

## G.O Thrones 491

### Chapter 491 Cannibal: Do You Know the Value of a Wild Dragon?

"Vermithor, do you want to fight me?"

His voice was calm, his expression arrogant. Rhaegar sat on the back of the black dragon, as if he were a dragon himself.

"Roar!"

Vermithor's pupils turned red with rage. The dragon's head shook violently, pushing outward.

Rhaegar's lips curled up. "Then let's try it."

"Roar..."

The dragon was awakened from its slumber, and Cannibal walked in into the nest. Vermithor was almost out of his mind, his huge body slamming into the cave, emitting rising heat.

Cannibal raised its head high, its green pupils betraying human-like contempt, waiting quietly for its defeated opponent to break through the terrain restrictions.

The cave where it was located was connected to Vermithor's sleeping cave by a tunnel. It was built for humans, not for a dragon of such enormous size. Cannibal was able to get here because it had previously explored every corner of Dragonmont in order to steal dragon eggs.

"Roar!"

Vermithor roared mightily, soon pushing its neck out of the tunnel, but its broad shoulders and wings remained stuck at the entrance. The entire cave shook violently, as if celebrating the angry dragon's escape. Cannibal let out a hot breath, its green eyes flashing with cunning satisfaction.

"Roar!"

The black dragon's shadow shot out, scratching the ground with its wings, and opened its mouth wide to bite.

Snap!

Scales cracked, flesh and blood flew. Vermithor let out a scream as its thick neck was bitten, shaking back and forth in shock and anger. How dare it attack me!

"Roar!"

Cannibal cried out in excitement, pressing one of its hind legs firmly down on Vermithor's dragon head, relishing the hard-won delicacy. At this moment, its mind was filled with thoughts of tyranny, pride, and arrogance.

Confident in its dominance, the Cannibal enjoyed the struggle of Vermithor. The neck that protruded from the tunnel was a lesson in the art of deception. It was a wild dragon! As we all know, wild dragons will do anything to survive.

"Roar..."

Vermithor was instantly subdued, with a piece of flesh missing from its neck. It spat out a mouthful of searing Dragonfire.

Zila—

Cannibal did not dodge or avoid the Dragonfire, allowing it to burn its hind legs. The pain only stimulated its desire to hunt. Anger rose within the Cannibal. It pressed its entire body against the outer wall of the tunnel, digging its sharp claws into the rock with one hind leg, while its wings spread out above and below, forming a difficult position for climbing upside down.

With one hind leg and both wings supporting it, Cannibal raised its head, swallowed the torn flesh, and stomped hard with its burnt hind leg.

Bang!

Vermithor's black claws slammed down on the dragon's head after a burst of Dragonfire, causing a momentary forced stun. Cannibal, now more rampant than ever, fully embraced its identity as a great evil dragon, lifting and dropping its hind legs with increasing force.

Vermithor had nowhere to go, emitting a low roar of helpless fury. However, its body was stuck in the tunnel, unable to fight back effectively.

Behind the two dragons, Grey Ghost crouched in fear, witnessing such a brutal scene. The big claws stomped on its head. Vermithor, as an adult dragon, was incredibly strong and had unparalleled vitality and defense. If it were Grey Ghost, its head would have been flattened in the first blow.

"Roar!"

Cannibal raised its head and roared, dragon's hot blood dripping from its mouth, making its already terrifying appearance even more hideous.

"Calm down, old friend," Rhaegar said calmly, watching the one-sided struggle between the two dragons. He had to remember his purpose: to find the young dragon that had been left to fend for itself in the wild.

"Roar!"

Vermithor's head whirled faster and faster, dodging the claws and spitting out a breath of Dragonfire. In an instant, the entire crypt was bathed in a dazzling golden light. The dragonfire splattered like molten lava, not only covering the Cannibal in flames but also nearly hitting the onlookers.

Rhaegar leaned back, and the Dragonfire passed by his hair, igniting a golden flame.

"Damn it!" Rhaegar's upper body was almost completely suspended in the air. He changed his expression and said, "Come on, didn't the dragon keepers feed you sheep and cattle?"

"Roar!"

Cannibal was stunned by the comment but then rose up with a spirit of defiance, opening its mouth wide to bite. It sensed Rhaegar's discontent, interpreting it as a challenge to bite harder.

Rhaegar sensed this emotion and turned his eyes away in disgust. He had expected a furious Vermithor and a thrilling battle, but it turned out to be a reckless dragon with a big body but no brains, being savagely ravaged by the insidious Cannibal.

He had his dragon whip ready. The thought alone caused a change in the situation.

Just as the Cannibal was about to sink its teeth into him, Vermithor lunged back, stretching its neck to try to bite back.

Boom!

Cannibal was no easy prey either, and a burst of dark green Dragonfire erupted.

"Roar!"

Vermithor let out a piercing cry of rage after missing its target. At this moment, something unexpected happened. Vermithor suddenly began to think. Taking advantage of the Cannibal's momentary distraction, it quickly pulled its neck out of the tunnel, despite the burning sensation of the maggot-like bone maggots. It successfully escaped.

Rhaegar glared slightly and reminded him, "Cannibal, the other one escaped."

"Roar!"

Cannibal was not about to give up so easily. The Dragonfire continued to spew relentlessly, targeting the narrow tunnel. As soon as the Dragonfire touched it, the rock began to twist and deform. In just a few short breaths, the surrounding rock walls melted into magma, quickly expanding into a spacious furnace passage. After a short while, the magma solidified and took shape.

Cannibal's green pupils glowed faintly as it crawled forward slowly but surely.

Step! Tap, tap, tap!

The dragon's claws hooked the ground, crushing the gray layer that had not yet solidified completely, spilling out bright yellow magma. The high temperature scorched the black scales, emitting a shrill sizzling sound. Rhaegar sat on the dragon's back, wisps of white smoke drifting out.

The scales of the Cannibal were reinforced and as hard as Valyrian steel, with super high heat resistance. At the same time, the high temperature from all directions swirled around him. Rhaegar remained calm, only tucking his long silver-gold hair behind his head and holding his breath. In the high-temperature environment, the air was nearly a vacuum. Even if he could breathe, it would be full of harmful substances.

Cannibal crawled slowly, its pupils fixed on the tunnel's end, a dimly lit cave. Rhaegar's body undulated as he lowered his dragon whip to his knees. One man, one dragon, fearless.

...

Driftmark

High Tide, Hall of Nine

Rhaenys stood calmly, her arms resting on a wine cabinet as she stared across the lobby.

"That's the situation," she said.

"Is that true?" Daemon asked, frowning as he sat down in a chair, leaning over to talk to one of the scouts.

The scout, his face as stiff as a board, whispered his report, "Explorers from Volantis have seen dragons in the Smoking Sea."

"Okay, I know," Daemon said distractedly, pulling a bag of gold dragons from his sleeve and handing it over. The scout took the money and left the lobby.

"Another wild dragon has appeared?" Rhaenys asked, her eyebrows raising imperceptibly.

Daemon nodded slightly, his expression grim. "A wild blue baby dragon. I don't know where it hatched."

Rhaenys thought to herself, "The matter of the young dragon could be important. It's best to report it to the royal family immediately." She wanted to report it to Rhaegar, but for fear of offending her narrow-minded cousin, she changed it to the royal family.

Daemon raised his eyebrows, a hint of dissatisfaction in his eyes. The royal family is full of problems. His brother was bedridden and Rhaenyra was only a woman. In the end, it would fall to his good nephew to take care of it.

During their conversation, a third voice interjected. "Prince Rhaegar is on Dragonstone right now. He should be handling this."

Daemon looked away toward the Driftwood Throne inside the Hall of Nine. The Sea Snake sat upright, his face solemn. "The last time a wild dragon from the Smoking Sea appeared, it triggered a war between the Kingdom and the Triarchy. This time, the wild dragon cannot fall into the hands of others and stir up the royal family's sensitive nerves."

Deep down, he already hated war. He didn't want to pay any more.

Rhaenys glanced at her husband and explained to Daemon, "house Velaryon has sacrificed too much and needs to recuperate."

His words are always so complicated. Why can't he just say what he means?

Daemon chuckled. "I'll report it. Rhaegar must know about this." He had sent out a myriad of spies to find a cure for his brother's damaged soul. Through the map of the Targaryen ancestral estate shared by his good nephew, more than a dozen exploration teams entered the Smoking Sea. Not only did they find traces of what they were looking for, but also news of a young dragon.

Daemon's thoughts drifted away to a courtyard in Tyrosh, where he seemed to see his paramour, Mysaria. That woman was born a dancer, lowly and dirty. But beneath that beautiful face was a heart of gold.

After Mysaria had an abortion, the two had a long period of estrangement. The reason was that Mysaria did not feel safe and abandoned Daemon, the Rogue Prince. To put it bluntly, a whore dumped him.

Mysaria lived in a brothel in Flea Bottom and made a living by selling information. She was once very close to Otto Hightower. When Daemon conquered Tyrosh, he needed someone like a Master of Whisperers and sent someone to find Mysaria. As expected, the old lovers who had not forgotten each other got back together.

Daemon thought of many things in an instant: his brother waiting for his son, his nephew about to ascend the throne, and Laena, who had nearly died in childbirth. Finally, the picture stopped on the

pale skin of Mysaria. Sixteen years ago, on a certain night, that woman had accused him of being a coward, afraid of his brother sitting on the Iron Throne, which had caused the miscarriage of their son.

Daemon recalled the past, covering his mouth with his hand to hide a sigh. "I need a son. Sorry," he muttered to himself. "Rhaenyra has retrieved all the dragon eggs, so I will capture a baby dragon." A dark and uncertain light flashed in Daemon's eyes, as if he were complaining about the unfair treatment he had received.

The dragon eggs and the young dragons were all under the control of the royal family. The dragon eggs his two daughters received, were under the control of their foster mother, and the gift was only dependent on Rhaenyra's charity.

He was determined to have a son. He didn't need a gift from the royal family; he would have already saved a dragon for his son.

"I will go to Dragonstone later," Daemon thought clearly. His nephew's movements were unclear, and his behavior on Dragonstone was very strange. There must be a secret. Fortunately, he also had a secret.

Chapter 492: Grey Ghost: Come on, Let's Fight!

Dragonstone

Dragonmont, Underground Caverns

"Roar!"

Roar...

Vermithor was on all fours, blood gushing from its neck, snarling furiously. Silverwing stayed close, snorting warily and staring into the tunnel, where the heat was already beginning to bite. The pungent smell of ash grew closer and closer.

Sssss...

Footsteps and the low growl of a dragon's throat could be heard in the tunnel. Vermithor and Silverwing braced for the worst.

Click!

A slight noise broke the tense atmosphere, as audible as a pin drop. At that moment, the black and red young dragon, curled up into a ball, opened its wings and peered around cautiously. Seeing that no dragon was paying attention to it, it quietly crawled down the stone bridge.

The heat transmitted quickly, and the stone slab under its butt began to warm, forcing it to move. As soon as the young dragon slipped under the stone bridge, a gust of wind suddenly blew.

"Roar!"

A grayish-white dragon shadow flashed past, rushing into the underground cave. Vermithor and Silverwing opened their mouths simultaneously, golden and orange Dragonfire swirling out.

"Ga~~"

Gray Ghost spun around, easily avoiding the two streams of dragonfire, and flew out of the underground cave. The Long Bridge was a passageway for humans and, of course, an entrance and exit for dragons.

Outside the cave was a cliff halfway up Dragonmont. The dragon flew out of the cave to a view of rolling mountains and green meadows.

"Roar!"

Vermithor stopped attacking, looking doubtfully at the cave entrance. It was a mistake. It wasn't Cannibal.

"Huh?"

The Grey Ghost flew halfway up the mountain, sticking out its dragon's head and emitting a high-pitched chirp. Its clear vertical pupils were a mixture of fear and curiosity. Yes, it was forced to scout the way, being small enough to escape easily.

Seeing the dragon outside the cave, Vermithor realized he had been tricked. He climbed up the stone bridge to attack, with Silverwing following.

Two against one, they had the advantage.

Suddenly, a strong smell of ash hit their nostrils.

"Roar!"

A pair of green pupils appeared, and then a black dragon leapt out.

Plop!

Cannibal crashed into Vermithor's chest, tearing scales off his belly with its claws and engaging in a brutal close-quarters battle. Initially passive, Vermithor quickly responded with a counterattack. It tried to kick the Cannibal away with its feet while opening its huge mouth to bite at its neck.

Crack!

Vermithor's sharp teeth collided with the Cannibal's dark scales, sending sparks flying. Vermithor lunged forward, its teeth slicing through the scales and finally tasting blood.

"Roar!"

In the blink of an eye, the Cannibal shook its head and knocked Vermithor away, spewing a mouthful of long-simmering, dark green Dragonfire.

Roar...

Silverwing roared, spreading its silver-white wings and swooping down on the Cannibal. Old grudges and new ones merged; today was the day of reckoning.

"I've been waiting for you!" Rhaegar locked his eyes on the ferocious Silverwing and swung his whip with all his might. The dragon-taming whip stretched out, its barbed spikes protruding like a flexible, strange snake.

In an instant, the whip struck Silverwing's neck.

"Roar..."

Silverwing let out a roar, and its attack halted. A black mark appeared on its green scales where the whip had struck, as if it had been bruised.

Rhaegar raised his whip and commanded in High Valyrian, "Back off!" His voice echoed loudly throughout the cave.

