

G.O Thrones 641

Chapter 641: The Sorrows of the Iron Islands

Sunspear

On a sunny afternoon, a flock of dragons circled above the Free Cities.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal, with its fierce green eyes, stood alone and imposing on the riverbank outside Sunspear, its aura like that of a demonic god. Above, several dragons of different colors scattered across the sky—a moss-colored elder, a dark green Vhagar, and a light blue Dreamfyre. On the high walls of Sunspear, two young dragons perched like vigilant gargoyles. One was black and red, the other pale gray.

With all six dragons in the air, the city below felt eerily empty. The streets were silent, the people frozen in fear. The memory of the Dragon's Wroth from just a few years prior still haunted them—the chaos of three dragons locked in a deadly melee.

But a closer look revealed the grim truth. Sunspear's walls were riddled with arrows, and the road leading to the Greenblood River was caked with dried blood.

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By the riverbank, Rhaegar surveyed the scene. The once bustling docks had been reduced to scorched ruins, signs of destruction everywhere.

"Your Grace, the Ironborn didn't even spare the boats in the river," Prince Qyle said, his voice filled with grief and anger. A bloody bandage wrapped around his forehead. "The big ships have all sailed away, and the fishing boats and goods they couldn't loot have been burned."

"After the Ironborn looted the place, where did they go?" Rhaegar asked, narrowing his eyes, his voice cold as ice.

'These Ironborn never change,' he thought bitterly. 'Always believing that might makes right, with no regard for toil.'

"We've received word from Oldtown. The Iron Islands fleet passed through the Shield Islands and has now returned to the Iron Islands," Prince Qyle quickly replied.

The continent of Sothoryos, remote and hostile, was unsuited for the Ironborn. Its jungles and swamps, crawling with venomous creatures and poisonous mists, ensured only a sparse population lived there.

"The first thing King Dalton did upon his return was to muster his troops and set his sights on Lannister Harbour," Helaena said, her voice measured as she recounted the news.

She wore a blue gown, her demeanor calm. "Lord Jason has been taken captive in Slaver's Bay. With him gone, Lannisport is nothing more than a defenseless prize."

"Idiot," Rhaegar muttered under his breath. 'How could the House Lannister produce such an arrogant fool?' Jason had risked his life for a handful of gold, trusting blindly in his advisers and family to save him.

"Father, Oldtown and Seagard can still muster a fleet," Baelon said, his hand resting on the dragon's claw-shaped hilt of his sword. His expression was serious. "We can ride the dragons, launch a surprise attack, and coordinate with the fleet to catch the Ironborn off guard."

The Velaryon fleet, which he commanded, was stationed at Lys, always on alert, watching over the Summer Sea. Dalton's Ironborn fleet had exploited the defense of Volantis to slip past the Stepstones and raid Sunspear. After looting their fill, they brazenly sailed back to the Iron Islands. Now, their eyes were set on Lannisport, which lay poorly defended, ready to be seized.

Rhaegar smiled faintly and patted his eldest son's head. "Not a bad plan. We'll do it."

"Father, what about the Summer Sea?" Baelon asked, his eyes firm. "The Triarchy's pirates are growing bolder by the day. We can't leave ourselves unprepared."

"No rush," Rhaegar said, his gaze hard and unyielding. "We'll deal with them one by one. It's time they learned what it means to challenge the House of the Dragonlord."

Daemon and Aemond had already departed, while Corlys and Rhaenys led their fleet to Volantis. Once peace returned to the Seven Kingdoms, those Bastards who sought to restore their shattered realms would not escape justice.

"Your Grace, Sunspear has suffered heavy losses," Prince Qyle began hesitantly, testing the waters before offering his suggestion. "You also mentioned wanting Prince Maekar to make contact with my sister. Do you think that will happen after the war?"

The first part of his statement was trivial—everyone knew Dorne was impoverished. The second part, however, was crucial. Everyone in the Seven Kingdoms was aware the king had recently lost a son, a dragon rider. The marriage alliance needed to be secured swiftly.

Rhaegar glanced at him, his mind already made up regarding the Greenblood River. "The harbor will be repaired at the expense of the royal treasury."

Prince Qyle's eyes lit up with hope.

But Rhaegar continued, "The royal family will also construct a Prince's Palace on the opposite bank of the Greenblood River, in what was once the Lemonwood Forest, to commemorate Prince Aemon. The palace will be funded by taxes collected from the port."

"Prince's Palace?" Prince Qyle was momentarily stunned. Cautiously, he asked, "How long will the taxes be collected?"

"Once the palace is completed, the taxes will naturally be handed back to House Martell," Rhaegar said casually, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. "But if you're in a hurry, you could always contribute some manpower to help speed things along."

Qyle was dumbfounded, standing there at a loss for words. The Prince's Palace at the ruins of Storm's End hadn't even begun construction—how could one rise across the Greenblood River so soon? Was it really a palace, or was this just a ploy to seize control of the docks and the taxes, a means of trampling over House Martell and humiliating them? Yet Rhaegar spoke as if it were no great imposition.

'A House that can barely hold onto the title of Prince,' Qyle thought bitterly, 'a House that couldn't even fend off the Ironborn invasion—how can it be trusted to govern Dorne?'

The Seven Kingdoms were still too loosely bound together, and the current system was fundamentally flawed. The Prince's Palace wasn't just a tribute; it was designed to oversee and manage regional political power. With House Baratheon gone from Storm's End, the throne would either reward an heir or install a minister. As for Dorne, with House Martell still nominally in power, the best strategy was to reduce them to figureheads, mere mascots. Real power should reside with the Prince's Palace, for easier control.

Especially since, until the palace was completed, the taxes from the Greenblood River wharf would be withheld. In less than a decade, House Martell would be reduced to third-rate nobility.

"Set up a puppet to appease the local nobility according to the circumstances," Rhaegar muttered to himself, thinking aloud.

Aemon's death had forced him to rethink many things. The stubborn nobility of the Seven Kingdoms couldn't be swayed by gentleness and diplomacy. Power and strategy were the sharp blades needed to cut through their resistance. House Martell may command the Dornish people, but the Iron Throne controlled House Martell. What happened within Dorne would not be the crown's responsibility—it would simply manipulate events behind the scenes.

With this policy in place, the Stormlands, Westerlands, and even the North could see Prince Palaces of their own.

The only question was whether these regions would heed the king's commands, and whether they could withstand the fire of the dragons.

Prince Qyle, quick-witted as ever, sensed that the situation was not in his favor.

Helaena leaned in and whispered, "Coryanne can come to King's Landing as a companion to Princess Visenya. The royal family will take good care of her."

"A companion?" Prince Qyle hesitated.

Helaena pressed on, "The war will be long, and a stay in the Red Keep will give her the chance to see the Seven Kingdoms."

As a hostage, she would also be a suitable candidate for marriage.

Sure enough, Qyle fell silent, weighing the pros and cons of both options. Rhaegar watched him indifferently, unaffected by the prince's deliberation.

Marriage into another family had never crossed his mind. After Aemon's death, his resolve to maintain Targaryen independence had only strengthened. House Targaryen, after all, was not of Westerosi blood. Daemon had left a lineage behind, as had Aegon. With Aemond, Daeron, and the next generation multiplying, the bloodline would grow, eventually spreading throughout the realm and absorbing everything within.

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Three Days Later

The Iron Islands, Old Wyk

A low, haunting moan echoed across the ancient island.

"Ooohhhh..."

Dalton Greyjoy stood on the weathered platform of Nagga's ribs, an ancient and sacred site, holding the great horn to his lips. His summons reverberated through the air, calling forth the captains and sailors under his command.

From all corners of the Iron Islands, hundreds of ships converged like a vast fishing net drawn tight. More than 3,000 Ironborn gathered on the shores, armed with swords, axes, and spears, their salt-cured leather armor gleaming under the gray skies. Their faces were set in grim expressions, each man burning with deep resentment.

Their homes had been razed to the ground, their families slaughtered—old and young alike. When these men returned from their raids, they found nothing but scorched earth and charred ruins where their villages once stood.

"Ironborn, who has gathered you here?" Dalton's voice boomed from the highest point of the platform as he looked down at the assembled crowd.

The grief-stricken Ironborn raised their heads to gaze at their leader, Lord Dalton Greyjoy—the man who had led them to countless raids and plunder.

"It is I, Dalton Greyjoy!" His face was a mask of rage as he addressed them. "Someone has burned our homes, someone has murdered our women. What are we going to do about it?"

Silence fell over the crowd. The Ironborn clenched their fists, the thrill of past plunder drowned by the pain of their loss.

"Who burned our homes? Who killed our women?" Dalton roared, drawing his long sword in a swift, dramatic motion. "What is dead may never die!"

The Ironborn gazed at their leader, their eyes drawn to the infamous sword. The pain of their losses mixed with the savage instinct of their kind, and vengeance flared hot in their hearts. The ruthlessness with which they had plundered the weak now fueled their hunger for retribution.

"What is dead may never die!" Dalton's rallying cry resounded across the shore.

One voice echoed it, then another. Soon, the entire crowd of Ironborn, eyes red with fury and throats hoarse, shouted in unison, "What is dead may never die!"

Dalton grinned, his face twisted with hate. "Destitute scum, follow me to plunder Lannister Harbour! Use iron to buy more houses, more women!"

On the vast, open ocean, a fleet of thousands of ships advanced, their sails full and their prows cutting through the water. Leading them was a mighty three-masted ship flying the golden Kraken banner, with a massive scorpion crossbow mounted high on the deck.

As the ships surged forward, one of the Ironborn began to sing a looting song. His voice was soon joined by others, until the whole fleet was roaring the grim tune of pillage and death.

In their minds, Lannisport was already theirs—an offering of blood and fire, waiting to be taken.

"Haha, the wind is just right today!" Dalton exclaimed, perched atop the lookout pole. His eyes gleamed with excitement at the thought of gold and slaughter ahead.

His ship, a grand vessel built in the Basilisk Isles, was manned by a crew of hardened sailors he had gathered with care. Before raiding Sunspear, they had sacked the Isle of Tears, plundering the allies

of the Triarchy and even stealing a Valyrian steel sword in secret. This was the Ironborn way: no iron could not be taken by force.

But suddenly, the wind shifted.

"Roar..."

A black dragon, as dark as coal, tore through the clouds, its massive wings blotting out the sky and sea. Its fierce, predatory gaze locked onto the Ironborn fleet.

Dalton's face paled, and his voice rang out in urgency, "Dragon! Prepare the scorpion crossbow!"

But even as his words carried over the wind, another roar echoed through the air. A second dragon, moss-colored and immense, appeared in the sky, its cavernous mouth opening wide as it began to gather fire.

The Ironborn, who had been singing their looting songs moments earlier, fell silent. Fear overtook them as their faces turned ashen.

Whoosh—

From the sky, the Cannibal plunged downward, a black shadow of death.

The eerie, ancient melody echoed across the sea, stirring something primal in his blood. The sound vibrated through the air, even shaking the thin clouds that floated overhead.

"Roar!"

Vhagar, the great dragon, bellowed in rage, its mighty wings cutting through the sky like a falling star. The wound in its side only fueled its fury.

"Roar!"

Behind them, more dragons surged forward—Dreamfyre, Iragaxys, Grey Ghost—all charging in with the unstoppable force of wildfire sweeping across a plain.

"No... no!" Dalton stood frozen, utterly stunned, his mind blanking as he forgot to give the command for the scorpion crossbow.

The dragons had arrived in full force, a display of power unlike anything seen even in the Battle of the Stepstones. The sky itself seemed to tremble under the weight of their wings.

Whoosh—

As the final note of his song faded, Rhaegar lowered the massive horn, a gleaming relic that took the strength of two men to hold, and calmly uttered a single word:

"Dracarys."

Chapter 642: The Beheading of Lord Dalton

"Roar..."

The Cannibal surged ahead, and dark green dragonfire poured from its jaws like a flood, crashing onto the lead sea monster ship.

"Boom..."

The sound was like thunder as the three masts shattered in unison. Maggots of green fire crawled over every iron surface. Amidst the wailing, a bright flame was kindled on the sea.

"Damn it, run!" Dalton shouted, rolling onto the deck. As he tried to find his footing, he realized there was nowhere safe to land. The pervasive green fire clung to his armor.

"Ahhh..."

The intense heat cooked his flesh, and his exposed arm split open instantly. Dalton's eyes went bloodshot as he yanked out Nightfall, his prized sword, and severed his left arm.

With a sickening sizzle, blood splattered as the burning armor fell away.

"Roar..."

Uragax soared into the sky, spewing torrents of green dragonfire. Its broad, milky-yellow wings swept through the chilling winds. The surrounding ships were defenseless, exploding into pieces and sinking into the sea as flames consumed them.

"Damn it, I'm Lord Dalton!" he screamed furiously, cutting down a fleeing sailor who had caught fire.

But it was too late—his ship was engulfed in flames, thick black smoke rising into the sky.

Plop!

Horried, Dalton realized the heat had singed one of his ears. Panic took over, and he threw himself into the sea, seeking refuge in its cool depths. The Ironborn could only find fleeting safety in the water.

"Leave none alive!"

Rhaegar's voice rang out, cold and merciless. The Cannibal's green, slitted eyes gleamed with solemn intent as it growled, diving to crush several small boats with its hind legs.

"Dracarys!"

Helaena rode Dreamfyre into the fray, her voice echoing as pale blue flames spread across the azure waters. It had been a long time since she'd ridden a dragon into battle, and her inexperience showed as she unleashed too much force. Dreamfyre swooped eagerly, its blue flames spilling like clouds, engulfing the Ironborn who had jumped into the sea, trying to escape.

Iragaxys and Grey Ghost, smaller but no less deadly, wove between the three larger dragons, their dark dragonfire and blazing fireballs merging in a symphony of destruction.

"Where are the men?" Rhaegar scanned the battlefield from above, searching for Dalton, the Red Kraken who had inherited the Iron Islands. The Iron Islands must be destroyed, and every member of House Greyjoy executed by fire.

Thud!

A heavy drumbeat reverberated from the horizon. A well-equipped fleet emerged, sails flying the sigils of the lion, the green tower, and the purple grapes. It was a coalition of the Westerlands, the Reach, and the houses of Lannister, Hightower, and Redwyne.

Rhaegar glanced at the approaching fleet and shouted to his eldest son, who was circling on his own dragon, "Burn all the ships and wait for me to return!"

"Roar..."

Before Baelon could respond, the telepathic Cannibal lunged forward, heading straight for the Iron Islands.

...

Old Wyk.

Dalton swam all the way back to Pyke, dragging himself to the small boat he had hidden on the beach earlier. Exhausted but determined, he rowed toward his destination: Old Wyk.

"Ho-ho..."

He gasped for breath as he crawled onto the shore, collapsing in the rolling tide. His body burned with exhaustion, but the cool waves provided some relief. Yet the salt in the water stung his torn skin, sending jolts of unbearable pain through his body.

"Aagh! Damn the dragons!"

With seawater filling his remaining ear, Dalton's will to survive forced him to crawl up the beach. If he didn't escape soon, he knew death would catch up to him.

Under the Nagga Terrace on Old Wyk lay a secret passage where he had stashed gold and jewels looted over the years. With the Iron Islands in ruins, he had to secure the treasure.

