

## **G.O Thrones 681**

### Chapter 681: The Night King's Weakness

His army seemed endless, a relentless tide of the dead that surged forward like a sea, overwhelming everything in its path.

*Roar!*

One after another, dragon roars echoed through the skies as several great beasts soared into the air.

"Dracarys, Dreamfyre!"

The immense pale-blue dragon Dreamfyre leapt over the Great Wall, soaring like a cloud a hundred meters high, its fantastical flames interwoven with blue and white.

*Boom!*

The ground below erupted, large flakes of snow exploding as the advancing army of ghouls came to a sudden halt.

*Roar!*

From the frost-covered city walls, a muddy, weathered dragon crawled forward, defiant. Sheepstealer leapt from the top of the Wall, overcoming its barrier for the first time, and unleashed a torrent of thick, muddy Dragonfire.

Syrax and Sunfyre followed, flying side by side, their golden flames raining down in unison.

With a thunderous rumble, the four dragons attacked together, their Dragonfire tearing through the ranks of the undead like an unstoppable force. The flames carved deep ravines into the snowy ground, scorching the earth and reducing the ghouls to ash.

*Roar!*

Above the Wall, a young light-green dragon circled anxiously, letting out a shrill cry. Baela pulled hard on the reins, urging Moondancer to join the fray. But the young dragon resisted, reluctant to cross the Great Wall—an unusual disobedience.

Even so, the sheer number of dragons on the battlefield was enough to turn the tide. The army of ghouls faltered under the onslaught of fire.

For the first time, the Night King's expression changed. His ice-blue eyes narrowed, and a shadow of concern flickered across his face. His lips parted slightly, revealing white, frostbitten teeth beneath the fog of his breath.

*Roar...*

The Cannibal, black as night, let out a long, fearsome howl. His massive body plunged downward like a meteor, his abyssal maw gathering dark-green Dragonfire. His menacing vertical pupils locked onto a lone figure standing on the distant slope.

Rhaegar's eyes, sharp as a falcon's, fixed on the Night King. His voice was cold and commanding: "Dracarys!"

*Boom!*

The dark-green Dragonfire, thick as smoke and mist, came crashing down, enveloping the towering slope in a torrent of flame.

The Night King remained unmoved, his icy gaze locked on the man and the dragon above. As the Dragonfire hurtled toward him, he calmly raised his ice spear.

A second later, the Night King was swallowed by the Dragonfire, the flames spreading like a deadly mushroom cloud, scorching the snow and earth alike.

For a moment, his figure blurred within the blaze, the searing fire threatening to consume everything in its path.

Rhaegar rose cautiously from the back of the Cannibal, his eyes locked on the raging flames below. The dark-green Dragonfire roared, scorching the earth and cracking the frozen ground beneath it. If the figure trapped within the fire was the legendary Night King, this battle could be over in an instant.

*To end the war, you must first kill the king.*

Rhaegar's heart raced. If the Night King fell here, the White Walkers' invasion would collapse. No creature should be able to survive such fierce flames. The figure had disappeared, seemingly consumed by the fire.

Each second stretched into eternity, and unease crept into Rhaegar's mind. Something wasn't right. And then it happened.

*Whoosh!*

A smooth spear of ice shot through the Dragonfire, slicing the air with lethal precision.

The Cannibal's green pupils contracted sharply, and the dragon twisted violently, flapping its wings to narrowly avoid the spear. But the danger wasn't aimed at the dragon.

The spear had been aimed directly at the Cannibal's neck. As the beast dodged, it grazed the dark dragon's side, tearing through the air toward its rider.

Rhaegar saw the glint of the ice spear reflecting in his eyes, and a chill swept over him. In less than a heartbeat, the spearhead was upon him, the cold biting into his skin.

For an instant, his mind went blank. He ran through a dozen evasive maneuvers in his head, but none of them worked. The spear was too precise, its speed too great. One of them would fall.

*Zero point one second left.*

The icy spear hurtled toward him.

In a last-ditch effort, Rhaegar rolled sideways, gritting his teeth. His loose saddle straps saved him; his body was never tightly bound, allowing him to roll freely. He twisted, moving just enough to avoid a direct hit to his head or chest.

*Pop!*

Bronze scales suddenly covered his body, shattering part of the ice spear as it made contact.

*Sizzle!*

A transparent protective film appeared over his skin, slicing through the spear's sharp tip with ease. The two layers of defense bought him a fraction of a second.

But it wasn't enough.

*Pop!*

The spear pierced his right shoulder with brutal force, the impact throwing Rhaegar backward. He crashed onto the dragon's back, his body slamming into the saddle as pain shot through his limbs. His internal organs felt like they had been shaken loose from the force of the blow.

Rhaegar hit the ground with a heavy thud, breathless, his vision swimming. His shoulder burned with pain, and cold sweat dripped down his face. Yet even through the agony, his mind remained sharp.

*Roar...*

The Cannibal let out a pained wail as dark-green Dragonfire spilled from its maw, wings beating furiously as it soared into the sky. The Ice Crystal Spear had pierced Rhaegar's body and driven deep into the dragon's dark scales.

Rhaegar's face turned deathly pale, his body pinned to the dragon's back, head tilted, barely able to stay conscious.

*Croak... hiss... buzz...*

His mind felt like it had been struck by a sledgehammer, and his ears rang with a chorus of strange noises. The gray Dream Toad leapt onto his forehead, its green eyes rolling wildly. The Serpent and Bat Worm circled the wound, guarding him anxiously against the spear's icy chill.

The three Rune Creatures were restless, black smoke rising from their bodies, all affected by the terrifying cold of the spear. Forced to materialize, they worked desperately to protect their master.

*Boom!*

The Cannibal shot upward, diving headfirst into thick black clouds, its form vanishing in the swirling darkness.

*Whoosh!*

Just as the dragon's tail disappeared into the sky, a second Ice Crystal Spear struck, barely missing its mark. The spear grazed the Cannibal's pitch-black scales, but it was too late to land a direct hit.

Down below, the Night King stood on the slope, his ice-blue eyes narrowing as he watched the dragon escape. A flicker of doubt crossed his cold expression. A White Walker stepped forward,

offering him another spear. The Night King glanced at it but made no move to pursue—the target had left his sight.

*Roar!*

Across the battlefield, several dragons rampaged through the ranks of the undead, setting vast swathes of wights ablaze with their Dragonfire. The Night King's gaze swept over each one, his eyes cold and calculating.

...

Among the clouds, the Cannibal's glowing green pupils burned with anger. The dragon paid no attention to the battle below, focusing instead on checking the condition of its rider.

*Zilala!*

Rhaegar's face was ashen, his left hand frozen solid as he gripped the Ice Crystal Spear embedded in his shoulder. Gritting his teeth, he began to pull the spear out, inch by excruciating inch. Frost had overtaken his hand, and the wound alternated between searing heat and freezing cold.

No blood flowed from the wound; it had all been frozen into a solid clot by the spear's icy touch.

*Pop!*

The moment the Ice Crystal Spear was exposed to the air, it shattered into powder.

*Coo... sssss...*

The three Rune Creatures pounced on him, each using their own unique abilities to aid him. The Serpent inhaled deeply, sucking in the black smoke surrounding Rhaegar's body like a chimney, its dry belly nearly bursting. The frost on his wound began to melt, though it left behind an unbearable itch.

Rhaegar glanced down at his wound, now barely recognizable. His sharp instincts told him the wound wasn't just physical—there was a chilling curse within it, sapping his vitality with every passing moment.

The Serpent absorbed a wisp of the cold air, hanging on for dear life as it tried to contain the magic.

Rhaegar frowned, tearing off a piece of cloth to wrap around the wound. With great effort, he hauled himself to his feet, his body trembling from the pain.

*"Roar..."*

The Cannibal arched its massive head, its green vertical pupils narrowing with tension. It could sense its rider's distress, the pain coursing through Rhaegar's body.

*"It's fine. First, let's deal with these demons."*

Gritting his teeth, Rhaegar forced himself back into the saddle. He had been careless, caught off guard by the Night King's attack. But worse than the spear, was the realization...

His body stiffened, neck aching from strain, as he growled, "Let's face him again, Cannibal."

The Night King's immunity to both Dragonfire and ice had turned him into an even greater threat. Rhaegar knew he had to hold him off, to prevent the danger from reaching Rhaenyra and the others.

*Roar...*

The Cannibal's pupils narrowed further, its wings flapping with renewed intensity as it lowered its head, exuding a powerful, acrid smell of ash.

*Rumbling...*

From above, the black dragon swooped down, spewing dark green Dragonfire that swept across the battlefield in a devastating arc. The flames seemed unending, carving a deep furrow toward the towering slope where the Night King stood.

Sensing the growing threat of the ash-tainted flames, the Night King turned his gaze skyward, locking eyes with the silver-haired figure atop the dragon.

Rhaegar, suppressing the tremors in his body, flipped his left hand and retrieved a spear. The spear, forged in Valyria, gleamed coldly in his grip.

This time, the Night King finally moved. He slid off his rotting horse and strode forward, his long strides carrying him toward the blackened pit where the Dragonfire raged.

*Roar...*

The Cannibal descended, its dark green Dragonfire sweeping the ground. In an instant, the rotting horse and the pale White Walker at the Night King's side were incinerated, reduced to nothing but ash.

"Retreat, Cannibal!" Rhaegar commanded in High Valyrian, his eyes flashing with caution. The Night King had vanished into the Dragonfire, and Rhaegar didn't intend to repeat his mistake.

*Boom!*

The Cannibal, half-airborne, surged back into the sky, its massive body flying high. Unwilling, it glanced back at the battlefield below, its green eyes filled with lingering fury.

At that moment, a sudden change rippled across the battlefield.

*Clatter!*

Half of the dead collapsed where they stood, falling into heaps that piled up like a grotesque mountain of the dead. As if responding to an unseen command, the remaining White Walkers retreated swiftly, vanishing into the depths of the Haunted Forest.

*Roar!*

Dreamfyre's pupils narrowed as it relentlessly pursued the fleeing wights, flames pouring from its jaws, displaying the full destructive power of a mature dragon. The other three dragons followed closely behind, clearing away the remnants of the undead army in a blazing sweep.

*Roar...*

Meanwhile, the Cannibal veered in the opposite direction, descending toward the Wall. Its massive feet slammed down on the frozen ramparts, the impact shaking the ice-crusting stones.

Rhaegar, beads of cold sweat trickling down his forehead, replaced his spear with a black horn, twice the size of his arm.

*Wo...*

A deep, sonorous blast echoed from his lips as they touched the dragon horn. The sound resonated across the battlefield, causing the dragons to slow their pursuit and turn back.

Gritting his teeth, Rhaegar tightened his grip on the saddle, his gaze fixed on the blackened pit where the Night King had vanished.

After their second encounter, Rhaegar understood the Night King's true intentions. The attack on the Wall had been a diversion—a mere test. Had Rhaegar not fought with every ounce of strength, the Night King would have pressed further. It was a probe to measure Rhaegar's resolve.

*Hoo!*

A cold wind swept across the battlefield, carrying the acrid scent of burnt ash. The remaining wights retreated beyond the Wall, scrambling back into the Haunted Forest, leaving nothing but silence in their wake.

The deep pit behind the slope lay still, void of any movement. Rhaegar exhaled slowly, his chest tight with tension.

*Roar!*

Dreamfyre's roar broke the stillness as it turned back toward the Wall, its light blue wings beating against the cold air.

From atop her dragon, Helaena's clear eyes noticed Rhaegar's pallor.

"Retreat, Sheepstealer," Aemond called, tugging on the reins and commanding the stubborn Mud Dragon to turn back.

The battle was over. The threat had receded—for now.

The low blast of the Dragon's Horn echoed once more, signalling the recall of the dragons.

Chapter 682: Daemon Finds The Heart Tree

It was night, and the cold wind bit into the air. The Wall stood ablaze, illuminated as brightly as day. Beyond its perimeter lay the smoldering remains of the dead, charred and twisted. It looked as though flames from purgatory were still rising from the earth.

## **Great Hall, Castle Black.**

"The Night King has escaped, and no one knows where he's gone," Aemond said, his voice grim, radiating a coldness that kept everyone at a distance.

"We should be grateful we managed to drive off the White Walkers," Roderick Dustin declared in his gruff voice, pacing the hall. His heavy footsteps echoed off the stone walls.

Cregan Stark sat with the lords of the North, nodding in agreement. The memory of the White Walkers' invasion was still fresh—an army of darkness, the pale White Walkers themselves fearless and relentless. Without the dragons in the sky, it was hard to imagine the Wall holding against such an unstoppable force.

Aemond snorted, clearly unimpressed by any talk of relief.

At the head of the hall, Rhaegar sat silently, his head bowed.

"The wound is stubborn. You must be careful," Maester Tru said, his rotund figure bent over as he examined the king's shoulder. An ice spear had pierced through, fracturing the bone and tearing the muscles. The wound refused to heal, as though some unknown force lingered within it, and Rhaegar's entire right arm had turned pale and bloodless.

"Besides the wound, is there anything else?" Rhaenyra asked softly, half-squatting beside him, her hands gripping his trembling arm.

Rhaegar's eyelids drooped. An unnatural flush had spread across his face, and his body shook uncontrollably. His breath was hot and labored.

"I'm fine. Just a minor issue," he muttered, his voice raspy as he struggled to control his breathing. The wound had gone numb, leaving him with no feeling in his arm. But his body's abnormalities were growing clearer, like a cold that crept deeper each moment.

For a Targaryen, however, this was unnatural. They were known for their resistance to illness, especially colds. Rhaegar had never even caught a cold in his life.

Rhaenyra's gaze fixed on Maester Tru, her eyes full of worry. The maester wiped sweat from his brow, his large sleeves trembling as he dabbed his forehead. He hesitated before speaking. "Your Grace's symptoms resemble the tremors that plagued the realm during the Old King's time."

"Can it be cured?" Rhaenyra's voice tightened, her concern palpable. Medicine in Westeros was rudimentary at best—thanks only to the Citadel, it barely matched the knowledge of Essos. Many illnesses, especially the more obscure ones, were considered terminal.

Grayscale, puerperal fever, and shivering sickness were some of the most feared.

Maester Tru shook his head gently, his voice dropping to a whisper. "Shivering sickness was a mysterious illness that emerged last century. It gradually vanished, but only after most of the infected had succumbed."

The Citadel still knows very little about it.