Silverwing, uncertain and wary, stared at the whip and slowly backed away. It understood High Valyrian and felt the sting of the whip. The unfamiliar pain made it retreat.

"Roar!"

Vermithor roared in anger, struggling to break free from the Cannibal's grip. The Cannibal took a step back, then spread its wings and prepared to pounce again. It was bigger and stronger. In a one-on-one fight, it didn't need to maneuver much.

Rhaegar sat on the Cannibal's back, with no chains around his waist, and almost fell off due to the shaking. At such a critical moment, there was no room for error. He held the handle with one hand and used his feet to keep his balance on the saddle.

"Roar..."

The dragon-taming whip no longer pointed, and Silverwing, like a runaway horse, was determined to re-engage in the fight.

Roar!

Grey Ghost flew back from the outside and spat out a massive fireball with a diameter of two meters. Silverwing, unable to dodge in time, was hit in the head by the fireball, nearly knocking it unconscious.

Roar~

As Silverwing regained its composure, the black and red young dragon flew out from the ground and shot Dragonfire at its wing. The Dragonfire was pure black, leaving a small black spot on the silver-bright wing membrane. It didn't burn through, but it was smudged.

Silverwing was furious. With a flick of its tail, it sent the black and red young dragon flying like a fly, straight at the grey shadow at the mouth of the cave. Grey Ghost, smart and quick, knew when to run. It flew out of the cave in an instant.

As Silverwing arrived at the entrance, a huge fireball smashed into it.

Bang!

Silverwing's wings blocked the fireball, which shattered into a shower of sparks.

"Roar!"

Silverwing let out a roar, and its huge body emerged from the cave, leaving its nest for the first time in months. Once out of the underground cave, its silver wings spread out completely. The green scales resembled leaves, and the silver dragon wings mirrored two bright shields.

Silverwing, over 90 years old and more than 70 meters long, was an undisputed giant. In terms of size, it was larger than the three generations of dragons before it, including Dreamfyre, who had swallowed the Dragon's Essence. Grey Ghost, flying in the air, was barely 30 meters long, not even

half the size of its opponent. A glance from Silverwing's vertical pupils almost made Grey Ghost run away in fear.

Silverwing was huge and striking, a dragon of both strength and beauty. The only drawback was the two obvious missing patches of flesh where the neck connected to the shoulder blades. That was the work of the Cannibal. Even after the wounds healed and the scales grew back, the dents remained, devoid of muscle tissue.

“Roar!”

Silverwing glared at the gray wild dragon, its green scales shining in the sunlight. Grey Ghost, smaller and more agile, dove into the clouds and hid its body as it always did. With its gray-white scales, it blended perfectly with the clouds.

“Roar!”

Silverwing was furious, spitting Dragonfire at the clouds, the orange flames stretching for hundreds of meters. At this moment, a grayish-white dragon head poked out from a cloud behind Dragonmont. Grey Ghost trembled, torn between fleeing and fighting. Its instinct told it it could not defeat the green dragon, but it wanted to prove itself.

Grey Ghost, in his young-adult years, had been bullied by Sunfyre and hunted by Cannibal, and it was covered in scars.

Rhaegar happened to save it. Grey Ghost had seen Rhaegar ride the Cannibal out of Dragonmont, and the image had burned into his mind. It had already escaped once and lost a possible rider.

Dragons have their pride, and overcoming their nature is the hardest choice. The thought came to him.

“Roar...”

Grey Ghost's reason prevailed. It snorted and burst out of the clouds, spitting Dragonfire balls at the green dragon. It was not a timid little dragon!

Chapter 493: Herding the Dragon Pack – Iragaxys

The fireball sped forward.

Silverwing, sensing a gust of wind behind it, quickly turned to face it.

Boom!

The dragon's tail swayed slowly, and Silverwing leapt nimbly, dodging the fireball sideways.

“Roar!”

Its vertical pupils locked onto the Grey Ghost in ambush. Burning with rage, Silverwing chased after it head-on. A wild dragon that had just become an adult dared to challenge the majesty of a true dragon.

Even the ugly Mud Dragon was too scared to make a sound when facing it.

Hoo!

Silverwing moved so fast it seemed like a jade arc, spraying orange Dragonfire as it charged forward. Grey Ghost was shocked, not expecting the gap between the two to be so great. Its wings flapped desperately, trying to dive into the clouds to escape.

Frantically, Grey Ghost flapped its wings, trying to escape into the clouds.

However, Silverwing, intimately familiar with Dragonmont, created a boiling mist with its Dragonfire, foiling Grey Ghost's attempt to vanish into the clouds.

"Gah?"

Exposed and desperate, Grey Ghost spat fireballs in fear.

Pop!

The fireballs disintegrated into sparks upon contact with the orange Dragonfire.

Silverwing's eyes gleamed with lethal intent. It swooped down, jaws wide, aiming to seize Grey Ghost's neck in one swift move.

Grey Ghost turned to flee, but it was already too late.

It watched in horror as the green dragon bore down on it, drooling acrid dragon saliva.

At this critical moment, a thought pierced its exhausted mind.

It didn't want to die; it wanted to fight back.

Embracing this resolve, Grey Ghost abandoned its flight.

A piercing scream erupted from it, and a massive three-meter ball of Dragonfire shot forth.

"Roar!"

From the cave, a thunderous roar echoed, followed by a stream of green Dragonfire.

Grey Ghost felt a chill down its spine and instinctively ducked.

The smoky green fire surged overhead, colliding with the onrushing Silverwing.

Boom!

Caught off guard, Silverwing crashed into the green Dragonfire, driven back by the powerful blast.

Grey Ghost paused in astonishment, then glanced back at the cave.

"Cannibal, fly."

A silver-haired figure astride the dragon gazed serenely skyward.

Grey Ghost's pupils widened in surprise. It shook off the Silverwing flapping at the Dragonfire and darted to the edge of the cave.

Rhaegar raised his dragon whip and smiled faintly. "Grey Ghost, have you grown more courageous?"

Grey Ghost took it as a compliment and felt a surge of joy.

Rhaegar's smile grew brighter. He whipped the Cannibal on the back and commanded, "Don't block the entrance."

“Roar!”

Cannibal shook its head and growled, its green pupils full of reluctance, especially fearful of the dragon-taming whip.

Grey Ghost was stunned, noticing Rhaegar's appearance.

Silver hair hanging down his shoulders, his face had turned pale, and a trace of black fire was visible in his eyes, exuding a sense of belonging.

Rhaegar let his long hair fall, revealing dragon scales and horns on his forehead. The strange posture and crooked corners of his mouth created a morbid sense of nobility.

Grey Ghost did not wait to observe him up close. Cannibal stepped out of the cave, its huge body leaping down and taking flight.

Silverwing saw this and quickly retreated.

Cannibal did not pursue but circled back and forth in front of the cave.

Rhaegar looked down on him condescendingly, and the dragon whip snapped in midair with a crisp sound. He commanded, “Let's go!”

“Roar!”

A weak growl came from the cave. The rock wall at the top of the cave rubbed back and forth, dropping sharp gravel, accompanied by the sound of rustling stones.

A bronze dragon head with a ferocious horn poked out, its pupils narrowing with a hint of defiance, looking up at the dragon rider in the air.

Crack!

Without a word, Rhaegar whipped his hand back and forth in the air, saying sternly, “Obey my command, Vermithor!”

Hearing the crack of the whip, Vermithor opened his jagged dragon's mouth and reluctantly stepped out of the cave.

Whoosh!

The wings beat out a gust of wind, and the bronze dragon climbed high into the sky, searching for its mate to fly with.

Rhaegar's face was cold, but his lips curled up in a secret smile.

The binding spell and the dragon whip really worked.

After a few lashes, the two adult dragons that had been fighting each other calmed down and made peace, especially Vermithor. This dragon, known as “Bronze Fury,” would rampage when angry.

Rhaegar used a little physical persuasion to calm the Bronze Fury down. Although there was the use of external forces, it had overcome its irritable nature.

“Roar!”

Cannibal glared at the two dragon partners with contempt, snarling repeatedly in a show of defiance. If it weren't for the rider's intervention, there would only be one dragon allowed on Dragonstone.

Crack!

The whip of the dragon tamer struck the black scales with lightning speed, and the sound was particularly crisp.

Cannibal growled in pain, its pupils dilating in reluctance.

Rhaegar's face was as cold as ice. He said sternly, "You've almost poached a dragon from Dragonstone again!"

If it weren't for his timely arrival, the baby dragon would not have survived. The Cannibal was furious and turned to glare at the rider as if to say, "That's a wild dragon, not a native of Dragonstone."

Crack!

The dragon whip cracked again, and Rhaegar's tone was firm: "It belongs to Dragonstone, not to the wild!"

A dragon that flies to Dragonstone is a Targaryen dragon. This is an unchanging truth.

Cannibal was hit again, its anger filling its brain. It roared and cursed.

He said he wasn't going to hit it with the whip, but he didn't live up to what he said.

The relationship between the man and the dragon, which had lasted for more than ten years, was now facing its first emotional crisis.

"You just need to be beaten!" Rhaegar's eyes burned with black fire, and he whipped the dragon again.

"Roar!"

Cannibal, furious, carried its rider into the sky, plunging through the clouds in a chaotic rush.

Vermithor and Silverwing: ...

The companion dragons hid behind Dragonmont, watching the Cannibal's wild antics from a distance.

"Cannibal, are you going through a rebellious phase?"

Rhaegar clung tightly to the handlebar, unchained, and still wielded his dragon whip.

Dragon and rider shared a deep bond, able to read each other's minds.

When the Cannibal craved the baby dragon, Rhaegar knew its intentions immediately.

Dragons possess intelligence comparable to humans, each with a unique nature.

Grey Ghost was naturally timid and shy and Vermithor was easily angered and prone to losing control. Cannibalism was intrinsic to the Cannibal.

When he was young, Viserys had separate conversations with Rhaenyra and Rhaegar.

“The Targaryens' control of the dragons is an illusion.”

“The nature of dragons is chaotic and disorderly.”

“Use the dragon well, but don't rely on dragons too much.”

Rhaegar had taken these words to heart. Today, he truly understood the nature of dragons.

The Targaryens' bond with their dragons allowed them to control them. But dragons, driven by their nature, would sometimes disobey their riders.

For instance, the special relationship between the Sheepstealer and Aemond. Aemond would command it to go east, but the Sheepstealer would go west, perhaps seeking sheep or merely teasing its rider.

“Roar!”

Cannibal ignored Rhaegar, flying up and down through the clouds, defying its rider. The instinct to eat dragons was in its blood and couldn't be erased.

Rhaegar wasn't angry; he laughed. “Good fellow, then let's race.”

It was as if time had turned back eleven years to their first meeting. Cannibal soared with all its might, but Rhaegar held on tight. Man and dragon began to compete. Rhaegar's goal was clear: to tame the wild nature of the Cannibal.

Eating dragons was instinctive to it, but it had to be controlled. With his dragon-taming whip and knowledge of restraint magic, Rhaegar was confident he could succeed.

Crack!

The whip flew back and forth, occasionally striking the dark scales. With each lash, the Cannibal roared, its resistance growing more intense.

Rhaegar did not relent, patiently waging this war between man and dragon. He never saw himself as the Cannibal's master. The Cannibal was his partner, as described in the family chronicles of the Dragonlords.

But!

In their bond, there was a hierarchy. Rhaegar, as the rider, had to take the initiative.

Cannibal must obey his commands. Hunting young dragons without permission was a serious offense. Rhaegar punished him severely, trying to change his bad habits.

In the blink of an eye, a quarter of an hour passed.

Cannibal panted heavily, slowing down and stabilizing. It still couldn't shake off its rider. Just like eleven years ago, Rhaegar clung stubbornly.

Rhaegar's smile faded, and he tapped the dragon's back with his whip, panting slightly. “You can't say no to me, partner.”

From the first time he rode on its back, the Cannibal was destined to be ridden by him for the rest of its life.

“Roar...”

Cannibal let out a low growl and landed heavily on Dragonmont.

“Roar?”

From a cave halfway up the mountain, a black and red baby dragon cautiously poked its head out, curious about the outside world.

Grey Ghost flew silently, landing on the cave roof to observe the young dragon from above. No dragon was better at hiding than it.

Everything is for survival.

Dragonmont Peak.

Cannibal lay prostrate on the ground, panting heavily, its breath warming the dark rock.

Rhaegar shed his Dragonborn form, combed his disheveled hair, and silently gazed at Vermithor and Silverwing circling overhead. This pair of dragons had lived on Dragonstone for years, their combined combat power formidable.

For various reasons, the Cannibal and the elder dragons had a strained relationship, often clashing in recent years. Dragonstone was too small to accommodate three adult dragons. Even the oldest, Vhagar, had moved away, now active in Driftmark and The Gullet.

“If there were a dragon horn, could it command the dragons?” Rhaegar wondered, raising his dragon whip and surveying the situation.

Dragon-taming tools were highly effective, as anyone who had used them could attest.

"I remember that the first dragonlords of ancient Valyria were just a group of shepherds on a peninsula," Rhaegar mused, looking down at the long whip in his hand.

Crack!

The whip made a crisp sound, and Rhaegar beamed. “Cannibal, fly!”

“Roar!”

Cannibal did not understand, but obeyed anyway, spreading its wings and leaping from the peak.

At Rhaegar’s command, man and dragon approached Vermithor and Silverwing in the air.

Crackling!

