privately and forbade the ravens from spreading the news, forcing the adjutant to cross the disputed lands to deliver the report.

The news first reached the ears of the Sea Snake stationed in the harbor, then quickly made its way to the Magister's mansion.

Lys, the ruins west of the city.

Hundreds of elite soldiers of the Second Sons Regiment, clad in armor, stood in two rows, forming a wide passageway in the middle.

At the end of the passage, a huge dragon as black as charcoal lay prostrate, statuesque and motionless as it slept.

Tap...

At the other end of the passage, the sound of powerful footsteps slowly approached.

Rhaegar, dressed in a pure black dragon rider armor, walked steadily down the passageway.

"Prince, war has broken out; you need to calm down," Johanna's face was grave as she followed closely, her slender legs keeping pace.

"I'm not losing my cool," Rhaegar's voice was calm, revealing neither happiness nor anger.

He knew that Daemon had a problem with him, and their feud had been buried ten years ago. But Daemon shouldn't have vented his dissatisfaction in this manner. War was a continuation of politics, and taking a city-state did not mean ruling it effectively.

Myr and Lys had just been captured, and Targaryen had yet to gain a firm foothold. Rhaegar did not want further bloodshed and preferred a softer approach to stabilize the situation.

At least, he wanted people to remember the "Battle of the Narrow Sea" not just for its blood and fire, but for Targaryen's justice, strictness, and tolerance.

Johanna quickened her pace but still fell behind, asking urgently, "The war has lasted three days; rushing over now won't help."

She thought the prince intended to stop the war or rally the remaining wealthy individuals. The presence of the rich was like a duck that laid golden eggs for a free-trade city-state.

"The situation has changed," Rhaegar replied as he reached the end of the passage.

Standing by the neck of Cannibal, he ground the dragon's scales twice before climbing the soft ladder woven with hemp rope. Smelling a familiar odor, Cannibal's nostrils stopped snoring, and its stern green vertical pupils instantly opened.

In a flash, a dull, oppressive odor swept through the air, mixed with a hint of ash stench, making it hard to breathe.

"Roar..."

Cannibal growled lowly and shook its massive body to stand, its pitch-black wings and hind feet slowly emerging from the rubble.

Rhaegar hung onto the soft ladder, swaying lightly, climbing onto the dragon's back and straddling the newly cast black steel saddle. After devouring Morghul, Cannibal had been in a deep slumber.

It was uncertain whether the dragon's flesh and blood provided nourishment or if Rhaegar's bloodline metamorphosis had boosted it, but Cannibal had grown noticeably in less than half a month. The rope net woven with special material broke, and the black iron saddle needed replacement.

Thus, Rhaegar had sought craftsmen to cast a new set of dragon rider equipment.

Boom...

Cannibal's vertical pupils were cold and unfeeling, and its wings slapped the rocks, triggering a ground tremor.

Johanna wanted to pursue the matter but was scared back by the dragon's aura, too afraid to approach.

"Calm down," Rhaegar calmed the giant dragon, bent his head, and said, "Notify the Sea Snake to deploy a medium-sized fleet of three thousand men and twenty ships, and rush to Tyrosh immediately."

"Yes, Prince," Johanna nervously replied, her expression frozen as she came into close contact with a adult dragon for the first time.

Rhaegar turned back and patted the dragon's back, "Let's go, partner!"

The pig he had raised had been slaughtered by Daemon prematurely, and the city-state could not afford any more accidents.

"Roar-"

Cannibal leapt up and zipped into the thin clouds.

"Roar..."

Another shrill roar responded as the light gray dragon shadow followed deftly.

Over a hundred thousand pairs of eyes within the city-state looked up in unison, the fear of being burned by the evil dragon striking their hearts once again.

Cannibal's appearance was menacing, and its dark dragon body resembled an evil god's descent.

The Grey Ghost hung behind it like a white specter.

It is likely that another city will be on fire this time.

...

Tyrosh.

"Roar..."

Caraxes let out a shrill cry, weaving through the city-state and spewing Dragonfire to wreak havoc.

Daemon rode on the dragon's back, his armor battered and pitted with arrow craters, his expression icy and intense.

Hundreds of high towers filled the city-state, each armed with scorpion crossbows aimed at the dragon and its rider.

Whoosh!

A steel spear flew past, grazing the broad dragon wings.

Daemon glanced back and forth and commanded, "Burn down that tower!"

Caraxes swiftly moved towards the attacking tower, unleashing a furious stream of Dragonfire.

"Ahh!"

"Shoot, shoot..."

Under the Dragonfire's intense heat, the tower's stone walls began to crack, the fire surging through doors and windows, incinerating the garrison inside.

Swish, swish, swish...

As one tower burned, several nearby towers launched a coordinated attack, their steel spears aimed at the dragon.

"Roar..."

Caraxes dodged hurriedly, abandoning the smoldering tower and climbing high into the sky.

The relentless attacks over three days and nights were testing the dragon's endurance. The frequency of Caraxes' wing flaps showed its exhaustion.

Realizing this, Daemon spoke in a deep voice, "Caraxes, let's go!"

He, too, hadn't slept for three days and nights, his eyes bloodshot and weary.

Caraxes, relieved by the command, quickly left the battlefield, disappearing into the clouds.

...

In the harbor, the flames of battle raged fiercely.

Boom!

The stone throwers launched their flints, heavily bombarding the enemy warships.

Daemon's fleet, forced out of the harbor, engaged in brutal combat with the Tyrosh fleet on the open waters. Both sides unleashed their stone throwers and scorpion crossbows with relentless fury. The warships shattered into splinters, and the decks became abattoirs of blood and flesh.

It was as if a colossal meat grinder had descended upon the blue sea.

"Fight for the Iron Throne!" a King's Landing knight roared, swinging his greatsword aboard a warship.

"All men must die!" the mercenaries bellowed, eyes gleaming with the lust for gold, sacrificing their lives in the deadly fray.

On the first night of the attack, Daemon's fleet had successfully raided the harbor, landing a significant number of soldiers. But the defenders, with their superior numbers, had managed to force them back.

Daemon, commanding Caraxes to dominate the skies, still couldn't prevent the relentless scorpion crossbow attacks. Forced to retreat, he redirected his assault to the city's buildings.

"Roar!"

Caraxes soared through the air, its vertical pupils scanning the warships bearing the banners of the Triarchy. Once again, it unleashed dragonfire.

Boom!

Dragonfire engulfed the ships, and the mercenaries on deck screamed as they leaped into the sea, their bodies aflame.

Daemon watched the destruction coldly, riding his dragon with ruthless ambition.

Caraxes, unconcerned about friendly fire, continued to spew Dragonfire indiscriminately, escalating the bloodshed.

The chaotic assault caused a riot.

A young officer with silver hair and dark skin from the Velaryon branch shouted, "Prince, we can't hold the harbor. We need to withdraw!"

In war, momentum was everything. After three days of relentless fighting, the soldiers were exhausted. Instead of pushing their limits and sacrificing more lives, it would be wiser to withdraw and recuperate.