Boom!

A fierce wind swept over the island, and a black dragon, as massive as a mountain, blocked out the sun. Its shadow engulfed Old Wyk.

Rhaegar, seated upon the beast, looked down from above, seeing nothing but the barren island below. The most striking feature was the Nagga's towering ribs, standing tall on the hill like relics of a long-forgotten era.

"Does the skeleton of a sea dragon count as a relic?" Rhaegar muttered, tapping the dragon's back to signal his descent.

Legends spoke of a great sea dragon that once roamed Westeros's shores, so large it could swallow the sun and feed on krakens and sea beasts. Its maw was said to be wide enough to engulf an entire island. The Grey King of the Iron Islands had fought this beast for three days and nights, beheading it with his sword. The Nagga's 44 ribs were used as pillars for his palace, its skull fashioned into a throne, and its towering teeth embedded in his crown.

They said the blood of the Nagga could keep a flame burning forever, but after the Grey King's death, the Drowned God extinguished the last embers of that fire.

"What a show. Those ribs are no bigger than Cannibal's," Rhaegar sneered as he surveyed the scene. The Nagga's remains paled in comparison to the dragon bones housed in the crypts of the Red Keep—Balerion's skull alone could contain a mammoth, and his teeth towered higher than these relics.

Boom!

The Cannibal crashed to the ground, its massive hind legs smashing through several of the Nagga's ribs, scattering grey bone fragments across the rocky earth. Rhaegar leapt from the dragon's back, cautiously approaching the high platform of the Nagga.

Standing beside the shattered remains, he compared the ribs to the Cannibal's body, which was larger and more fearsome. The Nagga's bones were tall, like the walls of a castle, but even as the Cannibal crouched low, its broad chest was parallel to the highest point of the ribs, its monstrous head looming far above them.

"Where are you!?" Rhaegar shouted, drawing Blackfyre from his waist. His voice echoed across the island, laced with fury. "Dalton, come out here!"

"Dalton, don't be a coward! Your fleet perished because of you!"

Rhaegar drove his sword into the ground, his long, noble silver-and-gold hair flowing in the wind. It had been years since he had taken up his sword in battle, long enough for people to forget the power of his martial skill. A petty Greyjoy dared to rebel?

Yet no response came from Dalton. The only sound was the whisper of the wind and the crash of the sea against the shore.

Suddenly, a faint voice echoed in Rhaegar's ear, the long-lost system message he had been waiting for:

"This exploration mission is now open. The target is the skeleton of the sea dragon Nagga."

Rhaegar's lips curled into a grin as he looked at the Nagga's ribs, towering like the fingers of a giant hand. Forty-four tall ribs stood before him, resembling the walls of a grand palace. Now, the display seemed more impressive than before.

Meanwhile, in the depths below...

Dalton, hidden in the secret passage beneath the Nagga's high platform, flinched as the ground above trembled. He heard the clear voice of a young man reverberating across the island, his blood running cold.

"Only an idiot would fight you," Dalton muttered through gritted teeth as he navigated the dark, narrow passage.

Everyone in the Seven Kingdoms knew of the King on the Iron Throne, once called the "Young Dragonlord" before his coronation. He had come of age wielding both power and fear, and now ruled with a black dragon—its green eyes and massive body larger than several ships combined. Who in their right mind would challenge him to a one-on-one fight?

Outside, smoke from the burning sea drifted over Old Wyk.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal sniffed the scent of charred flesh and let out a deep, resonant howl as it crouched low to the ground. One of its colossal wings flapped forward, and its short, powerful forelimbs crushed a pile of stones, revealing the entrance to the secret passage beneath the rubble.

"Huh?"

Rhaegar, about to ignite a glass candle to scout the area, paused and chuckled. He leapt into the entrance without hesitation.

So it was hidden here.

If not for the Cannibal's hunger, it would have taken him far longer to find it.

Crack!

A bone snapped underfoot as he landed, and the stench of mold and rot rushed up to meet him. Rhaegar held his breath for a moment, then shifted. Scales sprouted along his skin, horns formed on his forehead, and his purple eyes transformed into sharp, vertical pupils. The dim tunnel brightened under his draconic vision.

Dragons see in the dark. So do their descendants.

"Dalton, where are you?"

Rhaegar's smile was playful as he followed the disordered footprints in the dust. This was just a game of cat and mouse now, and Dalton was already cornered. Rhaegar had lost a son—everyone associated with that loss would pay dearly.

As he adjusted to the confines of the passage, Rhaegar's movements became more agile, his speed increasing. The chase soon brought them to a narrow corner, not far from the exit.

"Dalton, die!"

Rhaegar's cold expression darkened further as wisps of black flame flickered around him. He lunged forward, Blackfyre in hand, its dark blade gleaming in the faint light.

Dalton stumbled backward, terror in his eyes. "Don't come any closer! There are traps everywhere!"

"Cut the crap," Rhaegar snarled. His black robe billowed as the ground erupted in a wave of black fire, sealing the exit. Flames leapt toward Dalton, tongues of fire reaching out like serpents.

"You're the king... fine! I'll fight you to the death!"

Dalton had no choice. His back was against the wall, and the only thing left was to fight. He gripped Nightfall with his one good hand and braced himself.

A jet of black fire shot forward, wrapping itself around Dalton's waist. His blistered skin crackled under the intense heat, the flames binding him in place.

Before he could react, another stream of fire lashed out, this time coiling around his right arm, the one holding his sword. His flesh sizzled and charred, and as the fire consumed him, his fingers crumbled, reduced to white bone.

"Are you even worthy to fight me?" Rhaegar sneered, stepping forward.

As the King of the Iron Throne and the King of the Iron Islands faced each other, the narrow passage filled with dark flames, devouring every flicker of light.

"You know magic!?" Dalton gasped, his jaw dropping as cold sweat trickled down his face.

"I'm not wasting my breath explaining it to you. You're not worthy of hearing the answer," Rhaegar replied, his voice laced with contempt. He looked down at the tall Ironborn king, his hand gripping Blackfyre as the blade rested against Dalton's neck. "King Dalton, your reign ends here."

With a swift pull of his arm, the sword flashed with dark light. Dalton's charred, disfigured head rolled to the ground as his headless body swayed, then crumpled. Before it could hit the floor, the dark flames surged up, consuming the remains in an instant.

Rhaegar's expression remained cold as he nudged Nightfall—Dalton's fallen Valyrian steel sword—with the tip of his boot. He casually twirled it in the air, performing an elegant sword dance.

"There's also a pleasant surprise," Rhaegar murmured, eyeing the sword with renewed interest. Despite Dalton's fate, the sword in his hands showed a glimpse of the Red Kraken's worth. Valyrian steel swords were rare treasures, and with every one collected, the world had one fewer.

"This sword has character," Rhaegar remarked, running his fingers along the blade's dark edge. "It will make a fine gift for the children."

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At nightfall, a great fire swept through the Iron Islands. The fleet of House Lannister patrolled the shores, killing any who remained. The king had decreed that not a single soul should survive in the Iron Islands. Whether Ironborn, sellsword, or hostage, all were executed. From this day forward, the Iron Islands would be completely depopulated of humans.

At Nagga's Hill, Old Wyk, Rhaegar leaned against one of the towering ribs of the ancient sea dragon's skeleton.

Helaena and Baelon stood on either side of him, nestled in his broad embrace. The three of them gazed out into the sea breeze, their eyes half-closed, pretending to rest.

The Cannibal had disappeared, likely off foraging for food. Nearby, Dreamfyre and Uragax slithered on the ground, watchful, guarding their family.

As the night deepened, a voice rang out, breaking Rhaegar's brief moment of rest.

"This exploration is complete. Please collect the lost treasure."

Rhaegar's eyes snapped open as the system panel appeared before him.

[Skeleton of the Sea Dragon Nagga]

Exploration progress: 100%

Exploration progress: 100%

"That was fast," Rhaegar muttered, already guessing the quality of the relics.

Two purple halos materialized at his feet, shimmering before they burst into tiny points of light when he gently touched them.

Pop.

"Relic successfully retrieved, initiating analysis..."

"Analysis complete. Judged to be an epic relic: Nagga's Tear."

"... Judged to be an epic relic: Nightfall Descent."

Chapter 643: The Fallen Prince Who Tends Sheep

Rhaegar froze for a moment as two objects materialized in his hands. One was a watery-blue eye with an amber vertical pupil, about the size of an adult's fist. The other was a dark, irregularly shaped stone, smooth to the touch with a faintly undulating surface, as if it were alive.

He summoned the system panel, his eyes scanning the cryptic prompts tied to the relics:

"The last tear of the sea dragon Nagga, the Drowned God deprived it of its blood, thirsting for fullness."

"Bloodthirsty creature, hatching eggs."

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre's vertical pupils flicked open, watching the silver-haired figure disappear into the distance. Urax, slumped nearby, barely stirred, its thick tail swaying lazily as it snored like an old man.

Plop!

Ripples spread across the water's surface, quickly followed by the formation of a whirlpool, as if a powerful force beneath was draining the sea itself.

"Haha, just as I thought," Rhaegar muttered, a faint smile curling his lips. His theory was confirmed: the sea dragon Nagga was long dead, its blood lost, but the seawater could awaken its lingering spirit.

He slashed the blade across his wrist, letting bright red blood drip onto the stone.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The stone trembled violently as soon as it absorbed the blood, its dark surface flushing with a rosy hue. Layers of the black stone began to peel away, revealing something hidden within. The system prompt chimed:

Level: Excellent (Blue)

Function: Incubates bloodsucking creatures that sense blood connections.

Comment: "A long-lost blood witchcraft, ideal for large families to distinguish bloodlines."

The stone pulsed and cracked open, shedding its outer shell to reveal a dark, oval insect egg. It was no larger than a finger, and inside the transparent casing, a small creature squirmed—neither fully insect nor bat.

Under Rhaegar's watchful gaze, the creature quickly broke free from its shell.

Flutter!

Tiny wings unfolded as the small creature stumbled to life, resembling a fluttering moth.

"What's the use of this little thing?" Rhaegar muttered, tilting his head curiously as he reached out to poke it.

"Hiss!" Rhaegar sucked in a sharp breath as pain shot through his hand. It hurt, as if his blood was being drained. At the same moment, he felt a faint connection form between him and the small creature in his grasp.

“Chirp, chirp...” The bat bug chirped happily after drinking a few drops of his blood, fluttering around its master in circles. Its tiny body was covered in dark fluff, and its pale red wings were no bigger than those of an ordinary butterfly.

Rhaegar blinked as a flood of knowledge settled into his mind. The bat bug wasn’t a fighter; it was an auxiliary magical creature, tied to blood magic. Its primary function was to form a blood bond with its host and reproduce, laying eggs to hatch more male bat bugs. While the males couldn’t reproduce, they retained the ability to maintain a connection with the dominant female bat bugs, enabling communication across bloodlines.

“In other words, once these little things start laying eggs, we can give one to each of the children,” Rhaegar muttered, his eyes brightening. The bat bugs would allow him to sense the location and condition of any child carrying a male bat bug at any time.

“If only Aemon...” Rhaegar’s voice trailed off, his expression clouding as he cradled the tiny creature in his hands. But before sadness could take hold, the whirlpool in the sea began to calm, and a soft bluish glow floated to the surface.

Rhaegar’s attention snapped back to the water. He gently gathered the bat bug in his palm.

“Zhi zhi...” The bat bug chirped again, then dissolved into a misty black vapor that hovered in his hand. Magical creatures were fascinating like that—they weren’t bound by physical form but carried a trace of wisdom, like the Serpent and the Toad.

With a swift motion, Rhaegar scooped up the aquamarine glow from the sea.

Level: Epic (Purple)

Effect: Grants a layer of sea dragon skin, +50% resistance to seawater and frost.

Comment: "This false skin could save your life when the cold winter grips the land."

A faint transparent shimmer passed over Rhaegar’s body. He blinked, then muttered, “An extra layer of dragon skin?”

Curious, he ran his hand over his body, feeling his skin, which remained firm and porcelain white. There was no slimy liquid, no snake-like scales—nothing had visibly changed.

“It’s still the same...”

Rhaegar stood in silence for a moment, then called up his personal panel:

[Rhaegar Targaryen]

Hum...

Green dragon scales immediately surfaced, forming the first layer of protection. Then, a second layer appeared—grayish-white keratin, like fine scales still wet with seawater.

For a moment, Rhaegar stared at his arm in silence before asking quietly, “Am I even still human?”

The state of being a Dragonborn, the power of the Bronze Runes, and now the skin of a Sea Dragon... With each relic added, his body and appearance had grown further and further from those of an ordinary person.

"Maybe," he sighed, dark lines appearing on his forehead. "The ancient Dragonlords of Valyria must have looked like this—dragonborn, but not entirely human."

It made sense, he thought. For the mighty Freehold Empire to exist, those in power may have transcended humanity in more ways than one.

Rhaegar consoled himself silently with that thought.

...

The next day, the sky was shrouded in darkness, with thick clouds hanging overhead like stalactites, ready to break.

"Roar..."

A jet-black dragon soared against the wind, its massive jaws clamped around the bloodied corpse of a ten-meter-long wyvern, tearing into it with savage ferocity.

"Roar... Roar..."

More wyverns appeared, their white and green markings stark against the stormy sky as they circled in flocks over the Iron Islands. Whenever a wyvern tried to stray, a dragon would swoop down, driving it back into formation with merciless precision.

Atop the high hill of the Nagga, Helaena stood tall, her slender neck craned as she watched dozens of wyverns scatter across the islands. Some vanished into caves, others slipped into the ruins of old buildings, settling into the desolate landscape.

"Father, are we really doing the right thing?" Baelon asked, cradling a dark, gleaming egg in his hands, his voice heavy with doubt. "Is it right that the Ironborn are all dead?"

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Tic-tac...

A tear slipped from Baelon's boot, unnoticed until it hit the ground. Rhaegar glanced down and saw it, knowing the flood would follow.

"Go ahead, cry," Rhaegar said, pulling Baelon closer. "After today, you'll be a Lord."

"Uuu..."

Baelon's shoulders trembled as he tried to suppress his sobs. He hadn't cried when he first heard about Aemon's accident. He hadn't shed a tear when Storm's End burned or when the Iron Islands were ravaged. But now, in the stillness, grief overwhelmed him, clawing at his heart.

"Uuu, I don't have a brother anymore..." Baelon whispered, gasping between sobs. He clung to his father's waist, his breath hitching. "Father... Aemon..."

But the words caught in his throat, choking him.

"It's okay," Rhaegar murmured, though his voice lacked conviction. His eyes hardened as he stared into the distance. "A lot of people will pay for this. The Ironborn call it iron price."

Baelon shook his head furiously, refusing to accept the reality of his brother's sudden death.

"Let's go," Helaena said softly, breaking the silence. She took both his and Baelon's hands in her own. Her expression was distant, though the pain was clear in her eyes. "Later, we'll build a Prince's Palace on Pyke. The Iron Islands will be ours."

Rhaegar glanced at her, recognizing her attempt at comfort. The Iron Islands, barren as they were, would serve as a perfect outpost. A small palace on Pyke would not only keep a watchful eye on Lannisport, but also provide a home for the wyverns. It was time to fortify their rule.