The dragon whip was swung, some blows landing on the dragons, others in mid-air. Rhaegar, like a shepherd, shouted, “Move!”

“Roar!”

Vermithor growled in protest, and Silverwing received a lash. The two dragons were irritated but could not resist the threat of the dragon whip and Cannibal, obediently spreading their wings and soaring.

Cannibal led, with the other two dragons following at a distance, entangled with each other.

Rhaegar was enjoying himself, steering the dragons halfway up the mountain. He commanded, "Let's go!"

"Roar!"

Grey Ghost was startled. Just moments ago, it saw three dragons being whipped into submission. They seemed terrified of the whip.

"Huh?"

The black and red young dragon tilted its head, hesitating.

Rhaegar glanced at it, cracked the whip, and said in a threatening tone, "Obey my command!"

The young dragon shivered in fear and quickly jumped out of the cave, flapping its blood-red wings to keep up.

Rhaegar finally had a chance to take a good look at the wild young dragon and exclaimed in surprise, "Balerion?"

The black scales and red wing membranes made it look exactly like Balerion.

"Well, from now on, you'll be a Targaryen dragon, and I'll give you a great name."

Rhaegar's eyes lit up as he pointed his dragon whip at the young dragon and decided, "Since you were almost eaten by Silverwing and has scarlet wings, you'll be called Iragaxys, The Bloodwing!"

Iragaxys tilted its head and followed Grey Ghost obediently. It didn't understand, not at all. It was just a baby dragon that had just hatched. Despite its size, it was still growing fast.

Rhaegar was content, driving several dragons and the young dragon through the sky.

Balerion name was too special. The Targaryens only had one dragon named Balerion. Iragaxys, also name of an ancient Valyrian god, whose duty was to greet death and guard the gates of hell, was a fitting name for the black and red young dragon.

It is a subordinate god of Balerion, the god of death, it was perfect name for the red and black young dragon.

#### Chapter 494: The Bastards of Hull

Time flies, and the sun sets.

Roar!

On Dragonstone, a black dragon streaked by, stirring up a salty sea breeze.

Roar!

Roar...

Vermithor and Silverwing arrived late, intimately entwined, leaping over the winding stone steps and the stone bridge.

At last, Grey Ghost flapped its wings, clinging to the tail of the three dragons.

"Roar~"

Iragaxys whimpered, lying on the back of the grey dragon and spreading its wings to feel the sea breeze. Grey Ghost glared back at it, a hot stream of air shooting from its nostrils. The little one immediately became obedient, curling up into a ball.

Satisfied, Grey Ghost landed on the cliff behind the Stone Drum Tower, its head held high.

The little dragon, new to the place and with no one to rely on, found solace in the shy yet dependable Grey Ghost. Despite its timid nature, Grey Ghost quickly formed a deep friendship with the young dragon under the threat of the dragon-taming whip.

The sun was setting.

Cannibal circled the Stone Drum Tower twice and landed in the same clearing on the cliff.

Boom!

The two dragons sunk their feet into the soil, sending a gust of wind through The Flatlands.

“The day of herding dragons is finally over,” Rhaegar yawned, climbing down from the dragon's back.

“Roar...”

Cannibal, in a foul mood, slumped to the ground. It had been driven hard all day and even had to catch its own fish to eat. This seemed to be its life now.

“Don’t be so down. There’s still a long way to go,” Rhaegar approached the dragon’s head, smiling wickedly. “You’re tired, that way you won’t feel like eating dragons.”

Cannibal: ...

The dragon turned its head away, ignoring its master.

After a few idle words, Vermithor and Silverwing slowly descended, their ears and cheeks rubbing together affectionately.

Rhaegar watched with a sigh. "No wonder Silverwing is such a fertile egg producer," he thought. With such a stable relationship, it would be a shame not to produce more dragon eggs.

Rhaegar sat down in front of the black dragon's snout, rubbed his hands over its hard scales, and whispered, "They are the future of the Targaryens."

“Huh?”

The Cannibal glanced at them and frowned.

Rhaegar smiled and said nothing, his hand resting on the dragon whip at his waist. After a good whipping, the Cannibal was unusually calm, almost embarrassed by the dragons proximity.

A bit odd, but not worth worrying about.

Vermithor and Silverwing, like a devoted couple, chose to be obedient and accompany Rhaegar and his dragon for the entire day. Rhaegar reveled in the role of “dragon herder,” delighting in the unique joy of managing five dragons together.

As the sun set, the clouds turned a fiery red.

The five dragons gathered on the cliff by the sea, resembling a collection of differently sized boulders.

Cannibal crouched on the ground, its neck and head pressed against the grass, lazily shaking its tail.

Rhaegar relaxed, leaning against the dragon's snout, his eyes closed as he enjoyed the breeze on his face.

Beyond the golden beach, the vast ocean stretched out as far as the eye could see, peaceful and serene.

"Roar?"

Grey Ghost whinnied in confusion, moving to the edge of the cliff and stretching its neck to peer into the distance.

Iragaxys, lying on the tail of its new big brother, tumbled to the ground with a thud as Grey Ghost shifted, rolling and crawling onto the grass.

Rhaegar noticed the commotion and opened his eyes, looking into the distance.

At the end of the sunset, the sea reflected a shade of red.

"Roar..."

A piercing, shrill roar spread far and wide, with penetrating power.

Rhaegar sat up straight, his eyes filled with doubt.

A bloodthirsty dragon, long and scarlet like a snake, slowly soared towards the setting sun. On its back was a familiar figure.

Rhaegar frowned. "Daemon, what is he doing here so late?"

His uncle, returning to Tyrosh, was making a courtesy call on his way through Driftmark. They had just parted in the morning, and now he was here in the evening.

Boom!

Caraxes flapped its large wings and landed leisurely on the cliff, its slender body vertical.

Daemon, dressed in black, with his hands on the saddle, teased, "I saw you herding the dragons earlier." He then looked directly at the dragons present, lingering on Vermithor and Silverwing.

His nephew truly surprised him. Rhaegar could control dragons, whether they had owners or not. Is he an enhanced version of the Dragonpit Dragonkeepers?

Rhaegar had no time for small talk. "What is it?" he asked, eager to return to King's Landing with the young dragon.

Daemon was about to reply when he noticed Iragaxys hiding under Grey Ghost's wing. He looked slightly shocked. "A young dragon I've never seen before."

Then he examined the young dragon's appearance. "Isn't this just like a young Balerion?"

Rhaegar said indifferently, "It's a wild young dragon, just captured by me."

“A wild dragon? What a coincidence,” Daemon’s eyes flashed, thinking of a possibility. “My scouts reported that a wild young dragon appeared in the Smoking Sea.”

Rhaegar’s spirit lifted. “What color?” he asked hurriedly.

“Blue,” Daemon replied truthfully.

“That’s it!” Rhaegar slapped his thigh, smiling innocently. The young dragons in his dream were one black and one blue.

Daemon frowned, uncertain. “Do you know the news about the two young dragons?”

The Smoking Sea’s wild young dragons are his source of information.

Rhaegar pointed to his head and smiled. “I had a dream.”

Daemon was speechless.

Rhaegar got up, patted his clothes, and said, “It’s getting dark, let’s go.” He climbed onto the back of his dragon.

Daemon remained silent and turned Caraxes around. The two men had a common goal regarding the young blue dragon. They must not be left alone!

“Roar!”

Cannibal shook its body lightly, ran towards the edge of the cliff, smashed a piece of it, and flew off.

Facing the setting sun, Rhaegar unfurled his dragon whip.

Grey Ghost jerked, grabbed Iragaxys in its mouth, threw it onto its back, and hurried to catch up.

Roar!

Roar...

Vermithor and Silverwing reluctantly approached the edge of the cliff and leaped off, diving towards the ground.

Hula-la!

As soon as they neared the ground, their wings spread out, following the main group in undulating flight.

Over the waves of the sea, the dragons flew together.

...

Driftmark, Hull.

Though the night is still deep, the harbor bustles with activity. On a three-masted warship, the Sea Snake stands with his hands behind his back, surveying the deck.

Shipwrights mend planks while sailors hang ropes to clean the barnacles and seaweed clinging to the hull.

Splash!

A bucket of fresh water is poured onto the deck, accompanied by the hesitant voice of a young man.  
"My lord, please move."

The Sea Snake turns his head, frowning slightly.

A half-grown boy with silver curls and naturally dark skin carries a bucket to wet the bloodstains on the deck.

"Brother, I can't keep up with the work."

Before the Sea Snake can respond, another boy with similar features arrives, carrying a mop. His hair is buzz-cut, revealing silver roots, and his violet eyes are anxious as he scrubs the bloodstains. It seems as if the work is endless and food is scarce.

The Sea Snake takes note and stops the older boy with curly hair. He asks casually, "Where are your parents?"

The curly-haired boy, surprised by the Lord's interest, answers carefully, "My grandfather is a boat builder. He's too old to work now."

"What's your name?"

"Addam," the boy replies, "I'm twelve years old. This is my younger brother, Alyn. He's nine."

Sea Snake looks at the two boys, his eyes reflecting an inexplicable light. Hearing their names and noting their features, he recalls a past that few know about.

"These two children have Velaryon blood," he thinks to himself.

"Do a good job, and you'll get a reward from the chief financial officer later. Just say I approved it," the Sea Snake says calmly, before walking away.

Addam and Alyn exchange surprised glances, not expecting such kindness.

"The Lord is a good man," Addam says, eyes full of admiration as he watches the figure depart.

Alyn, still struggling with the mop, mutters, "The Lord is suddenly being so nice to us. Could it be that we are his bastards?"

The brothers have no father and, not knowing his identity, can't even claim the bastard name of "Waters." They belong to the general populace without a surname.

"Shh, keep your voice down," Addam warns.

...

The Sea Snake completed a circuit of the deck before stepping down from the ship.

As he walked along the fish-scented harbor, he glanced back. The two half-grown boys were still on deck, working diligently. Satisfied, he nodded and continued toward town.

He passed an alley where a prostitute in revealing clothes was adjusting her collar as she emerged. The Sea Snake gave her a brief glance and then moved on.

The prostitute was plain, with big wavy flax-colored hair, olive skin, and dark eyes. Her exotic style was her only distinguishing feature, marking her as a streetwalker. After the Sea Snake passed, she slunk back into the alley, soon emerging with a little girl who shared her hair and skin color.

The little girl, plain with a scar on her nose, yelled into the alley, "You old bastard, you have no money to pay for my services!"

A ragged fishmonger rushed out, cursing, "Damn you, little bastard, how dare you curse me!"

Suddenly, a gust of wind carrying the smell of ashes blew through the town.

"Roar!"

A thunderous roar echoed, shaking everyone's eardrums. The townsfolk looked up at the darkening sky. A pair of jet-black wings blotted out the sun, and green eyes like lanterns of the underworld glowed ominously. The ash-laden air felt like an invitation from an evil god.

"Roar..."

More dragon shadows soared past. The fishmonger froze, forgetting his anger. The prostitute lifted her skirt and ran, dragging the fishmonger by his belt. Only the little girl with the scar stared at the sky, her dark eyes filled with reverence.

...

Climax City.

Rhaenys watched in amazement from the window as several dragons landed outside the city.

"It's Vermithor and Silverwing," Laena said, standing by the window, her tone full of surprise. These dragons usually slept in Dragonmont and rarely traveled.

"Don't worry about it. Go greet your cousin first," Rhaenys said, regaining her composure and heading downstairs.

In the castle hall, Rhaegar and Daemon walked side by side.

Rhaenys met them at the foot of the stairs. "Rhaegar, you brought several dragons."

"Just a little test," Rhaegar replied, waving his hand dismissively. He then turned serious. "There are dragons in the Smoking Sea, and I need the help of House Velaryon."

Chapter 495: Digging a Pit for Daemon

Rhaenys remained calm, glanced at the amused Daemon, and greeted her nephew. "Corlys is still outside. You men can talk among yourselves."

"Then I won't disturb you," Rhaegar replied sensibly, noting that he hadn't eaten yet.

...

"Brother, what brings you here?"

Little Daeron exclaimed in surprise, trotting over like a greedy cat that just smelled fish. Baela and Rhaena followed close behind, their faces lighting up when they saw Rhaegar sitting at the table. They hurried over to chat, their voices sweet as honey.

Surrounded by the children, Rhaegar sniffed his dragon stench and said helplessly, "You really need to stay away from me. Don't become a stinking nest."

"It's okay, I'm not afraid," little Daeron giggled, sitting down on a nearby seat and scratching his head. He nudged Baela, who was about to sit down, with his butt.

Baela glared at him and raised her hand as if to slap him.

"Shhh!" Rhaena quickly intervened, pulling Baela back and giving up her seat to protect her brother.

Rhaegar watched with interest, admiring Baela's courage. Turning his head, he saw Daemon talking to a waiter and interrupted him. "Have you considered teaching Baela the martial arts?"

Daemon looked back in confusion, waved the waiter away, and asked, "Like that stupid girl Helaena?"

"She's not stupid!" Rhaegar insisted, rubbing Baela's head. "She's your heir and a dragon rider. Learning some martial arts will help her protect herself."

Daemon snorted. "As you wish. After all, both my daughters are adopted by you and Rhaenyra."

Rhaegar frowned slightly, observing Baela and Rhaena's reactions. Rhaena smiled, watching her father and cousin talk, while Baela looked resentful, snorting and turning her head to ignore her father.

Rhaegar nodded thoughtfully. "Fine, I'll oversee their education."