Daemon's face was grim. He was determined to fight to the bitter end. The soldiers under his command could die, and dozens of warships could burn. He was even willing to risk his life and Caraxes' in the process. His pride wouldn't allow him to retreat in defeat.

"Roar!"

Caraxes sensed his rider's determination, roaring fiercely as he dove back into the fray, spraying Dragonfire and decimating enemy ships.

The dragon's fire seemed endless, its stamina unwavering.

After a grueling half-hour of high-intensity bombardment, an opening finally appeared in the enemy fleet. The Iron Throne's fleet quickly adjusted, pushing back the enemy troops and charging straight into the harbor.

Warships anchored, hook locks were thrown along the coast, and soldiers poured out.

Daemon led the charge, riding Caraxes at the front, two dozen scorpion crossbows in the vanguard. Man and dragon, unflinching, were determined to carve a bloody path.

"Scorpion crossbows, prepare!"

Inside the watchtower, the mercenaries' faces were grim. They aimed their giant crossbows at the scarlet dragon.

Daemon's eyes gleamed with madness. His voice, hoarse from shouting, bellowed, "Dracarys!"

"Fire!"

Scarlet Dragonfire erupted as dense steel spears shot out, and the two sides clashed head-on.

In that moment of life and death, there was no retreat.

"Dracarys!"

Suddenly, a clear voice rang out, shattering Daemon's fierce resolve.

"Roar!"

A roar as loud as thunder echoed. A huge green dragon stormed the battlefield, spewing orange Dragonfire mixed with thick smoke.

The Dragonfire, fierce like an erupting volcano, melted the steel spears into molten puddles of iron.

"Roar!"

From the midst of the inferno, Caraxes surged forth, carrying an unharmed Daemon.

Daemon froze in astonishment, looking back.

He saw Laena's face.

"Roar!"

Vhagar roared deeply. Its massive body, resembling a giant mountain, unleashed a torrent of Dragonfire.

The intense heat melted stone and iron alike. The Dragonfire swept across half the harbor, incinerating everything in its path.

Chapter 387: Laena Gives Birth

"Laena!" Daemon shouted, startled by his wife's sudden arrival.

Without a moment's hesitation, Laena called out crisply, "Dracarys!"

"Roar..." Vhagar swooped down, unleashing Dragonfire that shattered the defenses of several watchtowers before quickly taking to the air again. Laena, with her silver hair flowing in the wind, rode gracefully in the saddle, her shoulders bound in chains for security. Restricted by her pregnancy, she wore no armor, only a thin white dress.

Vhagar, like a protective mother, flew fast and steady, ensuring Laena's safety. Daemon stared for a moment before quickly grasping his wife's intentions.

“Roar...” Caraxes, sensing the unity, shot up into the sky, following Vhagar and spewing Dragonfire in synchronization.

Over the eight years of traveling the Free Cities, the bond between Daemon and Laena had deepened, mirrored by the connection between their dragons. Vhagar and Caraxes frequently soared together, displaying scenes of two dragons dancing in perfect harmony.

Rewind twenty to thirty years, and the masters of these two dragons were Aemon and Baelon, known for their legendary achievement in the “Hundred Candles Battle.”

“Dracarys!” Laena’s eyes were resolute as she commanded Vhagar to break through the harbor’s defenses, carving a flaming path of destruction.

Vhagar roared repeatedly, its vertical pupils indifferent to the chaos, its huge body a relentless killing machine.

Even Caraxes, powerful as it was, dared not approach too closely, instead flanking to provide support. Despite Vhagar’s age and gradually aging body, it displayed an unparalleled destructive force, living up to his name as the Goddess of War

“Attack!” Daemon shouted. “Siege the free city...”

With the two dragons dancing in deadly harmony, the morale of their forces soared. They charged into Tyrosh, following the scorched path left by Vhagar’s fiery wrath.

In moments, Tyrosh descended into chaos.

...

A squad of guardsmen rushed up the tower, aiming their scorpion crossbows at the sky.

"Roar!" Vhagar's war consciousness was strong, and the dragon's head aimed at the tower, spewing black smoke and rolling Dragonfire.

Laena crouched low, protecting the child in her womb. She had received secret messages from several of her cousins about Daemon's intent to wage a private war. Each day, her worry and depression grew.

Now she understood how Vhagar felt. Determined to correct her husband's mistake, she mounted Vhagar's back, fulfilling her duty as both wife and dragon rider. With a mournful whimper, Vhagar carried her across the Narrow Sea. The old dragon had finally returned to the battlefield.

"Laena, help the army in the alleys!" Daemon, worried, urged his wife to stay out of range of the scorpion crossbows. Vhagar was too large, easily becoming a living target among the tall towers.

At 170 years old, Vhagar's scales had hardened over time, becoming harder than steel. Even the Cannibal's strengthened scales were not as thick. Age had not only weakened Vhagar's body, it had also increased his ability to survive.

Daemon shook his head and smiled. His wife, inheriting his cousin's quick mind, was much smarter than him. The couple rode their dragons, destroying towers as they soared above the city. With dragon support, the army's morale soared, driving them straight into the city.

Within an hour, the army defeated the defending forces and surrounded the Archon's mansion on the west side of the city. Caraxes landed boldly, stepping into the mansion's vestibule.

Daemon looked around. The mansion was silent, a scene of abandonment.

Bang! The mansion gate was violently broken down, and soldiers poured in.

Daemon's face darkened as he ordered coldly, "Search every corner. Don't spare a single soul!"

Archon Milov had insulted him with numerous letters. Daemon was determined to roast him alive.

...

Tyrosh, a hidden beach on the east side.

"Move quickly."

"Hurry, or it will be too late."

Hundreds of well-equipped mercenaries fled, led by the brash Milov. They carried crates of gold, silver, and jewelry, and in the middle of the group, seven or eight rich prisoners were bound and dragged along.

Milov looked back at the city and saw the huge green dragon hovering like a massive mountain, pressing down on Tyrosh.

"Gulp." Milov swallowed hard, envy and jealousy twisting his face. "Damn it, how come Targaryen has so many dragons?"

He had thought he could barely resist with only Daemon attacking the city. The Sealord of Braavos had sent a message urging him to defend the city-state to the death, promising support from a hidden fleet in the Narrow Sea.

Bullshit! Sealord Braavos was clearly swindling him, using him as bait to attract the Iron Throne's attention. As a mercenary, he knew when it was time to cut and run.

Clap Clap Clap...

The tide surged onto the beach, and several small sailing ships hid outside the reef.

"Get on board, and don't lose my treasure and hostages!" Milov shouted, drawing his sword to deter his men with his remaining authority.

"Roar--"

Suddenly, a pair of pitch-black wings covered the sky, and the beach echoed with a flood of roaring.

Rhaegar looked down and immediately saw the fleeing mercenaries. Smoke churned in the city, signaling that the war was nearing its end.

"Dracarys," Rhaegar said in a clear, cold voice.

Cannibal's green vertical pupils glowed coldly, and spewed raging Dragonfire.

Zira...