Daenerys Targaryen, eldest daughter of the Old King, was taken by it when she was barely seven or eight. Despite being carefully raised, she never survived.

Rhaenyra's eyelashes fluttered, her face pale with fear as she looked up at Rhaegar. Though he appeared calm, there was an unspoken tension in the air.

Rhaegar glanced at his wound. Slowly, a layer of translucent film spread over his body, covering the wound and the right side of his body. It was the shimmering skin of a sea dragon.

*'Open the system panel.'*

[Rhaegar Targaryen]

Talents: Dreamer (Gold)

Runes: Bronze (Green) [Broken], Serpent (Blue), Dream-Eating Toad (Purple)

Blood Sorcery: Bat Worm (Blue), Dance of Dragons (Purple)

Special Items: Necklace of Space, Dragon's Horn (Exclusive)

Assessment:

*The ice magic is eroding you, and your blood is gradually losing its warmth.*

'My bloodline is eroding' There's something wrong with the root,' Rhaegar muttered under his breath, feeling the chill creeping through his veins. It was a sensation unlike anything he'd ever experienced before—a negative state that had never plagued him.

The Bronze Rune was completely shattered, and the Sea Dragon's protective skin was damaged, reducing its effectiveness against threats.

"Your Grace, please..." Maester Tru rushed forward, attempting to stop him.

"Just wrap it. Don't be nervous." Rhaegar's voice was calm, but it held a finality that left no room for argument.

He refused any medication, knowing ordinary remedies couldn't heal the effects of the Night King's dark magic. The source of his condition was beyond the reach of typical cures.

"But your condition..." Tru hesitated, his anxiety growing as he saw the pallor of the king's face, the involuntary tremors shaking half his body. How could a simple bandage suffice?

Reluctantly, Maester Tru obeyed, quickly bandaging the wound, tying the bandage into a neat bow, though his face twitched with worry.

Rhaegar tested his right hand, trying to clench his fist. There was a response, but it was sluggish, as if something within him was fighting for control. His hand shook uncontrollably, disobeying his will. Whether it was a tremor or a deeper complication, he couldn't tell.

"How do you feel?" Rhaenyra asked, her voice trembling with concern as she held his other hand tightly.

"I'm fine," Rhaegar replied, his voice steadier than his body. He twisted his neck, then forced himself to stand, rising from the chair with effort.

"Be careful," Helaena's soft voice broke the silence, her fair face creased with concern as she rushed forward to help steady his arm.

Rhaegar shook his head gently, whispering, "Don't show weakness."

With his left hand, he gently pushed away her touch, his expression firm. He gave a quick glance to Aegon and Aemond across the hall, signaling for them to follow his lead. Turning away, he guided his sisters from the table, his movements purposeful.

*If there's a problem, solve it. If the bloodline is weakening, find a way to break the curse.*

He knew better than to discuss such matters in the open, especially in front of vassals. Exposing his vulnerability would shake the morale of those who depended on him.

On the way back to his chambers, Rhaegar kept his head down, deep in thought. The image of the Night King, powerful and untouchable, weighed heavily on his mind. Dragonfire had failed to harm him, which meant the only option left might be direct combat.

With a Valyrian steel sword, perhaps he could find the opportunity to kill him. But his right hand remained cold and numb, affecting his ability to think clearly.

Raising his hand, Rhaegar's purple eyes flashed with determination. If he was going to defeat the Night King, he would need to bridge the gap in knowledge and strategy.

Daemon was already on his way to find the Heart Tree and the Greenseer, but that might not be enough.

The illness couldn't be allowed to fester. If left unchecked, it would consume him.

And that, he realized grimly, was exactly what the Night King would want.

...

The night grew darker over the Haunted Forest. Beneath the shadowy canopy of trees, the army of corpses surged forward in thick, unrelenting waves.

A bright moon broke through the dark clouds, casting a pure white arc of light over the snow-covered ground.

The Night King strode ahead, his face expressionless and cold. His pale skin remained unscathed, untouched by battle, but his ancient silver-grey armor was blackened by Dragonfire.

Behind him, the dull thud of footsteps echoed through the forest. The Night King's sharp ears caught the sound, and he glanced back.

A pale White Walker had stopped, kneeling on one knee. His wrinkled face was solemn, his expression determined—he was silently asking for permission to continue the assault on the Wall.

*Ha...*

The Night King's lips parted slightly, and a cold mist of white frost escaped from his mouth. His ice-blue eyes, gleaming with cold wisdom, met the White Walker's gaze. Slowly, he raised one sharp finger and shook it gently, a silent refusal.

He exuded an air of grace and authority, as dignified and commanding as the ruler of the night.

The White Walker frowned, rising to his feet without protest.

The Night King turned, his gaze shifting toward the distant east. His sharp finger pointed in that direction, toward Eastwatch-by-the-Sea.

There were too many dragons at Castle Black, too many threats to his forces. But Eastwatch was different—sparsely populated and a potential blind spot for a new assault.

Without rest, the army of White Walkers continued their march, a silent and relentless procession in the dead of night.

The Night King led them, his movements steady, though his gaze briefly flickered to the north.

The sky was dark and starless, offering no guidance. He stared at it for a moment, as if calculating, weighing the pros and cons of his next move.

...

### **Two days later.**

The Haunted Forest, far north beyond the Fist of the First Men, stretched for thousands of miles, running from the south to the frozen north. In the land near the Milkwater River, light snowflakes drifted down, cold enough to raise goosebumps on the skin.

"Roar..."

A huge, scarlet serpent-like creature weaved through the trees, gliding on its wide, leathery wings. Its long, sinuous tail swayed, sweeping ice crystals from the pale tree canopies.

"Land, Caraxes!"

A command, sharp and magnetic, cut through the air, followed by a dragon's roar that echoed like a wave of sound.

Daemon Targaryen sat atop the great beast, clad in black steel armor, his dragon-winged helmet adorned with a blood-red mane. His expression was cold, eyes locked on the rolling mountains below.

The jagged peaks converged into a narrow valley, where a branch of the Milkwater River trickled through. Something caught Daemon's eye—a flash of red, faint and distant. The color of Weirwood.

"Quickly, that's it," came a small, excited voice.

The Child of the Forest peeked out from behind Daemon, her pretty face lit with excitement.

"Roar..."

Caraxes let out a shrill, melodious cry as he descended, cutting through the air like a bolt of scarlet lightning. His hind legs folded inward as he landed with a heavy thud, sending snow flying in all directions.

*Boom!*

The valley shook as the dragon's massive body touched down. Daemon wasted no time, leaping from Caraxes' back. Drawing Dark Sister, he strode forward with purpose.

In front of him, deep in the valley, stood a Weirwood tree. Its wide canopy spread like a red umbrella over the black tundra, glowing faintly in the snowy haze. After three days and two nights of flight, he had finally found it.

"Wait for me."

The Child of the Forest darted ahead, bending low to sniff the ground with her keen senses. But as she sniffed, her expression grew increasingly uneasy.

The valley grew eerily silent. The snow underfoot shifted slightly, almost imperceptibly.

Daemon's sharp instincts kicked in. His earlobes twitched, and he scanned the surroundings warily.

Suddenly, the Child of the Forest screamed in horror, "Watch your step!"

In the next instant, the snow caved in, and a decayed hand shot out from beneath the surface, clutching at Daemon's black boots with red stripes. It shook violently, trying to drag itself upward.

Daemon's eyebrows shot up, his senses now fully alert as a chorus of faint, unsettling noises began to echo around him.

*Puff, puff, puff!*

The snow crumbled away, revealing the grotesque remains of the dead. Armor-clad skeletons, decaying corpses, broken bones, and severed limbs—countless dead clawed their way up, roaring as they lunged at Daemon.

"Ghostly things... have you followed me here?"

Daemon's expression turned cold. With a swift motion, he swung Dark Sister, severing the rotting hand that gripped his boot at the wrist.

Within moments, hundreds of dead rushed toward him, but Daemon remained calm. His sword danced through the air, an impenetrable blur of steel. In the art of swordsmanship, there few equal to him in the Seven Kingdoms—especially not among mindless undead.

*Clop, clop...*

A rotting warhorse stepped from the shadows, standing atop the high valley cliff. Atop it, a pale White Walker tightened the reins, its ice-blue eyes fixed on Daemon. After a moment, its gaze shifted toward the Child of the Forest, who was crouched in the corner.

Without a word, the White Walker drew an ice-crystal spear from its back, silently aiming it at the small figure.

*Shhhhhhhh!*

The crackling sound of wildfire filled the air, but more wights burst through the flames, their eyes locked on the weakened Child of the Forest.

*Huh?*

The noise caught Daemon's attention mid-battle, and he glanced over just as danger loomed.

"Roar..."

A piercing dragon roar echoed through the valley. Scarlet Dragonfire split the sky, carving a line of flame across the battlefield.

Caraxes's fierce pupils burned with rage as the dragon slithered forward like a serpent, wings beating, spewing fire across the undead ranks.

"Burn them all—leave none behind," Daemon commanded coldly, moving closer to his dragon.

Out of the corner of his eye, he caught a glint of something in the valley. The White Walker, holding an ice spear, stood poised, the spearhead reflecting the pale light of the sun.

Chapter 683: The Premonition of the Greenseers

Daemon spotted the White Walkers in the distance, and they were watching him in return. A tall, pale figure dismounted from its horse, pointing provocatively at the ice crystals on its spear. With unblinking ice-blue eyes, it seemed to issue a silent challenge to the humans.

The roar of the undead army drowned out the howling wind and snow. Daemon regarded them coldly, his sword flashing as he swiftly beheaded two corpse ghosts, advancing steadily into an open area.

"Roar..."

Caraxes stretched its long neck, releasing a torrent of Dragonfire that blazed across the battlefield, cutting off the White Walkers' advance. Meanwhile, the Child of the Forest darted along the mountain wall, slashing at the undead with claws and teeth.

Beneath the ancient Weirwood tree, Daemon stood solemnly in the shade, where not a single red leaf remained.

Tap, tap...

The White Walker strode forward, its large, bare feet stamping on the frozen black soil, closing in on its prey.

"Uglier up close, you damned thing," Daemon sneered, his eyes scanning for an opening to strike.

The White Walker's expressionless face remained menacing as it lowered its spear of ice crystals. If it attacked with the same rhythm as before, it would surely shatter Daemon's weapon.

Clang!

Daemon raised his sword to block the attack, shards of ice scattering and dazzling his eyes. As his nephew had once told him, Valyrian steel could indeed counter the White Walkers. The creature's surprise flickered as its weapon was stopped.

"Haha, I underestimated you," Daemon smirked, giving a devilish grin. With a sudden lunge, he slammed his shoulder into the White Walker's chest.

The Walker attempted to retreat, but its spear was tangled with Daemon's blade, leaving it unable to move. Frustrated, it let go of the spear and swung its fist at Daemon.

Bang!

Daemon's shoulder collided with the creature's chest, forcing it back two steps. The White Walker was unnaturally strong, but it managed to steady itself, planting its feet firmly on the ground. Daemon's eyes locked on his enemy's, his wrists twisting as he angled his sword downward. He gripped the hilt tightly and drove the blade toward the Walker's abdomen.

The White Walker reacted quickly, crossing its arms to block Daemon's strike. The blade halted just inches from its pale skin.

"You're finished," Daemon declared, his voice low. Suddenly, he loosened his grip on the sword, letting his right hand slip through the creature's defenses to reclaim the hilt.

The White Walker hesitated, stunned by the maneuver.

With a cold, metallic sound, Daemon thrust the Dark Sister forward. The blade pierced the Walker's abdomen as if cutting through paper. The creature opened its arms, as if preparing for one last counterattack, but Daemon was quicker. He stepped back, his movements as swift as a cheetah, and plunged the sword again—this time through its heart.

"A fool with power. I could beat ten like you with my bare hands when I was sixteen," Daemon scoffed, his gaze dripping with contempt. He twisted the hilt slowly, savoring the moment.

Pop!

The White Walker disintegrated into a fine powder, vanishing as if it had never existed.

"So much for that," Daemon grinned, tossing the lithe Dark Sister from hand to hand. He was as bloodthirsty as ever and never showed a hint of hesitation.

At the mouth of the valley...

Boom! Boom!

The Child of the Forest darted frantically, pursued by an army of dead. Just then, an explosion thundered behind him.

At the mouth of the valley...

Boom! Boom!

The Child of the Forest darted frantically, pursued by an army of Orcs. Just then, an explosion thundered behind him.

"Don't be afraid, Billbo!"

A dozen small, brown-skinned Children of the Forest suddenly appeared, their hands filled with pumpkin-shaped bombs. With swift precision, they hurled them into the midst of the wights.

The blasts tore through the enemy, scattering limbs and bones across the battlefield. One of the dead was blown apart mid-lunge, its jaws snapping uselessly in the air.

"You've finally come!" Billbo cried, overjoyed to see her long-lost kin.

With the reinforcements joining the fray, the army of undead quickly crumbled, becoming nothing more than vulnerable, shattered remains. After a relentless barrage, the valley floor was littered with broken limbs and charred remains.

Billbo rushed to join the others when, suddenly, a skeletal hand shot up from the snow and clamped onto her ankle.

"Arba, Arba!" she screamed.

The snow burst open, and a half-destroyed skeleton struggled upright. Another skeleton, nearby, retrieved its fallen skull, placing it back on its neck. The reassembled figure exuded an eerie ferocity, its bony jaws snapping down on Billbo's ankle.

Billbo's eyes widened in terror as she kicked wildly, trying to shake off the undead grip.

Pat!

Before he could land another kick, the skeleton crumbled to dust. The few wights still struggling nearby also fell still, their eerie glow fading.

"Roar..."

Caraxes climbed the steep cliff, its sharp teeth clamped around the remains of a corpse. Its long neck coiled as its fierce, vertical pupils scanned the valley below, eyeing the diminutive Children of the Forest with suspicion.

Billbo looked up, her expression lighting up with excitement. High above, Daemon strode leisurely up the cliff, Dark Sister in hand. His figure overlapped with that of the Blood Wurm, the two appearing almost as one. A ray of sunlight illuminated the corner of his eye, revealing the slight wrinkles of age, but his strength remained undiminished by time.

"Strange creatures, you came out of this cave, didn't you?" Daemon called down, his sword pointing toward a narrow cave opening in the cliff.

...