Prince's Palaces in the Stormlands and Dorne were already necessary. In the Westerlands, it would be too risky to interfere directly, and The Reach would only complicate things. But the Iron Islands? They were the perfect place to strengthen their hold and rebuild the family's future.

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Meanwhile, in Pentos:

"Ooh la la!"

A Dothraki cavalry unit galloped along the Valyrian roads, their war cries echoing through the plains. There were many of them, all strong, battle-hardened warriors. Behind them trailed a large group of ragged slaves, bound together with ropes, alongside carts of stolen wealth pulled by horses.

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sensing trouble, quickly declared a ceasefire. They sent envoys to King's Landing to express their sorrow over the death of one of the Dragonlord's sons.

With the war over, the Dothraki tribe found themselves without an employer. However, Prince Reggio, skilled in diplomacy, spared them from retaliation by gifting the Khal a substantial number of slaves and gold.

"Hurry up! Sack the next village and let's return to the Great Grass Sea!" A young Bloodrider shouted, brandishing his curved blade as he charged toward a nearby village.

The war may have ended, and the gifts had been received, but for the Dothraki, anything looted was considered an extra reward for their efforts. The simple logic of a raider's mind was direct and merciless.

...

A small fishing village.

"Run!"

"Please, spare us!"

The Dothraki cavalry stormed in, slaughtering the men and elderly, burning homes and fields. The women were taken, and the children captured as slaves.

"Khal, I've found a silver-haired boy!" A young Bloodrider emerged from a thatched hut, holding his trousers in one hand and dragging a silver-haired boy by the other.

"Put him in the cage," Obon Khal commanded, his rugged face set in stone. As he turned his head, his bushy beard and long braid—adorned with jingling bells—swayed with the motion.

"Yes, blood of my blood," the Bloodrider snarled, tossing the boy into an iron cage, the same one used for pigs and dogs. It was a clear message: captured children were treated no better than livestock.

Bang!

The iron door clanged shut, and the cage was packed with terrified children, crying and clinging to each other.

"Haha, you'll fetch a fine price in Slaver's Bay," the Bloodrider laughed, slapping his blade against the bars. The sound startled the children even further, but he had long grown used to such sights.

As the Khal rode past the cage, something caught his eye. Among the weeping and trembling children sat the silver-haired boy, silent and unflinching. His purple eyes stared ahead, devoid of fear or emotion, as if the horrors around him didn't matter.

“Valyrian?” Obon Khal muttered in surprise. He lifted his riding crop, pointing at the boy. “Pull him out. He’ll tend the goats.”

The Bloodriders obeyed, dragging the boy from the cage. Obon Khal watched intently, scrutinizing the boy’s appearance. There was something unmistakable about him—the nobility in his bearing, the way he carried himself despite his ragged clothes. No amount of dirt could hide it.

“Your necklace is unusual,” Obon Khal noted, prodding the dragon-shaped pendant hanging beneath the boy’s coarse linen shirt with his riding crop. The boy didn’t flinch, his vacant purple eyes locking onto the Khal’s.

“Ho ho...” The boy finally spoke, but his voice was cracked and hoarse, like fingernails scraping glass.

For a long moment, the Khal said nothing, studying him carefully. Then, with a solemn expression, he withdrew his crop and turned his horse.

A person who does not fear death cannot be easily controlled by fear.

“Let him stay,” Obon Khal commanded. “He’ll work as a stable boy or a shepherd. Perhaps he’ll prove useful.”

The Khal rode off, leaving the silver-haired boy behind. He had seen something rare in the child—something that could not be broken easily. Perhaps, in time, this boy could make his fortune.

Chapter 643: The Fallen Prince Who Tends Sheep

Rhaegar froze for a moment as two objects materialized in his hands. One was a watery-blue eye with an amber vertical pupil, about the size of an adult’s fist. The other was a dark, irregularly shaped stone, smooth to the touch with a faintly undulating surface, as if it were alive.

He summoned the system panel, his eyes scanning the cryptic prompts tied to the relics:

"The last tear of the sea dragon Nagga, the Drowned God deprived it of its blood, thirsting for fullness."

"Bloodthirsty creature, hatching eggs."

"Roar..."

Dreamfyre’s vertical pupils flicked open, watching the silver-haired figure disappear into the distance. Urax, slumped nearby, barely stirred, its thick tail swaying lazily as it snored like an old man.

Plop!

Ripples spread across the water’s surface, quickly followed by the formation of a whirlpool, as if a powerful force beneath was draining the sea itself.

"Haha, just as I thought," Rhaegar muttered, a faint smile curling his lips. His theory was confirmed: the sea dragon Nagga was long dead, its blood lost, but the seawater could awaken its lingering spirit.

He slashed the blade across his wrist, letting bright red blood drip onto the stone.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The stone trembled violently as soon as it absorbed the blood, its dark surface flushing with a rosy hue. Layers of the black stone began to peel away, revealing something hidden within. The system prompt chimed:

Level: Excellent (Blue)

Function: Incubates bloodsucking creatures that sense blood connections.

Comment: "A long-lost blood witchcraft, ideal for large families to distinguish bloodlines."

The stone pulsed and cracked open, shedding its outer shell to reveal a dark, oval insect egg. It was no larger than a finger, and inside the transparent casing, a small creature squirmed—neither fully insect nor bat.

Under Rhaegar's watchful gaze, the creature quickly broke free from its shell.

Flutter!

Tiny wings unfolded as the small creature stumbled to life, resembling a fluttering moth.

"What's the use of this little thing?" Rhaegar muttered, tilting his head curiously as he reached out to poke it.

"Hiss!" Rhaegar sucked in a sharp breath as pain shot through his hand. It hurt, as if his blood was being drained. At the same moment, he felt a faint connection form between him and the small creature in his grasp.

"Chirp, chirp..." The bat bug chirped happily after drinking a few drops of his blood, fluttering around its master in circles. Its tiny body was covered in dark fluff, and its pale red wings were no bigger than those of an ordinary butterfly.

Rhaegar blinked as a flood of knowledge settled into his mind. The bat bug wasn't a fighter; it was an auxiliary magical creature, tied to blood magic. Its primary function was to form a blood bond with its host and reproduce, laying eggs to hatch more male bat bugs. While the males couldn't reproduce, they retained the ability to maintain a connection with the dominant female bat bugs, enabling communication across bloodlines.

"In other words, once these little things start laying eggs, we can give one to each of the children," Rhaegar muttered, his eyes brightening. The bat bugs would allow him to sense the location and condition of any child carrying a male bat bug at any time.

"If only Aemon..." Rhaegar's voice trailed off, his expression clouding as he cradled the tiny creature in his hands. But before sadness could take hold, the whirlpool in the sea began to calm, and a soft bluish glow floated to the surface.

Rhaegar's attention snapped back to the water. He gently gathered the bat bug in his palm.

“Zhi zhi...” The bat bug chirped again, then dissolved into a misty black vapor that hovered in his hand. Magical creatures were fascinating like that—they weren’t bound by physical form but carried a trace of wisdom, like the Serpent and the Toad.

With a swift motion, Rhaegar scooped up the aquamarine glow from the sea.

Level: Epic (Purple)

Effect: Grants a layer of sea dragon skin, +50% resistance to seawater and frost.

Comment: "This false skin could save your life when the cold winter grips the land."

A faint transparent shimmer passed over Rhaegar’s body. He blinked, then muttered, “An extra layer of dragon skin?”

Curious, he ran his hand over his body, feeling his skin, which remained firm and porcelain white. There was no slimy liquid, no snake-like scales—nothing had visibly changed.

“It’s still the same...”

Rhaegar stood in silence for a moment, then called up his personal panel:

[Rhaegar Targaryen]

Hum...

Green dragon scales immediately surfaced, forming the first layer of protection. Then, a second layer appeared—grayish-white keratin, like fine scales still wet with seawater.

For a moment, Rhaegar stared at his arm in silence before asking quietly, “Am I even still human?”

The state of being a Dragonborn, the power of the Bronze Runes, and now the skin of a Sea Dragon... With each relic added, his body and appearance had grown further and further from those of an ordinary person.

“Maybe,” he sighed, dark lines appearing on his forehead. “The ancient Dragonlords of Valyria must have looked like this—dragonborn, but not entirely human.”

It made sense, he thought. For the mighty Freehold Empire to exist, those in power may have transcended humanity in more ways than one.

Rhaegar consoled himself silently with that thought.

...

The next day, the sky was shrouded in darkness, with thick clouds hanging overhead like stalactites, ready to break.

"Roar..."

A jet-black dragon soared against the wind, its massive jaws clamped around the bloodied corpse of a ten-meter-long wyvern, tearing into it with savage ferocity.

"Roar... Roar..."

More wyverns appeared, their white and green markings stark against the stormy sky as they circled in flocks over the Iron Islands. Whenever a wyvern tried to stray, a dragon would swoop down, driving it back into formation with merciless precision.

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Chapter 644: Laenor's Return

Basilisk Isles, the gathering place.

In a calm bay, beneath a towering cliff crowned by a grand palace, hundreds of Triarchy dignitaries, sellswords, and slave owners had gathered. The scent of wealth and danger hung in the air.

On a plush wool rug, a burly man with a thick black beard sat cross-legged, engaged in a heated debate with two other men.

"The King on the Iron Throne has lost his son. He'll burn us all to ash for it," one man muttered darkly.

"You want to surrender? Go ahead, try," another shot back with a sneer.

"Cut the talk. We've made a fortune selling tapestries and perfumes to Qarth..." Blackbeard grinned, flashing his white teeth. The conversation quickly shifted to trade. As long as there was gold to be made, they were willing to risk anything.

"I heard the Red Kraken died," Blackbeard said with a laugh. "Serves him right, letting his town be plundered."

"He was too arrogant for his own good, refusing to die on his precious Iron Islands," remarked a man with a short, purple-dyed beard, shaking his head. "He was a good pawn, but too greedy."

"He hoarded the profits and now lies dead with all that gold," a white-haired slave owner from Myr chimed in with a sneer. "But the dragons of the Iron Throne will return. What then?"

"Run away?"

"Idiot. We do business."

"Then we'll fight!"

"Against Dragonfire? Are you mad?"

The three decision-makers argued bitterly, each with a dark, tense expression. Around them, the others watched with amusement, enjoying the spectacle. The Basilisk Isles were desolate, tucked away in the far south of the Sothoryos continent. But how much Dragonfire could even a hidden cave withstand?

"We've already retreated from the Disputed Lands," Blackbeard growled, slapping his thigh. "We can't keep running!"

"Exactly! We fight," the mustachioed man declared, his sharp eyes drawing applause from the crowd.

The women and children could wait in the brothels, but without their riches, these men had nothing left. If they wanted to continue living in luxury, the Triarchy had to be rebuilt.

“Good! Then it’s decided!” The white-haired slave owner pulled out a dagger and stood, anticipating the cheers of his comrades, expecting it to inspire them.

Boom!

Before he could bask in the applause, a tremor shook the palace. A hot gust of wind followed, carrying the acrid smell of ash.

“What’s going on?” Faces paled as the men scrambled to their feet.

“A dragon!” came a terrified scream from outside.

Over the bay, a jet-black dragon, as dark as coal, soared through the sky, spewing green-tinged Dragonfire. It swept across the waters, burning every ship in sight. Thick smoke billowed as Triarchy pirates threw themselves into the sea, desperate to escape the inferno.

“in the palace... It’s the Cannibal,” one man gasped.

Rhaegar sat astride the beast, his black robe fluttering in the wind, purple eyes locked on the foreign palace perched on the cliff.

"Roar..." The Cannibal roared, its massive body skimming the sea’s surface before diving toward the cliff.

Dark green Dragonfire erupted from its jaws, scorching everything in its path. With a thunderous crash, the dome of the palace crumbled, the stone walls melting under the intense heat.

Rhaegar’s eyes were cold as he patted the dragon’s neck, urging it on. The Cannibal’s green pupils gleamed with hatred as it spun through the air, its shadow darkening every inch of the Basilisk Isles.

Man and dragon were connected in spirit, each feeding off the other’s emotions. Rhaegar’s simmering hatred fanned the flames in the Cannibal’s heart, pushing it to vent its fury without mercy. The Dragoneater, once feared for its savagery, now unleashed its wrath on all who stood in its way, a monstrous force bound to the will of its rider.

...

Volantis.

Eastern City District, atop the Black Wall.

Whoosh.

A crossbow bolt whistled through the air, striking the scarecrow's bull's-eye from several dozen meters away.

“Feeling lucky today?” Baelon asked as he approached, wearing a red cloak and carrying another crossbow.

“Not really. Just practicing,” Baela replied, her expression emotionless as she quickly loaded her crossbow with practiced ease.

Shoot.

Baelon released his bolt, which clanged off the parapet and ricocheted away. He sighed. “Seems I don’t have any talent for shooting.” He paused, recalling that their father rarely used longbows or crossbows either.

Baela, nearby, gave him a sidelong glance before returning to her own target practice, pulling the trigger with quiet determination.

Two months had passed since Aemon’s death. In that time, momentous events had unfolded across Westeros and beyond. House Baratheon of Storm’s End had been extinguished, the Ironborn annihilated across the Westerlands, The Reach, and the Riverlands. The war in Essos had ended, and the Iron Throne had launched a devastating campaign against the Triarchy pirates in the Basilisk Isles.

“Roar!”

A thunderous dragon roar echoed across the sky. A majestic scarlet dragon soared from the harbor, leading the royal fleet out into the Summer Sea.

Baela glanced up, awe flickering in her eyes. “Grandmother and Grandfather have set off.”

The elderly couple had stationed themselves in the Basilisk Isles, determined to bring the drawn-out naval conflict to an end.

“Father left early this morning,” Baelon added, lowering his crossbow. Regret flickered across his face. “He was the first to take on the pirates who were still putting up a fight.”

Since the Battle of the Iron Islands, their great-uncle Daemon and third great-uncle One-Eyed Aemon had returned to King’s Landing, only to quickly depart for the battlefields of Sothoryos. Baelon, his sister Baela, and their younger brother Maekar had been left behind in Volantis, forbidden to leave the city.

“Your father is incredible,” Baela said with a sigh, continuing her practice. “One man and one dragon, sweeping through entire lands. Burning so many people to death was his way of releasing all that pent-up frustration.”

The near-massacre by Dragonfire had sent shockwaves across the world, sparking outrage from the Free Cities and various faiths. Even in Volantis, Baela could hear the condemnation from every corner. But she knew her father well—when he was in a dark mood, he would lash out and push away anyone who tried to care for him.

“He’s a king,” Baelon replied quietly, sitting on the wall beside her. “He can’t afford to show weakness.”

Baelon had been sent by Rhaena to watch over her. Aemon’s death had shaken Baela to the core. One month she spent crying in secret, the next trying to escape Volantis in every way possible, seeking revenge. Now, she was locked away, consumed by training. If she continued like this, she would burn herself out.

“One day, I’ll avenge him,” Baela said suddenly, as if reading Baelon’s thoughts. She turned to him. “It was a wild dragon that killed him, wasn’t it?”