The green Dragonfire descended like smoke and mist. Upon contact, it wrapped around its victims, scorching flesh and turning bodies into dry, charred corpses.

The mercenaries wailed in agony, unable to escape, rolling around in vain attempts to extinguish the flames.

"Ah! It hurts!"

A mercenary, his upper body engulfed in Dragonfire, screamed as he ran, colliding with Milov like a headless fly.

Milov was knocked to the ground, the Dragonfire instantly clinging to his leather armor and spreading to his head and face.

"Bastard, what kind of fire is this!"

His tight skin burned through, and Milov screamed in agony, convulsing as if having a seizure. The flames burned through his skull, and the convulsions gradually ceased.

Boom...

Cannibal landed with a crash, scattering gravel everywhere. The dozen or so remaining mercenaries were terrified, their legs trembling as they looked up at the evil dragon before them. The rich had long since gone limp, men, women, and children wetting their pants.

Screams filled the air, and the vision of green flames flickered, as if they were in the seventh layer of hell.

Rhaegar took a few glances and said blandly, "Are you the rich merchants of Tyrosh?"

The only ones who could escape at a time like this were the elite of Tyrosh. Those who could be bundled up and taken along were naturally the wealthy within the city-state.

A bearded man nodded furiously and hurriedly said, "Honorable Dragonlord, we have money!"

"We also promised Black Swan our allegiance to you," another person immediately added, afraid they would miss their chance if they spoke too late.

The rest of the rich people rolled onto their knees and bowed in fearful submission. With such a large dragon in front of them, their respect and honor seemed exceptionally fragile.

Rhaegar's eyes twinkled as he said, "Don't worry, with your allegiance to me, blood and fire will not befall you."

Sweeping his eyes over the trembling mercenaries, he coldly said, "The same goes for you. Forsake evil and protect these people, and I will forgive your sins."

"Yes, merciful Targaryen Dragonlord!" The dozen or so mercenaries knelt down in surprise, as if they had been reborn.

"You all stay here and wait for my men to pick you up afterward," Rhaegar ordered, patting the dragon's back and taking off towards the city.

As he rode the dragon over the beach, he unconsciously hooked his lips into a smile. He had thought the pigs they raised had been slaughtered, but fortunately, a few lucky ones had survived.

...

Meanwhile, the entire western city center of Tyrosh was captured. The remaining six thousand troops were divided into three groups: three thousand to the southern city, two thousand to the northern city, and one thousand stationed in the western city.

In the Grand Army Residence, Vhagar had destroyed most of the towers and slowly landed in the mansion's vestibule.

"Laena," Daemon called out as he immediately climbed down from the dragon's back, his armor clinking with every step.

Laena, her forehead beaded with sweat, unlocked her shoulder chains and began descending the soft ladder. Before she could land, Daemon took her by the legs and back, smoothly catching her.

Looking at his wife, whom he hadn't seen in a long time, Daemon yanked his helmet off roughly and asked eagerly, "Laena, why are you here?"

Laena's expression was complex as she stared at her husband in silence.

"Why aren't you saying anything?" Daemon asked, confused.

Her eyes filled with disappointment, Laena finally questioned, "Daemon, Rhaegar's military order was to surround but not attack. How dare you start a private war!?"

Daemon frowned slightly, unhappy with the turn of events. "I blocked the news. Who told you?"

"Daemon, I am your wife!" Laena's frustration boiled over. "My family has risked their lives for you. Do you think you can hide this from me?"

Growing impatient, Daemon said in a deep voice, "I fought for honor, to win a territory that belongs to me and to the child in your womb!"

"You only have honor and your pride in your eyes. Don't use me and the child as leverage!" Laena's disappointment turned to anger as she shouted, "For the sake of your pride, you'd rather sacrifice the soldiers who follow you. You're only doing this for your own selfish desires."

Having been his wife for many years, she understood his personality better than Daemon did himself. Beneath the lonely, arrogant, and magnificent exterior of the Rogue Prince was a selfish, paranoid, and reckless man—sometimes less understanding than a child.

Daemon's temper flared. He glanced at Laena's swollen belly and forced himself to say, "Whatever you say, I've already struck down Tyrosh."

"You struggled to make peace with the king. Have you thought about how you're going to face your brother after this battle?" Laena's anger was palpable, her breath growing sharper.

Fed up with wandering and her husband's constant foolishness, she felt a sudden warmth between her legs. Laena's face blanched. Ignoring the soldiers around her, she reached under her skirt, fumbling.

When she pulled her hand out, her fingers were stained with blood.

Daemon froze in place, his expression turning to one of shock and fear.

Laena's pale lips quivered. "I seem to be in labor."

She had been sleepless and depressed for the past month. After the argument with Daemon, her water broke.

Daemon's face changed drastically. He rushed to Laena, picked her up, and carried her to a nearby attic building, shouting anxiously, "Go call the accompanying maester, quickly!"

The soldiers didn't dare to be slow, rushing out of the mansion to summon help.

...

Not long after, Cannibal soared above Tyrosh, surveying the chaos below.

"Roar..."

A wail full of emotion echoed far and wide.

Cannibal's green vertical pupils locked onto the Archonh's mansion in the western city center.

Rhaegar was stunned for a moment, then said suspiciously, "Vhagar?"

He recognized Vhagar's grief-filled wail immediately.

"Cannibal, rush over."

Rhaegar frowned, sensing something was wrong.

Cannibal turned and soared away.

Soon, the dragon landed outside the mansion's gate.

"Prince..."

The soldiers guarding the gate brightened up and saluted.

Rhaegar nodded and barged straight into the mansion.

As he entered, Vhagar's huge, distressed form was conspicuous, lying among the rubble and wailing uncontrollably.

From hundreds of meters away, Rhaegar saw Daemon standing grimly in front of an attic door, at a loss for words and flailing around.

Rhaegar stepped forward, about to speak.

"Ah! Come out quickly..."

Laena's anguished scream echoed from behind the door, filled with heartbreaking pain.

Rhaegar winced, choking back the words that came to his mouth.

There was only one thought in his mind:

"She's giving birth! It must be hurting like hell!"

Chapter 388: First Meeting in the Reflections of the Moon

As the minutes dragged on, Laena's agonized cries grew more intense and desperate, each cry a testament to the intense pain she was enduring.

Crunch...

The attic door creaked open, and an old maester with a deeply furrowed face emerged, moving with hurried steps.

Daemon's face tightened, and he rushed to meet him.

The old maester, sweat dripping from his brow, whispered urgently, "A full-term pregnancy is ten months, but Lady Laena is only eight months along. It's extremely difficult for a premature baby to be born safely."

Laena had conceived earlier this year, and now, in late July, she was eight months pregnant. With the medical limitations in Westeros, premature births were dangerous and often equated to difficult labor.

Daemon, stunned by the maester's words, glanced anxiously toward the attic and asked, "Is there any way to ensure a smooth delivery?"

"I learned a technique in the Citadel to assist labor, but it doesn't work for every woman," the old maester replied, his voice laced with helplessness.