He sensed that his uncle didn't seem to care much about the future of the two girls. It wasn't that he didn't love them, but he didn't invest in their potential.

"I'll have Rhaenyra teach her a lesson later. We can't waste two good seeds," Rhaegar thought, teasing the children while secretly calculating his next steps.

...

The food was served and the candlelight flickered.

Rhaenys and Laena sat next to each other, eagerly inquiring about the herding of the dragons.

The dragonkeepers at the Dragonpit could command the dragons to enter and exit the pit, feed, and comfort them. However, whipping a dragon and driving several adult dragons to fly was unheard of.

"Rhaegar, is this the dragon-taming tool?" Rhaenys asked, her elbows on the table as she examined the dragon whip in front of her nephew.

The whip was black, covered in barbs, with a handle made of Valyrian steel. It was anything but ordinary.

Rhaegar didn't hide his talent. "The ancient Dragonlords of Valyria had many dragon-taming treasures, and this is just one of them."

Daemon's eyes flashed with interest. "I saw in the library in Pentos that some Dragonlord families had a horn that controlled dragons."

"That's just a legend," Laena interjected with a hint of helplessness. "The Valyria Freehold was destroyed overnight, and the biographies that remain are hard to distinguish between fact and fiction."

Daemon often visited the library during their years in the Free Cities, reading the stories left behind by the Dragonlords.

Ignoring Laena's skepticism, Daemon looked at Rhaegar with burning curiosity. When it came to knowledge of the Dragonlords, his nephew surpassed him. He wanted to know more.

Feeling the others' stares, Rhaegar thought about the purpose of his visit and said decisively, "Yes! It may be more in the Smoking Sea, but it's not easy for ordinary people to find."

"The Smoking Sea is very dangerous," Rhaenys commented.

Daemon smiled, his eyes shining. "Can you find it? If you enter the Smoking Sea."

Rhaegar recalled his premonition dream and, after a moment, nodded. "Yes."

He had the means: the Dragon Compass to search for young dragons, the glass candle with the [Reflections of the Moon] to see thousands of miles, and a rough map of The Lands of the Long Summer. Combining these three elements would minimize the dangers of the Smoking Sea.

He was about to speak when the door opened with a bang.

Sea Snake, dressed in a dusty suit, looked around and greeted them, "Sorry, I was a little late back from Hull."

"Lord Corlys, I was looking for you," Rhaegar stood up to show his respect, his eyes firm. "The Smoking Sea has revealed traces of a wild young dragon. I plan to retrieve it and need the escort of House Velaryon's fleet."

The Sea Snake was stunned, thinking he had misheard. "You want to take the fleet of House Velaryon into the Smoking Sea?"

The Smoking Sea was a high-risk area, avoided in his nine voyages.

As the saying goes in Hull: "A smart sailor will flee before the Storm."

Rhaegar acknowledged the danger, but insisted, "The young dragon cannot be abandoned, and the Smoking Sea contains a special herb that can alleviate my father's symptoms."

"With all due respect, this is an unrealistic decision," the Sea Snake sighed, his voice tinged with helplessness. "The Smoking Sea is treacherous, but if it's for the king, House Velaryon will not shy away."

House Velaryon had recently strengthened ties with the royal family through marriage.

"However, our fleet is not enough to explore the Smoking Sea," the Sea Snake admitted, shaking his head. "After the war with the Triarchy and Dorne, only one in ten of our ships remain. The few we have are tasked with monitoring the Greenblood River and cooperating with the Stepstones to secure the Narrow Sea. We can't spare any ships for the Smoking Sea, which is fraught with danger."

Rhaegar rubbed his chin, pondering whether the Sea Snake's words were entirely truthful.

The Sea Snake took his seat, his expression resolute, and gestured for Rhaegar to join him at the table. It was clear he wasn't lying—everyone desired a young dragon, but few could capture one. The risk outweighed the reward.

Rhaegar sat down and exchanged a glance with Daemon, who was also deep in thought, contemplating the untapped treasures in the Smoking Sea.

“Rhaegar, I have a suggestion,” Rhaenys suddenly spoke up, her expression a bit complicated.

Rhaegar was stunned and humbly replied, “Aunt, please go ahead.”

Rhaenys, encouraged by her nephew's sincerity, straightened her back and temporarily smoothed the wrinkles at the corners of her eyes. “Rather than focusing on a young dragon, you should quickly secure your father's throne and resolve the post-war hidden dangers.”

Rhaegar hesitated, wanting to mention that one reason for exploring the Smoking Sea was to help his father. But he chose to listen to her advice instead.

Seeing he didn't interrupt, Rhaenys felt relieved. “Your father relies too much on the Small Council, and many important matters are handled carelessly. You must be prepared to take over a mess.”

Rhaegar nodded, having already noticed the Small Council's flaws and planning to address them once he became king.

Rhaenys continued, glancing at Daemon to be tactful, “What about your affair with Lady Jeyne? The entire Vale knows she's pregnant.”

Rhaegar's lips were dry as he replied, “I have re-drafted the Law of Exceptions with the Faith of the Seven.”

“Hmm?” Rhaenys raised an eyebrow, intrigued.

Daemon watched the exchange, raising his eyebrows and giving a mocking laugh. Laena gave him a disapproving glance, prompting him to look away and drink his wine moodily.

Rhaegar's mind raced with the barrage of questions. A flash of inspiration struck him as he locked eyes with Daemon. He saw greed in his uncle's eyes-Daemon wanted the young dragon and the treasure of the Smoking Sea.

Rhaegar formulated a plan to extricate himself from the situation.

The House Velaryon fleet will send a detachment to patrol the Smoking Sea. If Daemon wants to enter the Smoking Sea, let him do so on a dragon. Tyrosh is full of mercenaries who will do anything for money.

Rhaegar was bold and decisive. “Then seal off the Smoking Sea so that no one can enter or leave,” he declared.

Daemon immediately took the bait. “What if someone sneaks into the Smoking Sea and steals the baby dragon?”

“I'll set up patrols,” Rhaegar replied, raising an eyebrow suggestively.

Daemon was silent, not taking the task lightly.

The Sea Snake was generous and readily agreed. "I will send someone to block the Smoking Sea and ensure immediate reports if anyone enters."

"Let's proceed this way," Rhaegar decided with a clap of his hands.

Reflecting on the affairs in King's Landing, he couldn't help but feel a bit of a headache. "I'll have to fly back to King's Landing."

Daemon sipped his wine, watching it drip down the side of the glass before finishing it in one gulp.

...

Under a star-studded night sky at King's Landing, within the Red Keep...

Creak.

The doors to the king's chambers opened, and two Kingsguard glanced back.

Rhaegar emerged, rubbing his brow. "It's been a long day," he said wearily, then turned to leave.

The Kingsguard, ever vigilant, responded, "Good night, Prince."

Moments earlier, Rhaegar had been part of an important discussion in the royal chambers.

The heir prince was about to be officially named!

...

Princess's Bedroom.

Creak.

The door quietly opened a crack, and a purple eye peered inside. It was quiet and dark.

Outside, Rhaegar, nervous, slipped into the room quietly. He passed through the dimly lit hall, gently lifting the bead curtain to reveal a large carved bed. Rhaegar sighed in relief when he saw that the person in the bed was still asleep.

"Luckily, Rhaenyra is asleep," he thought. Discussing the matter of marrying more wives would be awkward.

"Rhaegar!"

In the quiet room, a cold voice suddenly rang out. Rhaegar's body stiffened, and he clenched his teeth.

Click!

A candle lit up the room, casting a hazy glow. Rhaenyra sat quietly on the edge of the bed, holding a candlestick, staring at him with her neatly dressed figure. Judging by her posture, she had been awake for a long time.

Rhaegar was embarrassed, unable to move.

Rhaenyra looked stern and slapped the edge of the bed. "Come here!"

"Okay," Rhaegar obediently stepped forward and sat down next to her, feeling the warmth of her firm presence behind him.

He took the candlestick and looked around before asking, "Where are the babies?"

"Sara is taking care of them," Rhaenyra replied, rolling her eyes in exasperation.

"What were you doing in my room in the middle of the night?"

In the middle of the night, instead of sleeping, she heard the Cannibal growling and guessed that he had returned.

Rhaegar lay on his side, resting his head on her lap, wrapped in her red dress, his arms around her delicate waist. "I'm going to be king," he said.

"Yes, and I'm going to be queen," Rhaenyra replied, lifting his chin with her white fingers and looking into his slightly melancholy purple eyes. "Not happy?"

"It's a lot of trouble," Rhaegar admitted.

"How many people would love to have trouble but don't get it?" Rhaenyra's eyes softened, and she gave him an encouraging look. "Think about Aegon and Aemond's divisions and how to deal with Daemon after your ascension."

"Daemon won't get off lightly," Rhaegar muttered. "I caught a wild baby dragon, and there's another one in the Smoking Sea. I want to go, but they won't let me."

Rhaenyra listened silently, stroking his face with her delicate hands. She knew Rhaegar wanted to go to the Smoking Sea to find something to cure his father.

After a while, Rhaegar yawned and said he was sleepy. He hugged her soft waist and rubbed his cheeks against her, wanting to get a good night's sleep first.

"Rhaegar."

"Hm?"

"You came into my room in the middle of the night just to tell me a story?" Rhaenyra's voice was soft, and her eyes gleamed mischievously.

"Huh?" Rhaegar opened his eyes. Red fabric covered his face, and all he could see was white. "Who said you could sleep?" she said.

Rhaenyra put her hands behind her back, adjusting her red dress. Her legs clenched tightly, and Rhaegar's eyes went dark.

"Are you afraid I'll get angry?" Rhaenyra raised her hips to find a comfortable position, breathing heavily. "Serve your queen well!"

"Woof woof!" Rhaegar whined, shaking his head in protest. He didn't like this approach.

"No protest allowed!" Rhaenyra was fierce, just as when she bullied him as a child, and she pushed his head under her red dress. Rhaegar's eyes filled with tears.

Lying on the side of the bed, he was kicked under it and forced to kneel. Rhaenyra was always so bossy, always bullying him when they were little, always doing strange and bad things.

Rhaegar wiped away his tears on the white sheet and resigned himself to his task.

“Sss!” Rhaenyra gasped, her earlobes turning rosy red, her waist arching involuntarily. One hand propped on the soft mattress, the other pressed against her red dress. Her legs squeezed tighter, and her eyes flashed with a sense of revenge.

Chapter 496: Ascending the Throne – Reforging the Iron Throne

Time flies. It is now March.

King's Landing, Dragon Gate.

The road is teeming with traffic, the path repeatedly rammed and rolled over, turning it into a muddy mess.

A group of cavalymen in fur coats led the way, escorting a convoy of rolling wheels. A tall carriage moved slowly through the ranks, flying an ancient banner with the head of a direwolf.

“Messenger from Winterfell!” The captain of the cavalry rode up to the city gates and announced the identity of the caravan's owner.

“Roar!”

A dragon's roar echoed from above.

On the towering walls of the Dragon Gate, a magnificent golden dragon slumbered, looking down on the visitors with pride.

“Dragon!!”

The northern cavalry team was terrified, even the usually stoic captain rode back nervously.

On the city wall, two fearless officers exchanged glances and raised the flag to signal: “Let them pass!”

After a long pause, the caravan from the north slowly entered King's Landing. They had arrived with confidence but entered the city humbly.

The young Cregan rode a tall horse with a huge sword strapped to his back, blending in with the caravan. The streets of King's Landing were bustling with people, hurrying about and discussing various news.

“Look at these northerners. Their balls didn't freeze off in the winter, but they almost got scared off by that golden dragon.”

“Shh! That's a nobleman.”

“What are you afraid of? The kingdom is holding a coronation ceremony, and there have been nobles all over the city for the past two weeks.”

Cregan listened carefully, analyzing the information he overheard.

“Let them through!”

Suddenly, another shout came from the top of the city wall. Cregan's face remained unchanged as he looked back at the procession behind the convoy.

On the muddy road, a team of well-equipped and luxurious cavalry advanced. As they approached, a blue banner with a curved-moon eagle was raised high.

“Arryn of the Vale,” Cregan muttered to himself, urging the caravan to speed up. They had all been invited to the coronation—or, as it was also known, the abdication of the old king.

Red Keep

“Hurry, hurry, hurry! The guests are about to fill the ballroom. Get those refreshments and drinks served!” Lyonel was flustered and red-faced, bustling about and giving orders to the servants.

The servants were scurrying around, carrying tables and chairs and clearing away plates. Every corridor in the Red Keep was bustling with activity.

“Lord Lyonel, the throne hall is ready.”

“That’s good. This is a task the Prince specifically asked for.” A thin line of sweat appeared on Lyonel’s forehead, which he quickly wiped away as he turned his head.

He was met by the sight of Tyland Lannister, panting heavily and slightly disheveled, his neatly combed blond hair askew from exertion.

Lyonel looked at him twice and gently reminded him, “Lord Tyland, you don't need to push yourself so hard... it's beneath you.”

“Oh, is that so?” Tyland looked down at his clothes and smiled ironically. “The ceremony is important, so I must give it my all.”

“You're too kind.” Lyonel was speechless and patted him on the shoulder.

Tyland, moved by the gesture, turned and resumed his work with renewed determination.

Just a month ago, the construction of the Prince's Palace was finally completed. After three years of reconstruction, Tyland had returned to King's Landing to take over from the retired Sea Snake, reappointed as Master of Ships.