“I’m going to eat. Leave me alone,” Baela muttered, setting down her crossbow and walking down the steps, her mood dark.

“That...” Baelon sighed, watching her go. His father was right. They were still young, and the world beyond Volantis was vast. But Baela’s pain was undeniable.

Everyone wanted to avenge Aemon, but the family couldn’t afford to lose another dragon rider. Not now.

...

Night falls.

Basilisk Isles, Isle of Flies.

A campfire flickered in the mosquito-infested wasteland as soldiers hacked away at trees, building fortifications to shield the island. The air was thick with the hum of insects and the distant sound of waves crashing against the shore.

“Our king is gone,” Rhaenys muttered to her husband as they walked along the beach, her voice tinged with frustration.

Corlys, ever watchful, inspected the coastline as the fleet formed a defensive line around the island. There were three rebuilt Triarchy strongholds: The Axe, Isle of Tears, and Naath. Rhaegar had rushed to The Axe, Daemon and Aemond headed for Naath, leaving the most critical location—Isle of Tears—in the hands of the old couple.

Strategically placed near the Basilisk Isles, any attack on the settlements would have to break through their defenses first. House Velaryon’s fleet, undefeated and formidable, was meant for battles where raw power decided the outcome.

“He burned thousands today—more than in many of our past wars,” Rhaenys said, her tone carrying clear disapproval. The stench of charred flesh clung to her, an unpleasant reminder of the day’s carnage.

“You’re still brooding over Storm’s End?” Corlys frowned, glancing at her. “Rhaenys, we’re at war. The Iron Islands suffered far more.”

“Yes, and the lords of the Westerlands and The Reach applauded,” Rhaenys snapped, turning her head away. Her husband’s words offered no comfort. She knew he was right, but it didn’t lessen her unease.

No matter the politics, no matter the war, the destruction of House Baratheon weighed heavily on her. They had been loyal to the Iron Throne for over a century, yet her own nephew had wiped them from existence. That was her second family—those children who perished had been her blood.

“Keep your head, Rhaenys,” Corlys said sternly. “Don’t let your emotions cloud your judgment. No one wants to lose their children.”

He spoke from a place of deep sorrow. When their eldest son, Laenor, had been assassinated, Corlys had been so consumed by rage he nearly killed Prince Qoren of Dorne. His grief, like hers, had led him down a dark path.

Rhaenys sighed, closing her eyes for a moment. “You’re right,” she whispered, her voice soft. She didn’t blame Rhaegar for his ruthlessness, but the loss of both her son and daughter had left her fearful—afraid of more loss, more heartache. Rhaegar, too, was reacting to the pain of losing his son, and in his fury, House Baratheon had paid the ultimate price.

Corlys reached out, gently pulling her closer, his arm wrapping around her shoulders. “Try to stay hopeful,” he said, his voice tender yet helpless.

Together, they walked through the night.

Whoosh.

Suddenly, a deep horn echoed through the night.

Corlys’s face darkened, his expression turning sharp. “No, that’s not the sound of a patrol ship,” he warned.

“Get ready!” Rhaenys broke free from his embrace and sprinted toward the camp.

Meleys, her scarlet dragon, lay atop the island, lazily digesting the livestock the soldiers had fed it. But now, the rumble of approaching ships filled the air, and pirate vessels appeared one after another on the horizon, their catapults launching burning fireballs into the night sky.

“Hurry! Get to the warship!” Corlys ordered, his face grim as he strapped on his armor and was the first to board the ship. He knew these waters well—the pirates must have attacked the patrols and slipped past them, sneaking up on Slush Island.

Out at sea, the enemy fleet approached.

“Attack! Capture the Sea Snake alive!” Blackbeard bellowed, laughing as his ship was the first to land. Brandishing a scimitar, he led the charge, his black curls still matted with soot from a previous battle. He had survived countless close calls, and tonight, he believed he was destined for glory—he would capture the head of House Velaryon himself.

Crash! Boom!

Catapult fire rained down on the camp, breaking through its defenses and lighting up the dark sky with flames. Pirates swarmed the shore like ants, rushing to claim the island.

Meleys, resting at the top of the hill, stirred at the noise. The dragon opened its vertical pupils, scanning the chaotic scene below for its rider. But with so many people running, screaming, and fighting, it couldn’t immediately find Rhaenys.

Crash! Boom!

“Follow me and capture Corlys Velaryon alive!” Blackbeard urged, leading the pirate horde onto the island.

“Damn it, hold the line!” Corlys shouted, engaging in a brutal melee, blood staining the deck as he waited for Rhaenys to come to his aid with her dragon.

“Die, old man!” a group of sellswords taunted as they broke through the defenses, grinning viciously as they closed in. Corlys’s pupils narrowed as he raised his long-handled curved sword to fend them off, but his age was catching up to him. His movements were slower, his strength waning.

He fought valiantly, but the tide turned against him. As he was forced back, he caught a glimpse of the frontline on the Isle of Flies collapsing entirely. The campfires had become infernos, spreading across the island unchecked.

Clang!

A blade slashed through his armor, forcing Corlys to stagger back several paces. Gritting his teeth, he turned, only to see more sellswords charging toward him. He knew he couldn’t hold out much longer.

Roar!

Suddenly, a piercing dragon’s roar shattered the night, cutting through the chaos.

“Dracarys!” came a shout in High Valyrian, followed by the pale silver form of a dragon rising into the sky.

Chapter 645: Slaver’s Bay Surrenders

Boom!

A torrent of orange-tinged Dragonfire erupted across the battlefield, spewing from the jaws of a pale silver dragon. Flames swept over the Triarchy pirates, engulfing them in a merciless inferno.

“Ahhh...”

Their agonized screams echoed through the night as they writhed on the ground, desperately clawing at the unrelenting flames. There was no escape. Above them, the silver dragon hovered—slow, deliberate—raining fire with ruthless precision.

“Father, steer the ship out to sea!” A familiar voice cut through the chaos, and Corlys Velaryon froze, his curved blade halting mid-swing.

For a moment, his heart stopped, the blood pounding in his ears. He looked up, disbelief flooding his senses.

It couldn’t be.

“Laenor...”

Corlys’s hands shook. He rubbed his eyes, bloodshot from the fight, as if trying to dispel an illusion. But it wasn’t a dream. It was real.

“Dracarys!” Laenor’s voice rang out, his face alight with a fierce smile as he shouted the command. Tears blurred his vision, but he pressed on.

Roar!

Corlys wiped the tears from his face, his heart swelling with newfound strength. His voice thundered across the deck. “Follow me! My son has come to our aid on his dragon!”

The words “my son” electrified the sailors. Exhausted and battle-weary, their spirits surged at the sight of the familiar silver dragon. With renewed energy, they fought back, breaking through the pirate siege with newfound hope.

“Dracarys! Dracarys!” Laenor’s battle cry echoed across the waves, a decade of unspoken shouts unleashed all at once. His voice rang with a raw intensity, as if making up for the lost years.

...

On the mountaintop,

gripping the rope ladder in preparation to mount, when a powerful roar split the sky, laden with an inexplicable familiarity.

She froze, her breath catching. Quickly, she looked up at the night sky. There, circling above, was the pale silver dragon, rescuing Corlys from the ship he had been trapped on.

Rhaenys’s almond-shaped eyes widened in disbelief. When she saw the rider—his familiar figure unmistakable—tears welled in her eyes. “Laenor...”

The name slipped from her lips, and she instantly covered her mouth, afraid her voice would break under the weight of her emotions.

Unlike Corlys, who had made peace with the loss, Rhaenys had always held on to a sliver of hope that her son was alive. And now, against all odds, Laenor was here—alive and well, riding the dragon he had bonded with since childhood. Joy trembled through her body.

Roar...

Roar...

“He’s back,” Rhaenys repeated, her tears slowly turning into laughter. She rested her forehead against the dragon’s body, taking in the moment before regaining her composure. “We have work to do too, old girl.”

Moments later, the empty night sky was alive with the sounds of battle—fierce fighting and desperate cries mingling with the roars of dragons.

Roar!

Roar!

A scarlet dragon and a pale silver one flew together, their majestic forms cutting through the sea breeze, their combined Dragonfire spilling across the battlefield. The war had spread from the Isle of Flies to the open sea, and still, it pushed onward.

The banner of House Velaryon—its blue seahorse flapping proudly in the wind—stood tall, a symbol of strength and defiance.

But the fate of the Triarchy pirates remained unchanged. They were engulfed in flames, burning on land and sea.

...

The next day, at noon.

Several dragons soared over the mouth of the Rhoyme, their shadows sweeping across the waters before landing atop the Black Wall of Volantis.

At the Magister's Palace, Baelon, impeccably dressed, led his foster sisters, Baela and Rhaena, each at his side. The three young people stood at the entrance, excitement lighting up their faces.

“Grandmother!”

Rhaena, always the sharpest-eyed, waved enthusiastically. In the courtyard, silver-haired figures moved about, a familiar sight to the siblings.

Rhaenys, still brimming with energy despite the long night of battle, approached with a radiant smile. “Rhaena, my children,” she called warmly, her arms open as she walked alongside Daemon and Corlys.

Baelon, being the youngest, only noticed the familiar faces of his relatives. But Baela and Rhaena—both older and more observant—stood frozen in shock, their gazes fixed on the man accompanying their elders.

He was handsome, with a striking resemblance to their mother, Laena, but his skin was roughened and darkened by the sun, and his hair was cropped short. He dressed simply, in stark contrast to the richly adorned surroundings.

The sisters stared, momentarily speechless.

“Look who it is, children,” Rhaenys beamed, gathering her three grandchildren into a warm embrace.

The man stepped forward, his expression both wistful and awkward. “Baela, Rhaena, how are you?” he asked softly.

“Laenor!”

Baela’s exclamation broke the tension as she rushed forward, wrapping her arms around him.

Rhaena’s eyes reddened, her voice trembling. “Uncle...”

“It’s me,” Laenor chuckled, quickly accepting the embrace of his nieces, his deep, magnetic voice unmistakable.

Baelon stood rooted, his eyes wide with disbelief. “You’re Ser Laenor?” he asked, his composure slipping. It was hard to reconcile the long-lost figure from family tales with the man now standing before him.

Laenor smiled, glancing at his mother before turning to Baelon. “That’s right, Prince. I last saw you when you were just a baby.”

“Yes, Ser,” Baelon replied, gathering himself as he extended his hand to guide them inside. “Please, come in. It’s a shame my father isn’t here—he would have been overjoyed to see you.”

“Rhaegar isn’t here?” Rhaenys asked, puzzled. She had sent word the previous night about the council, and with the speed of the black dragon, he should have arrived by now.

Baelon hesitated, then offered an apologetic smile. “Perhaps something came up. He may have stayed behind at The Axe.”

Corlys stepped forward, his gaze sweeping the courtyard. “And what of Prince Maekar? We should greet the host of this house properly,” he said, puffing out his chest proudly, his hand resting on his son’s shoulder. There was a certain satisfaction in the Sea Snake’s stance—his son had returned, and he wanted the world to know.

“Maekar had something come up as well,” Baelon admitted, clearly uncomfortable. “But please, let’s go inside.”

Baela and Rhaena exchanged glances, sensing the tension, and quickly moved to help change the subject as they all made their way into the palace.

...

Slaver’s Bay, Meereen — The Great Pyramid.

Roar...

The Cannibal loomed before the Great Pyramid, its massive, terrifying head level with the peak of the tower. Its eerie green pupils glowed with a dark, unsettling light. Hundreds of Unsullied stood surrounding the creature, their spears trembling in their hands, their fear palpable.

Roar!

Above, a young silver-grey dragon hovered in the air, its dark vertical pupils surveying the soldiers on the city walls. Occasionally, it flapped its wings, sending gusts of wind that rippled across the silent city. The once-noisy streets of Meereen had fallen into an uneasy hush. Only the roars of the two dragons echoed across Slaver’s Bay.

...

Inside the Great Pyramid’s main hall.

Rhaegar lounged on the throne, lazily removing his black robe as he reclined, eyes half-closed. He listened idly as his third son, Maekar, sat at the foot of the throne, carefully reading aloud from a letter.

"At midnight yesterday, pirates from the Isle of Tears attacked the camp..." Maekar’s childlike voice echoed in the cavernous hall.

Below them, the Wise Masters, Good Masters, and Great Masters of Slaver's Bay gathered, huddled in fearful silence. Every now and then, one of them would glance upward nervously, terrified of drawing attention, as if the dragons outside might burst into the hall at any moment.

Father and son, relaxed and at ease, seemed perfectly at home in the imposing pyramid, despite the tension that gripped everyone around them.

"Okay, that's it," Maekar said, folding the letter with a satisfied nod, his voice still carrying the innocence of youth.

"Aren't you going to say anything, Father?" Maekar asked, his sapphire-blue eyes filled with an unspoken sadness. His aunt and uncle had been reunited, but his own brother was gone.

"This is good news," Rhaegar replied with a faint, emotionless smile. "If Laenor is still alive, then nothing in this world is impossible."

Maekar's eyes sparkled thoughtfully as he nodded, trusting his father's words completely.

Rhaegar reached over, gently ruffling Maekar's hair, his gaze softening with a mix of relief and nostalgia. If Baelon, the eldest, was to inherit the throne but met with misfortune, Maekar would be prepared to assist his brother. His youngest son would need to learn the ways of kingship and become an able advisor.

As their conversation trailed off, the soft sound of footsteps echoed from outside the hall.

"My apologies for not welcoming you sooner, Your Grace of the Iron Throne," a woman's voice chimed in.

Irina entered, her stride brisk and her smile wide. She greeted Rhaegar with the confidence and charm so characteristic of those from the Lands of the Long Summer. There was a certain wildness and warmth in her manner that set her apart from the rest.

"Cut the crap and get to the point," Rhaegar's voice cut through the room with icy precision, his gaze unflinching. "You claim to have found traces of the wild dragon. Where?"

"In the Great Grass Sea, stretching all the way to Sothoryos," Irina replied earnestly, her tone unwavering.

Rhaegar's eyes narrowed with suspicion. "What color is the dragon?" he demanded. If not for the message hinting at its discovery, there would have been no reason for him to travel to Slaver's Bay. But if this information was true, it would pave the way for avenging his second son—and eliminating a lurking threat.

"White," Irina said confidently, then added, "maybe pale or grey. It has one blind eye."

At this, Rhaegar straightened in his seat, his skepticism fading just enough. There was a 70 or 80 percent chance she was telling the truth.

"Father," Maekar, standing nearby, tugged at the hem of his trousers, his young eyes filled with caution. Both knew this meeting wasn't solely about tracking a wild dragon.

Rhaegar gave a slight nod, signaling that he understood. Regaining his composure, he responded, "That's still not enough. I need the exact location." Sothoryos was vast, and finding a wild dragon was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

"Perhaps near the Axe and the Basilisk Isles," Irina suggested seriously. "There's war in the Basilisk Isles right now, so the Axe seems the likelier location."

Rhaegar considered this, weighing the credibility of her words. With Slaver's Bay positioned across the sea from Sothoryos and informants scattered across the region, her analysis seemed well-founded.