The dark cave was filled with a strange warmth, a gentle current of air moving through it. Daemon followed the Children of the Forest, holding a torch in one hand. An older female Child led the way, her expression serious as she spoke.

"The White Walkers appeared last night," she explained. "We had to hide."

Daemon furrowed his brow, still unsure why the White Walkers had been drawn to the area. He suspected it had something to do with the Heart Tree.

"Just tell me where the Heart Tree is and how I can become the Greenseer," he demanded, growing impatient. He glanced around the dark, cramped space, his eyes flicking between the strange, squirrel-like people who spoke in whispers.

"The Heart Tree is just ahead," the elder Child said, pausing to glance back at Daemon. Her voice grew more serious. "But whether you can gain its approval depends on your ability."

With that, she dismissed the rest of the tribe, leaving only herself, Daemon, and Bilbo to press on. The three made their way through the twisting, dark tunnels of the cave. Suddenly, the passage opened up.

Before them was a massive cavern bathed in sunlight streaming through a hole in the ceiling. In the center stood a towering Weirwood tree. Its pale trunk gleamed in the light, while its vast canopy stretched out beyond the cave. Tangled roots coiled across the ground, clutching the dark soil below. The Heart Tree awaited.

"This is the Heart Tree," the older Child of the Forest said, her voice filled with awe as she gazed up at the towering Weirwood. "Touch the trunk, and you will receive guidance."

"You both, step back," Daemon ordered, glancing at the two Children of the Forest. "Caraxes is outside, and it will eat anything in its path."

Bilbo didn't argue. He stepped back obediently, eyeing the massive red dragon lurking beyond the trees. The elder Child gave Daemon a look, something unreadable in her eyes, and whispered, "Be careful."

Daemon, who often seemed reckless, took note of the fleeting expression on her face as he approached the Weirwood. The trunk was massive, its girth so wide that several people together could barely wrap their arms around it. Its thick, gnarled roots pierced through the dry rock, bulging as if suppressing ancient spirits desperate to crawl out of some long-forgotten purgatory.

Daemon climbed onto a rock, standing directly before the Weirwood. Its pale bark was carved with a face that seemed to pity the world, bright red sap streaming from the corners of its eyes like tears, weeping for a disaster yet to come.

"What exactly are your powers?" Daemon muttered, his sharp eyes glowing with curiosity as he reached out to touch the bark. It felt rough beneath his hand, the sticky sap clinging to his skin.

He closed his eyes, focusing inward, instinctively tuning into the fire magic pulsing in his blood.

A deep, humming sound vibrated through his mind. Suddenly, the world began to spin, dizziness overtaking him.

*What's happening?*

Daemon tried to open his eyes, but the words lodged in his throat. The scene around him shifted violently, reality turning upside down. The Weirwood disappeared, replaced by visions—wild and disjointed.

Boom!

The body of a pale dragon crashed into the snow, its lifeless form sprawled across the frozen ground. Blood dripped from its mouth, hot against the cold, stark white of the snow.

Shocked, Daemon instinctively stepped closer to get a better look, but in an instant, the world shifted again. The sky flipped, and he plunged into icy lake water, his lungs filling with freezing liquid. Panic surged through him as he coughed, bubbles rising to the surface.

The sensation of suffocation gripped him for a moment, but as quickly as it came, it passed. The lake froze solid, transforming into an endless snowfield.

Puff!

A large, dragon-ringed hand burst through the snow, struggling to pull itself free. Daemon gasped, his head breaking the surface of the snow. He lay there, breathless, his heart pounding in his chest. All around him, a battlefield stretched on, littered with corpses and drenched in blood. Blackened scorch marks marred the ground from where flames had once roared.

Pop!

Just as Daemon began to make sense of the vision, the image shattered like fragile glass.

He found himself back under the Weirwood tree, its pale trunk looming above him once again.

“Ahhh!” Daemon's eyes snapped open, a growl rumbling from his chest.

“What did you see?” The older Child of the Forest stood nearby, her gaze sharp with expectation.

“What? What?” Daemon gasped, still catching his breath. He wiped the cold sweat from his forehead, his body trembling slightly. What he had just experienced felt like dying and coming back to life.

“This concerns the future,” the Child pressed, her voice urgent.

Suddenly, a new voice echoed through the cave, drawing Daemon's attention. A fourth figure stepped forward—a male Child of the Forest, stocky and dressed in tattered armor, with a helmet crowned by antlers. He held a spear, its stone tip crudely bound to the shaft.

Daemon gathered his thoughts, steadying his breath as he felt the weight of their expectant gazes.

“I didn't see clearly,” he muttered, trying to collect himself. “I'll take another look.”

Hum!

That same familiar dizziness washed over him, but this time it was less overwhelming. The cave dissolved around him, and he found himself once again in a vast expanse of snow. Now, having endured the vision before, Daemon steadied himself, focusing on the scene around him.

In the distance, a massive ice wall stretched across the landscape, towering over the snow-covered plains from east to west. Daemon recognized it instantly—the Wall. But something was horribly wrong. The ground was littered with corpses, charred remains scattered in all directions. The smell of burning flesh filled the air.

“Roar...”

A deep, guttural dragon's roar broke through the eerie silence, accompanied by a strong gust of wind that swept across the bleak sky. Daemon looked up just in time to see a massive black creature soaring over the Wall, its enormous wings blotting out the sun as it flew swiftly southeast.

“The Cannibal?” Daemon whispered in shock as the vision zoomed closer, revealing more detail.

On the dragon's broad black back, a silver-haired figure lay slumped, barely moving. It was Rhaegar. His face was pale, eyes closed as if in a deep sleep. Bandages wrapped tightly around his arm, which trembled uncontrollably.

As if sensing his thoughts, Rhaegar suddenly opened his eyes, locking onto Daemon's. For a brief moment, time seemed to stop as the two stared at each other across the vast, surreal landscape. There was something unsettling in the way they connected—an absurd, dreamlike tension filled the air.

Rhaegar, his expression a mix of shock and confusion, opened his mouth as if to speak, but no sound came out. The black dragon beneath him flapped its wings, accelerating its flight over the Haunted Forest, quickly disappearing into the distance, taking Rhaegar with it.

Daemon stood dumbfounded, trying to decipher what his nephew had been trying to say. He strained to make sense of the movement of Rhaegar's lips...

“Boo~~”

The vision blurred, then shattered completely, leaving Daemon once again under the Weirwood tree.

Chapter 684: The Fish Feeding War

Meanwhile, in the North—White Harbor:

"Roar..." The Cannibal's green, vertical pupils glinted coldly as wisps of Dragonfire seeped from its maw. The beast stood in tense alertness, scanning its surroundings with a predator's calm.

"I'm fine, mate," Rhaegar murmured groggily, his eyes fluttering open as he lay slumped on the dragon's back. Incredibly, he had dreamed of Daemon.

"Roar..." The Cannibal growled softly, scattering the seabirds circling the bay. The dragon cast a sidelong glance at its rider, almost as if to check on him.

Rhaegar propped himself up with his left hand, chuckling wearily. "I can still hold on," he muttered, though his right side was numb, cold, and trembling uncontrollably.

The Wall had taken its toll. There was no cure for the cold that clung to him, and the fragmented understanding of magic in Westeros offered little hope. His plan was to cross the Narrow Sea, seeking answers from the Red Priestess in Lys or the blood mage Varys. And if they failed to provide a solution, he would follow Quaithe's cryptic advice and journey to Asshai, to uncover the root of what ailed him.

"With Daemon back, the garrison at Castle Black is practically impenetrable," Rhaegar mused, casting a glance toward the horizon, estimating how much time he had left. The Night King had been defeated in their first encounter and wouldn't likely attempt another invasion of the Wall anytime soon. This lull gave Rhaegar precious time to heal and prepare.

"We're in a hurry, my friend," Rhaegar said, rubbing the Cannibal's rough, dark scales, the gesture affectionate despite the weight of his worries.

"Roar..." The Cannibal responded with a mighty bellow, plunging headlong into the clouds. It accelerated in a steep dive, its immense chest skimming the surface of the sea, sending waves crashing in its wake as it hurtled forward on their urgent journey.

...

In the underground cavern beneath the Weirwood...

Hum...

"You're awake?" The male Child of the Forest, still wearing his antlered helmet, approached cautiously. "You spent three hours in the Green Vision this time."

“Unfortunately, no,” the Child replied with a sigh. “You received guidance from the Heart Tree, but you did not inherit the Greenseer's legacy.” If Daemon had inherited it, this conversation would be very different—there would be no doubt, no questions. A Greenseer transcended such things.

Daemon’s frown deepened. “So, I came all this way and all I saw were a few premonitions?” His voice hardened. “What exactly is the Greenseer, and where is the legacy hidden?”

At least he needed to understand what had gone wrong.

“The Greenseer is everywhere,” the Child of the Forest said, his tone resolute. “You are already blessed to see the future through the Green Vision.”

Daemon was unconvinced, his eyes narrowing as he fixed his gaze on the solemn face carved into the Weirwood. The tree remained silent, bright red sap trickling down from its carved eyes like blood. He hesitated, debating whether to reach out and touch the bark again, to reconnect with the vision.

“No need to try,” the Child of the Forest warned. “The Heart Tree will reject you.” His voice carried a note of finality. “One cannot attempt it twice.”

“Really?” Daemon shot back, watching him closely from the corner of his eye.

The Child crossed his arms, showing no interest in stopping him.

Daemon’s eyes narrowed as he gripped the sword and tugged.

Click!

Turning, he strode away, his head held high, passing the Children of the Forest without a backward glance. It was time to return.

The Children of the Forest exchanged glances as he left. The older female Child of the Forest silently departed to rally her kin, preparing for the migration.

An hour later...

Daemon emerged from the cave. The sun greeted him with blinding intensity, and he raised his hand to shield his eyes after so long in the darkness.

Rumble...

The shadow of his dragon fell over him, a scarlet silhouette blotting out the harsh light. Caraxes clung to the cliff face above, its wide wings stretching forward as it surveyed its rider below.

“Roar...” Caraxes let out a long, rumbling call, its throat trembling with emotion that echoed Daemon’s own unsettled thoughts.

Daemon blinked against the sunlight, adjusting as he scanned his surroundings.

“Gah gah gah...”

A sudden flurry of cawing drew his attention. A flock of crows swooped down, perching in the branches of the Weirwood. Their black feathers and the tree's crimson leaves created a striking contrast.

Daemon's gaze lingered, searching for the familiar figure from his vision—the three-eyed crow. It was nowhere to be seen.

“Haha, I’m being paranoid,” Daemon muttered with a wry smile, shaking his head. But his eyes, lowered to the ground, betrayed a lingering unease that refused to leave him.

...

The Riverlands, Green Fork of the Trident...

"Kill!"

"Archers, don't stop!"

The air was thick with the sounds of battle—swords clashing, arrows whistling, and the screams of men locked in combat. On the sandy banks of the Green Fork, two armies clashed. One bore the proud lion banner of House Lannister, its 2,000 men well-equipped and disciplined. The other, a larger force of 3,000 soldiers, carried the sigils of the Riverlands’ feudal lords, though their armor and weapons varied in quality.

"Follow me! Drive the Westerlanders into the river to feed the fish!" bellowed Kermit, Lord of Riverrun, as he emerged from a pile of corpses, drenched in blood. His cry rallied the men of the Riverlands, who surged forward, spurred on by the sight of their lord leading the charge.

At the forefront were the banners of House Tully, House Blackwood, and House Frey. The combined strength of the Riverlands cut through the Lannister forces like a spear driving into the heart of their shield wall. The fighting grew fierce, and soon the sky darkened with the dust and chaos of war.

Kermit's eyes, bloodshot with rage, found a gap in the enemy ranks. With a wild yell, he charged alone into the fray, hacking his way toward the center of the Lannister army.

"Kill him! He's the Lord of Riverrun!" a Westerlander shouted, rallying the spearmen to close in on Kermit.

"Get out of my way!" A boy with dark hair, barely more than a child, suddenly burst out from the Riverlands lines, brandishing a longsword. His young face twisted with fury as he let out a maniacal laugh, charging at the enemy.

"Kill him first!" commanded a Lannister soldier. The Westerlanders, towering over the boy, braced for his attack.

Whoosh!

Just as the boy's shield raised to block, arrows hissed through the air, striking his enemies with deadly precision. The arrows found their marks—neck, throat, and eye—felling the soldiers before they could reach him.

Benjicot, the boy, glanced back in surprise. There stood Black Aly, bow in hand, her leather armor stained with blood. Her eyes were cold as she nocked another arrow, her aim steady. House Blackwood's archery skills ran deep—just like the bastard Robb, the famed Alysanne precision was deadly.

The battle raged on, a chaotic melee of thousands of men locked in combat. Blood flowed freely, staining the banks of the Green Fork. Neither side gave an inch, fighting with every ounce of strength they had left. The Westerlands' shield wall, strong and nearly impenetrable, held firm against the desperate charges from the Riverlands forces.

But Kermit's men were relentless. Spurred by his command, some soldiers leapt onto the shields, impaling themselves on spears, dragging the enemy down with them. Others hacked away, trying to break through the iron discipline of the Westerlanders.

"Charge! Follow me!" Kermit roared as the battle dragged into the evening.

Suddenly, the thunder of hooves echoed across the battlefield. A cavalry force of several hundred men swept in from the flank, led by Oscar Tully, clad in heavy armor and wielding a lance. The cavalry smashed into the Lannister shield wall with a deafening crash, scattering shields and sending men flying.

At last, the shield wall broke.

The Riverlands army howled with triumph, surging forward like a pack of ravenous wolves. The Westerlanders, now in disarray, were pushed back toward the cold, fast-flowing river.

Plop! Plop!

Men screamed as they were driven into the icy waters. Archers lined the riverbank, loosing volley after volley of arrows into the retreating enemy. The infantry pressed on, their bloodied bodies forcing the Lannisters into the Trident, where death awaited.

As the light faded and night crept in, the Riverlands stood victorious.

"Hoo... hoo... hoo..." Kermit dropped to his knees, exhausted, blood streaming down his face. His breath came in ragged gasps. "Send word to the Prince... tell him we've won."

The cold night air settled over the battlefield, a sharp wind cutting through the stench of death. The riverbank was littered with corpses, their wounds frozen by the cold. The ice on the Green Fork thickened, trapping bodies beneath its surface. The dead floated like driftwood, their blood turning the river red, feeding the fish below.