In order to make a grand impression, he had set off a wave of excitement throughout the palace.

Lyonel glanced at him, then shouted at a servant, “Hang the banner properly! We don’t want the noble ladies laughing at us.”

It was Noon.

Guests from all over the kingdom arrived one after another, entering the Red Keep to attend the succession ceremony. Hundreds of important nobles gathered together, setting aside their old prejudices and waiting solemnly for the ceremony to begin.

Erryk, the commander of the Kingsguard, personally led the group of dignitaries to the back garden of the castle. Those observant enough noticed that it was a bit out of the way.

Lord Jason of the Westerlands, a known busybody, counted the floors of the castle behind him with his hands clasped behind his back.

“One, two...” When he reached the third floor, he noticed a large hole in the wall, as if it had been bombed by a trebuchet. “This is the throne hall!”

Jason gasped, seeing the Iron Throne made of molten steel and swords through the gap. It was peculiar that the castle wall had such damage, and it was even stranger that the meeting was to be held in the throne hall.

The nobles looked on in amazement, whispering among themselves.

As everyone's curiosity reached its peak, the Hand of the King arrived, sweating and shuffling. “My lords, let us welcome His Grace and the Prince!”

The announcement drew everyone's attention. They all turned to stare at the back of the Hand of the King.

However, there was no one there.

“Lord Lyonel, where are His Grace and the Prince?” Lord Jason frowned, ready to complain about the absence of the main characters.

Just as he began to speak,

“Roar!”

A thunderous roar fell from the sky, resounding throughout most of King's Landing. The Red Keep, being the closest, felt the sound waves the fastest. Jason's eardrums vibrated painfully, and his knees almost gave way.

“Roar!”

“Roar!”

The roars continued, each one like thunder on a clear day. Some people covered their ears and looked up.

What they saw was not just the blue sky but dragons—swarms of them! A black dragon circled overhead, contrasting sharply with the sky, which was now a mix of black and blue. Against this two-tone backdrop, dozens of dragons of various colors flew by, as if a painter had splashed dye across the sky.

“Cannibal, Dracarys!” a loud shout pierced the air, clear as a babbling brook.

Rhaegar, dressed in a black robe and holding Truefyre and the Dragon Whip, looked down.

“Roar!”

Cannibal plunged into the clouds, releasing dark green Dragonfire that painted the sky before diving downward at high speed.

"Roar!"

Behind the man and the dragon, a dozen dragon shadows flashed past.

Vermithor, with its bronze scales and huge, mountain-like body, Silverwing, with green scales and silver-white wing membranes. Meleys and Caraxes, with their scarlet scales and varied forms, Syrax and Sunfyre, glistening like gold.

And Dreamfyre, Sheepstealer, Tessarion, Grey Ghost, and many other dragons familiar to the continent.

In addition, some dragons had tiny children attached to their tails: the young dragons Stormcloud, Tyraxes, Iragaxys, and Moondancer.

A dozen dragons appeared together, following the flight path of the Cannibal and circling above the Red Keep, forming a magnificent display.

“Vermithor, land!”

Viserys, sitting on his dragon with his face flushed, panted as he gave his orders. Vermithor broke away from the group, circled the towering Maegor Holdfast, and slowly descended.

Boom.

The dragon's wings closed, sending a wave of heat. Viserys climbed off the dragon, waved away the advancing Kingsguard, and looked at the stunned nobles. He took two shaky steps and smiled brightly.

"Welcome, lords, to the ceremony. Thank you for coming to the Great Hall. You haven't missed the dragon event of the century."

"Roar!"

As soon as the words fell, the dragons in the sky roared. Viserys slowly closed his eyes, opened his arms, and embraced the glory of the dancing dragons.

Inspired by their king, the nobles looked up and saw the dragons soar. Some, superstitious, suspected that the royal family was trying to awaken the sleeping Fourteen Flames and restore the glory of the Freehold.

Rhaegar stood up straight in his saddle, his voice low as he looked out at the clouds and mist.  
"Cannibal, land!"

In the sunlight, the man and the dragon looked like gods incarnate. The dragons roared in unison, lowering themselves to the ground and choosing a suitable spot to land.

Hoo-hoo!

The Cannibal landed first, sending a wave of heat that blew up the skirts of the noblewomen. Rhaegar did not look away, jumping off the back of the dragon along its jet-black wings.

Syrax landed nearby. Rhaenyra, with her silver hair tied back and wearing a long black dress, hugged two swaddled babies.

"Princess!" Baela ran down from the back of Moondancer and took one of the babies in her arms. Rhaena and Daeron, riding Tessarion, arrived a moment later and took the other baby.

Meanwhile, the Targaryen riders dismounted their dragons one after the other. The elders, Rhaenys and Daemon, and the younger generation of Aegon, Helaena, and Aemond. All the members of the Targaryen royal family were present, and eleven pairs of purple eyes swept the crowd.

Rhaegar and Rhaenyra walked over to Viserys and whispered, "Father."

"Let's go."

Viserys smiled, his eyes filled with indescribable joy, and he took his eldest son's hand. Rhaegar, supporting his father, walked solemnly towards the group of princes and advisers. Rhaenyra held hands with her husband, looking unflinchingly into the eyes of every nobleman who gazed her way.

The nobles respectfully bowed their heads and voluntarily made way. Rhaenys, Daemon, and the other children followed as the father and son, brother and sister, walked forward step by step.

Lyonel announced from the side, "The ceremony of succession is officially held!"

When the royal family reached the front, Erryk and Arryk, the two brothers, stepped forward holding two crowns. They knelt and handed them over.

Viserys glanced sideways. The crowns were the Valyrian steel crown used by the conqueror and the gold crown he had inherited from the Old King. Without hesitation, he took the Valyrian crown, studded with rubies, and handed it to the High Septon, who was already waiting.

The High Septon, pale and trembling, took the crown and said in a quavering voice, "In the name of the Seven, I proclaim..."

He continued with a lengthy blessing, bidding farewell to King Viserys Targaryen I, who was abdicating, and welcoming Rhaegar Targaryen I, who would succeed him.

Rhaegar remained silent as the High Septon anointed him with holy oil. When the moment came to place the crown on his head, Rhaegar drew his sword and gently pushed the High Septon's arm aside. In a calm voice, he said, "There's no need to trouble the Seven. I'll do it myself."

With that, he took the conqueror's crown in one hand. Ignoring the slightly angry looks from the gathered nobles, Rhaegar held the crown above his head. After a brief pause, he placed it on his head.

Silence. Complete silence, as if the air had frozen.

Erryk placed one hand on his chest, pounded it, and shouted, "Welcome, King Rhaegar I of House Targaryen, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms and Protector of the Realm! Take your place!"

In the next moment, a thunderous applause erupted from the nobles, their eyes lighting up with enthusiasm.

"Long live Your Grace!"

"Long live Rhaegar the First!"

The cheers were loud and clear. Rhaegar remained calm, pointed his sword at the throne hall above his head, and spoke in High Valyrian: "Cannibal, Dracarys!"

Boom! Boom! The Cannibal's wings touched the ground, and its enormous body towered over the other dragons. It crawled forward until its head blocked the sunlight from the nobles' heads. Lowering its neck, the dragon aimed its snout at the Iron Throne.

“Roar!”

A jet of dark green Dragonfire shot out, and the Iron Throne began to melt. Before everyone's eyes, the Iron Throne, which had ruled Westeros for over a hundred years, dripped and melted into a pool of molten iron.

Rhaegar looked up, the ruby in his hand releasing a brilliant light, and silently recited the Dragonstone spell.

Zilala...

The red-hot iron water gradually changed shape, cooling and solidifying into a throne with a long staircase. A group of smiths appeared in time, wielding hammers and reshaping the appearance of the Iron Throne.

Rhaegar took Viserys's hand, looked into his complex purple eyes, and whispered, “A Throne is a Throne. Even an Iron Throne shouldn't make it difficult for the person sitting on it.”

Viserys was transfixed, his eyes gradually turning red, and he choked, “My child.”

“You are still the king. I am only ruling in your stead.” Rhaegar gave a confident smile and pointed Truefyre at Daemon and the others standing next to him.

Daemon glanced at his brother and stepped forward. He knelt between his brother and nephew, lowered his head, and said, “Your Grace!”

He didn't know who he was addressing.

Rhaegar smiled down at him, Truefyre resting on his shoulder. He whispered, “Daemon Targaryen, in the name of Rhaegar the First, I name you Prince of Tyrosh and Magister of the Narrow Sea.”

Daemon looked down, then up at his nephew. “Yes, Your Grace.”

Rhaegar helped him to his feet and then proceeded to bestow titles on Aegon and Aemond: Prince of the Stepstones and Warden of the Narrow Sea, Lord of Stonehelm and Warden of the Sea of Dorne.

Finally, his gaze fell on Rhaenyra. Rhaegar took the golden crown from Arryk's hands without a word. Rhaenyra looked back at him, her eyes rippling with emotion. Baela and Rhaena, each holding a swaddled infant, stood closest to the throne, witnessing the golden crown being placed on their foster mother's head.

Rhaegar stepped back and, with each rising step, declared, “I, Rhaegar Targaryen the First, proclaim the coronation ceremony a complete success. House Targaryen is ushering in a new future!”

As soon as he finished speaking, the dragons stretched their necks and roared loudly in unison.

Chapter 497: The Rise of the New Generation

127 AC

Early spring, early morning.

In the towering Red Keep, people bustled about with purpose.

“Brother, hurry up!”

In the courtyard, a little boy with silver hair and purple eyes hid behind a wooden post, waving urgently toward the stables.

“Shh, be quiet.”

Behind the trough in the stable, another boy's head poked out, warning him in a serious tone. He glanced around at the crowd before running to his brother.

As soon as he got close, he punched his younger brother in the stomach with his small fist.

“Ouch!”

The little boy cried out, tears welling up in his eyes.

The older brother glared at him, looking every bit like a little lord, and said sternly, “Aemon, we’re going to the Dragonpit to get a dragon egg for our brother. Don’t mess this up.”

“I won’t, don’t hit me again,” Aemon retorted angrily, wiping away his tears. Despite the pain, he didn’t cry or make a fuss. He was stronger than most children.

Baelon ignored him and scanned the crowded courtyard for a suitable path. He knew exactly what his little brother was like—just like his dragon, a bit of a troublemaker.

Seeing that his older brother was ignoring him, Aemon puffed up his cheeks and marched through the crowd.

“Aemon, don’t let anyone see you,” Baelon hissed, trying to pull him back.

Aemon shook his head and said angrily, “If we’re getting out of the Red Keep, it’s because Father agrees.”

It was just a little trick of their father.

Baelon’s cute face fell at this realization, and he followed his determined little brother in silence. Aemon was right.

The two silver-haired boys walked through the front courtyard, holding hands as they navigated through the adults’ skirts. Remarkably, the two boys looked almost identical. They had the same height, build, and fair complexion.

To tell them apart, one had to look closely at their expressions. The older brother had clear eyes and moved with purpose, while the younger brother’s eyes darted around, full of liveliness and intelligence.

“Drink!”

“Prince, be careful.”

As they passed by the martial arts arena, the clanging sound of metal clashing filled the air. Baelon stopped and turned his head to see a gathering of nobles watching a martial arts performance.

“Let’s go have a look!” Seeing his brother's expression, Aemon dragged him into the crowd without hesitation.

The nobles, noticing the two little ones, humbly made way for them.

In the center of the crowd, two figures were dueling.

Criston Cole, dressed in white cotton armor and wielding a hammer, smiled as he swung his weapon with sharp precision. His opponent was a young man with a black eye patch and silver hair.

The duel quickly turned fierce. Cole used a familiar move to break his opponent's shield, gradually reducing his mobility.

Swish!

The young man moved swiftly, resisting the hammer twice, then discarding the broken shield and dancing with his sword. In a blink, Cole swung his hammer, but he couldn’t dodge in time. The young man's eyes were sharp, his sword pointed directly at Cole's neck.

Cole made a slight movement, and a trickle of blood oozed out.

“Oh, Uncle Aemond has won!” Aemon clapped his hands and cheered.

Baelon tugged his brother away, smiling, “Okay, let’s go to the Dragonpit.”

The two children, small and nimble, quickly slipped out of the crowd.

In the middle of the arena, Cole looked helpless. He dropped his flail and panted, “Well done, Prince. You’ll win the tournament soon.”

Aemond’s eyes were cold as he lightly withdrew his blade. “I don’t care about any tournament,” he said indifferently.

Turning his head, he noticed the retreating backs of the two boys, smiling and frowning at the same time. “My dear nephews have run away again.”

Cole was even more helpless, unable to say anything.

In the blink of an eye, six years had passed, and the Prince had grown up at a tremendous rate. He could no longer keep up with the prince in martial arts or intellect.

Clang!

Aemond casually dropped his one-handed sword and turned to walk toward Maegor’s Holdfast. “I’m going to find my brother. I heard that Rhaenyra has given birth again.”

...

On the Road

The two children successfully escaped the Red Keep and boarded a wheeled carriage driven by the Kingsguard.

Ser Steffon, clad in a black robe, patiently advised, “The ride will be fast, so the two little Princes should sit tight.”

“Don’t worry, Ser,” Baelon assured him.

“Full speed ahead. My whip is hungry,” Aemon declared eagerly.

Steffon sighed but had no choice. He drove the horses forward at a brisk pace.

Inside the carriage, the two boys exchanged a glance.