After a pause, Rhaegar spoke bluntly, "Your information has some value. Now, tell me why you really summoned me here." He knew there was always more to such discussions—especially when something was being asked of him.

Irina's expression brightened slightly, sensing an opening. "Even if you refuse the marriage proposal, the Iron Throne and Slaver's Bay can still forge a strong alliance for mutual defense," she said with a serious tone.

Unfazed, Irina pressed on. "You're attacking the Basilisk Isles, the last refuge of the Triarchy pirates. They'll fight to the death, dragging your kingdom into a drawn-out war."

"Braavos and Pentos have already declared a truce," Rhaegar replied coldly, his eyes flashing with a dangerous glint. "We can afford to wait."

"An alliance with Slaver's Bay would end the war much sooner," Irina argued, her posture straightening as she emphasized her point. "With our fleet, the Triarchy pirates would be driven to seek shelter."

"But I don't need an alliance," Rhaegar said, his tone flat and immovable. "Slaver's Bay once knelt to the Freehold Empire, and just a few years ago, it surrendered to me and raised my banner."

He paused, letting his words sink in before delivering his final blow. "If you truly seek the Iron Throne's support, then kneel and pledge your allegiance."

He didn't need Slaver's Bay to be particularly useful, but if Irina wanted to secure her place, it would be on his terms. A woman ruling over Slaver's Bay could make things... complicated.

Irina blinked, momentarily stunned. "You want me to be your advisor?" she asked, disbelief creeping into her voice.

"Or my subject," Rhaegar replied without hesitation.

Suddenly—

Roar...

The palace shook as a massive dragon's head smashed into the walls of the Great Pyramid. Glass shattered, spraying the air as the unmistakable stench of ash and fire filled the hall.

Irina turned her head slowly, dread creeping up her spine as she met the gaze of the beast outside—its gleaming green pupils staring back at her, cold and malevolent, like the eyes of an ancient evil.

Eerie. Cunning. Cruel.

Chapter 646: The Unknown Wild Dragon

"Your Grace, what do you mean?" Irina's voice wavered slightly, but she stood firm, her stubbornness battling against the fear creeping down her spine.

“It’s simple,” Rhaegar replied, his tone casual as he spread his hands. “Surrender, or die.”

Roar...

The Cannibal let out a deep growl, thin streams of green fire flickering from its mouth as its malevolent gaze bore into the room. The slave owners trembled uncontrollably; one or two even soiled themselves. Facing a dragon head-on was a fate worse than death—killing oneself seemed a mercy by comparison.

“Surrender, or die,” Rhaegar repeated, his eyes narrowing with a dangerous glint. He had no time to waste. He still needed to avenge his second son, and this delay tested his patience.

“I...” Irina’s proud posture faltered. She felt the weight of death pressing on her shoulders, and though every fiber of her being resisted, she lowered her head, teeth clenched. “I submit.”

Better to live and fight another day than to perish here. She hadn’t fled from the Lands of the Long Summer to die in a blaze of recklessness.

“Good,” Rhaegar said, a smile barely touching his lips as he waved dismissively.

Roar...

The Cannibal shook its enormous head, slowly pulling away from the Great Pyramid, though a low, menacing growl rumbled in its throat, sending waves of terror through everyone present.

As the dragon retreated, the tension in the hall eased. Slave owners collapsed where they stood, their legs weak, drenched in cold sweat. Irina forced herself to remain composed, though her throat bobbed with the effort to keep calm.

“Bring Lord Jason,” she ordered, her voice strained.

“Yes, Your Grace,” an Unsullied guard bowed and hurried to carry out the command.

Moments later, a disheveled man was dragged into the hall—unkempt, clothes tattered, and hair a matted mess.

“Jason Lannister?” Rhaegar blinked, almost failing to recognize the man who once exuded such arrogance and elegance. Jason, who had always dressed finer than the noblest ladies of the realm, now stood before him looking like a beggar.

He kicked his legs in desperation, sobbing like a child. No one could have imagined the torment he had endured these past few months—locked in a squalid cell, treated worse than a common slave, dragged to the coliseum regularly for beatings.

“Your Grace!” Jason wailed again, his once-rotund body now gaunt, his face hollowed by hunger. “They starve me, they keep me from sleep, they mistreat a Lord of the Realm!”

Rhaegar stared in silence, momentarily at a loss for words.

Maekar, standing beside him, muttered, "What a disgrace."

Rhaegar's face flushed with embarrassment. "Get up," he snapped, his voice cutting through the pitiful sobs. "I'll arrange a ship to take you back to Lannisport."

"Yes, Your Grace," Jason replied, scrambling to his feet with surprising agility, his movements betraying none of the suffering he had just lamented. The once-proud Lord, stripped of his dignity, seemed far quicker on his feet than he ever had been.

'The Game of Thrones truly tests a man's mettle,' Maekar thought dryly, seizing the moment to add his own observation.

Perhaps leaving Lord Jason behind last time hadn't been the worst decision after all.

"Your Grace, I had no desire to make things difficult for him," Irina said with contempt, striding forward. "He's a miserly old fool who refuses to spend a single gold coin to buy his freedom, even though Casterly Rock is overflowing with riches." She sneered, shaking her head. "I've never seen anyone cling to wealth more than life."

"I agreed!" Jason protested, his face smeared with tears and snot.

The letters she'd sent to Lord Tyland in Volantis had gone unanswered, sinking into silence like stones tossed into the sea. No one from the Westerlands had bothered to ransom him.

Rhaegar waved his hand dismissively, as if swatting at a fly. "Enough of this farce. Get someone to clean him up."

"Prepare the fleet to support the Basilisk Isles campaign. Slaver's Bay is to be incorporated under the rule of the Iron Throne," he commanded, his tone leaving no room for debate.

Rhaegar gave her a final glance and then beckoned to Maekar, signaling him to follow. He didn't expect full submission from her, just enough cooperation to use her when needed. As long as she didn't stir up trouble, she could continue developing Slaver's Bay as she saw fit.

...

Later, above Meereen.

Roar...

The black dragon soared high into the sky, its massive wings cutting through the air like curtains that dragged the wind behind them. Following closely was a young silver-grey dragon, its smaller form roaring defiantly at the soldiers manning the city walls.

The soldiers, already terrified, turned pale at the sight, some nearly fainting where they stood.

...

Inside the Great Pyramid.

Irina stood gazing out at the horizon, her expression unreadable. "It's good to have a dragon," she murmured to herself, the bitter truth of it heavy on her heart. There was an undeniable chasm between the power of Dragonlord houses that possessed dragons and those that did not.

If her House, House Daeryon, had even a single dragon—an egg, a hatchling—she wouldn't need to curry favor with House Targaryen, nor be trapped in their shadow.

"Sister!" A loud, simple-minded voice called from behind her, muffled slightly, as if something was still in the speaker's mouth.

Irina turned, and her face softened with helpless affection. A handsome young man stood there, a childish grin on his face, his mouth full of candies. "Why did you run out?" she asked, sighing.

"Eat, eat!" the young man drooled, pulling out more colorful candies from the pocket of his satin clothes, offering one to her with sticky fingers.

"Alright, alright," Irina said sadly, taking the candy and wiping the drool from his chin. He was her only family left—her simple, sweet younger brother. In the Lands of the Long Summer, food was scarce, and all they had were lamb and grass roots. But here, beyond that cursed land, they could eat anything they wanted.

"Take him away," she instructed her most trusted captain, Racallio. "And make sure the servants take good care of him."

Racallio, dressed flamboyantly in a purple gown, laughed boisterously as he draped his arm around the Queen's brother, hoisting him onto his shoulder. With a grin, he carried him off toward the bedchambers, which were filled with the heady scent of incense.

Irina watched them disappear, a pang of guilt gnawing at her. Her brother, with his childlike mind, was the one who would have to continue their bloodline.

But before she could dwell on it, two bald wizards in red robes approached, their presence casting a shadow over her thoughts.

"Your Grace, Queen of Meereen," one of them said, bowing slightly.

Irina's brief moment of reflection vanished, replaced by cold calculation. "Have you found the wild dragon?" she asked, her voice sharp.

"No," the bald wizard admitted, his tone low. "It was once tamed in Asshai, but it escaped."

"Then go find it," Irina commanded, her patience thinning.

"We need more people," the other wizard said.

"Slaver's Bay is never short of people," she retorted, waving them away.

As the wizards retreated, Irina frowned, distaste twisting her features. The wild dragon had never been tamed by the sorcerers of Asshai, despite their claims. It had been a hatchling when they captured it, and they had tortured it—draining its blood and pulling off its scales for their twisted magical experiments.

But the young dragon had broken free, grown strong, and turned on its captors. It was no wonder it had escaped.

"Forget it," Irina muttered to herself, rubbing her face in an attempt to shake off her frustration.

"Finding that dragon is the priority."

...

The Great Grass Sea.

The sun blazed high in a cloudless sky, casting harsh light over the endless expanse of grasslands. A Dothraki tribe, more than 100,000 strong, roamed the vast plains, seeking the season's richest pastures.

"Weak cowards! Don't slow us down!" a Dothraki warrior spat, cursing in broken Valyrian as his whip snapped again at the dark-skinned slaves from the Summer Isles. Their ebony skin stood out against the sea of green—a rare sight in these lands. But they were strong and resilient, a gift from Slaver's Bay, making them excellent slaves.

"Hurry up! We need to reach the river by nightfall!" the gruff voice of a scarred Bloodrider barked as he passed on horseback, his orders punctuated by the crack of whips driving the slaves forward.

At the rear of the procession, carts mixed with cows and sheep trudged along. Among them, a pale-faced silver-haired boy struggled to push a stubborn sheep forward.

"Ba-ba..." The sheep bleated lazily, chewing on the grass, its plump body refusing to budge.

"Go!" The boy's voice was hoarse, as if worn down from exhaustion. He shoved at the animal with all his might, but the sheep remained unmoved.

"You're doing it wrong—the sheep needs to be driven," a voice interrupted. A girl with jet-black hair and a fur skirt approached, flicking a small leather whip. With a quick snap, she struck the sheep's rear, causing it to bleat and finally move forward.

The silver-haired boy watched, defeated, and followed with his head bowed.

"Why aren't you saying anything?" the girl asked, her freckled face bright with curiosity. Her dark, intelligent eyes studied him closely.

He looked at her in silence, his expression unreadable.

"My name's Leah. What's yours?" She continued driving the sheep as she walked beside him, her gaze fixed on him as if he were some rare creature.

The boy remained mute.

Leah frowned and, with sudden boldness, grabbed his collar, leaning in and sniffing like a curious animal. Wrinkling her nose, she pulled back. "Even dragons stink?" she teased, smirking at the scent.

The boy stiffened, his pale eyes flickering with a brief flash of anger as he tried to push her hand away. Leah just grinned, unfazed, her interest in him only growing.

"What's your name? Targaryen?" Leah's eyes sparkled with curiosity as she tugged at the silver-haired boy's dirty, matted hair, her gaze lingering on his unusual purple eyes.

"I'm not... a Targaryen," he muttered, his face tense with discomfort, struggling to deny it.

"You are. My father said so," Leah replied, tilting her head back with a knowing grin. "He's the Khal of the tribe, and he said he's going to sell you to Slaver's Bay—enough gold to buy the whole tribe."

The boy fell silent, his jaw tightening.

"I'll teach you to herd sheep. Will you talk to me then?" Leah leaned in, her face nearly brushing his, her voice teasing.

"And what could I possibly learn from you?" he asked bitterly, his lips curling into a pained smile. "How to beat slaves? The same way you beat sheep?"

"You're boring!" Leah snapped, her expression darkening before she spun around and stormed off.

Crack!

No sooner had she left than a whip sliced through the air, striking the boy's back with a sickening snap. His linen shirt split open, exposing fresh, bloody welts beneath.

The boy gritted his teeth, refusing to make a sound, though the pain was searing.

"Take care of your sheep, just like your goat-fucking ancestors," sneered the young Bloodrider, rolling up the bloodstained whip with disdain.

The silver-haired boy trembled, his purple eyes locking onto the Bloodrider with a chilling intensity. He glared, his gaze dark and full of quiet fury, as if committing the man's face to memory.

"Want more?" the young Bloodrider jeered, raising the whip to strike again.

But before the blow could land, a large hand gripped the Bloodrider's arm, stopping him mid-swing. The scarred Bloodrider had appeared without warning, his face thunderous. "Don't be a fool. Obey the Khal's orders."

The young Bloodrider scowled, pulling his arm free before riding off, but the silver-haired boy's eyes never left him.

"You need to be smarter," the scarred Bloodrider said in broken Valyrian, his voice firm yet carrying a note of warning, before turning to relay orders to the rest of the camp.

The boy understood the words clearly. In the entire tribe, only the Khal's daughter spoke pure Valyrian, while the others mixed their speech with broken dialects of Dothraki. Wincing from the pain, he continued to drive the sheep forward.

"Ba-ba..." One of the plump-bottomed sheep bleated, suddenly rearing up and knocking him to the ground. His wounded back struck a sharp stone, sending waves of agony through his body. Sweat beaded on his brow as he struggled to sit up.

Pop.

His hand slipped into something slick. He glanced down and grimaced in disgust—it was a pool of black, slimy excrement.

“Dung,” he muttered, his nostrils flaring as the pungent smell of sulfur hit him, the familiar stench of livestock waste.

Tick... tock...

"No dragon... no Targaryen..." he whispered, his voice cracking with emotion.

The boy buried his face in the sheep's thick fleece, muffling his sobs, the overwhelming sense of loss and loneliness washing over him in silence.

Chapter 647: The Great Targaryen Council

Volantis.

The weather was clear and pleasant as the council convened atop the towering Black Wall. Rhaegar stood by the council table early, flanked by his two sons. The "table" was more a vast sandbox, where battle plans and strategies were visualized with ease.

The Baela and Rhaena sisters, serving as cupbearers, moved gracefully among the gathered family and advisors, offering refreshments. The first to arrive were Rhaenys, her husband and Laenor.

“Your Grace,” Laenor greeted, his voice tinged with bashfulness as he nodded, dressed in a finely tailored brocade suit. The new clothes helped smooth his rough edges, but he still lacked a certain confidence.

“Sit,” Rhaegar said with a faint, unreadable smile, his tone neither warm nor cold.

“Come now, your cousin may be king, but he's still family,” Rhaenys interjected, wrapping her arms around her newly returned son, her joy palpable.

Laenor nodded, taking a seat, though his movements were awkward, still adjusting to the sudden shift in his status. “I suppose I'll get used to it... in time,” he said, offering a wry smile as his hands fidgeted nervously in his lap.

Rhaegar silently pushed a goblet of golden wine toward him, casting a brief glance at the sisters. Baela's expression was a complex mix of emotions as she maintained a poised demeanor, carefully minding the manners of her upbringing. Meanwhile, Rhaena stood nearby, smiling too brightly, the discomfort of her shifting position evident.

With Laenor's return, Corlys' inheritance had changed automatically—his eldest son had been restored to his rightful place. Rhaena, who had been groomed as heir, now found herself pushed aside, a status gap she could not help but feel keenly.

As the day went on, more members of House Targaryen arrived. Aegon, Helaena, Aemond, and Daeron—the four adult dragonriders born of the same mother—gathered at the council.