Daemon, momentarily dazed, patted the maester's shoulder and said heavily, "Do everything you can to protect my wife and child."

"I will keep you informed of any developments," the maester assured, wiping the sweat from his face before quickly returning to the attic and closing the door behind him.

Daemon stood there, watching the door close, then turned and scratched his long hair in bewilderment.

Laena's first labor had gone smoothly, resulting in the birth of twin daughters. With that experience, Daemon had hoped this time would be safer.

"Uncle," Rhaegar's voice broke through the tension, his eyes filled with concern as he approached.

Daemon glanced at him briefly, then tugged off his cloak and discarded it, continuing to pace restlessly in front of the attic door.

He had noticed his nephew's arrival but chose to ignore it out of sheer frustration.

Seeing Daemon's distressed state, Rhaegar took a deep breath and decided to let it be.

Before arriving, he had many things to say. But with Laena in labor, any words felt out of place.

"A woman giving birth is a terrible ordeal," Rhaegar muttered to himself, stepping back from Daemon.

With that, both uncle and nephew fell silent, each retreating to his corner, lost in thought.

Daemon's mind was consumed with worry for his wife and the premature labor, while Rhaegar's thoughts wandered to Rhaenyra and the memories of his mother's difficult childbirth.

"Roar..."

The only sound in the large vestibule was Vhagar's low, mournful roar. The old dragon, sensing its rider's pain, let out wails of sadness mixed with anger.

Time seemed to stretch endlessly.

The birth was not yet over, and Laena's screams gradually weakened, fading into an unsettling silence.

Bang-

The old maester burst out of the door, his dry, thin hands stained with blood.

Daemon, his face a mask of worry, hesitated to speak.

The old maester's expression was despondent as he apologized, "There's really nothing I can do. The child refuses to come out."

Daemon's heart sank. He moved toward the attic, but stopped halfway, his gaze fixed on the scene inside.

"Push hard... ma'am... push hard..."

"Ah... ha..."

In the spacious hall, a large bed had been improvised. Several demurely dressed women bustled around with basins of water.

Laena was kneeling on the bed, her body sprawled forward, hands clutching the sheet as she wailed in agony. Her loose white dress was soaked with blood, her desperate cries echoing through the room.

The old maester followed quickly, his voice sorrowful, "I'm terribly sorry, Prince."

Daemon stood silently, his eyes locked on his wife. He murmured, "My brave wife."

Laena had helped him win the battle to take Tyrosh. Now, without rest, she fought alone on the birthing bed.

Rhaegar, who had arrived quietly, leaned against the wall to listen. Laena was his acknowledged cousin and housemate, the rider of Vhagar, and he had no intention of leaving.

"Ma'am... you need to push... hard."

"Ah... get out..."

Laena's hoarse voice echoed through the room. Her body was tense, shaking with effort, tears streaming down her face.

The pain was unbearable.

The women around her anxiously encouraged her, wiping her sweat and checking on the progress of her labor. With no one else in the Archonh's residence and the neighboring civilian physicians hiding, unwilling to help the invaders, the only assistants available were the women who had given birth before.

The old maester hesitated before speaking, "We can perform a cesarean section, but I can't guarantee the child will survive."

Rhaegar's head snapped up, his eyes fixed on Daemon and the old maester.

His mother had died from a cesarean.

Daemon, obviously thinking the same, glanced quickly at his nephew in the corner.

Without much thought, Daemon asked hopefully, "Can the child's mother survive?"

He was more hopeful for his wife's safety than for the child's uncertain future.

The old maester drooped his eyelids and shook his head helplessly.

In cases of difficult labor, both mother and child often died. With a cesarean, at least the child had a chance of survival.

Daemon's head buzzed, leaving him frozen in place, unable to think clearly.

He looked helplessly at his wailing wife, unable to utter a word.

"Prince, please make a decision as soon as possible," the old maester urged, knowing that every second of delay increased the danger.

Daemon's heart was in turmoil. Leaning against the wall, he shook his head in silence.

He was not a man who took childbirth lightly. To him, a woman's birthing bed was as much a battlefield as any other.

It was a battlefield on which he felt unqualified to make a choice for Laena.

"Prince..."

The old maester tried to persuade but found no words.

"Why don't you choose?"

Rhaegar spoke abruptly.

Daemon turned his head, licking his dry lips.

Rhaegar's eyes were heavy as he stepped in front of his uncle and said, "Laena is dying. You have a choice to make."

"No!" Daemon shook his head, "I can't decide if she lives or dies."

"But she needs a decision," Rhaegar said firmly.

Daemon continued to shake his head, muffling his voice, "My brother made a choice once, and he may have won, but I don't want to gamble on it."

Rhaegar had only cried once at birth, then fell into a three-year-long slumber. Had it not been for the healing of a Shadowlands witch, it was unlikely he would have woken up.

His older brother was born before him, was king of a country, married the woman he loved, had an heir to the throne, and had always been luckier than him. Daemon recognized himself as an unlucky man and did not want to get on this table.

Rhaegar, mixed with emotions, lost his smile and looked down, "You're right. No one can decide life and death for someone else."

Clenching his fist and pounding his shoulder, he rounded the corner and headed down the hall, saying in a deep voice, "Then ask the person involved what they want."

"Ah..."

Laena was sweating profusely, her screams gradually weakening and exhausting.

Hearing footsteps, Laena gasped deeply, lying on the bed and staring in a lost daze.

Seeing Rhaegar dressed in black, she smiled bitterly, "I don't want to die in such a sorry state."

She had heard the conversation around the corner and was aware of her own situation.

The child had been refusing to come out, completely lacking the feeling of the last birth. This child, more than likely, would not survive.

Rhaegar walked over to the bedside and whispered, "The choice is yours. I will do my best to keep you safe."

With a flip of his wrist, he took out a glazed candle. Stretching out the palm of his right hand, he shone a deep slash across his palm, and crimson blood dyed the seven-colored glaze red throughout.

"Watch this, there is only one chance."

Rhaegar reminded, extending his intact left hand.

"Roar..."

Wisps of black smoke emerged, and the sound of snakes hissing came out.

Laena's eyes widened as she saw a bizarrely dark little serpent burrowing out, floating in the air and landing in the palm of Rhaegar's bloody right hand.

Zira...

Black smoke rose from the palm, and the small snake opened a large, toothless mouth disproportionate to its size and quickly devoured the black smoke.

When the black smoke was eaten, the wound in the palm recovered as before.

"Blood Sorcery?"

Laena was stunned, forgetting the pain for a moment. The scion of the most ancient bloodline, the descendant of the most powerful family in the kingdom, she had a clear perception of blood sorcery. After traveling the free trade city-states for many years, she had seen too many strange people.

Rhaegar said, "Decide!"

"Cut my belly open," Laena clenched her teeth and immediately made a decision.

If she did nothing they were both dead, so it was better to put up a fight.

"Very well."

Rhaegar nodded and gestured at a few prostitutes, "Move her to the bed."

The prostitutes, still shocked at the wonders of blood sorcery, reacted by rushing to move Laena onto the bed.