Oscar Tully, pale and weary, supported his elder brother as they surveyed the scene. "The bodies are frozen solid. We can clean up tomorrow."

In a quieter corner of the beach, Black Aly wrung the blood from her long, black curls. Her sharp eyes scanned the piles of bodies until she found her nephew, Benjicot, alive but covered in gore. He lay among the dead, his head resting on a blood-soaked corpse. With a weary grin, he pulled a piece of dried meat from his armor and began to chew, his face smeared with blood.

He stared blankly up at the darkening sky, chewing in silence.

...

The next day, around noon...

At Riverrun, the air was tense and quiet, save for the occasional rumble of war-drums in the distance.

"Roar..."

A massive, moss-colored dragon slithered across the frozen surface of the Trident, its claws puncturing the ice as it fished lazily. With a swift swipe, it snatched a large, fat fish from beneath the ice, gulping it down in one bite. The soldiers on the battlements stood rigid, too frightened to look away from the monstrous creature.

Inside the castle, in the small hall on the second floor, Kermit—his shoulder wrapped in bandages—stood with his brothers Oscar and Benjicot. Their faces were somber, the weight of their recent battle heavy on their minds.

"So many casualties?" Baelon, his clothes still dusted from travel, frowned as he scanned the casualty report. "Three thousand men lost, 1,800 of them killed. More than half the force."

Kermit gave a bitter smile. "We had a plan, but we underestimated the Westerlanders. They fought harder than we anticipated."

"But we annihilated the enemy," Benjicot interjected, licking his lips, his expression proud. His youthful face bore a smugness, like a dog waiting for its master's approval. Two thousand Lannister soldiers now lay dead beneath the waters of the Trident.

Baelon nodded solemnly, his eyes scanning the room. "You fought bravely, all of you. With unwavering courage, you've proven the strength of the Riverlands to the world."

The victory, hard-fought and bloody, had been achieved without a single soldier from outside the Riverlands. This 'fish-feeding' battle would go down in history, a testament to the Riverlands' resilience. In years to come, no one would dare question their army's might.

Kermit winced as he adjusted his bandages, pulling a letter from his tunic.

"What is this?" Baelon asked, taking the letter with a wary glance.

Kermit handed it over. "A report from the scouts. Ten thousand Lannister soldiers have left Golden Tooth. They're marching straight for the Trident—three thousand of them are cavalry."

Baelon's eyes darkened as he read the letter. "Jason Lannister is determined to rebel," he muttered, his voice cold.

“Prince, the people of the Riverlands stand with you,” Benjicot declared, pounding his chest with fierce determination. “At your command, House Blackwood will lead the vanguard.”

Despite his baby-faced appearance, Benjicot had already proven himself one of the most ruthless fighters. House Blackwood had claimed the majority of the kills in the battle that had stained the Trident red.

Baelon crushed the letter in his fist. "Jason is seeking death. Let him have it."

He tossed the crumpled paper aside. "Let the Lannister army cross into the Riverlands. We'll trap them at the Green Fork and crush them. They'll have no idea about the battle at the Trident and will walk right into our hands, like animals into a trap."

Riverrun was too close to the heart of the Riverlands to risk an open battle. But they would draw the enemy north and tear them apart when the time was right.

"Roar!"

A deafening dragon's roar shattered the tense silence, the sound crashing through the walls and windows of the hall. The boys glanced up, startled, their eyes drawn to the sky outside.

Two massive dragons circled above Riverrun, chasing each other through the cold air. One was bronze and menacing, its form cutting through the sky like a predator. The other had dark green scales, its wings ragged and tattered, resembling a war machine that had weathered countless battles.

The sight of the two beasts overhead filled the room with a renewed sense of anticipation.

Chapter 685: Red Dragon!

Slaver's Bay, Meereen

The Great Pyramid...

“Your Grace, this is the gift the Good Masters have prepared for your Name Day celebration,” a representative of the slave owners from Astapor and Yunkai announced, bowing low with exaggerated respect.

In the Great Hall, Irina sat on the throne, her posture commanding. She wore her favorite slinky blue dress with a high slit—elegant and regal, while giving her freedom of movement. It displayed her queenly grace without the stiffness of more formal attire.

“Valyrian steel?” Irina’s eyes gleamed as her fingers traced the necklace presented to her—a delicate chain with a dragon’s head pendant crafted from Valyrian steel. Upon closer inspection, the links were unremarkable, but the pendant was a masterpiece, clearly from ancient Valyria. She felt a strange sense of recognition, as though she’d seen it somewhere before.

The slave owner stepped forward eagerly, his tone full of flattery. “Only treasures from Valyria’s glorious past are worthy of the noble blood of a true dragon.”

“A fine gift, showing real sincerity,” Irina said with a smile, placing the necklace back into its box. Since her capture of the red dragon that had been missing, rumors had spread like wildfire. The Great Masters of Meereen were now completely submissive, and even the Good Masters and Wise Masters of Astapor and Yunkai had grown more obedient. What had once been a fragile rule was now unshakable.

However...

Irina’s eyes flicked to the bald red-robed wizard standing quietly in the corner of the hall. Her brow furrowed slightly. The plan to fully tame the dragon had been delayed. The last remaining red-robed wizard could not control the creature, and his attempts to seek help from Asshai had yielded no results.

This made the slave owners uneasy. Without the queen riding a dragon, doubt and suspicion were beginning to creep into their minds, and plots were being hatched in the shadows.

As if reading her thoughts, the representative of the slave owners bowed again, his voice dripping with false reverence. “Gracious Queen, when will you hold a grand event to show Slaver’s Bay might to House Targaryen? The people long to see the greatness of the Dragonlord’s lineage.”

Irina remained calm. “There’s no need to rush. The merchants from Qarth have been visiting Slaver’s Bay frequently of late. After their business is concluded, we’ll host a grand event.”

“But we’ve heard the merchants of Qarth are at war with House Hightower of Oldtown,” a Good Master from Astapor interrupted, stepping forward with a haughty sneer. His short beard curled sharply as he eyed her with skepticism. “They’ve been buying slaves to fuel their attacks, even sending slaves infected with grayscale to sow chaos in Oldtown. The entire Reach has united against them, and no one knows how long the war will last.”

Irina’s eyes narrowed, her voice sharp. “Are you doubting me?”

The Good Master paled but tried to recover. “No, Your Grace, we are merely... eager.”

“Insult the queen again, and you’ll lose your tongue,” she warned, her tone ice-cold. The man recoiled, quickly bowing in submission.

Irina stood, her patience at its end. “Then go home and wait for news in peace,” she said curtly. Grabbing the box from the maid’s tray, she turned and swept out of the hall, leaving the slave owners behind. They exchanged uneasy glances, frustration simmering beneath their forced smiles, but none dared speak.

The doors of the Great Hall closed with a heavy thud, sealing them in silence.

...

**Great Pyramid, Dungeon**

Irina, flanked by Unsullied guards, approached the heavy iron door to the dungeon once more.

Rumble!

The door creaked open slowly, releasing a pungent stench of rot and sulfur, mixed with the briny smell of fish. It struck her like a wall, clinging to her senses, refusing to fade.

"Torch," she commanded, her voice steady, though her eyes darkened with unease. One of the Unsullied quickly handed her a torch. With its dim light, she cautiously stepped into the pitch-black dungeon.

Hoo...

A gust of hot, fishy wind blew from the depths of the darkness, brushing against her face. Irina stiffened, her fingers gripping the torch tightly, her hand going numb. In her youth, she had dreamed of finding a dragon and restoring the glory of her house. But after so many failed attempts to control one, her initial courage had crumbled.

"Roar..."

A deep, guttural growl echoed through the dungeon, the sound thick, as though being dragged up from the throat of a monstrous creature. The shadows swallowed everything; even the faint torchlight couldn't pierce the darkness ahead.

"Roar!"

Suddenly, a torrent of red Dragonfire exploded from the depths, illuminating the dungeon in an inferno. The flames revealed the massive, chained silhouette of the dragon. Bright red scales gleamed, bristling with thorn-like barbs, and pale fangs, sharp enough to crush steel, gleamed in the flickering light.

The red dragon glared at her, its amber eyes filled with malice. It was chained in the corner, yet its presence dominated the space. Its appearance mirrored that of its mother, Dreamfyre, with the same brilliant red scales, off-white horns, and barbed jaw. Its three pairs of horns and dark red dorsal fin made it a fierce, majestic warrior by nature.

"Quiet, Daenarion!" Irina commanded in High Valyrian, raising a hand to assert control.

Though she had learned the ancient binding spells, she had yet to master the Fire Magic that pulsed in her blood. High Valyrian was a fragile substitute for true dragon mastery, but it was all she had.

"Roar!"

Daenarion, however, was not so easily tamed. The dragon growled menacingly, rejecting her words and the name she had given it. With an enraged snarl, it lunged forward, chains rattling as it strained against its bonds. Though the dragon's muzzle couldn't reach her, the searing heat of its breath washed over her like a furnace.

Irina's heart raced, and her façade of calm began to falter. The dragon's amber eyes tracked her every movement, watching for any sign of weakness. In an instant, its wings spread wide, the chains groaning under the strain as it lunged once more.

The heat enveloped her, scalding her skin a deep red, and the pressure was unbearable. Irina's face paled as fear surged through her, her courage finally cracking under the dragon's onslaught. She stumbled back, dropping the torch in a panic.

Rumble!

As she retreated, the heavy door slammed shut behind her, the noise reverberating through the stone halls. The dragon's furious roar echoed from within the dungeon, but Irina was already out of reach, her heart pounding as she leaned against the wall outside.

...

### **At the same time, the Colosseum**

#### *Backstage rest area*

In a dimly lit corner, a boy with a buzz cut crouched alone, clutching a rusty iron sword to his chest. His fair skin was smeared with yellow mud, his dusty hair streaked with silver, and his frame was thin and frail. He looked every bit like a lost child, though his hardened expression hinted at something darker.

*Sa sa sa!*

The quiet sound of footsteps approached, and a towering man with thick black hair strode over, settling down beside the boy. The giant of a man began to methodically rub a large broadsword with salt and lemon, paying no mind to the boy at first.

The boy glanced over cautiously, his body tensing. Life in the Colosseum had left him perpetually on edge. It wasn't just a place of blood and spectacle—it was a world where survival meant preying on the weak. The slaves here weren't simply victims; they were predators, ready to crush anyone below them. If not for the cold ruthlessness that had grown inside him, he knew he might have already been violated or worse.

"Don't worry," the Blackhair giant muttered, his voice lazy but rich with character, never looking up from his sword. "I'm not interested in boys."

The boy relaxed ever so slightly, though his eyes remained wary. He had learned not to trust anyone here. The Colosseum had shattered his previous view of the world, reshaping everything he thought he knew about power. Before, he had believed in the importance of kindness and mercy. Now he understood the harsh truth: without power, such ideals were meaningless—worse, they were dangerous.

"You're Aemon, right? The boy who came with the priestess?" the Blackhair strongman asked, casting a sidelong glance, sizing him up as though he were a curiosity.

Aemon's head jerked up, his eyes sharp. "Who are you? Do you know Sally?" He spoke with sudden intensity. The priestess meant something to him; they had shared the road, and he had helped her as much as she had helped him.

The man shrugged, unconcerned. “No. She’s just a slave who peddles medicine.” He paused for a moment, then continued, “You’ll be in the arena soon enough. Might want to sharpen that sword of yours—at least give yourself a chance to stab someone in the belly.”

With that, the Blackhair strongman tossed the half-used lemon aside, sheathed his massive sword, and stood. As he walked away, he twirled the sword in one hand, the blade cutting a lazy arc through the air with surprising grace for someone of his size.

Aemon watched him leave, still unsure whether to believe anything the man had said. He picked up the discarded lemon and began to rub it along the edge of his dull blade, following the advice, if only half-heartedly.

The giant had a weathered face, rough with a beard, his muscles sculpted from years of fighting. He wasn’t particularly remarkable to look at, yet there had been no malice in his demeanor, no immediate hostility. Whatever his reasons for speaking, Aemon couldn’t sense any ill intent—for now.

...

Soon, the Colosseum's gates swung open, and the duel began.

Slaves, clad in mismatched armor and gripping crude weapons, streamed into the arena through the heavy gates. Among them was Aemon, armed with nothing but a rusty iron sword. Blending into the crowd, he spotted the Blackhair giant striding confidently ahead.

“He’s here too,” Aemon muttered, his gaze locking onto the hulking figure. Slowly, he began to edge his way closer.

In the stands, slave owners and merchants whispered eagerly, placing bets on their chosen fighters. The air buzzed with anticipation. Irina sat among them, looking disinterested, her chin resting in her hand as she lazily leaned against the table.

In the arena, Aemon felt a pang of anxiety as he glanced up at the unsightly slave owners gawking at them. Then, he saw her—Irina, sitting in the stands, her hand pressed to her forehead. His stomach tightened.

“Kid, stick close to me,” the Blackhair giant interrupted, his deep voice breaking through Aemon’s thoughts.

Aemon nodded quickly, realizing the wisdom in the advice. With his small frame and lack of real skill, there was no way he could survive the bloodbath without protection. “Okay,” he agreed, knowing he needed all the help he could get.

Clang!

The sound of the gong echoed through the arena, signaling the start of the fight. Chaos erupted instantly. Swords flashed, and the sound of metal clashing filled the air as slaves turned on one another, desperate to survive. The arena quickly transformed into a brutal, frenzied battlefield.

Aemon hesitated for a split second—just long enough for a spray of blood to splatter across his face.

“Watch yourself! I can’t protect you all the time!” the Blackhair giant bellowed, swinging his enormous sword as he charged into the throng of combatants.

The arena was a storm of violence, and the Blackhair strongman stood at the center, his massive sword cleaving through enemies with terrifying ease. The weapon, nearly as tall as a man and as wide as a palm, cut through flesh and bone with every swing. No one could stand against him—those who tried were either hacked down or crushed by the force of his blows. Blood splattered in wide arcs, painting the ground red.

Aemon, shaking off his shock, fell into step behind the giant, using him as both a shield and a weapon. He dodged and weaved, staying just out of harm’s way as the strongman carved a path through the battlefield.

Time crept forward, and as noon approached, the once-crowded arena was littered with bodies. Only a handful of slaves remained standing—less than a tenth of those who had entered. Aemon, still alive, had managed to avoid most of the fighting by hiding in the shadows, his heart pounding as he watched the carnage unfold.