From King's Landing came Daemon, accompanied by Mysaria, the enigmatic White Worm.

Roar!

Syrax circled overhead, its enormous 40-meter frame casting a broad shadow over the assembly. The dragon wasn't alone. Perched on its back alongside Rhaenyra were two young dragons. Visenya, her daughter, sat nestled in her mother's arms, while at her feet lay a menacing, earth-colored dragon, its sharp gaze surveying the scene.

Aegor, her youngest son, clung to his sister, gnawing contentedly on a bright orange dragon egg, drool dribbling down his chin.

Roar!

The timing was fitting. With the good news of Laenor's return and the successful assault on the Basilisk Isles, Rhaegar had issued a special order—a Great Council to reunite the Targaryens, bringing together all three generations. While it carried no formal agenda, it was a rare chance for the family to reconnect.

"Was the journey safe?" Rhaenyra approached as Rhaegar stood to greet her.

Rhaenyra's face was drawn and weary, her smile a faint shadow of its usual warmth. The loss of their second son had struck them both deeply, leaving a lingering sorrow neither could fully shake.

"Everything will pass. That wild dragon won't survive much longer," Rhaegar said, his voice heavy with resolve. His hand found hers, and though her fingers were cold, he held them tightly. He was confident in his words—driven by the need for vengeance, and by his pain.

Glancing up, Rhaegar saw the Black Wall teeming with the presence of their kin. Overhead, a dozen dragons soared, casting shadows over the gathered Targaryens. This was their golden age—a House at the peak of its power. They had far surpassed the reigns of the Young and Old Kings, and no force in the known world could threaten their might.

Rhaenyra gave him a sideways glance and nudged him lightly. "It's a good day. You should smile more," she said, her eyes soft but tired, as though the weight of their grief pressed her down.

Who wouldn't feel the sadness? They had to lean on each other, to push through the darkness together.

"Give me the egg!" Visenya suddenly appeared at Rhaegar's feet, reaching for her brother's small, chubby leg.

"Don't call him by that nickname," Rhaegar said sternly, pressing a finger gently to his daughter's forehead.

Rhaenyra raised her eyebrows, then playfully slapped the back of Visenya's head, making a soft thud.

Visenya stepped back, biting her lip, trying to hold back tears. Despite her frustration, she managed to snatch Aegor into her arms, holding her brother as if he were her prize.

As they settled in, the family began to relax, conversations flowing more easily, the mood lightening bit by bit.

Aegon joined Rhaegar, wrapping an arm around his two children. Leaning in, he whispered, "You're heartbroken over your son's loss. How about I send these two to you for fosterage? It'll give you something to focus on."

responsibility?" he replied, a sharp edge in his voice. "Keep them yourself." His tone left little room for argument. Black lines of irritation creased his forehead—raising other people's children held no appeal for him.

"Your Grace..."

The sisters approached Rhaenyra, gracefully serving tea and water. Rhaegar stroked his chin, his mind already drifting into deep thought. This gathering was far from over.

Moments later, two royal ships, their sails emblazoned with the three-headed red dragon, docked at the port of Volantis. Tyland, who doubled as a tutor, led a group of children ashore, guiding them carefully by the hand. Arriving were Rhaegar's seventh and eighth children, Viserion and Daenaera, along with Daemon's firstborn, Gaemon, and his illegitimate son, Aenar.

In Westeros, the distinction was clear: legitimacy mattered more than birth order. Daemon had never remarried after Laena's death, and though Aenar, born to Mysaria, was acknowledged by both his father and the royal family, he remained a bastard by law.

As the children gathered, an unexpected figure arrived, awkwardly standing at the edge of the group.

"Celine, come here," Aemond called with a slight smile, stepping forward to take his wife's hand.

Celine blushed deeply, her gaze lowered, barely able to meet the eyes of anyone around her. The subtle tension between the couple drew the attention of the entire gathering, and Rhaegar and Rhaenyra exchanged knowing glances, settling back into their chairs. It was nice to sit back and watch the scene unfold, a brief moment of lightness amidst heavier matters.

Unaware of the attention, Aemond remained focused on Celine, gently inquiring after her well-being. He pulled out a chair for her, seating her beside him. By chance—or perhaps not—he ended up seated not beside Aegon or Helaena, but directly next to Laenor.

Celine's discomfort grew, her eyes catching a glimpse of her ex-husband from the corner of her eye. She stiffened, feeling as though she were sitting on pins and needles. Laenor, equally uneasy, wiped the sweat from his brow, trying to avoid her gaze.

It wasn't just the former spouses who were uncomfortable. Nearby, Daeron and Rhaena fidgeted in their seats, unsettled by the unusual gathering. After all, just weeks ago, Rhaena had been the rightful heir to Driftmark. Now, cousins, uncles, and former spouses were seated awkwardly together, the air thick with tension.

Rhaegar took a sip of his sweet wine, watching with mild amusement as the scene played out. The children were gathered around his feet, but for the moment, he paid them little mind, too entertained by the unusual company.

Baelon and Maekar, being slightly older, sat wide-eyed, observing the scene with interest. They had clearly inherited their parents' spirit of enjoying a bit of drama.

"It's a miracle that Laenor is still alive and back," Rhaenyra murmured under her breath, taking a slow sip of sake. Her head rested gently on Rhaegar's broad shoulder, her delicately braided hair tickling his ear.

"Are we going to have a fight?"

"Shh, Uncle Three is very powerful," Daenerys whispered, putting a finger to her lips as she peered cautiously over her father's knee. She wasn't keen on the idea of a fight breaking out and wanted to be ready to hide if things got too intense.

Rhaegar glanced around, a soft laugh escaping him as he overheard the children's playful chatter. Surrounded by his family, even with the awkward undercurrents of past relationships and complicated bloodlines, he felt a sense of lightness.

"Hey, hey, I'll bet five golden dragons that Aemond is going to make a scene," Aegon said, pushing his nephew Baelon aside as he leaned in to whisper in Rhaegar's ear. He raised an eyebrow mischievously and pulled a handful of golden dragons from his pocket.

Rhaegar didn't flinch. "What are we betting on this time? Teaching the children bad habits?" Without missing a beat, he reached out, snatched the coins, and scattered them among the dragon hatchlings on the ground.

Visenya was the first to react, quickly scooping up the coins and stuffing them into Aegor's diaper with a triumphant grin.

"Haha!" A low laugh rumbled from the corner, drawing everyone's attention. It was Daemon, his eyes gleaming with anticipation. He feigned innocence, covering his mouth as if to stifle more laughter, though it was clear he was enjoying the unfolding drama.

The gathering had taken on an air of tension, with several family members watching closely, clearly expecting a confrontation. Laenor, visibly uncomfortable, gritted his teeth. Despite everything, he tried to remain composed. "I'm glad to see you're doing well," he said stiffly, his words directed at his former wife, Celine, though his gaze kept slipping past her, avoiding direct eye contact.

Celine's face flushed, and she murmured into her chest, "I'm just as surprised to see you alive." Her voice was soft, barely audible, as if the simple act of speaking to him took all the courage she had.

Technically, they had never divorced, and the tension between them lingered like unfinished business. Even exchanging pleasantries felt like a monumental effort.

"Why don't you two chat a little longer?" Aemond cut in smoothly, stepping between the two chairs. His hand landed on Laenor's shoulder, but the gesture was far from friendly. His sharp, one-eyed gaze flicked back and forth, a glimmer of amusement in his expression. "You've been apart for years. Surely, there's plenty to catch up on?"

Laenor's discomfort deepened, but he stood his ground. "I sincerely wish you all the best with your marriage to her," he said, his voice taking on a more formal tone. "Celine is a good woman—innocent and flawless like milk, as you surely know." The word "innocent" carried a subtle, pointed emphasis, and for a moment, Laenor's old frustrations surfaced.

Aemond's lips curled into a slow, mocking smile. "Oh? So, you know her that well?" His voice was deliberately drawn out, his posture growing more aggressive as his grip on Laenor's shoulder tightened. The pressure was subtle but unmistakable, and the bones in Laenor's shoulder creaked under Aemond's strength.

Laenor's face paled. "That's all in the past, cousin," he said quietly, clearly unnerved by Aemond's intensity. He couldn't understand why Aemond was targeting him so openly, but his sense of decorum and upbringing kept him from reacting more forcefully.

Roar!

High above, a pair of miserable green vertical pupils gleamed from the clouds, exerting an undeniable dominance over the dragons below.

Aemond, however, seemed oblivious to the tension between the dragons, his focus entirely on Laenor. His lips twisted into a derisive smirk. "Cousin, do tell—how did you escape death?" he asked, his voice dripping with sarcasm. "And where have you been all these years? Selling fish?" He exaggeratedly sniffed the air, wrinkling his nose in mock disgust before flapping his hands as if to waft away an imagined stench.

The insult hit its mark. Laenor stood up abruptly, his face flushed with anger.

Chapter 648: The Pale Wild Dragon Shows His Tracks

"Aren't you welcoming me?" Laenor asked indignantly. "Or are you dissatisfied with your wife and taking it out on a woman?"

Aemond's expression turned cold as he said gloomily, "Compared to you, I hope it's my poor nephew who returns."

"Who?" Laenor was taken aback, unable to understand. He only knew that his cousin became the king, had taken the throne and fathered many children. He wasn't even aware that one of them had met with an accident.

"Don't you know yet? It was half a month before you returned." Aemond's one eye darkened as he continued in a sharp tone, "Isn't it a coincidence that the day after the child was born, someone saw a wounded dragon on Tarth—and then you came back?"

Aemond did not lower his voice, ensuring the entire audience could hear. According to his inquiries, his nephew Aemon shouldn't have been attacked by a wild dragon. There was another dragon involved, one that had been chased, and the situation clearly implicated Laenor and his dragon.

At these words, many people's faces changed. Rhaenys frowned and began to speak, but Laenor quickly cut her off.

"This has nothing to do with me." Laenor felt confused and denied it vehemently. "The culprit is the wild dragon you mentioned. Seasmoke is innocent."

"I don't care if you're innocent or not!" Aemond suddenly raised his voice, stepping forward and slamming his chest into Laenor's. He stared him down and said fiercely, "You—you never should have come back."

"Stop it!"

"Aemond, watch your words," Corlys and Rhaegar both interjected, one rising quickly to his feet while the other frowned slightly. Rhaegar seemed conflicted but held back from further reprimand. Some things could be said, while others could not. Just because something couldn't be spoken didn't make it untrue.

Laenor's route back was suspicious, especially since it passed near Shipbreaker Bay, where Aemon's accident had occurred. Seasmoke was also mysteriously injured. No amount of explanation could withstand close scrutiny.

Corlys, however, glared furiously at Aemond and demanded, "Are you doubting my son, or are you defying House Velaryon?"

Laenor was the face of House Velaryon, and as his father, Corlys would never allow anyone to humiliate him.

But Aemond wasn't intimidated in the slightest. With a playful smile, he replied, "Velaryon? You ask who the heir to Driftmark is, so I'll ask you the same question."

At these words, Daeron and Rhaena paled. In theory, they were the confirmed heirs, and Driftmark should have belonged to them. Aemond tilted his head, waiting for an answer. He had every reason to reject Laenor—his nephew's accident, Rhaena's claim to inheritance...

The return of a Velaryon had cost his house far too much.

"Aemond, you've asked your question." Rhaegar stepped in, determined to stop the growing farce. The future of House Velaryon was at stake, and this was no longer a matter for casual discussion. Laenor was the most legitimate heir by virtue of his presence.

"Your Grace, I should be the one to handle my family's internal matters," Corlys retorted to Rhaegar, his tone firm. "My son has returned, he has done nothing wrong, and he should not be subjected to such vile accusations."

"Then how does he explain Seasmoke's injuries?" Aemond shouted, pointing an accusatory finger at Laenor's past. "Ser Fishmonger."

"This is slander," Laenor shot back, his eyes resolute, undeterred by the weight of the past decade.

Corlys' face darkened like a stormy sky. He was ready to unleash his fury on the one-eyed Aemond.

"Have you had enough?" Rhaegar's patience was wearing thin, his voice flattening as it grew colder. He had no time for this endless nonsense. His child was dead, and the inheritance returned to someone else. The bitterness gnawed at him, and he had no desire to prolong the argument.

Aemond and Corlys locked eyes, the tension between them crackling like lightning.

"It's hot. Let's sit down and have a drink first," Rhaenyra interjected, placing a calming hand on Rhaegar's shoulder. She raised her glass in a conciliatory gesture. If they continued like this, the two opposing sides might not fight to the death, but the volatile situation around them was certain to explode.

Helaena clapped her hands and laughed softly. "Yes, we still have business to discuss."

"Humph!" Aemond and Corlys each snorted in contempt before reluctantly returning to their seats.

Laenor, feeling deeply depressed, switched seats with his neighbor, Daeron. Across the room, Celine covered her face and wept, and Rhaena quietly escorted her out.

After a brief silence, the council formally convened. The topic was simple: formulating a strategy for the distribution of the Basilisk Isles. All adult dragon riders in the family were to go to war, while the older children—like Baelon—would stay behind to care for their younger siblings and guard the home base at Volantis.

This was the first time that all members of House Targaryen had visited Essos, so close to the ancient land of Old Valyria. The threat of the Four Cities Alliance, including Braavos, loomed large, meaning the war had to be swift. With the old king in King's Landing commanding Vermithor but in poor health, the defense fell to Gulltown in the Vale and the White Harbor fleet in the North.

Rhaegar raised his wine glass and said solemnly, "For the honor and prosperity of the House, I ask that you do your utmost to eradicate the remnants of the Triarchy."

"For the House!" came the chorus, as one by one, they raised their glasses and drank.

Above them, dragons danced in the sky, roaring and weaving through the clouds. It was the dawn of a magnificent era.

...

Half a month later.

Basilisk Isles, Isle of Tears.

A massive fleet docked at the shore, soldiers bearing the red three-headed dragon emblem on their armor swarming ashore, their numbers no less than two thousand.

"Roar!" Above them, a yellow jade dragon hovered in the sky, unleashing scorching golden Dragonfire.

The battle was about to begin, and it was quickly turning one-sided. Syrax roared with wild ferocity, showing none of the restraint of a tamed dragon. Golden flames engulfed the island, wrapping it in a blinding halo.

Miles away, along the southern mainland coast...

"Roar..."

The Cannibal crouched low, stretching its long neck and letting out a ferocious roar. High above, Dreamfyre, with scales the color of pale blue sky, circled slowly, almost blending with the heavens.

"Is she always like this?" Rhaegar asked, leaning against his black dragon.

"Just blowing off steam," Helaena replied, watching the havoc on the Isle of Tears with a smirk.

"Syrax is truly a fierce golden beast."

Rhaenyra had been under immense psychological pressure since losing her son, and this was her way of releasing it—by raining Dragonfire on the Triarchy's pirates.

The battle progressed swiftly. With the dragons' help, the Royal Fleet drove the Lyseni pirates into the sea, routing them entirely. Rhaegar kept a watchful eye on the skirmish.

"What's the situation on Naath?" he asked.

"The Sellswords of Tyrosh are holed up," Helaena answered, tilting her head thoughtfully. "Aemond's been burning them for seven days."