"Ah... ha..."

The movement involved severe pain. Laena clenched her teeth and lay down on the bed to lift the blood-stained dress herself.

When pregnant women give birth, there is no difference between men and women in this kind of situation.

Rhaegar turned his head sideways, his gaze falling on the two men around the corner, and said weakly, "Come over here and handle the knife. Do you think I know how to cut open a woman's womb?"

"Yes." The old maester's eyes shone brightly, and he flew to prepare the belly planing tools.

Daemon froze and hesitantly stepped back.

He was shocked. It seemed that the means to make the sword burn with fire at the tournament was just the tip of the iceberg.

But none of that mattered, only that his wife would be able to give birth safely.

A short period of preparation passed.

Laena lay on the bed with her legs wide open, several prostitutes holding her arms and legs.

Rhaegar held the dragonglass candle in one hand and stroked her belly with the other.

Zip~

The glass candle ignited, and the serpent that manifested in his right hand fluttered about restlessly.

He had two dragonglass candles, one that empowered the Enchantment Spell, and one for casting [Reflections of the Moon].

The planchette would be cut sideways along with the uterus, and the excruciating pain and bleeding would be fatal.

The Serpent's Rune ability was not enough and needed to be augmented with an Enchantment Spell.

When the old maester took out his knives and aimed them at the incision, Rhaegar said in a deep voice, "Do it!"

"Ah!!!"

At once, miserable screams resounded inside and outside the attic.

...

Ten minutes later.

The bed was soaked with blood, and Laena's screams had long since lost their strength. Her eyes were full of despair, her neck straining, and she lay paralyzed on the bed.

Rhaegar's face was pale, constantly urging the serpent while his gaze remained fixed on the candle flame of the glazed candle. It was proving to be more bloody and cruel than he had imagined.

At first he had hoped to save both Laena and the child, but now it seemed that even the saving of one of them would be a matter of luck.

Zira!

As his mind wavered, the candle flame flared violently, as if fueled by oil. Rhaegar's eyes widened, and his consciousness shifted instantly.

The blood on the dragonglass candle was rapidly absorbed, triggering both [Reflections of the Moon] and [Dreamscape].

...

"Ah don't"

As soon as his consciousness cleared, a woman's miserable scream resounded in his ears.

The voice was very unfamiliar, yet inexplicably felt familiar.

Rhaegar froze and opened his eyes.

He was in a bedroom, the mural on the wall looking very familiar.

Looking around, Rhaegar froze on the spot.

On a birthing bed, a silver blonde woman wailed piteously, her round belly sliced open with a bloody gash.

A group of familiar maids surrounded the bed, pressing down hard on the woman's arms and legs.

On one side of the bed, the younger version of his father waited anxiously, his head bowed and his face tense.

At the end of the bed, the Grand Maester Mellos, his face grim, had his hand deep inside the woman's stomach, trying to pull out the baby.

"Viserys... no..."

The woman cried out in pain, shaking her head violently.

Viserys, at a loss for words, closed his eyes and prayed to the Seven Gods.

Rhaegar witnessed the scene and stared intently at the woman's face.

Long silvery blonde hair, delicate features, and sweat dripping from shock.

The eyes were almost identical to Rhaenyra's, and somewhat like Rhaegar's.

With just a glance, Rhaegar recognized the woman's identity and murmured, "Aemma... Mother."

Chapter 389: One Day Heir?

"Ah... Rhaegar... Come out..."

Suddenly, Laena's screams resumed, calling out the name she had prepared for the fetus in her womb.

Rhaegar heard the cry, though it seemed that no one else in the mirrored image did.

No, someone did hear it.

"Rhaegar~~"

Aemma, on the delivery bed, stopped screaming. Her pupils rapidly contracted, and she repeated the name.

Rhaegar's heart trembled, unable to distinguish reality from fantasy.

The next second, the mirror image shattered like glass, falling apart in the blink of an eye.

The last sound was a baby's cry.

Rhaegar didn't want the mirror image to shatter, staring blankly at Aemma. This was his mother, the one he had never seen.

There was no portrait of her in the Red Keep, no trace of her in the Eyrie.

In the mirror image, every glance was a gift.

"Rhaegar?"

"Aemma, are you saying the child's name is Rhaegar?"

The familiar voice was tinged with sadness, and the mirror image disappeared with it.

...

Outside.

"Waaaa~~"

A baby's cry rang out, waking Rhaegar from his intense focus on the candle flame.

"It's out, the baby is out."

The old maester's face was agitated as he held a blood-covered, red wrinkled baby in both hands. The baby's limbs drooped, and only its head and body were supported by the maester's large hands. After a single cry, the crying stopped abruptly.

The old maester, still unaware, took the scissors and cut the umbilical cord.

Rhaegar dazedly returned to his senses, pressing his palms against Laena's cold belly, channeling what little fire magic he had left. Laena's eyes were vacant, her breathing imperceptible, and her body drenched in sweat.

The old maester handed the child to a nearby prostitute to hold, then took out a needle and thread and asked shakily, "Prince, are you sure you want to sew up the wound?"

The belly and uterus had been cut open with little possibility of suturing.

Rhaegar looked at the prostitute, whose face had gone pale, and nodded. "Yes, the Serpent Rune will speed the healing of the wound."

At a time like this, hygiene and potential infection were secondary concerns. Stopping the bleeding was the priority.

The old maester sniffed and moved his hands, sewing with difficulty. There was a lot of blood, and high-temperature washed cotton cloths were used to wipe it away while the cotton thread stitched the wound.

"Hiss..."

The serpent lay on Laena's belly, twisting randomly. Its body swallowed the black smoke and became bloated, continuing to absorb the newly born black smoke.

A few minutes passed.

The cut was stitched up, and the wound began to heal quickly. The twine was cut, the blood stains wiped away, and then the belly was stitched.

The old maester, now more confident that this method worked, quickly sewed the wound shut. The serpent wriggled twice, swallowing the last wisp of black smoke.

"Hoo~~"

Wound after wound healed, and Laena snapped awake, the pain in her body drastically reduced.

"Did the child survive?"

Laena looked around blankly, her lips bloodless.

"Rest well, your body is severely anemic."

Rhaegar admonished her, silently getting up and heading out. The cesarean section had brought him too much mental stimulation, and his mind was muddled. The vision of his mother in the mirror image seemed to produce some kind of special reaction.

Perhaps his mother, who carried the Targaryen bloodline, was also a Dreamer and had collided with his dream.

"Laena!"

Daemon, who had been watching from the sidelines the entire time, hurried toward his wife, brushing past his nephew.

...

Rhaegar exited the attic and found a gazebo to rest, trying to clear his mind and release the stress.

"Roar..."

Vhagar climbed to its feet, its broad wings supporting the ruins, and raised its head to let out a deep, mournful cry. The dragon felt the emotions of its rider—a deep sadness.

Rhaegar glanced at Vhagar but continued to close his eyes and let go. Either it was held in for too long, or due to premature labor, the child didn't survive.

About a quarter of an hour later, Daemon walked out of the attic carrying a swaddled bundle.