Many in the stands had expected him to be among the first to fall. But here he was, quietly lingering at the edge, unnoticed by the bloodthirsty crowd. Against all odds, he had survived.

Clang!

The gong sounded again, signaling the end of the duel. The remaining slaves, battered and exhausted, dragged themselves toward the iron Sect, leaving the gruesome battlefield behind. Aemon lingered at the back, not eager to draw attention to himself among the hardened survivors.

As the survivors filed into the rest area, a rare reward awaited them—food. According to the rules of the arena, those who survived each round would be given a feast before returning to the dark, damp cells below.

Just as Aemon was about to enter the gate, he glanced back over his shoulder. His eyes caught a glimpse of Irina, her blue dress trailing as she rose from the table and made her way out of the stands. Something stirred in his mind, but he couldn’t quite grasp what it was.

He turned back, stepping through the iron doors, his thoughts a whirlwind of uncertainty.

...

As night fell, the Colosseum grew silent, the chaos of the day replaced by an eerie stillness.

In the damp, underground prison cell, Aemon huddled in a corner, gnawing on a half-eaten baked potato. He had survived the day’s brutal fight and, as a result, had been temporarily moved to a less crowded cell. It was still cramped and reeked of damp stone, but at least there was more space to breathe.

His eyes drifted toward the Blackhair brawny man who lay near the small, barred window, his eyes closed, breathing steady. The man appeared to be asleep, but there was a tension in his muscles, as if even in sleep, he was ready for anything.

He walked toward the window, where the cool night breeze blew through the bars, pushing away the clouds that had been covering the sky. The Pure moonlight broke through, casting a beam over the prison. Aemon's gaze drifted upward, following the light to the towering shape of the Great Pyramid of Meereen. It loomed high above the city, an oppressive symbol of power, bearing down on those beneath it.

He stared at the pyramid, its size and grandeur crushing to those who stood below it. For a moment, he swore he could hear something—a distant roar. The sound of a dragon, full of fury and rage. Or perhaps it was just his imagination, stirred by the oppressive weight of the night and the towering pyramid. Either way, it stoked a fire within him, setting his heart ablaze with something he hadn't felt in a long time.

“What are you looking at?” a voice interrupted his thoughts.

Chapter 686: I am Aemon Targaryen

A deep voice startled Aemon from behind. He glanced down to find the Blackhair strongman glaring at him, his dark eyes burning with annoyance.

“Disturb me while I'm sleeping again, and I'll stab you in the ass,” the Blackhair growled, his voice thick with irritation.

Aemon glanced at the other sleeping slaves, unfazed. He crouched down beside the man and replied calmly, “No need. You prefer women.”

“There aren't any women here,” the Blackhair retorted, licking the corner of his mouth with a smirk that was anything but kind.

“Let's talk,” Aemon suggested, cutting straight to the point. He wasn't interested in meaningless threats. Instead, he reached into his pocket and pulled out one and a half leftover baked potatoes, offering them as a sign of goodwill.

The Blackhair raised an eyebrow, looking at the half-eaten potatoes with disdain. “What are you trying to do, feed a beggar?” he sneered, but took them anyway, chomping down between his words.

Aemon used the moment to press his advantage. He knew the mentality of men like this, men who’d been beaten down by the world but still had some fight left in them. He leaned closer and spoke in a low voice, “Do you want to be free?”

The Blackhair chuckled as if Aemon had just told a joke. “With you?” he scoffed, his tone dripping with sarcasm.

Aemon didn’t waste time with a rebuttal. Instead, he raised an eyebrow and gestured to the shackles around his ankles. “I have a few... unorthodox skills,” he said, pulling a twisted fork from his pocket, a simple utensil he had swiped from the Colosseum’s dining area.

The Blackhair’s eyes widened slightly, but his expression quickly shifted into a smirk. “Quite the talent,” he said, impressed despite himself. The Colosseum was notorious for its tight security, and the locks on the slaves were specifically designed to prevent such escape attempts. This wasn’t a trick any common thief could pull off.

Aemon casually refastened the shackles, his demeanor growing serious. “If you help me, I can get us all out of here.”

The Blackhair’s amusement faded, and a skeptical look crossed his face. “And where exactly do you plan on going? Even if you pick the locks, without weapons, we won’t stand a chance against the guards. You’ll be dead before you make it ten steps.”

The Colosseum had a strict policy: all weapons were confiscated after each duel, leaving the slaves defenseless. But Aemon remained undeterred.

“I’ve already figured that out,” Aemon replied, his voice firm. “I saw where they store the weapons today—it’s behind the rest area.”

The Blackhair listened, still skeptical but intrigued. Aemon’s plan seemed simple but feasible: unlock their shackles, sneak out, reach the storage room, and arm themselves. From there, they’d stand a chance.

After a moment, the Blackhair leaned back, considering the idea. “The Colosseum is heavily guarded. Even if we make it to the weapons, getting out of here will be difficult.”

Aemon met his gaze steadily. “Difficult, yes. But not impossible. I can come back for the others once I’ve gotten out.”

The Blackhair was silent, his eyes searching Aemon’s face for any sign of doubt. Why should he trust this scrawny boy, or believe he’d return to free the rest of them?

Aemon’s next words were slow, deliberate. “I am of the blood of the Dragon.” He paused, letting the words sink in before continuing, “You can ask Sally. She’ll vouch for me.”

At the mention of his lineage, the Blackhair's pupils contracted, his demeanor shifting from doubt to deep contemplation. The blood of the Dragon was no small claim.

...

### **Seven days later**

The Colosseum, Meereen.

After yet another grueling duel, the victorious slaves trudged back to the rest area, sweat mixing with the blood on their bodies. Aemon moved with the crowd, slipping into an inconspicuous spot along the wall, trying to stay unnoticed.

"I've found fifty men willing to help," came a low voice.

Aemon glanced up to see the Blackhair strongman approaching, his sharp eyes scanning the surroundings for eavesdroppers.

"Only fifty?" Aemon whispered, frowning. He had hoped for more—fifty men seemed barely enough to take on even the guards at the weapons storeroom, let alone fight their way out of the Colosseum.

The Blackhair scoffed, tearing into a piece of black bread. "And if there were more, could you trust them? The bigger the group, the quicker someone talks."

Aemon couldn't argue with that. Rallying fifty men in the cutthroat, backstabbing world of the Colosseum was an impressive feat on its own. More would mean more risk—more chances for someone to betray the plan.

He nodded in silent agreement.

"When do we move?" the Blackhair asked, a glint of anticipation in his eyes. The thought of slitting the guards' throats and escaping Slaver's Bay clearly filled him with barely contained excitement.

Aemon considered it for a moment, then whispered, "Half a month..."

*Ding-dong!*

The sharp clang of a gong interrupted him. The sound rang out three times in rapid succession—loud and jarring. It was the signal for all slaves to gather.

"Let's see what's happening," Aemon muttered, swallowing the rest of his sentence as he stood. The other slaves around him cursed under their breath, hastily shoving food into their mouths before filing out. No one dared disobey the summons; the guards of the slave owners were merciless executioners, and defiance meant death.

The arena was eerily quiet when they arrived. The spectators had already left, and the grandstands loomed above, empty of the usual roars and jeers.

Aemon stepped out through the iron Sect, squinting against the harsh sunlight. As his eyes adjusted, he caught sight of a familiar figure standing in the center of the arena, bathed in the midday glow.

His heart skipped a beat.

“Sally!!” Aemon’s voice echoed across the blood-stained arena.

In the center, a gallows stood wrapped in thorny briars. Tied to the wooden frame was Sally, the middle-aged woman who had cared for him all this time. Her bloated body showed the harsh marks of the ropes, her wrists raw from the restraints. Beneath her, dry firewood had been piled high, ready to burn.

Aemon stood frozen, disbelief coursing through him. He never imagined he would see her like this—condemned and bound for execution.

Clang!

The guard, his face grim and emotionless, slammed a gong and pointed to the gallows. “This vile slave girl is a blood witch,” he shouted to the gathered crowd. “She’s been trading forbidden magic potions to the slaves in the Colosseum.”

The crowd erupted in a mix of murmurs and shouts. Aemon couldn’t fully grasp what was happening, but beside him, the Blackhair strongman looked shaken. He knew. The Colosseum cared little for its slaves unless they were undefeated champions. Wounded slaves were left to fend for themselves, receiving little to no treatment. Sally had been one of the few to help, secretly trading medicines through slave owner channels, offering both healing and information in exchange for survival.

The guard’s voice cut through the noise again as he berated the slaves, calling them worthless, before picking up a torch. With a sneer, he hurled it onto the woodpile beneath Sally.

Boom!

The fire ignited instantly, flames licking up the sides of the gallows. The wood had been soaked in oil, and the fire spread rapidly. Sari closed her eyes, her lips trembling as she whispered a prayer—a final plea to her god, hoping for salvation. But there would be none.

“Nooo!” Aemon’s cry was drowned by the crackling flames.

This woman had saved him, time and time again, persuading him not to give up, scavenging food and water to keep them alive. She wasn’t beautiful, she wasn’t powerful, but she had given everything to ensure they survived together.

Now, the fire raged, black smoke billowing into the air. Sally’s prayers grew frantic, her voice speeding up as the heat reached her skin. In seconds, her prayers turned to shrieks of agony as the flames consumed her clothes, burning her flesh.

“Don’t look,” the Blackhair strongman muttered, stepping in front of Aemon, shielding him from the horrific sight.

But Aemon stood in shock, his body rigid, unable to move. The last thing he saw was Sally’s face—her green eyes wide with terror. In a fleeting moment, their gazes locked across the flames. Recognition flickered in her eyes, followed by a brief, painful smile, her wrinkled eyes tightening in what seemed like a final act of tenderness.

Then her screams turned to cursing—her voice rising above the crackle of the fire as she damned every slave owner and their lackeys. She cursed them all, vowing they would meet the same fate.

Aemon felt the Blackhair strongman press him against his chest, trying to shield him from the horror, but the sound of Sally's wails lingered, haunting the air.

"Ashes..." Aemon whispered, closing his eyes as his lips moved faintly. He understood. This was Sally's last wish—a wish for vengeance, for justice.

Soon, the execution ended, the grim spectacle meant to deter rebellion among the slaves. As the fire smoldered, the slaves were ordered back to the underground cells. The rest area, which had once promised a brief respite, now seemed hollow and lifeless.

On the way back, the Blackhair strongman walked beside Aemon, his mood heavy. "Is the plan still half a month from now?" he asked cautiously. He had overheard the guards mention a grand event in Meereen in half a month—an event that would surely leave security weakened.

"No," Aemon muttered, his voice steely with resolve. He clenched his fists, his head bowed. "Tonight."

...

It was dusk.

The guards had begun their shift change, heading off to eat, leaving the underground cells lightly patrolled.

*Click!*

A cell door quietly swung open, and several shadowy figures slipped into the corridor. Aemon moved swiftly, dropping his shackles and hurrying to open the other cell doors one by one.

The imprisoned slaves erupted with excitement, shouting and cheering as their chains fell away. Their eyes gleamed with a dangerous mixture of desperation and hope. For some, this was a chance to escape, while others saw an opportunity to betray the escapees in exchange for favor. Either way, it was a fight for survival.

"Get out of here, all of you! If you want freedom, follow me!" the Blackhair strongman bellowed, leading the charge. His powerful voice cut through the chaos, rallying the slaves.

"Charge!"

Blood spilled across the dungeon floor, and the sight sent the slaves into a frenzy. They surged forward, a wild mob, some darting off in all directions while others rallied behind the Blackhair strongman, following his lead.

Aemon, however, had a clear target. He sprinted towards the weapons storage room behind the rest area, his heart pounding in his chest.

“Who goes there!?”

A squad of guards was stationed outside the storage room, their hands tightening around their spears as they tried to rally against the oncoming slaves. But the moment of hesitation was fatal. The slaves, fueled by adrenaline and the scent of blood, descended on them. A vicious melee erupted, and the guards were quickly overwhelmed, torn apart before they could even call for reinforcements.

*Click!*

Aemon worked quickly, picking the lock to the storage room with calm precision. The door swung open, revealing rows of weapons and armor stacked neatly within.

The slaves’ eyes widened, and they surged forward, ready to plunder the armory and arm themselves. The smell of freedom was almost palpable.

“Stop right there! If you want to be free, listen to me first!”

The Blackhair strongman had already retrieved his enormous sword and now stood at the entrance of the armory, his voice booming. His shout halted the chaotic rush, his presence demanding attention.

The slaves paused, their breath ragged. While many had scattered, hundreds still remained, eyes gleaming with desperation. Yet, only a few dozen of them had been part of the planned escape—most of the others were simply swept up in the moment, clinging to any chance of survival.

“What do you want to say?” a young slave snapped, his voice seething with anger. “If we don’t run now, when will we?”

With weapons within reach, hope was finally tangible. The other slaves murmured in agreement, their expressions turning hostile. They were ready to break free, and anyone standing in their way was a threat.

"Listen to me, you scum!"

Aemon stepped forward, his voice cold and cutting through the tense air. “You want freedom? So do I. But do you really think you can win it with this handful of people and a few stolen weapons from the armory?” He gestured at the ragtag group around him. “You can’t even break out of the Colosseum, let alone a heavily guarded city like Meereen.”

The young slave who had challenged him earlier scowled, clearly unimpressed with the half-grown boy. "So, what are you going to do?"

Aemon took a breath, straightening his back as he drew from the speeches his father once gave. “Help me,” he declared, his arms wide, “and I will give you your freedom! I am of the blood of the dragon. If you help me escape, I will repay you with more than just survival. I will repay you with freedom.”

The slaves exchanged doubtful glances. Most of them knew nothing about the "blood of the dragon," and to them, Aemon was just a boy making grand claims.

But Aemon didn't stop to explain. He had to prove himself. Without a word, he knocked over a brazier near the entrance of the armory, scattering glowing embers across the floor. The fire flared up as the coals hissed.

Stepping toward the flames, Aemon didn't hesitate. He picked up a dagger from a fallen guard and, with a sharp, metallic sound, sliced his wrist. Blood dripped down, falling into the coals.

*Boom!*

The flames roared higher, as if the blood had fueled the fire itself. The slaves gasped, eyes wide with shock.

This was exactly the reaction Aemon had hoped for. He gritted his teeth through the searing pain and spoke through the rising heat. "I am Aemon Targaryen! The lost Dragonlord! Who will fight for me and for freedom?"