Baelon watched as his brother fumbled with something in his pants and couldn't help but ask, “How did you manage to steal that?”

Aemon raised his little face, looking for praise. In his chubby hand, he held a long black whip. The handle was made of Valyrian steel, engraved with strange inscriptions. It was a dragon whip used to herd dragons.

Baelon snatched the whip from him and asked, “You stole the dragon whip from our father? This is a rare treasure. How did you manage to do it?”

Aemon crossed his arms proudly. “Mother was in labor, and Father was too busy to pay attention to us. So, I took it.”

“Awesome!” Baelon exclaimed, excitedly hugging the dragon whip to his chest. He decided to confiscate it immediately.

...

#### The Princess's Bedroom

In the familiar layout, several experienced maids gathered around a birthing chair. Rhaenyra lay in the arms of a plump maid, covered in sweat, gritting her teeth and gathering her strength. In front of her, the maids held basins of water and wrung out towels.

The scene shifts to the corridor outside the bedroom. Rhaegar hunched over, his head down, his back against the wall, looking like a child who had made a mistake. Six years later, the boy had become a young man. Rhaegar's face was more handsome than ever, his tall and slender figure exuding a noble air of superiority. His silver hair naturally fell over his shoulders, and his purple eyes were clear and slightly sad. Servants passing by, male or female, would steal a glance at His Grace.

“Ahem.”

A few light coughs interrupted his thoughts. Rhaegar turned his head and asked, confused, “Father, what's wrong?”

Closer to the door, Viserys sat in a wheelchair, his legs covered by a blanket. After stepping down, he had gradually relaxed. Time had been kind to the former king. Viserys, who had put on weight and had a bit of a receding hairline, said reassuringly, “Don't worry, Rhaenyra will be fine. This isn't her first time giving birth.”

He leaned forward, looking past his eldest son to see a little one. Rhaegar forced a smile and followed his father's line of sight. A baby boy in a little outfit sat on the ground, staring blankly at the cracks in the brickwork. The baby boy looked to be about two or three years old. He had short platinum hair, violet blue eyes, and a pale, chubby face. At this moment, the little one was sitting on the ground, his short legs apart, holding a dark red dragon egg in his arms.

Rhaegar shook his head and sighed, then bent down to gently stroke his son's head. "Maekar, why aren't you playing with your brothers?"

Maekar, born in the summer of 124 AC, was the third child and third son of Rhaenyra and Rhaegar. He had a different appearance from his parents and two older brothers, with slightly different hair and eye colors.

Maekar lowered his head, his little body like a ball, his delicate face tinged with sadness, his chin resting on the dragon egg. Hearing his father's question, the little one tilted his head and said honestly, "They think I'm stupid and don't want to play with me."

Rhaegar was speechless, silently comforting his youngest son. "They have a mission, and you're still too young."

"Oh." Maekar turned his head back and continued to stare at the brick gap.

Rhaegar stood up helplessly and gave his father a look of regret. The younger son was good in every way, except that he was a bit of a loner. He clearly wanted to be part of his two older brothers but was always too timid to join in.

Viserys laughed. "There's going to be another little one in the house soon, and Maekar will have someone to play with."

Just then, a scream came from the bedroom.

"Ah!"

The three of them twitched their ears and shuddered at the sound. Rhaegar lowered his head again and prayed silently for everything to be all right. Maekar closed his eyes, hugged the egg, and whispered, "A sister, a sister."

Rhaegar kicked him lightly on the butt and glared at him. "You ungrateful little brat, make a wish outside the delivery room."

"Ahhh!" Suddenly, another scream rang out, even more piercing than the last. Then, a child's cry was heard.

"Waa waa waa..." There was a flurry of activity in the bedroom, and the fat maid's honest voice could be heard through the door.

"Great, it's a healthy girl."

Outside the door, the three of them heaved a sigh of relief, and the weight on their hearts lifted. Rhaegar's forehead broke out in a cold sweat, and a smile reappeared on his face.

Maekar exclaimed, "It's a sister, it's a sister."

Bang! Another light kick.

...

The Boardroom.

Creak.

The door opened, revealing a spacious room with floor-to-ceiling windows offering a wide view. A desk was placed in front of the window, and sunlight bathed the documents on the desk.

Purr...

Two young people sat behind the desk. A beautiful maiden with silver-gold curls, dressed in a beige skirt, leaned back in her chair, her eyes slightly closed, face flushed from the sun, and head resting against the chair. She was dozing off.

Beside her, a young man with messy silver hair lay on his back, arms stretched out in front of him, sleeping soundly. The siblings had a pile of papers in front of them, and the breeze from the window rustled the pages.

Creak! Creak!

Aemond stood in the doorway, gritting his teeth and staring at the scene, his clenched fists making a loud cracking sound. He mumbled a few words to himself and then walked over to the two with heavy footsteps.

Three chairs were behind the desk. The siblings each occupied one, leaving an empty seat in the middle. Aemond didn't bother asking permission and sat down. He moved the papers in front of his sister Helaena and began to read them with a serious expression.

Since Rhaegar ascended the throne, he had reclaimed most of the power from the Small Council. The advantage was increased efficiency, but the downside was dealing with every little detail. His philosophy was clear: "If I'm not comfortable, no one else should be either."

After a year in office, Rhaegar had dragged his three younger siblings into the council hall to help him read petitions. The kingdom belonged to the entire Targaryen family, and he couldn't suffer alone. They should all experience what it was like to be a king.

"Ohh~"

Helaena opened her eyes and looked around in confusion as she heard the sound of rapid writing. At that moment, the Master of Coin, Lyman, finished some paperwork and walked past the siblings without a word.

Aemond continued writing with his quill and, without looking up, asked, "Lord Lyman, what's the latest news?"

Lyman, a bit surprised, responded slowly, "Prince, shouldn't you ask Tormund for information?" He was not the Master of Whisperers, after all.

Aemond paused for a moment, his one eye sharp as a knife. "Tormund reports directly to the king and should not exceed his authority." Returning to his original question, he asked, "What news from Driftmark? Is Daeron doing well there?"

"Of course. Prince Daeron is the cupbearer of the Sea Snake and accompanies him on every voyage," Lyman replied, satisfied with his answer. "As for Driftmark, I heard there was some trouble, apparently over the succession."

"Really? I think it's more than that." Aemond, with a cold face, took a document from the file and deliberately slapped it on Aegon's ear.

Bang!

Aegon woke up instantly, panicking and wiping his mouth for saliva. "What's wrong? Is Rhaegar here?"

The child was terrified.

Aemond gave him a disdainful glance and moved the document in front of Lyman, revealing the side with the writing. Lyman bent down to read it, squinting his eyes.

The document was from House Velaryon on Driftmark. The sender was not Corlys, the Sea Snake, but one of his nephews. There were five handprints on the letter, one for each Velaryon.

The content read:

"The House Velaryon has a direct male line of succession, and the female heir is not in line with tradition. We hope that Rhaegar Targaryen I will make a decision."

At the end of the letter, it specifically mentioned Rhaegar's succession as being superior to that of his predecessor, Rhaenyra.

Such words were both bold and presumptuous.

Helaena's eyes were vacant as she muttered, "Is the Sea Snake in trouble?"

Chapter 498: Hatchlings and Young Dragons

At that moment, a chariot rumbled out of Silk Street and up the steep incline of Rhaenys' Hill to the grand entrance of the Dragonpit.

"Aemon, quickly, out of the chariot now!"

As the chariot stopped in the square, Baelon flung open the door and leapt out with the urgency of a discharged cannonball.

"Prince, you-"

Steffon's frown deepened, turning into a visible sign of concern. His features, already marked by early maturity, took on a sharper edge of distress.

"Ser, I'll catch up later."

Without waiting, Aemon jumped from the chariot, his small legs hitting the ground with a thud.

Steffon reached out to stop him, but his hand paused mid-air, and his voice carried a tint of resignation. "Alright, see you later."

The young princes, one chasing the other, were brimming with youthful exuberance.

Erryk had always remarked how children were such easy charges, saying "Your Grace was so well-mannered in his youth..."

The high-spirited pair, both plump and childlike, disappeared into the depths of the Dragonpit.

Over the years, the Dragonpit had undergone significant transformations.

The bronze gates now stood permanently open, and the solid roof had been replaced by an open framework that resembled the vast scale of a coliseum.

This renovation was designed to give the dragons the freedom to fly unhindered.

With the roof no longer a barrier, dragons could exit the Dragonpit whenever they wished, alleviating concerns about intruders or obstacles that might trap them within.

Now, the Dragonpit glowed under the illumination, its black stone floor reflecting like obsidian.

Baelon looked up, awe-struck, at the newly installed roof—a lattice of iron chains sprawling like a spiderweb across the sky.

These chains were both a constraint and a precaution, intended to prevent dragons from escaping and wreaking havoc upon King's Landing.

During periods of calm, they lay across the former stone ceiling, ready to be deployed.

From above, a piercing roar echoed, tinged with astonishment.

Baelon turned just in time to see a young green dragon, its wings a vibrant contrast against the ironwork.

The dragon struggled on the iron bridge, its wings flapping desperately like a butterfly ensnared.

Aemon darted toward it, calling out with glee, "Trickster, come here!"

Without hesitation, the dragon plunged down the long bridge like a green comet.

Watching from afar, Baelon couldn't shake the feeling that the dragon's flight was dangerously controlled, its wings snapping shut as if in a final, desperate dive.

A cloud of dust erupted as the dragon crashed to the stone floor, its long tail twitching in distress.

"Tsk, tsk."

Shaking his head, Baelon turned away, a mixture of concern and dismay on his face.

A simple-minded dragon, indeed.

His father had speculated that the dragon's long time in the eggshell might have dulled its wits.

Aemon, brimming with delight despite the choking dust, seized the young dragon by the neck and nuzzled his face against its scaled head. "Trickster, did you miss me?"

"Roar!"

The green dragon, Trickster, feigned death with its tongue lolling out, then rolled over and scrambled to its feet.

Aemon's grin widened as he clambered onto Trickster's back. "You rascal, take me for a ride!"

"Roar?"

Trickster shook its head vigorously, trotting along slowly instead of taking flight, clearly reluctant.

Annoyed, Aemon gave the dragon a playful smack on the back.

Both the boy and the dragon were of similar age, born only a day apart, and were still under six years old. Trickster, having spent its life in the Dragonpit, was as large as a fine war horse and perfectly capable of carrying a child through the air.

The pair, both spirited and playful, engaged in a friendly tussle.

Baelon, observing, couldn't help but doubt his brother's intelligence for a moment.

An elderly Dragonkeeper approached, his face lined with age and caution. "Prince, how may I assist you?"

With a stern expression, Baelon replied in High Valyrian, his pronunciation precise and his fluency evident, "My mother is giving birth. I'm here to choose an egg for my brother."

The old Dragonkeeper nodded and, leaning on his walking stick, motioned toward the greenhouse. "Follow me."

Baelon, carrying himself with the dignity of a young lord, followed the Dragonkeeper through the tunnel leading to the greenhouse, while other Dragonkeepers kept a watchful eye.

As they walked, Baelon's attention was drawn to a particularly dark dragon pit. Its narrow, elongated shape was obscured by shadows, making it seem even more mysterious.

Ssss~

A faint light flickered within the darkness, accompanied by a low, ominous sound.

Intrigued, Baelon's curiosity was piqued, and he stared intently as the light grew brighter.

Suddenly, an indistinct shape emerged from the darkness, and a pair of large, menacing amber eyes opened wide.

Crashing!

Chains rattled violently as a black, dragon-like figure surged forward.

"Roar!"

The roar was fierce and brutal, but the dragon was still restrained by its chains, only able to spew a cloud of black smoke and Dragonfire into the air.

"Wow!"

Baelon's eyes widened in astonishment at the sudden spectacle.

"Step back and be quiet!"

The old Dragonkeeper's face darkened with anger. He stood protectively in front of the young prince, banging his cane on the ground and shouting toward the dragon pit.

Crack!

The chains groaned as the dragon retreated into the cave, vanishing from view.

The old Dragonkeeper sighed with relief and turned to Baelon. "Remember, do not approach the dragon pit without permission."

Baelon hesitated. "It didn't seem hostile, though."

The old Dragonkeeper's expression remained serious. "Always follow the rules. Your Grace will arrange for you to select a young dragon to tame."

Baelon scratched his head thoughtfully as the old Dragonkeeper led the way.

The old Dragonkeeper added muttering, "Just like your brother."

...

Red Keep, Princess's Bedroom.

The newborn's cries filled the room, their piercing clarity a testament to new life.

In the hallway, Rhaegar, his father, and his son exchanged smiles of shared joy.

Creak

As Rhaegar paced nervously, a maid with a sweaty brow pushed open the door.

"How is it?" Rhaegar blurted out, his excitement barely contained.

The maid, catching her breath, replied, "The Princess wishes to see you."

Rhaegar's face lit up with a smile as he swiftly entered the room.

Inside, the maids worked diligently, restoring order to the room after the birthing. The urgency had faded, and Rhaegar lifted the bead curtain to find Rhaenyra resting on the birthing chair, holding their newborn.

"You're here," Rhaenyra said, her voice soft but laced with joy.

Rhaegar returned the smile and approached, kneeling beside the chair. He gently brushed the sweat-drenched hair from Rhaenyra's face. "Are you alright?"

"Yes, everything went smoothly," she assured him with a weak but genuine smile, then presented the swaddled baby with a hint of pride. "Look, it's a girl."