Rhaegar tilted his head back, his eyes still closed, and whispered, "I did my best." He wasn't speaking to Daemon but to Laena.

"Laena passed out," Daemon said, looking down at the swaddling cloth. "You saved the child's mother."

Rhaegar opened his eyes and said faintly, "Congratulations, you didn't lose everything." Laena was in the same situation as his mother. The difference was that one husband made a choice, and the other left the choice to his wife. When Rhaegar helped Laena, he was also helping his unseen mother.

"Rhaegar, I want to thank you," Daemon said, looking lost. "But this child is not as lucky as you."

Both were named Rhaegar, and both cried only once at birth. However, his child would never open his eyes.

"Huh," Rhaegar shook his head and smiled sadly. "Daemon, you've lived a life of capriciousness and arrogance; maybe this is your retribution."

Daemon was silent, holding the swaddled cloth tightly.

Rhaegar was unforgiving, tilting his head and asking, "Do you remember calling me the One Day Heir?"

Daemon's face turned cold.

Unconcerned, Rhaegar pointed to the battle outside the mansion and said, "Look what you have done, destroying a Free City against orders."

"I took it," Daemon's voice chilled.

Rhaegar scoffed in disdain, "It was your arrogance that got the better of you."

"Your father promised me a city-state, and I took it myself," Daemon said somberly.

"Why did you take matters into your own hands when you knew he promised you a city-state?"

Rhaegar's anger flared. "I intended to persuade Father to give Lys to you, but you preferred Tyrosh."

"My brother did not personally say he would give me a city-state; he just kept appeasing me," Daemon replied, voicing his long-suppressed resentment.

"When has your brother ever treated you badly for something you wanted?" Rhaegar was indignant, his voice rising. Aside from the Iron Throne and Rhaenyra, there was nothing Daemon wanted that Viserys hadn't given him: gold, honor, wealth.

If Rhaegar had died at birth and Daemon had not said he was the "One Day Heir," the heir might not have been Rhaenyra.

Daemon glared at him and scoffed. This brat didn't know what he was talking about. He had never wanted to inherit his brother's throne; he wanted to serve as the Hand of the King.

To that end, he had rotated through almost every position in the Small Council during the first few years of his brother's reign. All were picked on in various ways and were eventually kicked out of the Small Council and reduced to the City Watch.

Keep in mind that even the Commander of the City Watch was a subordinate position to the Master of Laws. He was constantly being demoted.

Rhaegar looked straight at his uncle, not bothering to say more. He knew something about the past of his father's brothers. Daemon was elusive and acted in an arrogant and perverse manner.

For some reason, the former Hand of the King, Otto Hightower, had a grudge against him, and the two often quarreled. Over time, Daemon lost the political battle to Otto and was kicked out.

Rhaegar rubbed his tense brow and said with a straight face, "You've defeated Tyrosh. I'll report to Father and propose that Tyrosh be given to you as a fiefdom."

"I'm the one who conquered the city-state. Don't treat it like a reward," Daemon replied with displeasure.

"Your army comes from the Iron Throne, and your dragons belong to the Targaryens," Rhaegar replied. "The fiefdom is settled. I'll ask Father to formally enthrone you as a prince and incorporate Tyrosh into the Targaryen dynasty."

Daemon froze for a moment, not expecting his good nephew to be so generous. He had thought there would be more complications with Tyrosh's incorporation.

Rhaegar glanced at the swaddling clothes and said bluntly, "Uncle, you are a prince and now have your own territory, but your heir is also a one day heir."

Though what he said was hateful and rude, his meaning was clear. The words Daemon had once spoken now applied to his own child.

"I will not attend the child's funeral. Remember to guard the Targaryen territory," Rhaegar said, venting his frustration before heading out without looking back.

Daemon was left standing, tightening the swaddling clothes in his arms, a flash of confusion in his eyes. He had gained the city-state but lost a male heir—the male heir he had always wanted.

"Roar—"

Cannibal roared loudly, lifting Rhaegar into the air and flying into the sky. Rhaegar's face remained calm, and he silently thought, Daemon has been arrogant and reckless all his life, maybe he can learn something from this.

"Roar!"

Vhagar let out a low roar, gazing up at Cannibal with a mixture of recognition and concern. The Cannibal had a new, dangerous scent, replacing its previous open and pungent odor of decay.

The Cannibal soared on its massive wings, its body casting a shadow over the mansion. The two dragons met in mid-air, their sizes now largely overlapping.

Rhaegar judged silently, "After eating the dragon, Cannibal's size skyrocketed."

Cannibal's original size was less than one-fifth inferior to Vhagar, roughly a difference of about ten meters. But with the metamorphosis of Rhaegar's bloodline and devouring Morghul, it had grown savagely during its slumber, reaching the size of Vhagar's 170-year-old peak at just 90 years old.

There might be a difference in talent involved. Cannibal, different from other dragons, had the unique habit of eating its own kind. Vhagar had fought all its life but was still at the bottom of the first generation of the three dragons in terms of talent. It was believed that Vermithor would also be able to reach this size after twenty or thirty years.

"Roar!"

Cannibal roared lowly, its green vertical pupils revealing loneliness. At this moment, it was no longer afraid of the old dragon below. If it wanted to fight hard, it would ensure it wouldn't give Vhagar the chance to die together.

Rhaegar couldn't help but be proud and said, "Let's go, partner."

It seemed that Cannibal's achievements wouldn't stop at being the King of Wild Dragons.

...

Stormlands, Rainwood

During the time of the Children of the Forest, the continent of Westeros was covered in dense forests. But the arrival of the iron-armed Andals pushed the Children back and led to the decimation of much of these ancient forests.

Today, the Kingswood of the Crownlands and the Rainwood of the Stormlands are among the continent's few remaining woodlands.

From the coast of Stonehelm in Cape Wrath, a major road skirts the edge of the Rainwood and winds its way towards Storm's End Castle. Along this route, several ancient noble castles stand as testaments to generations of lineage, including Crow's Nest Castle of House Morrigen and Griffin's Roost Castle of House Connington.

For days, the Dornish forces had been invading, with ten thousand soldiers besieging Stonehelm Castle and a much larger number scattered throughout the rainforest, poised to ambush reinforcements from the two city-states.

In a lush virgin forest fifty miles from Crow's Nest City, a large contingent of Dornish soldiers clad in yellow-brown armor marched slowly. The clattering of wheels accompanied their progress as they pushed several giant scorpion crossbows.

"Hurry up! Storm's End Castle's reinforcements will pass through here. We need to ambush that Velaryon Dragon rider in advance," a young general with black hair and brown eyes ordered loudly.

His armor bore the emblem of a golden quill on a green checkerboard, signifying House Jordayne of the Tor, one of the main forces in this invasion.

Suddenly, the ground trembled, and the distant neighing of warhorses could be heard. Trebor Jordayne immediately lay down on the ground, pressing his ear to the earth. After listening intently, he excitedly shouted, "Prepare for battle! There's a large cavalry force approaching!"