Silence gripped the room, every pair of eyes locked on Aemon as he stood, arm bleeding, in the midst of the flames. His sweat mingled with the blood, his face pale but defiant. He wasn't immune to the fire, and the pain was excruciating, but he endured it.

*What is a little pain in exchange for loyalty?*

"I am a true Dragonlord!" Aemon shouted again, his voice louder, more commanding. "Who will fight for the Dragonlords?"

*Plop! Plop!*

Several slaves dropped to their knees, their faces flushed with excitement. They had seen many things in the Colosseum, but never a display like this. The flames danced around Aemon, a young figure standing tall amidst the fire, his presence almost otherworldly.

"Fight for the true Dragonlord!" the Blackhair strongman bellowed, his voice echoing through the armory. Without hesitation, he swung his massive sword, cutting down the shelves around him.

"For the true Dragonlord!" others echoed, their voices swelling into a chorus.

The wave of morale surged. The slaves, hearts pounding with newfound purpose, stormed the armory, grabbing weapons and armor. The atmosphere shifted—where there had been doubt, now there was determination. They were no longer desperate survivors; they were soldiers in a rebellion, warriors for the true dragon.

Aemon, trembling and weak from the pain, took a shaky step back. His arm throbbed, and when he glanced down, he noticed something strange—a faint layer of scaly lines traced across his skin, shimmering in the light of the flames.

*The blood of the dragon.*

Chapter 687: The Rebirth of a True Dragon!

The sun sank low in the west, igniting the clouds in shades of fire and ink. Over Meereen, the Colosseum roared with chaos.

"Stop them! Don't let them open the gate!"

"Archers, ready yourselves! Let none escape!"

...

Angry shouts echoed through the arena as, unexpectedly, the iron gate creaked open. The slaves surged forward in a coordinated assault, overwhelming guards and claiming lives with ruthless efficiency. Within half an hour, they had nearly breached the Colosseum's walls.

Boom! Boom!

Torches and braziers toppled, spilling charcoal fires that blocked the passageways and ignited the wooden structures above.

"The gate is just ahead!" someone shouted, igniting hope.

Bands of young, powerful slaves surged forward, wielding makeshift weapons and leaving a bloody trail of guards in their wake. Aemon found himself in their midst, propelled forward by the relentless momentum. Every so often, he glanced back, catching sight of the ashes still smoldering in the arena. The gallows had burned through, embers rising into the sky.

Crash!

The Colosseum gates burst open, and, for a fleeting moment, sunlight poured through, casting a final glow over the fleeing slaves. They escaped from the inferno that had held them prisoner, running into the last light of the setting sun. Then, as if on cue, darkness fell.

"Don't be afraid! Scatter!"

As night deepened, the slaves vanished into the shadows, fleeing in all directions. The Great Masters stood in fury, lashing out at their subordinates. "After them! Now!"

The slave soldiers hesitated, then steeled themselves and gave chase. Yet this rebellion felt strange—unlike past attempts where slaves made desperate dashes for the city gates, this group dispersed, vanishing into the streets and alleys.

It was as if they intended not just to escape, but to disrupt, sowing confusion and drawing the ire of the Great Masters and citizens alike, casting a shadow over the city's much-anticipated celebration.

...

The night grew darker, deepening the chaos that had spread across the city. Fires erupted in pockets throughout Meereen, blending with the torches of the slave soldiers until the darkness blazed almost as bright as day. The flames weren't random; they were set deliberately by the escaping slaves. But instead of fleeing, they turned on the nearby residents, releasing a pent-up fury that drove them to reckless attacks.

The slave soldiers fought back, using brutal force to beat, restrain, or kill the insurgents. Yet, the madness only seemed to grow. It was as though the slaves were venting for a battle they had long anticipated but had never had the chance to fight. Amid the chaos, it was impossible to tell friend from foe. Order frayed to the brink of collapse.

...

Outside the Great Pyramid

Taking advantage of the fires raging around the city, a small group crept toward the Great Pyramid—the palace of Meereen's queen. Guarding the structure were ranks of Unsullied soldiers, the famed warriors purchased from Astapor, whose patrols secured the pyramid like an impenetrable wall.

"Who's going?" murmured a muscular man with dark, wild hair as he lay hidden among the bushes, watching a patrol of Unsullied soldiers. There were only ten of them, but each was a product of brutal, unrelenting training.

A dozen slaves gathered behind him, visibly shaken by the sight of the Unsullied.

"Cowards," the man spat, standing with a heavy creak as he lifted his massive sword. "I'll lead the way. Are you with me?"

The sound of his voice immediately drew the attention of the Unsullied, who reacted with a swift, silent precision, spears and shields raised as they formed a tight circle around the advancing slaves. Trapped and seeing no way out but through, the slaves charged.

Puff! One of the slaves dashed forward, only to be impaled through the abdomen by an Unsullied spear.

Thud, thud, thud! The Unsullied struck their spears against their shields, their expressionless faces betraying no emotion as they crouched and moved in, closing the circle.

A major battle was about to erupt.

...

In the bushes nearby, Aemon watched the confrontation, his eyes sharp as he spotted his opportunity. He dropped low, moving stealthily on hands and knees as he crept towards the underground stone prison of the Great Pyramid.

He didn't know where the red dragon was kept, but every so often, he heard a distant dragon roar, its deep echo reverberating in what sounded like an enclosed space. During his time with Irina, she had told him of the Great Pyramid's layout. The only place secure enough to contain a dragon was the underground stone prison—a space originally built as a tomb.

Before long, he arrived at the stone prison's entrance. Two imposing sphinx statues flanked the heavy stone door—one carved with a female face, the other with a male. Normally, there would have been guards, but tonight, their attention had shifted to the battles raging nearby.

"We have to hurry; time is running out," Aemon said urgently, scanning the surroundings before sprinting toward the stone door.

The escapees were outnumbered, struggling to hold back the relentless waves of Unsullied. If he didn't act quickly, all their efforts would be for nothing.

Bang! Bang! He pounded his fists against the stone door, pausing to press his ear against its rough surface. This door wasn't ordinary; it was a specially crafted mechanism, said to be the work of a Blood Mage. Aemon remembered the burglar who had once taught him the art of lockpicking: 'Use your ears and fingers, not just your eyes.'

He struck the wall beside the door, listening carefully. The sound changed, signaling he was close to the hidden mechanism.

With his fingers pressed against the cool stone, he felt along the surface, seeking the latch that would let him inside.

“Where is it? Hurry!”

A cold voice rang out behind him as footsteps echoed, growing closer. Aemon’s face tightened; he spun around to see a large group of Unsullied soldiers approaching, one squad moving straight toward him, blocking the path to the stone door.

“Open up, open up!” he muttered urgently, a thin line of sweat forming on his forehead as his fingers scraped against the rough stone, bleeding from the pressure. The Unsullied were closing in fast, their spears gleaming black in the flickering torchlight.

Then, with a loud crash, the heavy stone door lurched open, leaving a dent in the wall.

“Excellent,” Aemon whispered, relief flashing across his face as he glanced once at the approaching Unsullied, then slipped through the doorway into the darkness of the stone prison.

...

Inside, the dim, stale air clung to him, heavy with the acrid smell of smoldering ash. Aemon’s purple eyes widened as he carefully traced his path along the cold stone walls. “Where are you?” he whispered into the shadowed silence.

He knew the dragon was here—he had felt its call. His siblings had their own abilities, mysterious talents that hinted at ancient bloodlines: Daenerys with her prophetic dreams, Maekar with his keen intuition. Perhaps he, too, had inherited something, for he could feel the dragon’s presence as though it were a whisper deep within his bones.

“Come out!” Aemon called out in High Valyrian, his voice echoing with the magic he willed into the words.

*Crack!*

Something snapped beneath his foot. He glanced down and found a charred rib, still warm, bearing marks of something far hotter than ordinary fire. This had to be it. As soon as the thought crossed his mind, a sudden rush of hot air wafted from his left, thick with the scent of sulfur. A rumbling sound grew louder, punctuated by the heavy clank of chains.

Aemon’s heart pounded as he looked to his left. There, less than ten meters away, a pair of amber eyes opened, cold and piercing, fixing on him with a merciless gaze.

In that instant, the dragon’s maw parted, exposing the fiery red glow of Dragonfire that illuminated its outline. Aemon’s breath caught as the dragon came into full view—a massive creature covered in glistening crimson scales, its neck chained to the wall. It lay coiled in the corner, slowly lifting its head crowned with a crown of sharp, menacing horns.

The dragon's snout hovered just a few feet from Aemon, their faces almost level. He could feel the searing heat radiating from the dragon's breath as flames flickered around its jaws.

“Roar~~~”

The dragon released a low, guttural growl, its head tilted slightly as it eyed the silver-haired boy with wary curiosity. Its amber pupils, narrow and sharp, flickered as it assessed him, a mere moment away from unleashing its wrath.

But Aemon only laughed—a soft, breathy sound, almost childlike in its happiness. Tears brimmed in his eyes as he slowly raised a hand, each step taking him closer to the dragon's open maw.

“Roar!”

The red dragon's pupils flashed with a fierce, tyrannical light as it stretched its neck forward, nearly toppling the silver-haired boy with its sheer size and force. Straining against the sturdy chains, its enormous maw stopped just short of Aemon, less than a meter away.

In that tense moment, Aemon's bloodied palm rested lightly against the dragon's muzzle. With a soft smile, he murmured, “Are you trapped too, big guy?”

The dragon, bound and unable to soar, mirrored Aemon's own confinement within these cold stone walls. Its pupils narrowed in surprise—no one had ever dared to touch it so casually.

“It's not pleasant being caught, is it?” Aemon spoke softly, more to himself, his usual disheveled appearance now calm and composed. Unlike his eldest brother Baelon's sternness or his third brother Maekar's hesitations, Aemon seemed to carry both his father Rhaegar's courage and his mother Rhaenya's resilient grace.

“Roar!”

The red dragon's fury flared, a fiery intensity rising in its maw as it opened wide, its bright red Dragonfire burning hotter. It seemed ready to defend its pride, even if it meant devouring him in an instant.

“Don't worry, I'll set you free.” Aemon withdrew his hand calmly, stepping past the dragon's fiery gaze, undaunted by its lethal breath, and moved toward the base of the dragon's neck where the iron shackles bit into its scales.

The dragon seemed to understand; for a moment, it held back its wrath, observing him in guarded silence. Aemon's steps were steady, and he even reached out to pat its glistening red scales, murmuring, “Bow your head, big guy.”

The dragon's pupils glinted with suspicion, but after a moment, it lowered its head, its massive neck resting on the floor and turning slightly to expose the iron shackles. The three-foot-wide metal bands wrapped tightly around its neck, restricting its every move.

“Here we go,” Aemon said quietly, climbing up the chains to examine the lock. His fingers ran along the cold steel until—

*Click!*

The shackle unlocked with a metallic snap, and the heavy chains slid down, clattering to the stone floor.

“Roar!”

The red dragon lifted its head and roared triumphantly, its Dragonfire bursting forth in a torrent of brilliant, blood-red flames that scorched the ceiling, a volcanic fury unleashed after years of suppression.

Roar! Roar!

With its amber eyes gleaming, the dragon crept towards the prison door, each massive step echoing through the chamber as it coiled its thirty-meter body. It was massive, already a giant even among dragons, its form well beyond its age.

“Roar?” The red dragon stopped at the threshold, then turned, casting a glance back at Aemon, who remained in the shadows, watching quietly. He didn’t move closer; a hint of a smile played at the corner of his mouth.

Bang!

The dragon shook itself, flexing its powerful tail and crashing it through the stone door, sending a squad of Unsullied flying before they had time to react.

Then, as the dust settled, the red dragon slowly turned its head back once more.

“Roar!”

The red dragon’s fierce, vertical pupils locked onto the silver-haired boy, reflecting his image as if its roar were summoning him forward. Aemon’s eyes gleamed with excitement, his mouth curling up in a grin. “Here it comes,” he whispered.

He ran up to the dragon, who lowered its proud head once more, allowing him to climb onto its back. As Aemon settled in, his hands found steady footing on the barbs along its powerful neck. “Shall I name you, big guy?” he murmured, though it sounded more like a statement than a question.

“Trickster... Trickster...” he mused, recalling his long-lost childhood companion. That memory was etched in his mind as if branded there. But his thoughts shifted to Leah, who was still in danger, and the little red horse she had once given him.

“Roar?” The red dragon’s head tilted slightly, sensing Aemon’s silence, then lifted itself up and climbed out of the dark stone prison, its wings unfolding as it took in its newfound freedom. The night sky sprawled above them, dotted with stars, the city

below alight with fires. Aemon looked up, recognizing the constellations Ursa Major and Ursa Minor shining clearly for the first time in ages.

“They’ve reunited too,” he murmured, a smile crossing his face as he ignored the stinging in his scraped palms. With this dragon, he could finally go home.

“Roar!” The red dragon’s excitement mounted as it saw the fires scattered across the city, eager to unleash its fury. An idea sparked in Aemon’s mind, and he leaned down, saying, “Big guy, how about Ursarion? You were born fierce, weren’t you?”

The dragon snorted indifferently at the name, caring little about titles. Its massive wings unfurled, catching the breeze as it launched into the sky, its blood-red wings stretching wide, seeming to scatter stars with each beat.

Boom!

Bright red Dragonfire rained down like molten blood, drenching the Unsullied below. Their screams echoed as armor twisted and bodies turned to ash beneath the dragon’s wrath.

The dragon—now Ursarion—swooped low over the Great Pyramid, its vertical pupils gleaming with cold fury as it burned everything in its sight, exacting revenge on those who had captured and chained it, those who had wronged them both.

“Follow me, Ursarion,” Aemon commanded, gripping the dark red dorsal fin firmly as they descended toward the Pyramid’s entrance, eyes fixed on the vestibule ahead.

Tonight, vengeance was their guiding fire.

...

Meanwhile, in the vestibule:

Irina, who had been preparing for bed, heard the commotion and rushed outside, eyes widening as she spotted the red dragon hovering in the sky. “What’s going on!?” she yelled.

Suddenly, she grabbed the bald wizard by the collar of his red robe, her voice a furious hiss.

“Explain yourself! Why has the dragon escaped?” She strained her eyes; there was another figure on the dragon’s back. Someone had tamed it.

“Your Grace, you must leave at once,” the wizard replied calmly, recognizing that the red dragon was now a threat to them.