Rhaegar leaned in to inspect the baby, her tiny, pristine face just visible. But his focus was more on Rhaenyra. His hand grazed her damp, sweat-soaked gown, and he could feel the heat radiating from her.

"What a beautiful girl, a noble little princess," he praised sincerely, enveloping Rhaenyra in a tender embrace as he gently cradled both mother and daughter.

Rhaenyra's eyes sparkled as she rested her cheek on his shoulder. "Don't worry, I'm happy and it was worth every moment."

Without hesitation, Rhaegar kissed her sweaty forehead, a gesture of deep affection.

Rhaenyra's eyelashes fluttered, and in that instant, the pain of childbirth seemed to vanish.

Peck!

She responded with a soft kiss on his lips.

Rhaegar, momentarily taken aback, then smiled warmly. "Do you want me to name her?"

"Of course," Rhaenyra said, raising her chin proudly.

“Then I suppose I’ll need to come up with a fitting name,” Rhaegar declared, assuming the role of the namer with a playful air. He pondered dramatically, occasionally lifting the swaddling cloth to gaze at the baby’s features.

Time passed, and Rhaenyra’s anticipation grew, her face reflecting her impatience.

Rhaegar finally announced, with a touch of grandiosity, “Visenya, named after the greatest female warrior in our family.”

“Good!” Rhaenyra’s eyes sparkled with excitement. She was eager to adopt the name for their daughter.

Rhaegar grinned.

But as her initial joy faded, Rhaenyra realized Rhaegar’s playful intent and pouted. “I’ve always wanted a girl, why did you take so long to name her?” She turned away, clutching the swaddling clothes with mock sulkiness.

Rhaegar, amused, gently played with the baby’s soft cheeks.

He glanced at her features: silver-blond hair at the roots and tightly shut eyes.

As expected, their daughter would grow to embody the Targaryen beauty—long silver-blond hair and violet eyes, a true reflection of mother.

Creak!

The door swung open, disrupting the intimate moment shared by the family of three.

“Father, we’re back!”

Aemon burst into the room, his excitement palpable.

“Shh! Don’t disturb Mother and the baby’s rest,” Baelon admonished, his tone sharp. He carried a stove-shaped incubator, and behind him, Viserys, in a wheelchair, and Maekar, followed.

Viserys rubbed his forehead wearily. “I couldn’t keep the little ones away.”

“It’s alright,” Rhaegar said, his smile not quite reaching his eyes. “They’re just enthusiastic.”

Aemon shrank slightly, sensing his father’s displeasure.

Baelon, more composed, approached and opened the incubator to reveal a steaming green dragon egg. His face was alight with anticipation. “We selected this dragon egg for our new sibling.”

“Oh?” Rhaenyra, though exhausted, propped herself up to take a look. Seeing the familiar dragon egg, she praised, “Very good, that’s a splendid choice.”

Baelon nodded earnestly. “I searched for a long time to find this one. I’m sure our brother will love it.”

“Actually...” Rhaenyra started, trying to correct her eldest son’s assumption.

At that moment, Maekar, who had been daydreaming, said calmly, "It's a sister, not a brother."

"A sister?" Baelon's face fell as he glanced down at the baby in the swaddling clothes.

Aemon's reaction was even more dramatic. His face mirrored Baelon's disappointment, and he exclaimed, "It's a sister!?"

They had been expecting a brother, and Aemon, in particular, had been eagerly anticipating a new baby brother. Maekar's presence didn't count in his expectations.

Maekar's eyes widened as he fixed his gaze on Aemon. "It's a sister."

Aemon, visibly shaken, quickly replied, "Alright, alright, it's a sister."

Maekar, satisfied, settled back in his chair, eager to see what his new sister looked like.

The youngest had clearly been busy, managing to procure a basket, place the dark red dragon egg inside, and cover it with a blanket borrowed from their grandfather.

As the siblings finished admiring the newborn Visenya, Rhaegar announced firmly, "Alright, everyone out."

"We haven't seen enough yet," Aemon protested, his little pout visible.

Bang!

Rhaegar swiftly kicked him out, grabbing him by the hair and tossing him out of the room. "Get out now! If you're not gone in three seconds, you'll all be reporting to Grand Maester Munkun."

Even Maekar, who had been silent, scrambled to leave, clutching his basket. As he passed his grandfather, he carefully placed the blanket back over his cold legs.

Viserys, feeling exhausted, handed the swaddling clothes to Rhaegar. "I'm tired too. I'll rest while you take care of things."

"Father, I didn't mean for you to..." Rhaegar began, but his father's exhaustion was evident.

"Stay and look after Rhaenyra," Viserys said, his fatigue apparent from the ordeal of his daughter's labor.

Rhaegar acquiesced, and Erryk helped his father back to his room. Since his abdication, Viserys had been residing in Harrenhal for its more favorable climate and only occasionally visited King's Landing. The underground lava at the Isle of Faces had been increasing, enhancing the hot springs' restorative effects.

Bang!

The door closed behind them, and Rhaegar turned back to find Rhaenyra cradling the baby and humming a lullaby. She glanced at him sideways, and they exchanged warm smiles.

#### Chapter 499: Quarreling Between Brother and Sister

Evening fell over the Council Hall, casting a warm glow across the room. Aemond's face remained impassive as he sifted through a mountain of petitions on his desk, his long hair shimmering like silver-gold in the setting sun.

On either side of him, his siblings went about their tasks. Helaena, resting her chin on her hand, idly toyed with a sapphire, her gaze occasionally drifting to the closed door. The sight only deepened her boredom.

Aegon, sprawled comfortably in a chair at the desk, was more interested in entertaining himself than in the matters at hand. When the maid arrived with dinner, Aegon seized her hand and began a flirtatious conversation. "Why isn't there any veal? Is the Red Keep so impoverished?"

The maid offered no response, her discomfort evident. Aemond, accustomed to Aegon's antics, chose to ignore the interruption.

Helaena, looking exasperated, waved the maid away with a dismissive gesture. "Thank you, Princess."

The maid, visibly relieved, hurriedly retreated, escaping Aegon's unwelcome advances. Just then, the door burst open, and Rhaegar's soft voice cut through the air. "Slow down."

Rhaegar, guiding Rhaenyra into the room, supported her as she entered, cradling a swaddled baby. She had clearly made an effort to present herself well, her blue dress and fresh appearance a stark contrast to the morning's fatigue.

The maid, caught off guard by Rhaegar's presence, scurried out of the room, her head bowed. Rhaegar's gaze narrowed dangerously at Aegon's slovenly demeanor, causing Aegon to stiffen as if doused in cold water. He quickly stood, offering his seat. "Rhaenyra has just given birth. Why is she out and about?"

Rhaegar's expression softened slightly as he dismissed Aegon's concern. "The servants insisted, so I came to see you."

Helaena stepped forward to assist Rhaenyra, her tone gentle. "Sit down quickly."

Rhaenyra settled into the chair, adjusting the swaddling cloth with a calm smile. "It's fine. The Maester said walking after childbirth aids recovery."

As she spoke, her eyes briefly scanned the cluttered desk. Aemond, pausing his writing, glanced at his siblings and slowly returned the sapphire to its place in his eye socket.

"Is everything going well?" Aemond asked softly, his gaze flickering to the tiny swaddled baby in Rhaenyra's arms.

Rhaenyra smiled warmly. "It's fine. It's a girl."

Aegon leaned forward eagerly, peering at the baby's face. With a flourish, he produced a ruby necklace, his pride evident. "A gift for my niece on her birth. A specialty from Volantis."

"Thank you," Rhaenyra said, placing the necklace gently in the swaddling clothes. "I'll make sure she gets it."

"It's nothing," Aegon said, puffing out his chest with a show of wealth, then turned to wink provocatively at Aemond.

Aemond's disdain was palpable as he looked away, dismissing his brother's display. The Stepstones, a lucrative hub with significant passage fees, had earned him considerable profit. With

the aid of Myr and Lys, Aegon had expanded the docks on Bloodstone and Grey Gallows to attract more ships and increased his revenue by setting up brothels.

Rhaegar, uninterested in the sibling rivalry, addressed the issue at hand. "The Stepstones will see a 15% increase in taxes this year, on top of the existing 30%."

Aegon's eyes widened in shock. "30% isn't enough. I'm barely making ends meet."

Rhaegar's lips curled into a smirk. "Myr taxes at 45%, and Lys at 50%. Do you have an issue with that?"

The network of shipping routes connecting the Stepstones, the Sea of Dorne, and the Summer Sea had bolstered the royal family's wealth. Aegon considered protesting but thought better of it, his thoughts drifting to the wine cellars at the Twins. He gritted his teeth and conceded, "Fine, but just this once."

Rhaegar's sly look conveyed his satisfaction. Helaena interjected calmly, "The Stepstones cannot exceed 65% in taxes. The Small Council has already deliberated on this."

Aegon's face fell. His heart ached at the thought of diminishing wealth. He sulkily retreated to the balcony, staring at the sky as he mourned his impending losses.

Rhaegar, shifting focus, rested his hand on the chair and turned to Aemond. "What's the issue that needs addressing?"

As he spoke, Rhaegar's demeanor became authoritative. Rhaenyra, with Helaena by her side, glanced at the baby, momentarily distracted.

Aegon, unable to contribute to the discussion, continued to brood on the balcony.

Aemond handed over a petition that had been lying on the floor. "There's news from Driftmark about the succession of the Sea Snake."

Rhaegar furrowed his brow in thought. "Isn't he out patrolling the Disputed Lands?"

Volantis had frequently entered the Disputed Lands under the guise of an ally, secretly deploying stowaways and pirates. The Sea Snake, as the Lys Admiral of the Navy, was responsible for countering such threats.

Aemond's gaze, intense and unyielding, settled on Rhaenyra. "You should see it for yourself. The sender is the Sea Snake's nephew."

Rhaenyra's lips tightened. "It's about inheritance again. The Velaryons never seem to be satisfied."

Rhaegar, taking the letter with a frown, scanned it with evident displeasure. "Malentine Velaryon—how many times has he caused trouble?"

Despite being a nephew to the Sea Snake, Marlentine was surprisingly immature and persistent for his age.

Aemond leaned back in his chair, crossing his legs with a nonchalant air. "What should we do? Just ignore him?"

Rhaegar's glance was indifferent as he responded, "Send a message to Aunt Rhaenys. I'll take the children to visit her on Driftmark in a few days."

Some issues, he reasoned, would resolve themselves with time.

Aemond nodded and turned his attention to Rhaenyra, who was calming the children. "Is she coming along?"

Rhaenyra frowned, but she spoke for Rhaegar. "Can't I go?"

"As you wish." Aemond shrugged casually, his tone dismissive.

Rhaenyra handed the swaddling clothes to Helaena, her gaze sharp. "If you're so concerned about me, you should have married Cassandra earlier and fulfilled the marriage alliance."

"I have my own plans. Storm's End will be mine sooner or later," Aemond retorted, his tone icy.

Aegon looked on in surprise, his eyes darting around as if he were watching a performance.

It was no secret that Rhaenyra and Aemond did not get along. Their antagonistic relationship was well-known; Rhaenyra's appearances were often followed by Aemond's absence, and he was rarely seen in public.

Rhaenyra's thoughts briefly turned to Alicent, locked away in the chapel at Harrenhal. She opened her mouth to retort but was cut off by Rhaegar.

"Let's focus on Visenya first," Rhaegar said, placing a hand on Rhaenyra's shoulder and speaking softly, though his voice carried through the hall. "Children grow up and deserve respect."

Rhaenyra clenched her teeth, struggling to suppress her anger. Rhaegar's soothing gesture was a stark contrast to his words. He then turned his attention to Aemond with a calm but firm tone.

"Rhaenyra is right. You've already completed the Rite of Manhood. Do you still require a tournament to prove yourself?"

Under Rhaegar's unwavering gaze, Aemond felt like a thorn in his side. He awkwardly adjusted his posture, dropping his legs and sitting up straight.

Aegon, Helaena, and the others were his closest blood relatives, but Rhaegar, the eldest brother, earned his admiration and respect. Rhaenyra, on the other hand, had never been close to him.

Rhaegar's cold stare softened somewhat, but he remained firm. The strained relationship between Rhaenyra and Aemond had worsened three years ago when Rhaenyra proposed joint funding for a dock at Aegon's Stepstones, a move that further strained their relations.

Stonehelm, which had its own dock and was less important than the Stepstones, had no need for such an investment.

Rhaegar sighed, his tone soft. "You really should think about marrying Cassandra. My father has been urging me to make that match for some time."

Aemond turned his head sharply. "Then you should take care of the one behind me. He's been married for years and hasn't fathered a single child."

Aegon, taken aback, protested, "Now you!"

"Quiet," Rhaegar snapped, his disgust evident. "I already have six children, including Visenya. Can't you do any better?"

"Hmph!" Aegon's indignation was obvious.

Rhaenyra glanced at Rhaegar before focusing on soothing her daughter. Helaena, speaking softly, added, "Seven."

Rhaegar's eyes widened in surprise. Helaena gently took her niece's hand, her eyes twinkling with affection.

Rhaenyra's expression was a mix of complexity and resignation.

Aemond, sensing the tension, shifted the subject. "After our visit to Driftmark, I'll return to Storm's End to address this matter."

"You should have done that long ago," Aegon grumbled, clearly displeased.

Rhaegar's eyes flashed with a hint of determination. "Prepare yourselves. The Sea Snake will be back soon."