There was no doubt it was the Storm Riders from Storm's End Castle, galloping to reinforce their allies. The five thousand Dornish soldiers quickly dispersed, spreading out in the forest, bows and arrows at the ready.

Crossbowmen maneuvered the scorpion crossbows, loading the launching pads with steel spears and aiming them at the sky, prepared to attack the moment soldiers or dragons appeared.

Chapter 390: Lys Council System

Soon, hundreds of elite cavalymen thundered down the road, hooves pounding the earth as they raised the banner of the Stag. Trebor Jordayne's eyes gleamed with murderous intent as he raised his arm, signaling his men to hold. He waited for the dragon to appear.

This invasion of the Stormlands had mobilized over 20,000 soldiers. Their strategy was divided into two main objectives: attacking Stonehelm to capture the strategic base and harassing Crow's Nest and Griffin's Roost to intercept reinforcements from Storm's End.

Trebor had dispatched teams to ransack mills and villages in the territories of the two castles and had encountered an attack by the dragon riders of House Velaryon, resulting in the loss of hundreds of soldiers.

"Roar....."

A roar echoed from the sky as the shadow of a light silver dragon, Seasmoke, flashed overhead.

"Ready!" Burt's eyes widened, fixated on the dragon above.

Seasmoke wasn't flying very high, its vertical pupils scanning the surroundings. The dense forest below provided perfect cover for the Dornish soldiers.

Click...

The crossbowman's heart raced as he maneuvered his scorpion crossbow to aim at the dragon, his fingers slick with sweat. Dragons were symbols of power and conquest, and during the time of the Conquerors, Dorne had famously shot down a giant dragon to repel the Targaryen invasion.

"Roar....."

Seasmoke abruptly changed course, veering off into the distance.

Trebor 's face darkened with impatience. "On my command, shoot!"

Shooting the dragon would secure his place in history. With his command, two thousand crossbowmen released their bowstrings, sending a rain of arrows skyward. The scorpion crossbows fired simultaneously, targeting the light silver dragon.

The Storm Knights' march slowed as arrows clattered against their armor. A few unfortunate soldiers had their warhorses shot out from under them, their cries silenced as they were trampled by the advancing cavalry.

"Ambush! Raise your shields!" the knight captain bellowed, lifting his half-man-high oak shield to fend off the arrows.

The Storm Knights, elite among the elite, quickly adjusted their formation, forming an impenetrable shield wall.

"Roar....."

In midair, Seasmoke shrieked and deftly dodged the elite steel spears. Though its young dragon scales couldn't withstand the scorpion crossbows, its smaller size and agility allowed it to evade the shots.

Laenor Velaryon, mounted on Seasmoke, twisted his head in surprise, scanning the forest where the crossbow shots had originated. The surrounding area was open for miles, with a spacious main road clear of obstructions. Only on the east side did the jungle grow thick, its lush shrubbery providing cover.

In the forest, Trebor Jordayne stomped the ground in frustration, grabbed a scorpion crossbow, and shouted indignantly, "Crossbowmen, cover! Infantry, surround the Storm Knights!"

"Yes, Ser!"

The crossbowmen took cover behind trees, providing remote suppression, while three thousand spear-wielding infantry charged forward. Burt aimed the scorpion crossbow with determination, muttering, "Watch me shoot you out of the sky!"

Ka-da!

The steel spear shot out like a commanding arrow, and the Dornish soldiers swarmed from the forest, synchronizing with the rain of arrows.

Seasmoke roared angrily, hovering higher to dodge the steel spears. The battle seemed to be at a stalemate, with neither side gaining a clear advantage.

"Roar!"

A sharp roar echoed through the dense forest, startling the birds into flight.

An ugly dragon with a mottled, brown appearance and ragged wings swooped down.

"Dracarys!" shouted the young rider, a broad smile spreading across his face.

In an instant, Dragonfire fell from the sky like a torrent of molten mud, tearing through the forest canopy.

Trebor looked up in panic at the sound, only to see a torrent of brown flames descending upon him.

Boom...

The Dragonfire hit like a stone, instantly crushing the man's head, and then the flames, reeking of earth, enveloped his body.

The crossbowman next to him was also consumed by the inferno.

"Haha!" Aemond cheered, crouching on the dragon's back and shouting, "More fire!"

"Roar..." Sheepstealer's vertical pupils gleamed with pride as it swooped lower, spewing wide arcs of Dragonfire.

"Aemond, watch out for the scorpion crossbows!" Laenor called out from afar, directing Seasmoke to attack the Dornish infantry emerging from the forest.

"Don't worry, Sheepstealer will protect me!" Aemond shouted back, exhilarated.

Sheepstealer roared, its thick scales deflecting the steel-tipped arrows. It glided low, targeting the threatening scorpion crossbows with precision bursts of Dragonfire.

After two swift passes, all five scorpion crossbows lay in ruins.

"Run, we can't hold against two dragons!"

"Head for the Rainwood!"

Without their general, the Dornish soldiers scattered like sand in the wind.

It wasn't their fault; they were simply outmatched.

As the vanguard emerged from the forest, Seasmoke's Dragonfire cut through their ranks, leaving them in disarray.

The Storm Knights charged, cutting down the panicked soldiers with ease.

"Roar..." Sheepstealer reveled in the chaos, igniting the forest with abandon, the smoke billowing for miles.

The Dornish soldiers hiding in the forest were routed, fleeing in terror.

The scene was one of utter devastation, with an ugly, fearsome dragon setting the forest ablaze.

...

The battle raged for a long time, and the sky began to darken.

"Clean up the battlefield, don't leave any survivors!"

The forest was ablaze, and the hillside and main road were strewn with charred remains. The banner of the Sunspear, symbolizing House Martell, lay in the mud and dirt, burnt and tattered.

Royce Caron led hundreds of Storm Knights, patrolling on horseback and driving their lances into the chests of the corpses one by one.

"Roar..."

Sheepstealer flew over the smoke-filled forest and arrogantly landed in front of the cavalry line. On the dragon's back, Aemond was filled with excitement, his forehead glistening with sweat.

Seasmoke circled twice before carrying Laenor to a smooth descent. Laenor removed his helmet and, with a note of exhilaration, said, "We've repelled the ambush. It's time to mobilize a large army and march to the besieged Stonehelm."

The Dornish harassment of Crow's Nest and Griffin's Roost Castle had already reached Storm's End. With no fortress between the two castles, the Dornish were sure to ambush the paths through the adjoining forest.

Lord Caron himself had planned and executed this counter-attack to annihilate the Dornish.

Lord Caron, riding his horse, murmured, "These soldiers are only half of the force blocking the attack. Let's first clear the main road between Crow's Nest Castle and Stonehelm."

It took time to mobilize troops. Storm's End Castle had temporarily conscripted thousands of soldiers and armed them. A premature attack would likely result in heavy losses.

Aemond nodded in agreement and reported, "Sheepstealer burned many, but more escaped into the forest."

These fleeing, disorganized troops would likely regroup into small guerrilla bands. When fighting the Dornish, one should never underestimate such stragglers; otherwise, they would suffer great losses.