Irina’s expression shifted to horror. She spun to flee, but it was already too late.

Boom!

A torrent of crimson Dragonfire rained down, obliterating the Unsullied stationed in the forecourt. With a heavy thud, the dragon—now an unbridled force of rage—landed before her. Irina stood frozen, watching in horror as the soldiers around her were incinerated in a burst of blood-red flame.

“Roar!”

The dragon, Ursarion, unleashed a furious bellow, its merciless gaze fixed on those who had once tried to tame it. Among them was Irina, who trembled as the dragon and its rider approached her slowly. She could make out the figure now, and a chilling recognition set in.

“You... it’s you?” she stammered, her voice barely above a whisper. Aemon sat astride the dragon’s back, looking down at his former captor with a calm, relieved expression.

Aemon didn’t reply. Instead, he patted Ursarion’s back, bringing the dragon’s head level with Irina and the others. The dragon’s amber eyes gleamed with deadly intent.

“What do you want?” Irina forced out, trying to keep her composure, but her shaking legs betrayed her.

Aemon regarded her coldly, extending his hand. “My mother’s necklace. Return it to me.”

Irina’s hand went to the pendant hanging around her neck—a dragon-headed piece of Valyrian steel. For a moment, she hesitated, but Aemon’s unwavering gaze left her no choice. She ripped the necklace from her neck and passed it to the bald wizard. “Give it to him,” she ordered.

The wizard’s face paled as he approached Aemon, his steps slow, as if each one brought him closer to certain doom. Finally, he handed Aemon the pendant, who took it with a faint smile, rubbing the dragon pendant thoughtfully before placing it back around his neck.

The bald wizard began to turn, thinking the exchange complete.

“Roar!”

Ursarion’s mouth opened wide, releasing a fresh wave of Dragonfire, this time directed at the wizard. He barely had time to scream as the flames consumed him, his red robes igniting and his skin melting away, leaving only a pool of blood and ash in his place.

Witnessing the gruesome sight, the remaining maids and guards attempted to flee.

“Dracarys,” Aemon commanded softly.

Ursarion’s eyes flashed with savage glee, and it unleashed its fiery breath, scorching all those within reach. Their desperate cries filled the air before they, too, were reduced to smoldering remnants.

“No... no, no...” Irina backed away, her body trembling as she struggled to escape.

With a low growl, Ursarion lunged, its jaws snapping down on her shoulder, tearing away her arm and swallowing it whole. Piece by piece, the dragon dismembered her, reducing her to silence in six brutal bites, until only one blood-soaked leg remained.

Aemon looked down at the remains without a shred of remorse. He spoke softly, as if to himself, “There is only one Dragonlord family in this world, and you taught me that lesson well.”

His journey, marked by suffering and betrayal, had confirmed the harsh reality of survival in a world ruled by power. “I won’t consume you, but you will live on in me,” he whispered, glancing up at the stars with closed eyes.

“Roar!” Ursarion bellowed, its mighty form lifting into the sky, its wings carrying it above the burning city below. Tonight, the flames would dance until dawn, and sleep would be banished from Meereen.

Chapter 688: Brothers Reunite

Three days later...

The Great Pyramid, Meereen.

Thousands of slaves gathered in the square, their eyes fixed nervously on the towering pyramid. After days of turmoil, the city had returned to an uneasy peace, signifying another shift in power.

Knock, knock, knock!

A rhythmic knocking echoed across the square as an army of Unsullied emerged from either side of the Great Pyramid. Clad in black armor and spiked helmets, they moved in disciplined silence. Though not many—perhaps a thousand—they formed an imposing line. Behind them trailed a procession of slaves, leading horse-drawn carts shrouded in white cloth. The clank of chains filled the air as the carts rolled over the cracked stone floor. The slaves cast uneasy glances around, sensing that something momentous was about to happen.

"Roar!"

A thunderous dragon's roar shattered the tense silence. The slaves flinched, looking skyward in terror toward the source of the sound. Moments later, the clouds twisted and the wind howled as a young dragon, its body a brilliant, blood-red, burst through the clouds. It spread its wings wide and swooped down over the square, circling twice before descending to the forecourt of the Great Pyramid, low enough to remain visible to all.

Boom!

The dragon landed with a resounding thud, sending up clouds of searing dust. Screams erupted among the slaves, and they scrambled back in panic. The Unsullied swiftly moved to contain the commotion, encircling the square and restoring order.

"Roar!"

The dragon issued another ear-splitting roar, its cold, unblinking eyes fixed on the crowd. It slowly lowered its long neck, its back fin twitching.

"Quiet, Ursarion," Aemon commanded softly, gripping the dragon's fin spikes firmly. Barefoot and still dressed in the coarse, rough fabric of a slave, he looked down at the crowd from the dragon's back. Only the faintest hint of silver-blond hair now crowned his head, a small change, yet his demeanor radiated a strength that felt worlds apart from the slave he once had been.

The entire square fell silent. The slaves trembled, peering cautiously at the young man atop the dragon, recognizing him as one of their own yet struck by the strange power he exuded. None dared speak.

Aemon gazed out over them, then reached inside his tunic and drew forth a whip with a handle carved into the shape of a Harpy. Holding it high, he let it hang in the air for all to see.

Thwack!

In response, the Unsullied struck their round shields with their spears, the resounding clangs echoing through the square. That whip had once belonged to the "Queen with Silver Hair," Irina Daeryon, but had fallen into Aemon's hands amid the chaos of the recent uprising.

Since the Iron Throne's invasion, Slaver's Bay had been left weakened. Meereen's defenses had relied heavily on the 5,000 pirates led by Racallio and 2,500 Unsullied purchased from Astapor. After Irina's death, Racallio had fled with his pirates, leaving the city defenseless. The Unsullied had suffered heavy losses, reduced to just 1,300 men. With Irina gone, Aemon had taken command of the Unsullied, seizing control over the leaderless city.

Crack!

The whip cracked through the air, its sharp report pulling every gaze back to him.

"Where is your master, you wretched slaves!?" Aemon's voice rang out, loud and clear as he surveyed the crowd.

The slaves glanced nervously at one another, too weak to respond. Their masters had vanished in the chaos long ago, leaving them to survive in the dilapidated slave huts.

"You don't know, so I'll tell you!" Aemon brandished his whip, pointing emphatically toward the square. "The ones who once enslaved you stand before you now!"

Crack! Crack!

The sharp sound of whips cut through the air, followed by frightened cries as a large group of slaves emerged from behind the Great Pyramid. They wielded long whips and spiked sticks, driving forward a line of slave owners. Once clad in luxury, the masters' finery was now tattered and bloodstained, their hands bound with coarse ropes. They stumbled forward like cattle, pushed along in strings by their former slaves.

The sight stunned the crowd. Some of the women screamed, recoiling at the brutal display. It had been years since they'd witnessed such a scene—the last time being during the bloody invasion by the Iron Throne, which had left many dead and had swiftly restored the slave-owning class to power.

Aemon raised himself on the back of the dragon to appear taller, his voice resounding through the square. "These are the Great Masters who once enslaved you!" He gestured toward the bound captives. "The false Dragonlord is dead, and Slaver's Bay will finally be liberated!"

The slaves stared at him, suspicion and hope flickering in their eyes. Aemon's whip pointed to the first cart in the line, signaling the Unsullied to pull away the white cloth. Beneath it lay a towering pile of chains and shackles, stacked high and pressing the wheels into the ground, as though the entire city's iron restraints had been gathered there.

Before the crowd of thousands, Aemon spoke with calm authority. "Dracarys!" He tossed the whip into the cart.

"Roar!"

The red dragon responded, unleashing a stream of searing fire onto the pile. The shackles glowed and deformed in the heat, slowly melting under the relentless blaze. For half an hour, the dragonfire

roared over the iron, reducing it to seven or eight red-hot mounds of molten metal, each several meters high. A slave with a hammer climbed onto the cart, striking the molten iron, melding the piles together in a unified mass. It took shape under his blows, gradually resembling the foundations of an Iron Chair—but with shackle loops replacing sharp blades.

Aemon watched intently, taking in every detail, including the twisted remnants of the shackles. He imagined the final throne: not a seat of sharp swords, but a powerful symbol made from the very chains that had once bound his people.

The gathered slaves watched with growing awe, beginning to understand the spectacle. The Unsullied, stoic as ever, betrayed a rare glimmer of emotion when they saw the whip's destruction.

“Today, Meereen is liberated—forever!” Aemon's voice rose as he lifted an arm in a solemn declaration. “No more slaves, no more masters—only equal citizens under the Iron Throne!”

His words struck deep, and a quiet fell over the crowd, the magnitude of his vow holding them captive. The metal mounds cooled slowly, the beginnings of the Iron Chair visible amidst the iron shackle loops.

Aemon rode out of the courtyard on his red dragon, moving closer to the oppressed slaves. “My father failed to truly free Meereen. From this day forward, I will rule here, and I will crush the evil of slavery once and for all!” His voice echoed through the square. “No one deserves to be a slave. My father said that Slaver's Bay was difficult to govern because of its remoteness. But I will achieve what he could not.”

He raised his arm in a sweeping gesture. “I declare that there are no more slaves!”

Aemon's eyes burned as he urged his dragon forward, drawing near to the crowd of downtrodden slaves, his voice carrying fervently, “Who wants to be free?”

“Me!” a voice cried out, quickly followed by a chorus of others.

The slaves pressed closer, surrounding the majestic red dragon as Aemon lifted his arm and brought it down in a decisive gesture.

A dreadful silence fell as, one by one, the slave overseers raised their spears and drove them into the kneeling slave owners, their captives who had once ruled over them with iron fists. Blood spilled across the stone as slave owners of all ages fell: men, women, and cunning old villains alike. Only the youngest children were spared, but every other family member tied to slavery paid the price, including the remnants of Daeryon's house, their final stand extinguished with merciless efficiency.

“Hero!”

“You are our hero...”

The slaves gathered around the silver-haired boy on the dragon's back, their eyes filled with awe. They had no understanding of the Dragonlord's House or its power. What they saw was the boy's slave attire, the declaration of liberation, and the grand act of slaying the Great Masters. Their cheers filled the air as they tore off the remnants of their shackles, throwing them high above their heads. Though the iron had long ceased to bind their bodies, the invisible chains of oppression had bound their spirits. For now, they placed their trust in the young figure on the dragon's back.

Aemon, breathing heavily, regarded the crowd without fear. He understood the psychology of the enslaved, shaped by his own life of hardship and servitude.

“King of Meereen!”

“Your Grace of Slaver’s Bay!”

The cheers grew louder as the slaves pressed closer around the towering red dragon, longing for a ruler who could shatter their bonds. The King of the Iron Throne had tried but failed to bring them lasting freedom. Now, in Aemon, they found a new liberator. He took a deep breath and accepted the titles they bestowed, knowing that to truly free Slaver’s Bay, he would need to remain there—perhaps for life. He had his own Iron Throne to rule from now.

Knock, knock, knock!

The Unsullied soldiers joined the crowd, striking their spears against their round shields in a solemn show of loyalty. Many among them had once been slaves, liberated and given purpose by the Iron Throne. If their predecessors could fight for freedom, they, too, could fulfill that role under Aemon’s command.

Aemon surveyed the scene and considered the future of Meereen. His mind formulated a strategy: he would establish an identity-tagging system similar to that of the Free Cities, ensuring a structured hierarchy to stabilize the Bay and help suppress unrest. He envisioned robust maritime trade between Meereen and the Free Cities of both East and West, Qarth, Asshai, and beyond. The very name of Slaver’s Bay needed to change, he thought, to erase the shame and pain of its past.

“Roar!”

A sudden dragon’s cry echoed from the distance. Startled, Aemon whipped around, his heart hammering as his eyes searched the sky.

Boom!

A flash of silver-gray sliced through the mist, soaring through the clouds. Aemon’s gaze locked on the glimmering figure, his breath catching in his throat as emotion swelled within him, bringing tears to his eyes.

“Roar!”

The silver-gray dragon descended, its shimmering form circling the enormous Harpy statue atop the Great Pyramid. A younger boy with short silver hair rode upon the dragon’s back, his sapphire-like eyes sweeping over the scene below. He noticed the red dragon, the Unsullied, and the countless slaves gazing up in rapture. His stare fixed on the red dragon, and then on Aemon. His expression froze in shock as his eyes widened.

“Land, Tyraxes!” Maekar leaned forward, patting the dragon’s back urgently.

“Roar!”

Tyraxes let out a sharp cry and descended gracefully, its silver-gray scales catching the sunlight and throwing brilliant hues across the square as it landed beside the red dragon.

“Ahhh!”

The crowd gasped, startled by the sudden arrival of the second dragon. They backed away, murmuring in awe and confusion.

Boom!

Tyraxes landed with a heavy thud, and the red dragon's cold, vertical pupils fixed upon the newcomer with a wary hostility. But Aemon had already leaped down, his feet hitting the ground before Maekar could even dismount.

“Roar!”

The red dragon's gaze was sharp and unyielding as it observed Tyraxes. Aemon, ignoring the dragons' silent standoff, ran forward, crossing the space between them. The sight of the familiar silver-gray dragon, and the boy with platinum hair standing before him, stirred an overwhelming surge of joy within him, as if he had been swept into the sky himself.

He stopped, his pupils trembling with emotion, his mouth opening to speak, though no words came.

“Aemon.”

Maekar took a hesitant step forward, eyes wide with disbelief. The name slipped from his lips just as a gust of wind whipped around them. Aemon's vision blurred, and, without another thought, he opened his arms and dashed forward.

“Aemon!” Maekar called again, stepping into the embrace with no hesitation.

In the span of seconds, the brothers closed the distance between them, meeting in a fierce hug. Neither had expected to find each other here in Slaver's Bay, yet now, face-to-face, their emotions erupted like a volcano, impossible to contain.

“Maekar...” Aemon's voice was thick with emotion as he clutched his younger brother tightly, resting his chin on Maekar's shoulder, fearful that he might vanish if he let go. His tears fell freely, dampening his face as he held on. Half a year—six endless months—had passed since he'd last seen family, a brother bound to him by blood.

Maekar silently closed his eyes, tightening his arms around Aemon, returning the hug with quiet, heartfelt strength. In their embrace, words became unnecessary; everything they felt was conveyed in the warmth and intensity of their hold. At last, after what felt like an eternity, they reluctantly parted.