With that, the meeting drew to a close, and they left the room.

...

Seven days later, Blackwater Bay.

"Roar!"

A formation of dragons soared gracefully above the vast expanse of the sea. Leading the pack was the formidable Cannibal, its jet-black wings casting a sweeping shadow over the water. Its massive, serpentine body glided effortlessly, dominating the sky.

On either side of the Cannibal flew two dragons with gleaming golden scales. Each was over 30 meters long, their impressive size a mere fraction of the Cannibal's grandeur.

The azure sky was dotted with fluffy white clouds, creating a stunning backdrop for the aerial display.

Roar!

From the clouds emerged a lean, agile dragon, its slimy, brown scales gleaming in the sunlight. The Mud Dragon darted through the air with quick, sharp movements, its brown wings stirring up the salty sea breeze below.

Whoosh!

Above the clouds, a dragon with light blue scales sailed through the air with an air of effortless grace. Its enormous size dwarfed the Mud Dragon as it glided leisurely, the second largest of the group, trailing only behind the mighty Cannibal, which measured over 100 meters long.

Beneath this impressive aerial display, a three-masted sailing ship with red dragon flags fluttering from its masts drifted in the wind. The ship's crew, accustomed to the royal entourage, kept a respectful distance from the deck, busy with their tasks but mindful of the dragons' presence.

Since Your Grace ascended the throne, the presence of dragons had become a constant and dramatic feature of royal excursions.

...

Driftmark.

In the harbor of Hull, several dragons flew overhead, heading for High Tide.

The royal ship docked and was first greeted by the Kingsguard, who disembarked with disciplined efficiency.

Whoo~

At that moment, a deep, resonant horn sounded, echoing through the harbor.

Outside the harbor, a majestic and battle-scarred warship with a seahorse flag entered the scene, moving slowly but with undeniable authority.

“It’s the Sea Snake!”

"This is the Lord's ship! Hurry, everyone!"

The arrival of the warship caused an immediate stir among the port's residents. Patrol soldiers rushed to the scene, drawn by the sight of the Lord's personal ship, which was anything but ordinary.

The ship's planks were darkened with grime, and the flag appeared scorched, evidence of a recent conflict. From a distance, the mingled scents of blood and smoke permeated the air.

Chapter 500: Every Family Has Its Own Difficult Experiences

High Tide.

The castle forecourt, flanked by a few ancient, gnarled trees, was strewn with a carpet of dead, yellow leaves. The scene had an air of somberness and desolation.

Rhaegar scanned the castle grounds, his eyes searching for a familiar face.

The gate creaked open, and several figures with silver hair emerged, full of enthusiasm.

Daeron, running ahead, threw his arms wide with a joyful shout. “Brother, you’ve finally arrived!”

“Your Grace!” came the warm response from Baela and Rhaena, who trailed slightly behind. They offered cheerful curtsies, their smiles genuine.

Rhaegar clapped his youngest brother on the back with a hearty thud. “Not bad, Daeron. You’ve grown quite strong.”

“I train a lot with Lord Sea Snake,” Daeron replied, his voice deepening with the authority befitting his royal status.

“There’s always room for improvement,” Rhaegar said with a smile, his eyes twinkling as he took in the sight of his youngest brother, whom he had guided with great care.

At 12 years old, Daeron had already developed into a young teenager, well-read and diligent in his studies. Rhaegar, mindful of avoiding the fate of Vaegon the Dragonless, had arranged for Daeron to

serve as a cupbearer on Driftmark at the Sea Snake's request earlier in the year. The Sea Snake, a seasoned veteran of the seas, had trained Daeron rigorously.

Aegon and Aemond approached, exchanging updates on each other's well-being, while Rhaenyra introduced her adopted daughters for the first time.

"Is this the little sister mentioned in the letter?" Baela asked, her curiosity piqued as she gently poked the swaddling clothes, her finger brushing the baby's tiny face.

"Ooooooh~" The little one, Visenya, stirred slightly in her sleep, her head turning away in mild irritation.

"May I hold her?" Rhaena asked, her voice filled with affection as she eagerly reached out.

Rhaenyra, observing her thoughtful foster daughters, offered a warm smile and gently instructed, "Be careful not to wake her."

Her three sons, including Maekar, had been accustomed to flying with her on the back of a dragon, their laughter filling the air. But her daughter was different. The dragon's back served as a cradle, and Visenya slept soundly, undisturbed by the flight.

After exchanging pleasantries, Daeron took the lead, guiding them past the guards with a sense of urgency. "Aunt is waiting for us. Please, come in."

...

## Hall of Nine

When the royal party arrived, it was already well past the hour. Having dismounted their dragons, they had changed into clean, fresh attire, free of any odor.

Inside the Hall of Nine, Sea Snake was reclining sideways on the driftwood throne, his chest bare. The Maester was carefully removing the gauze, revealing a gruesome sight.

Rhaegar's gaze was drawn to the gauze, stained with blood and pus. Sea Snake's face, as dark as pitch, turned towards the entrance as he noticed the visitors. His thick lips were pale, and his expression was one of strained welcome.

"Your Grace!" Sea Snake attempted to rise and salute but was clearly in too much pain.

"Corlys," Rhaenys interjected, stepping forward to gently restrain her husband. "You shouldn't exert yourself."

"I'm not that fragile," Sea Snake replied in a dry, strained voice as he struggled to stand.

Rhaegar, watching the scene with a sideways glance, remained impassive.

"Your presence has honored High Tide, Your Grace," Sea Snake managed as he dropped to one knee, his head bowed in submission.

From his elevated position, Rhaegar could see the extent of Sea Snake's injuries: a deep, gaping wound stretching from his left shoulder to his right lower abdomen, with ribs just barely visible beneath the torn flesh. The rest of his body bore numerous smaller scars.

Rhaegar's heart tightened with concern. He bent down to assist Sea Snake, his voice laced with worry. "How did you come by such severe injuries? Were you not patrolling the Disputed Lands?"

Sea Snake's eyes, hard as stones, flashed with anger. "It was a deliberate ambush by pirates from Volantis, allied with the slave-trading fleet from Slaver's Bay."

Rhaegar's brow furrowed as he processed this information. "So the remnants of the Triarchy are involved, working with Volantis. They must have ulterior motives."

Aemond, his hand resting on the hilt of his sword, spoke with a chilling calm. "The shipping lanes in the Disputed Lands are becoming increasingly contested. Ships from Volantis and Slaver's Bay will have to pay tolls, and we may face fewer resource wars."

"It is better to avoid unnecessary conflict," Aegon added, his voice rising slightly. "We still owe a debt to the Iron Vault. A war would set our economy back a decade."

As someone who had run the Stepstones for years, Aegon was well aware of the financial implications.

Aemond dismissed Aegon's concerns with a wave of his hand. "They're just a bunch of opportunists. Sooner or later, they'll have to face consequences."

Rhaegar intervened, raising a hand to quell the bickering. "Let us first hear Lord Corlys' perspective. He's the one directly facing these threats."

Sea Snake, visibly weakened but still rational, nodded in agreement. "I agree with Prince Aemond. They must be taught a lesson."

Aemond puffed out his chest, brimming with confidence. "Give me a fleet and Sheepstealer, and I'll burn their forces to the ground."

Having fought alongside his dragon for years, Aemond's combat prowess was on par with Rhaegar, Daemon, and other top-tier dragonlords.

Rhaegar did not lift his gaze, but addressed the matter at hand with a hint of weariness. "There will be an opportunity to act. There is no need to rush."

He had long considered the wild dragons of the Smoking Sea, but had been restrained by the realities of his position. As king, he understood the gravity of waging war.

The treasury is empty!

Braavos, Pentos, and other Free Cities are closely watching House Targaryen, wary of the potential for a resurgence of another Freehold Empire. Targaryen's influence is spreading too thinly, causing them to become mired in the Disputed Lands, the critical shipping route between the East and West continents of Essos. Engaging in war would invite numerous unforeseen conflicts.

Even with the abundance of dragons in the region, defending the Free Cities is a constant challenge. The foundations laid through years of effort must not be jeopardized by enemy sneak attacks or destruction. It's essential to choose the right moment to strike.

For now, Rhaegar remains steadfast and cautious.

With a gesture of polite concern, Rhaegar helped Sea Snake back to his driftwood throne. Sea Snake's movements were stiff, his face contorted in pain as the Maester quickly applied medicine and bandages.

Rhaegar asked, "Lord Corlys, do you understand the purpose of my visit?"

Sea Snake grimaced, his face dark with frustration. "There are some reckless individuals among my kin. I must address them first."

Rhaenys, rolling her eyes, withdrew her veil and added, "Several of your nephews are engaged in clandestine dealings while you're away."

"I will address it in detail," Sea Snake replied, his helplessness evident in his response to his wife.

Rhaenys shook her head, clearly displeased.

Understanding that a family meeting was approaching, Rhaegar decided it was best to take his leave. "Please concentrate on your recovery. We'll take a tour of the island in the meantime."

Such is the nature of noble houses. Sea Snake, as the head of the houses, needed to talk with his family to devise a suitable plan for dealing with the situation. The importance of his nephews in the direct line made this necessary.

Rhaegar was aware of this and refrained from intervening prematurely. Once the Sea Snake and his nephews had settled their affairs, Rhaegar would take further action. His current visit to Driftmark was primarily a deterrent.

With Sea Snake still receiving treatment, it was inconvenient prolonging his stay, "I appreciate Your Grace for the trip, please look forward to Prince Daeron showing you around Hull and Spicetown."

Rhaegar, with nothing to lose, nodded politely to Rhaenys.

Rhaenys inquired with genuine concern, "I heard Rhaenyra went into labor. Meleys still has one of her dragon eggs from her last clutch. Shall I place it in the newborn's cradle?"

Rhaegar politely declined, "There is no need. Baelon and Aemon have already chosen a green dragon egg from Syrax's clutch."

Syrax had laid two clutches in six years. The first clutch had two eggs, and the second, recently laid, had three. Meleys, though lethargic, had laid her eggs before Maekar was born, and the two eggs inherited their mother's dark red color.

Rhaenys had arranged for these eggs to be sent to King's Landing for the crown's consideration. Rhaegar, appreciating his aunt's gesture, decided to keep one of the eggs for his son, Maekar, and leave the other in her care.

Rhaenys remarked, "Pairing Visenya with a green dragon egg seems like a stroke of fate."

Rhaegar laughed softly. "Ultimately, it's up to the children. The hatching of dragon eggs is a matter of chance."

Rhaenys, curious, asked, "Have Baelon's dragon egg not yet hatched?"

Aemon's dragon eggs had hatched on the day he was born, and the young dragon was approaching adolescence. Baelon's egg, however, was slow to respond.

"Not yet, but he has his own ways," Rhaegar replied. "I've also considered taming a young dragon for Maekar when he's older."

It was unusual that, despite having six children, only one of his three sons had successfully hatched a dragon egg. It was a curious anomaly, given their dragon blood.

"It's a good idea. The young dragons in the Dragonpit are highly sought after," Rhaenys agreed.

Stormcloud and Tyraxes, the first to hatch, along with the fierce black hatchling, were all impressive in their own right.

After exchanging pleasantries, Rhaegar took his leave. Rhaenys, enthusiastic and warm, escorted her nieces and nephews out of the Hall of Nine.

Years of effort had restored the relationship between House Targaryen and House Velaryon. Rhaegar's decision to name his second son Aemon, honoring his aunt who had recently lost her own son, played a significant role in mending their bond.

...

Rhaegar and his entourage departed, leaving the hall behind.

Rhaenys returned to her husband with a sigh. "Why didn't you ask Daemon and Laena to go with you? It's a miracle you made it back safely."

"Daemon?" Sea Snake sneered at the mention of his son-in-law and former ally. "He spends his days chasing women. I'd be more concerned about him perishing in some woman's embrace than on the battlefield."

Despite his high status as a prince, Daemon had proven unreliable. Even as a Ranger Prince, he seemed to have forgotten the responsibilities that came with his position.

Rhaenys remained silent, her gaze fixed on her husband with a mixture of disappointment and concern.

Sea Snake, feeling her stare, shifted uncomfortably. "Laena is struggling with Lys. She's barely managing to hold things together."

Rhaenys's expression softened as she reflected on the situation. "It's true that Rhaena's claim to inheritance has been questioned. When such important matters arise, it's telling that the adoptive parents are present, while the biological parents are not."

Sea Snake, taken aback by Rhaenys' realization, tried to justify his actions. "Laena is young; she'll find her way eventually."

"Maybe", Rhaenys, no longer holding high expectations, nodded in resignation.

...

The old High Tide site was a relic of the past - an obsolete fortress located southeast of Driftmark. Abandoned for decades, it was built against a cliff and constructed of a mixture of stone and brick.

Originally the stronghold of House Velaryon, it fell into disrepair after Sea Snake's many voyages brought the wealth necessary to build the current High Tide. The old fortress, now damp and dilapidated, was eventually abandoned in favor of the new construction.

Following her marriage with Sea Snake, Rhaenys had repurposed the old site into a temporary Dragonpit.

At present, Baela, clad in a black dragon armor, led the way to this makeshift Dragonpit. Baelon and Aemon followed close behind, while the gentle Rhaena trailed behind, cradling the youngest, Maekar.

A sudden roar echoed through the dragonpit, startling the group of young children. Baelon glanced over to see a magnificent dragon with cobalt blue scales slowly emerge from the stone cave on the seaward side of the pit.