Naath's defense was held by the three brothers—Aegon, Aemond, and Daeron—along with their dragons. Supported by the combined fleets of Hightower, Lannister, and the Arbor, they had achieved a great victory early on. However, Naath's natural defenses made it difficult to attack, and Tyrosh's Sellswords were renowned fighters.

"Quack, quack..." A black raven swooped down, landing gracefully on Rhaegar's shoulder. The bird twisted its neck, raising one claw.

"Tormund's raven," Rhaegar recognized it immediately, taking the letter from its talon and reading quickly.

War had erupted on all fronts, and the battle lines had clearly been drawn. The Triarchy pirates had been given no quarter, and the full might of their enemies bore down upon them.

Helaena leaned over, resting her chin on Rhaegar's shoulder as she pouted playfully. "Great victory at The Axe... Wyvern remains... traces of a wild dragon?" Her voice was curious, eyes wide with interest. Despite being mothers now, both she and Rhaenyra still acted like children at times, even squabbling over food with their younger sister, Visenya.

"I'll go with you," Helaena said eagerly, turning toward Dreamfyre.

"No," Rhaegar refused flatly, concern shadowing his face. "You stay with Rhaenyra. Caraxes, Meleys, and me are enough."

Daemon and Rhaenys were already stationed at The Axe with their children, and the combined strength of two prime-aged dragons and an adult dragon made for formidable combat power. By the time the Cannibal arrived, the wild dragon would surely be slain.

"Be a good girl, and I'll bring you back some special treats," Rhaegar teased, pinching Helaena's soft cheek and giving her a playful smack.

Helaena blushed, her face reddening. Since giving birth to her two children, much of the pressure from the uncertain future had lifted, allowing her to reclaim some of the carefree joy of her younger days—something her young dragons adored.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal shook itself, flapping its massive wings to scatter the dirt clinging to its scales. With a powerful thrust, it took to the sky, carrying its rider toward the distant battle.

...

Half a day later...

The Axe, In a mountain range.

A faint rustling echoed through the steep mountains. The jungle shrubs swayed violently, their green leaves withering and falling at a speed visible to the naked eye. A pungent stench of decay filled the air, spreading across the landscape for nearly a kilometer.

Small animals foraging nearby froze in terror as the foul odor reached them.

Grunting...

A pale dragon's head emerged from the jungle, its blood-stained mouth crunching down on an ugly lizard crushed into the mud. One of its eye sockets was an open, bloody wound, mangled and grotesque. The creature looked like a demon straight from the depths of hell.

"Roar..."

Suddenly, a huge, dark red serpent-like beast flew overhead, emitting a sharp, continuous hiss as it passed. The pale dragon's head lay motionless on the ground, its remaining eye tracking the serpent-like creature as it disappeared over the mountains, where it landed among the bushes, panting heavily.

"Roar!"

A pale silver dragon streaked by, its wings flapping softly as it slowed its pace. The pale wild dragon's pupils shrank, and its fangs dripped with saliva.

Zilla, zilla...

The drops of its putrid saliva fell to the ground, burning through the leaves and scorching the earth. The dragon wasn't just wounded—its entire body reeked of rot, as though the flesh beneath its scales was decaying inch by inch, maggots feasting on the festering wounds.

"Roar..."

The pale wild dragon shook its head, its bony wings trembling as it slowly crawled toward its den in the mountain.

The dorsal fin along its lower abdomen scraped the earth, leaving a jagged furrow in its wake. Despite its hideous appearance, the dragon's body was strangely slender, and the pale, marble-like scales glimmered in patches where they weren't rotting.

But its head—twisted into a sickly visage of madness and ferocity—looked like the face of death itself.

Boom!

A gust of wind ripped through the jungle, tearing apart large sections of the canopy and spreading the choking smell of ash. The pale wild dragon's pupils contracted as it tensed, raising its head in what almost seemed like human surprise.

Crack!

A tall tree snapped, its dense vines tumbling down like thin, writhing snakes, covering the pale scales.

In the next instant, a massive pair of pitch-black wings, as wide as the sky itself, blotted out the sun.

"Be careful, Cannibal," Rhaegar's voice called down from above, his gaze sweeping over the hidden den below. He searched the terrain, alert.

The Cannibal's glowing green eyes peered down with disdain. It snorted, flapped its massive wings, and soared higher into the clouds.

"Roar..."

The pale wild dragon exhaled a foul breath, shaking free of the clinging vines and quickening its crawl. But as it moved, the sky darkened again.

The black dragon returned, its green vertical pupils glowing with menace. Swinging its head from side to side, it glared down at the jungle below, scanning for the elusive prey.

Chapter 649: A Feast Divided Among Dragons

As far as the eye could see, the dense jungle trembled slightly, revealing a sharp dragon's tail as pale as marble.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal roared fiercely, puffing out its chest as it dove at high speed.

Rhaegar's body shook as the pale color burst into his vision, and he immediately shouted, "Attack! Don't let it get away!"

I found it!

I finally ran into it!

"Roar..."

The pale Dragonfire burst from the jungle, its emaciated body charging forward, tattered wings flapping desperately in an attempt to escape.

Boom!

The Cannibal did not dodge or avoid; instead, it crashed head-on into the searing Dragonfire, opening its enormous abyssal maw in pursuit.

The pale wild dragon glanced back, its vertical pupils filled with disbelief. Behind it, the giant dragon was covered in hard, jet-black scales that glistened with a metallic sheen in the firelight. It was strong and fierce, like a colossus carved from Dragonstone.

"Roar...."

A shrill dragon roar, like a sonic wave, squeezed from its throat as its tattered wings beat hard, its sinuous body rising into the air.

Among dragons of the same size, the burly ones had more explosive power than the slender ones. The size difference between the two was immense—more than double—and the gap in fighting ability was like night and day.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal's green pupils glowed with excitement as it flapped its wings, its thick tail sweeping through the jungle. It could sense it—the decrepit old dragon was a Dragoneater, a species that devoured its own kind.

Normally, Dragoneaters were rare, with only one appearing in a generation. But when two Dragoneaters met in the same era, the cruel nature in their blood would erupt. The other was the best nutrient for their growth.

"Dracarys!" Rhaegar's heart surged with excitement, his murderous intent impossible to hide.

The two enormous beasts—one white, one black—soared into the sky together like yin and yang, circling each other in perfect balance.

Boom!

The pale wild dragon dove headlong into the clouds, its tattered scales blending perfectly with the thick mist. The Cannibal slowed its pace, clearing a path with a pillar of eerie green dragonfire.

"Roar..." The Cannibal streaked through the sky like a dark meteor, its massive body engulfing the Pale Wild Dragon. Its jaws opened wide, aiming for the dragon's neck.

Boom!

The Pale Wild Dragon suddenly twisted, spewing pale Dragonfire from its head as it coiled its long body into a bow shape. The flames, however, missed the black scales.

Sizzle!

At the last second, the Cannibal reacted with lightning speed, shifting its attack. Instead of striking with its jaws, it lashed out with its hind legs, the claws strong enough to split mountains and crush stone, hooking into the pale dragon's back.

Large pieces of scales shattered, and foul dragon blood sprayed into the air.

"Roar..."

The Cannibal let out a long howl, tilting its head back as its claws gripped its opponent fiercely. It spun through the air like a black falcon, twisting with brutal precision. Its massive body carved a semicircle in the sky, dragon wings beating with all their might.

"Grunting..." The Cannibal regained its balance, mouth wide open as it swallowed the chunk of flesh torn from the pale dragon, sending a torrent of searing heat from its nostrils.

In the next moment, the Tyrant of Dragons, its mind consumed with hunger, dove downward. A blast of greenish Dragonfire, like burning ash, showered the battlefield.

The pale wild dragon, still reeling from the fall, was engulfed in the flames. Its grey-white wings flapped in slow, rusted movements.

Drip... Drip...

Boom!

The black dragon swooped down, its ferocious jaws slamming into the slender dragon's neck, fangs sinking deep into the scales.

"Roar..."

The pale dragon writhed helplessly as the Cannibal's fangs crushed into its flesh. "Well done, Cannibal," Rhaegar murmured, watching with cold intensity as the Pale Wild Dragon endured every moment of its agony. Without issuing another command, he stood still, waiting for death to claim his foe.

The Pale Wild Dragon had killed Aemon and his dragon—now, it was paying with its life.

Crunch...

The Cannibal's green, vertical pupils were pitiless as its massive jaws slowly closed around its opponent's neck, the abyss devouring it bit by bit.

"Sss... Roar..."

Suddenly, the pale wild dragon thrashed wildly, its slender body coiling like a snake as it climbed onto the Cannibal's chest. Its sharp claws pierced through the solid black scales with a loud crack. Blood sprayed as the pale dragon's desperate attack landed, staining the air with crimson droplets.

"Sss... Roar..."

The Cannibal roared in pain, clamping its jaws even tighter as sticky, green Dragonfire spewed from its mouth. The pale wild dragon, its consciousness fading as it neared death, opened its massive jaws. The ferocity of the Dragoneater surged within it, triggering an instinctual, last-ditch counterattack.

Its claws dug deeper into the Cannibal's searing flesh, desperately trying to tear out its opponent's entrails.

For a brief moment, the green vertical pupils of the Cannibal turned cold. Its chest muscles compressed with force as it sank its teeth further into the pale dragon.

"Release it!" Rhaegar suddenly commanded, yanking hard on the reins that controlled the dragon.

A flicker of surprise crossed the Cannibal's eyes, but it obeyed. Twisting its neck, it loosened its grip on the dying dragon and, with a powerful flap of its wings, kicked the pale wild dragon away with brutal force.

Boom!

The Cannibal's large claw struck its opponent's waist, and the pale wild dragon let out a miserable shriek, its body tumbling uncontrollably through the air. The vicious blows to both its upper and lower body had left it nearly paralyzed.

The Cannibal prepared to pounce again, but a sharp tug on the reins stopped it in its tracks.

"Let it run, mate," Rhaegar's voice was as cold as winter frost, his face ashen. There was no need to chase a crippled foe. This Dragoneater would die soon enough—and it would suffer in the most agonizing way.

"Roar..."

The pale wild dragon plummeted, barely managing to slow its descent before crashing into the jungle with a thunderous noise, knocking down trees in a wide swath.

For a long moment, there was silence. Then, slowly, the pale wild dragon raised its head, shaking it in a daze. With what little sanity remained, it flapped its battered wings and began to soar low across the horizon, fleeing toward the distance.

Its survival instinct drove it now, carrying it toward the sea—back to the land of its birth.

...

Basilisk Isles.

The Pale Wild Dragon gasped heavily, its wounds oozing blood as it desperately tried to speed up. It flew over the scattered islands of the Basilisk Isles, heading straight for the distant coast at the edge of the continent of Sothoryos.

Whoosh

The ancient sound of a horn echoed across the azure sky.

A dragon as black as coal soared through the clouds, its vast wings blotting out the blinding sun and casting a massive shadow over the Pale Wild Dragon.

"Roar..."

"Roar!"

The black dragon's roar reverberated in every direction like rolling thunder. The Pale Wild Dragon's dull pupils flickered with a spark of light as it heard the horn, urging itself to fly harder. But just moments later, its shoulder blades snapped, and its massive body plummeted uncontrollably.

With a thunderous crash, it landed on an island in the middle of the sea, miraculously surviving the fall. The island was overgrown with shrubs, and the coast of Sothoryos was several miles away. Beyond the azure waters, a green-capped sleeping volcano towered on the horizon, overlooking a deep, bottomless canyon.

"Chirp, chirp..."

A flock of birds fluttered around, scavenging pale bone fragments from the dragon's crash, hiding them in the bushes to build their nests.

"Roar..."

The Pale Wild Dragon lay in a daze, staring in awe at the scene before it. Its emaciated body was twisted unnaturally, and foul-smelling blood oozed from its jagged mouth of broken teeth. Shadows crept over it, slowly enveloping its narrow, vertical pupils.

A dragon's claw, black as coal, came into view, crushing down on the Pale Wild Dragon's head.

"Eat it," Rhaegar muttered coldly, his voice as unforgiving as steel. "Let it atone for the mistakes it made."

The Cannibal's green vertical pupils gleamed with grim satisfaction. It lowered its head and bit into the Pale Wild Dragon's neck, its fangs sinking deep, the sound of bones cracking echoing across the island.

"Roar... crack..."

The Pale Wild Dragon's last cry was weak and melodic, its vertical pupils slowly closing as it succumbed to its fate.

"Roar..."

, the black dragon crushed the Pale Wild Dragon's neck. Its monstrous jaws clamped down, tearing the bloodied head from its body. Blood sprayed into the air, staining the blue sky a deep red before falling to the ground, where it corroded the withered soil below.

The crazed Dragoneater had fallen, lifeless, its body spewing blood like a fountain from its broken neck.

"You deserve to die," Rhaegar whispered, his violet eyes deep and cold as a pool of still water. His face was splattered with blood, but his gaze remained fixed. He saw something.

"Croak~~"

A dull, grey dream toad lay on its back, mouth wide open as it inhaled wisps of grey smoke. The smoke drifted from the lifeless head of the Pale Wild Dragon, its eyes closed forever.

Rhaegar's eyes were wide open, his calm breathing now slightly labored. Fragments of a dream not his own began to seep into his mind.

A dark cave, a canyon with a winding stream, the rotting corpse of a dragon...

A pale young dragon with a deformed body hatched from a greyish-white egg. Its body was thin and snake-like, thick fangs pushing its jaws apart, and its horns twisted together in a grotesque tangle.

"Another failure."

"Catch it—we can still raise it."

A familiar red-robed man entered the scene, grabbing the pale young dragon by the neck and carrying it off like a helpless chick.

The scene shifted.

The skinny pale wild dragon lived among the towering Fourteen Flames, devouring young dragons and dragon eggs. Driven away by its kin, it was forcibly domesticated by humans. Its temperament grew increasingly deranged until, one day, it bit the rider on its back and fled to the barren continent of its birth.

Pop~~

The dream fragments shattered like soap bubbles, and the final image showed the pale dragon, stained with blood, biting a young green dragon to pieces.

Kacha—

A sharp cracking sound rang in Rhaegar's ears, jolting him from the dream. The Cannibal had snapped the Pale Wild Dragon's head in its powerful jaws, swallowing it in two bites, licking its lips with a scarlet tongue.

"Roar!"

"Roar..."

The skies echoed with the roars of circling dragons, watching as the corpse the wild dragon fell. The Cannibal's green vertical pupils flashed with disdain as it spat a mouthful of Dragonfire at the remains, then flew away with a leisurely flap of its wings.

Click.

Caraxes and Meleys were the first to land, tearing apart the grey dragon's wings from both sides, blood dripping from their jaws as they chewed the flesh. Syrax and Sunfyre arrived last, clawing open the belly of the corpse, their golden heads diving in to devour the entrails.

In no time, the entire body was dismembered.

"Roar!"

Above them, Dreamfyre circled slowly, its docile nature keeping it from joining the feast. Nearby, Seasmoke and Tessarion hovered impatiently, but neither dared to challenge the four dragons below.