Lord Caron hesitated for a moment before making his judgment. "Then let's head to Crow's Nest to station ourselves and wait for the follow-up troops to arrive."

Stonehelm was a fortified city and could likely withstand the attack.

Laenor nodded, agreeing with the plan. "Good idea. I'll ride Seasmoke daily to help patrol."

Aemond agreed heartily, but when Stonehelm was mentioned, a flash of obscurity crossed his eyes.

...

Late at night in Lys.

In the courtyard of the Magister's mansion, a pitch-black dragon lay sprawled, its towering spine reaching the height of an attic. Under the moonlight, its green vertical pupils quietly opened as a scarlet dragon flew in from the night sky, landing swiftly on the other side of the courtyard.

The attic of the Magister's residence was brightly lit, and a dense crowd of people could be seen. Several bonfires illuminated the open-air platform. Rhaegar covered his forehead with his hand and leaned back in a golden chair. In front of him, Sea Snake and Tesrio of Valantis stood on either side.

Bang...

The rooftop door was pushed open, followed by Rhaenys' voice:

"Rhaegar, I received the news and rushed here overnight."

Rhaenys looked grave as she hurriedly walked over.

"Aunt, you're here." Rhaegar put down his hand and managed a stiff smile.

Daemon had captured Tyrosh, marking the end of the Narrow Sea War. Though the three city-states had not yet been fully taken, actual control was already in the hands of the Targaryens. The three city-states that roamed the disputed lands have been utterly destroyed!

Rhaenys swept her eyes over the people present and said with relief, "I went to Tyrosh first to check on Laena's condition. It's good to see she's all right, bless the Sevens."

As soon as Rhaegar returned to Lys, he brought news of Daemon's capture of Tyrosh to King's Landing and Myr. The Triarchy was shattered, and the task of rebuilding and reestablishing order was a daunting one.

Sea Snake Corlys's face tightened as he asked, "Daemon attacked the city privately. What is the situation in Tyrosh?"

He and Daemon were allies, committed to plundering the Triarchy. Now, with Daemon disobeying the king's order and attacking the city behind his back, Corlys felt offended and threatened.

Rhaenys looked at her nephew and said solemnly, "Tyrosh is still in the midst of the war. Daemon is leading an army to suppress it, so it will take a few more days."

"Selfish bastard." Sea Snake cursed under his breath. Everyone knew that Daemon would never stop once he entered the city-state.

Rhaegar waved his hand and interrupted, "Gentlemen, with the fall of Tyrosh, the Triarchy and the Disputed Lands are all in our control. We should first discuss maintaining the shipping lanes and resuming trade."

At the beginning of the Narrow Sea War, the main factor was the captured Morghul. Now that Morghul was dead, the only goal left was to destroy the Triarchy. With the Triarchy broken and the three city-states in hand, there was an urgent need for talents to manage them.

He always kept one thing in mind: The Iron Throne had conquered the Triarchy, and the Targaryen bloodline had set foot on the continent of Essos.

"Prince, I think it would be more valuable to negotiate the rewards first."

Tesrio's voice was gruff, and his eyes were shrewd.

The Sea Snake's eyes were deep as he proposed, "Daemon has overrun Tyrosh. This matter should be reported to His Grace, and he should be brought into the Small Council to discuss it together."

Rhaegar didn't even bother to raise his eyelids and said indifferently, "Daemon's issue will be discussed afterward. Tonight, we'll only talk about these two points."

He understood the intentions of the two men—they wanted to divide the benefits. The chaos in Myr had not yet subsided, Lys was in a state of disarray, and the war in Tyrosh was raging. Before the Targaryens grasped the initiative of the three city-states, these vultures wanted a piece of the pie?

Rhaegar had only one response, "Impossible!"

"Prince..."

The Sea Snake was clearly reluctant, desperately wanting a share of the benefits.

"Roar..."

A shrill roar pierced the night sky, accompanied by a flash of gray fire.

The crowd looked up.

Tyraxes hovered in mid-air before landing shakily on Rhaegar's shoulder, his vertical pupils blazing as he chirped at the gathered people.

The Sea Snake froze, inexplicably taking a step back.

Tesrio's face tightened, his left hand gripping the scimitar behind his back.

Rhaegar stroked Tyraxes's head and smiled. "Don't be nervous. The little guy is just a bit unruly."

He glanced over at the two men, leaving it unclear whether he was referring to the young dragon or to them.

"Ga..."

Tyraxes obediently crouched down, his large muzzle making a comfortable cooing sound, as if to express its obedience.

Rhaenys looked on naturally and complimented, "This is the young dragon hatched from Morghul's dragon egg. It truly is a unique breed."

"It will further the family's dragons bloodline."

Rhaegar spread a smile, greeted Johanna, and said with a straight face, "The three city-states are in more than just chaos, so I have decided to use Lys as a model and implement the Lys Council System."

Johanna walked over gracefully and handed several sample drawings to the group.

Rhaegar continued, "The Triarchy used to have an electoral system, which is at odds with the system in Westeros. I plan to create the position of Prince, with two or more councilors under him, adopting a council with one leader and many subordinates."

Rhaenys looked carefully at the drawings and wondered, "Is this a imitation of the Iron Throne with the Council under a Prince?"

"Not exactly. The councilors have more power than the royal advisors."

Rhaegar replied casually, glancing over at the Sea Snake and Tesrio.

The Sea Snake didn't notice and examined the program carefully, gradually frowning.

As a veteran politician, he could see at once that the "Council" was unusual.

One leader refers to the Prince, or the Targaryen lineage.

Multiple councilors mean that power is shared, which governs the authority of the Prince.

Parliamentary systems have existed since ancient times, most notably in the Freehold Empire of Ancient Valyria.

Led by the forty Dragonlord families, all the freeholders in the empire voted to form a large parliamentary group.

The multiple governors' councils of Myr were also based on the council system.

Such councils have always decentralized power.

The Council System, however, places a Prince of greater power above its members.

Ensuring the continuation of the rule of the Targaryen bloodline.

The Sea Snake read from the beginning to the end and raised his head to ask, "Prince, do you intend to implement this system in Myr and Tyrosh as well?"

As he said this, he unconsciously glanced at his wife, a glint of calculation in his eyes.

"No!" Rhaegar denied outright. "It will only exist in Lys."

Of the three free trade city-states, Tyrosh essentially belonged to Daemon, and he wouldn't just intervene.

Myr was a valuable land city-state that he intended to make into a complete and utter colony, fully incorporated into the royal jurisdiction.

Lys was a multi-elemental city-state with a bright future for development.

It was only because of the prying eyes of the Velaryon House, Pentos, and Volantis's tripartite allies that he thought of the Lys Council System.

With the legacy of the Targaryen bloodline, the rights of the councilors of the three parties would be divided to share the profits and bear the burdens of the city-state.

Though the prince was in danger of being overthrown, this only underscored the importance of having the Iron Throne at his back, in case the offspring inherited the city-state and turned their faces toward attacking the Iron Throne.