Rhaegar silently watched the scene unfold, absently stroking the dark scales beneath him. The Pale Wild Dragon's name was unknown, but it had hatched from the same clutch of eggs as Uragax. Though decades apart in age, both were aberrations—genetic experiments. Uragax had been a relative success, but the Pale Wild Dragon suffered from mental and physical defects.

"Roar..." The Cannibal growled, its blood boiling with excess energy that begged for release.

The Pale Wild Dragon had been very old, at least two hundred years, its flesh dry and aging. It held a medicinal quality that hastened ripening, making it unsuitable for adult dragons to eat, yet dangerously alluring to younger and middle-aged dragons.

"Roar!"

Syrax, typically gentle, plucked a dark red dragon heart from the remains and swallowed it whole.

On her dragon's back, Rhaenyra watched with fierce eyes brimming with tears.

The great revenge had been taken.

Chapter 650: Red Dragon of the Great Grass Sea

Sothoryos Continent, Naath Island.

"Roar!"

From the jagged beach, the black dragon bellowed in rage, unleashing pillars of eerie green Dragonfire.

"Come out, all of you!" Rhaegar's voice boomed, dark with fury, as he rode atop the dragon's back.

The surrounding landscape transformed into a hellish scene. Strange rock formations melted into pools of lava as the entire beach was engulfed in smoke and fire.

The Cannibal's green pupils gleamed with cruelty. Its snout sniffed the air, searching for the scent of prey hidden in caves. With deadly precision, it aimed its Dragonfire.

Whoosh!

A volley of arrows struck its bloodied muzzle, sparks flying on impact.

"Roar!"

The Cannibal grew more excited, its massive jaws slamming into the cave entrance, causing the mountain of rocks to shake violently. Rhaegar, seated in his saddle, enveloped by the dragon's dark wings, swayed slightly as the beast's ferocity intensified.

Having devoured the Pale Wild Dragon, the Cannibal's bloodlust demanded an outlet. It would unleash its fury on the last remnants of resistance in the Basilisk Isles, leaving nothing but destruction in its wake.

"Roar!"

Suddenly, two more dragons—one golden, one light blue—descended from the sky, joining the carnage.

"Dracarys!"

Rhaenyra's cold voice echoed through the chaos as she steered Syrax toward the pirate hideouts buried in the strange rock formations. The Triarchy pirates had no escape. Naath, though remote and rich in resources, had become their final refuge. Now, they cowered in the cold, damp tunnels beneath the mountain, trapped like rats.

Helaena landed gracefully at the summit atop Dreamfyre. The majestic dragon's head held high, its light blue scales gleaming in the sunlight, while the Cannibal towered over the battlefield like a dark colossus.

Rhaegar glanced upward, watching as Dreamfyre's light blue Dragonfire cascaded down the mountainside like a waterfall, reducing everything in its path to ash.

"Lord Corlys has already launched the main assault. There's nothing left to worry about," Helaena remarked casually, lying across Dreamfyre's back, her chin resting in her hands. The dragon stood protectively still, ensuring its playful rider was safe.

Rhaegar waved in acknowledgment, a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. The death of the Pale Wild Dragon had lifted a heavy burden from his heart.

...

Time passed swiftly, and a month later, the skies were clear and cloudless. The hot climate of the Summer Sea lingered, the gently rippling water distorted by the rising heat.

Basilisk Isles.

A lone pirate ship, flying a white flag of surrender, sailed slowly out of the harbor. Kneeling on the deck, the bearded leader of Myr addressed the Iron Throne with a somber face.

"Please accept our surrender, Your Grace of the Iron Throne," he said in Valyrian, his voice filled with defeat.

This act marked the fall of the Triarchy. The dragons had encircled the Basilisk Isles, cutting off every escape route. Tens of thousands of people were trapped on the barren islands, resorting to cannibalism as their food supplies ran out. If they didn't surrender, mutiny would surely follow.

Rhaegar stood tall, his family sword, Blackfyre, planted firmly in the ground before him. His voice was as cold as ice.

"Do you understand the consequences of defying me again and again?"

"We will offer you countless riches," the mustachioed pirate leader replied, bowing his head deeply. His sallow face was pale with hunger—he hadn't eaten in three days.

"Your wealth was stolen from my subjects," Rhaegar retorted sharply, his eyes narrowing in disdain.

Nearby, Daemon watched silently, his expression calm. Holding Dark Sister, his own Valyrian steel blade, in one hand, he nonchalantly wiped the dirt from his cloak. The two men—uncle and nephew—exchanged a glance, the air between them filled with an unspoken chill.

“I accept your surrender,” Rhaegar finally declared, raising his chin imperiously. “But you will leave all your wealth behind on the Isle of Tears.”

“No problem,” the pirate leader responded eagerly, his gray eyes lighting up with hope. Yet after a brief pause, his cunning instincts surfaced. He dared to negotiate.

“Your Grace, the treasure is yours. But allow us to return to the continent of Essos.”

Perhaps their move to Sothoryos had been a grave mistake. Returning to the wealthier, more fertile Essos might allow them to rebuild and resume their pirating ways.

Rhaegar looked down at him, a small smile playing on his lips. “Granted. You have three days to withdraw your forces. Women, children, and slaves may leave slowly.”

“Thank you, Your Grace, for your mercy!” the pirate leader gushed, relief flooding his voice. With trembling hands, he accepted a wooden box from one of his subordinates and presented it to Rhaegar. When opened, it was full of gold nuggets and precious stones.

“Now get lost,” Rhaegar snapped, his expression darkening as he took the heavy box.

The mustachioed man wasted no time. He fled back to his pirate ship, terrified that at any moment, if he lingered, he might end up as dragon food.

...

Two and a half days passed.

An overstuffed fleet of more than a hundred ships sailed sluggishly across the Summer Sea. The haphazard collection of large and small vessels looked almost comical, crammed with thirty thousand souls, all clinging to the hope of returning to their homeland.

“Haha, it’s all thanks to me!” the mustachioed leader boasted, staggering drunkenly across the deck. He strutted about, spinning the surrender negotiations into a tale of heroic struggle, full of bravado, with no trace of the fear or humility he had shown just days before.

The sellswords and pirates laughed in unison, cheering his exaggerated account. Whether or not his story was true mattered little. The fact they had escaped was reason enough to celebrate.

The fleet was in disarray, lacking any discipline, and no one noticed the shadow creeping over them.

“Dracarys!”

The voice was clear but eerily soft, carrying across the water to every ear.

"Huh?" The mustachioed man glanced up, blinking in drunken confusion. His blurred vision couldn't make out the threat, not until the heat seared his skin. Then he saw it—green flames raining down from the sky.

"Roar..."

A monstrous dragon, black as coal, descended from the heavens. Its eerie green eyes, like the ghostly fire of death, gleamed as it unleashed a torrent of Dragonfire that consumed hundreds of the overcrowded ships in an instant.

"Dragon!"

"It's the Deathwing! Jump into the sea!"

"Ah! The fire!"

The ash-colored Dragonfire spread like a plague, whipped by the wind, clinging to every ship like melted wax on a candle. Chaos erupted as the fleet was engulfed in flames.

Rhaegar, watching from above, allowed a small smile to play on his lips. He reached into a pouch, grabbed a handful of golden coins, and tossed them into the sea.

"Money?" he said with a sneer. "It won't buy your lives."

"Roar..."

The Cannibal soared into the sky, its massive form cutting through the clouds as it turned toward Volantis, leaving behind a sea of flames.

Below, the fire raged, turning the once-proud fleet into a burning, green inferno.

"Roar!"

"Roar..."

Two scarlet dragons appeared from the sky, their fiery breath scorching the water below. They strafed the sea, incinerating the pirates who had leapt from their burning ships in a desperate bid to survive.

For a time, the air was filled with the wails of the doomed and the despair of the dying, their cries blending into a macabre symphony. Between the red and green flames, a tune of destruction, not of this world, played its final, haunting notes.

...

The Cannibal soared across the Summer Sea and descended within the Black Walls of Volantis.

"Roar~~"

Nearby, a yellow jade dragon lay curled on its side, its massive body coiled into a ball. Its vertical pupils were tightly shut, and it let out a lazy, low snore.

"Father!" Baelon's eyes lit up as he spotted Rhaegar, surrounded by his younger siblings.

Rhaegar dismounted from the Cannibal, shrugging off his black robe that still smelled of dragon. The war was over. The remnants of the Triarchy lay either dead or defeated, no longer a threat.

"Did it work?" Rhaenyra appeared from behind Syrax, a smile on her lips as she approached. She took Rhaegar's robe, now dirtied from the journey, and draped it over her arm with a gentle motion.

Rhaegar leaned in, planting a kiss on her cheek. "Think about what to do with the Basilisk Isles."

Blushing, Rhaenyra glanced at the children and turned her head, embarrassed. "The children are still here!"

"Can we go back now?" Visenya skipped over, one arm slung casually around Aegor's neck, the poor child looking half-hung and ragged as he dangled like a limp rag doll.

"Visenya!" Rhaenyra gasped, quickly rescuing her youngest son from her sister's mischievous hold.

Rhaegar's face darkened, and with a quick nod, he signaled Baelon to handle Visenya. Without hesitation, Baelon and Maekar flanked their sister, dragging her away with synchronized precision.

"Hee hee..." The other children giggled, delighted to see Visenya getting into trouble.

Rhaegar glanced around, then leaned close to Rhaenyra and whispered in her ear, "Are you sure you want to bring all the children back to King's Landing? It's not just our eight dragons—you've got Daemon's and Aegon's children too. Baela and Rhaena, Jaehaerys, Jaehaera..."

"Of course," Rhaenyra replied, her earlobes turning a soft red, warmth flashing in her eyes. "I want my children by my side, where I can train them to be the best dragonriders in history."

After enduring another brutal battle and the devastating loss of a beloved son, Rhaenyra had matured. Her once fiery temperament had cooled, and she now carried herself with the wisdom of someone who had seen life's harshest lessons. Like the great queens Visenya and Alysanne, she knew her path. She would raise their children, nurture their legacy, and build a dynasty of exceptional dragonriders for House Targaryen.

Rhaegar blinked in surprise. He hadn't expected such insight from her; she had always seemed so headstrong and reckless.

"Stop looking at me like that," Rhaenyra said with a smirk, crossing her arms beneath her full, regal figure. Her posture was commanding, her tone confident. "I will take care of them, and history will remember me as the greatest queen there ever was."

Rhaegar chuckled, shaking his head. "King's Landing Kindergarten."

...

Night falls.

The Dothraki Great Grass Sea, beside a quiet stream.

"Hurry, wash my horse!"

A harsh voice cracked the night, followed by the snap of a whip.

A silver-haired boy, pale and gaunt, stumbled to the stream, carrying a heavy bucket. His trembling hands brushed the horse of a young Bloodrider, his movements mechanical. He wore rough hemp clothing, his back crisscrossed with fresh and old scars. His once-vivid purple eyes were now dull and lifeless, as if he'd forgotten what pain felt like.

As the night deepened, the moon cast a cold, silvery glow over the camp. Men and women gathered around the fire, engaging in wild revelry—some feasting on half-cooked flesh, others lost in frenzied acts of intercourse. Now and then, the sound of swords clashing pierced the air as they fought over rank, their savage nature fully unleashed.

The Khal yawned, uninterested, and strolled back to his tent, pulling a newly captured slave girl with him. The Bloodriders slowly dispersed, some taking turns to keep watch, while others rested.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo..." A lone cuckoo fluttered down into the grass, pecking at seeds to fill its belly.

A small figure darted past, weaving through the shadows toward the young Bloodrider's tent.

Hoo hoo hoo...

The silver-haired boy crouched near the tent, listening intently to the rhythmic snoring inside. His fingers brushed against the dragon-head pendant hanging from his neck, a relic of a life long lost.

Hum...

appeared in his hand. The ruby embedded in the hilt was dull, its once-bright gleam long faded. He stared at the black blade, running his fingers along its cold edge.

This sword had saved him. After he had fallen into the sea, it had protected him, keeping him afloat until he was rescued by fishermen on the other side of the Narrow Sea.

"Father, mother, I'm sorry..."

His voice cracked, hoarse with disuse, and tears silently trickled down his cheeks. His dragon was dead, its throat ripped open and its body thrown into the sea, and he'd been left to rot among the Dothraki, treated as less than human. A broken boy, no longer worthy of life.

It would be better to die.

His left hand hovered over the tent curtain, the reflection of his dark sword resolute in the moonlight.

"What are you doing?"

The curtain had barely been lifted when a clear voice startled the silver-haired boy. He spun around, gripping the long sword tightly. In an instant, the tip of the blade hovered against the black-haired girl's throat.

Leah glanced at the sword, unperturbed. She gently pushed the cold steel away, her eyes gleaming with envy. "Is this Valyrian steel? You actually have one." Her Valyrian was clumsy, the words awkward on her tongue.

"I'll kill you," the boy muttered, repositioning the sword as if to make good on his threat, though his voice lacked the conviction.

"You're crying," Leah observed, tilting her head and poking a dirty finger toward the corner of his eye.

The boy flinched but said nothing. Despite the dirt and grime, there was no denying that his gaunt face held a certain beauty, and his violet eyes were strikingly intense.

“Your mother must have been a great beauty,” Leah said, her voice soft with wonder.

“Nonsense,” the boy snapped after a brief pause, his cheeks flushing. “I’m not crying.”

“But you’re shedding tears,” Leah replied matter-of-factly. She wiped away one of the tears with her finger, then, to his horror, brought it to her mouth, tasting it. “Salty.”

The boy’s face twisted in anger, his teeth clenched. “Get away from me, or I’ll kill you too,” he growled.

“Who are you going to kill?” Leah teased, her lips curling into an innocent smile.

“You’re the one who gets beaten up every day. No wonder you want to die.”

Her words cut deep. He could feel his face burning with shame—she had seen through him. Many slaves found ways to end their suffering, but attempting to kill a Bloodrider? That was nearly unheard of.

“Just stay alive,” Leah said seriously. “My father said he won’t sell you. He’ll feed you until you’re plump and healthy.”

“What?” the boy asked, confused.

“You have to live,” Leah explained bluntly. “When the tribe’s poor, we’ll sell you for a good price.”

“He won’t hit you again,” Leah called after him, standing still. She didn’t try to stop him, but her voice held an odd, gentle persuasion.

Boom.

A breeze ruffled the boy’s silver-blond hair, and he froze, a sense of foreboding washing over him.

“Roar!”

A dark red shadow shot across the night sky, glowing like a ruby against the stars. A high-pitched screech echoed above, barely audible amidst the Dothraki’s noise, like the faint cooing of a cuckoo.

The boy’s pupils narrowed in shock. He stared upward, his heart pounding as the crimson blur streaked east, disappearing into the vastness of the Great Grass Sea.

“What are you looking at?” Leah asked, glancing from east to west with a curious smile. “Do you want to live?”

“Maybe...” the boy murmured absently, lost in thought as he continued to gaze at the sky.

Leah leaned in, sniffing at him with a playful wrinkle of her nose. “They say dragons are powerful... but they sure do stink.”

The boy hesitated at her words, but then, for the first time in what felt like forever, a faint smile touched his lips.

“My name is Aemon,” he said softly, meeting her eyes. “Aemon Targaryen.”