Aemon sniffed, managing a small, embarrassed smile. “Maekar, why did you come to Meereen?”

Their relationship had once been strained, with Aemon pushing his brother away. Now, reunited, the distance between them felt like a lifetime ago.

“I heard rumors of dragons in Meereen, so I came to see for myself.” Maekar wiped his eyes and smiled, glancing over at the red dragon that stood patiently behind Aemon. “I should have known it would be you. Always relentless, aren't you?”

He studied the dragon's formidable form, noting its calm obedience. “Even the dragons have been tamed once more. It seems you've moved on from the death of the Trickster.” Maekar's expression

softened. He was grateful that the dragon had found its way back to Aemon rather than falling into another's hands.

Aemon's face flushed, and he lowered his gaze. "It's all in the past now. If I'd known how things would turn out... I never would have acted the way I did."

"I told you, it's all in the past." Maekar pulled him in for another quick embrace and whispered, "When news of your disappearance reached us, it was as if the sky itself had fallen for Mother and Father. You don't know how we worried, you rascal."

Aemon returned the hug, voice thick with unspoken sentiment. "I wanted to come back sooner..." But he caught himself, sensing that reason had overridden emotion in the end. "But it wasn't until now that I was finally able to break free."

"Are you really all right?" Maekar's eyes flickered with concern, his small hands lightly tracing Aemon's back. Beneath the rough fabric, he could feel the uneven ridges of scars, a map of the pain he'd endured. He said nothing, only held him tightly, his sapphire-blue eyes briefly flashing with a deep, quiet pity he kept hidden.

...

The Great Pyramid.

With a tremendous crash, the bronze statue of the Harpy at the pyramid's peak toppled to the ground, shattering a vast section of the square below. Freed from their chains, young men who had once been slaves tugged on thick ropes, cutting the statue into pieces. Using logs as makeshift rollers, they hauled the fragments away, leaving only empty ground where the Harpy had once loomed. Soon, a fire was lit, consuming the last vestiges of the old symbol.

Inside the palace within the tower...

"So, what are you planning next? Heading back to Westeros?" Maekar asked, breaking the silence as he and Aemon sat across from each other at the dining table.

His father had sent him to Volantis to assist their younger uncle, Daeron, with developing the Golden Fields, and to keep a watchful eye on Slaver's Bay. Now, with the Golden Fields mostly established and Meereen in new hands, he thought it might be time to return to Westeros and help shoulder the burdens of the Iron Throne alongside his father and older brother, Baelon.

Aemon tore into his food, his brow furrowing as he thought. "I'll wait a while. There's still something I need to recover."

"Where is it?" Maekar's eyes narrowed with interest, ready to assist.

"It's... well..." Aemon's voice trailed off as he paused, lost in thought.

Ding-dong-ding-dong!

The bells of Meereen tolled urgently, ringing three times in rapid succession—a signal that a powerful enemy approached the city gates. The brothers' expressions changed, and they rose in unison, moving quickly toward the window.

Stepping onto the balcony, they took in the scene unfolding below.

Outside the gates of Meereen, a dark sea of Dothraki cavalry stretched to the horizon. Tens of thousands of mounted warriors clustered in a massive force, the sunlight glinting off their weapons and the unruly waves of dark hair. Aemon's eyes narrowed, his gaze sharpening as he fixed on the tall figure at the head of the horde, astride a red-maned horse. The figure seemed familiar, stirring a shadowy memory. Though he couldn't place the man's face, he vividly recalled the sensation of being bound and captured.

The Dothraki leader held a sword with a ruby embedded in its hilt—a Valyrian steel blade Aemon recognized instantly as a symbol of the Iron Throne. His grip tightened at the sight.

Outside the city gates, Khal Osk raised the sword with both hands, his expression grave as he signaled his 100,000 troops into a tense silence. Once a trusted ally to the king of the Iron Throne, Osk had assisted in the capture of Myr, even earning the king's gratitude. But after pledging allegiance to the one-eyed Aemond and enduring the battles at Qohor, his respect for the Targaryen name had been tainted with fear and resentment.

“Roar!”

From the horizon came the sound of dragons. Two great figures—one red and one silver-gray—circled each other in the sky, their eyes locked in fierce rivalry. They prowled the air, their scales glinting under the sun as they prepared for the fiery clash, each dragon's breath simmering with barely-contained Dragonfire.

Chapter 689: The Tragedy of Seasmoke

Snow fell thick and heavy, each flake settling into a three-foot blanket across the frozen ground.

*Shhh...*

Rhaegar, cloaked in a black robe, walked alone through the snow, his steps slow and steady.

"Where am I?" he muttered, frowning as he scanned the desolate landscape. The scene felt eerily familiar, like he was near the Fist of the First Men. Yet, something about it was different. After a few steps, he stopped, an uneasy feeling tugging at him. Glancing down at his right hand, he realized he couldn't feel the usual, dull tremor from his old injury.

He continued toward the Great Wall, the thought of his homeland tugging at his mind. "I wonder how things are faring in the North," he mused aloud. His gaze hardened as he thought of the Night King, an opponent of unnatural origin and powers. Rhaegar knew that even one misstep could tip the scales of victory.

As if on cue, the soft crunch of snow was joined by another sound—rhythmic, and growing louder.

*Tap, tap...*

He paused, looking up. To his shock, an army of undead marched against the howling wind, their dead eyes fixed straight ahead. They moved past him like he wasn't there, each step mechanical and unseeing. Yet, Rhaegar felt his instincts flare, a whisper of something watching him closely.

A guttural croak sounded, and suddenly, a dream-eating toad crawled out from his hair, perching on his head. Its gray, round body settled, and its dark, greenish eyes turned to the shadows.

Following its gaze, Rhaegar peered back. His eyes met a cold, unyielding stare—a pair of ice-blue eyes piercing through the storm. The Night King stepped out from the blizzard, gripping a spear of crystalline ice, his face devoid of emotion.

An unspoken tension rippled through the air as their gazes locked. The undead around them parted, forming a wide circle between the two figures. A blackened mound of snow lay at its center, a boundary between man and wraith. After a measured pause, the Night King crossed it, his gaze burning with intent.

Rhaegar tightened his grip on Blackfyre, the ancient sword of his house. "You're real, aren't you?" he said, voice steady, his eyes never leaving his enemy.

There was no answer, only the Night King's slow, unyielding approach, his icy gaze promising nothing but death.

*Clang!*

In that moment, the Night King hesitated, his eyes flickering briefly. Rhaegar capitalized, advancing swiftly, his stance a blend of offense and defense, probing for a weakness in his foe's icy resolve. The Night King raised his spear, parrying Rhaegar's feint, but his blue eyes held a flicker of wariness, recognizing the danger now before him.

*Clang!*

Blackfyre scraped along the ice-coated spear and, with perfect precision, pierced through the Night King's throat, cutting through the icy armor as though it were nothing but brittle paper. The black blade drove cleanly from front to back, skewering the Night King in one swift strike.

With a final glance down, the Night King's body suddenly dissolved into fine powder, scattering into the wind.

*Poof!*

Rhaegar took a step back, sheathing Blackfyre, yet there was no satisfaction, no sense of victory.

*Clatter!*

All around him, the dead fell to pieces, limbs collapsing into the pristine snow, scattering the ground with broken remnants of the wight army.

“Something’s wrong,” Rhaegar muttered, eyes narrowing as he scanned the clearing. The Night King had been far more formidable in battle against the Wall’s defenders; his strength shouldn’t have waned so easily.

*Hoo-hoo!*

A biting wind whipped up a blinding whirlwind of snow, howling and spinning with eerie force. And when it finally settled, the Night King stood once again, wounds healed, advancing with the same icy, unrelenting gaze.

Rhaegar’s eyes widened as he raised his sword to meet the foe once more.

*Clang!*

The weapons clashed, and Blackfyre sliced through the Night King’s chest.

Rhaegar panted, catching his breath as he waited, expecting the Night King to rise yet again. “Because it’s a dream... so it can’t die?”

*Hoo—*

The wind died down, and the Night King appeared once more, unscathed. As Blackfyre and the ice spear met, the strength of the Night King’s thrust forced Rhaegar back, the White Walker’s physical power undeniable. Rhaegar stumbled, taking two swift steps back, his eyes darkening with wariness.

The Night King’s ice-blue gaze glinted as he closed in, twisting sideways to deliver a feint—a move Rhaegar recognized as his own from their first encounter.

In a bold move, the Night King crouched, calmly picking up his severed hand. Placing it over his wounded wrist, he slowly twisted it back into place.

*Zila zila...*

Frost spread over the wound, seamlessly binding the wrist and hand together. Beneath the pale, icy skin, blue veins pulsed back to life, restoring his form as though nothing had happened.

“So he really is immortal,” Rhaegar gasped. His opponent was using this dreamlike state to its advantage, manipulating the endless cycle of death and rebirth.

But Rhaegar wasn’t about to be played with.

With a grim look, he raised a hand and brought it down sharply, slamming it against his head.

“Croak!”

The Dream Eater, hidden on his head and observing the battle, let out an indignant croak.

*Pop!*

The dream world shattered instantly, fracturing into fragments like delicate bubbles, breaking apart into nothingness.

As Rhaegar’s form began to fade, his gaze held steady, locked on the Night King, who still advanced, unyielding, with that deathless, unblinking stare.

Until both figures finally dissolved—Rhaegar fading into thin air as the Night King’s icy form crumbled into dust, the last remnants of the dream dissipating into the void.

...

The continent of Essos, deep within the Shadow Lands.

“Roar..”

A dragon as black as coal soared through the murky skies. Above the clouds, the air was thick and gray, filled with an oppressive, hazy gloom.

On the dragon’s back, Rhaegar stirred, his eyelids twitching slightly before he opened his eyes fully.

“You’re awake?” came a smooth, magnetic voice beside him.

Turning, he found himself gazing into the face of the red priestess, her features framed by the shifting shadows and the soft glow of her fiery eyes.

Rhaegar blinked, still groggy. “How long was I asleep?” he asked, feeling for something solid. His hand landed on soft skin beneath his head, and he realized she had been offering her lap as a pillow. Kneeling gracefully, her legs folded under her, the priestess looked down at him with a serious expression.

“We’re nearly there,” she said, her gaze steady. “Asshai, at the eastern edge of the world.”

At this, Rhaegar’s eyes widened, and a sharp ache flared at his temples. He pressed a hand to his forehead.

“Roar!” The wind shifted with a keening dragon’s cry as a second shadow streaked past them. Rhaegar turned, spotting a younger dragon trailing close behind, its scales gleaming cobalt blue with a striking copper underbelly stretching from its jaw to its abdomen. The dragon was over thirty meters long, sleek and fierce.

Riding atop it was his younger brother, Daeron. Short silver-blond hair swept down to frame his ears, and he gave Rhaegar a slight nod. Beside him on the dragon's back sat a bald man, skin decorated with intricate tattoos—a figure Rhaegar recognized as Varys, the caretaker of the Topless Tower, draped in his own crimson robes. Seeing the two of them helped clear Rhaegar's disoriented mind.

“Ah,” Rhaegar winced, rubbing his temples. “My head...”

The red priestess gave him a faint smile as he shifted, pulling away from her embrace.

When they had refused, he'd resolved to go to Asshai. Along the way, in the Golden Fields, he had fallen ill, trembling and convulsing uncontrollably. Afraid for his safety, he'd asked Daeron to accompany him on the journey as his escort.

“We've arrived in Asshai,” he said finally, gazing down as they descended. Below, at the juncture of shadowed mountains and the Jade Sea, stretched the strange and sprawling city, shrouded in fog and deep, impenetrable shadows.

This was Asshai, the heart of the Shadow Lands.

...

The North, The Wall.

Snow blanketed the ground, stretching endlessly, blending the sky and earth in a vast white haze. Across the Haunted Forest, a legion of wights marched steadily toward Eastwatch-by-the-Sea. Yet, amidst their ranks, the figure of their king was absent.

Far beyond the Wall, footsteps crunched through the snow.

*Tap, tap...*

The Night King emerged from the Haunted Forest, a solitary figure against the bleak landscape. He stared intently at the Wall's towering silhouette, distant yet imposing. Above, hundreds of Night's Watchmen stood on the battlements, calling out to one another, stoking their fires as they prepared for the inevitable assault.

This stronghold, situated between Castle Black and Eastwatch-by-the-Sea, was strategically positioned to unite the defenses along the Wall's eastern edge. Few fortresses remained in active use, and the men here were vigilant, yet oblivious to the silent predator observing from the shadows.

“Roar!”

A light silver dragon emerged from the Wall, sweeping along its length in a patrol to the west. The dragon, Seasmoke, stretched over forty meters in length, with scales that glimmered faintly in the cold light, blending almost seamlessly with the snowy expanse. Though young, he was already a gifted leader among his kin.

“Easy now, Seasmoke,” called Laenor, crouched on the dragon’s back, his cloak whipping around him in the icy wind. Assigned to guard this fortress, Laenor took to patrolling the Wall every few days.

Seasmoke, however, was restless. Its light-silver scales shivered as it rose and fell through the air, careful not to stray far from the Wall. The North’s chill gnawed at it, dulling its once lively nature. It had barely eaten since arriving, its appetite fading as the cold numbed its vigor.

Down below, the Night King watched with glacial patience, his ice-blue eyes narrowing. Slowly, he lifted one finger, dragging it across his throat in a deliberate, menacing gesture. Reaching over his shoulder, he drew an ice-crystal spear, sharp and deadly.

...

Above, Seasmoke continued its watchful flight, its breath misting in the frigid air. But then, with startling speed, the Night King hurled the spear.

“Roar!”

A pained scream erupted from Seasmoke as the ice spear pierced its neck, shattering scales and puncturing deep into its flesh. Hot, steaming dragon blood spilled into the snow below, staining it a vivid crimson.

“Hold steady, Seasmoke!” Laenor cried, gripping his saddle as the dragon twisted in agony. But Seasmoke's body convulsed, writhing uncontrollably despite its rider’s attempts to calm it.

“Roar!”

At last, Seasmoke plummeted, spiraling down like a wounded hawk, crashing heavily into the snow just outside the Wall. A great plume of snow exploded on impact.

“Seasmoke is down!”

The Night’s Watchmen gasped in shock, scrambling down from the Wall to reach the fallen beast. Yet a pale figure moved toward the crash site faster than any of them.

...

The dragon’s great form lay sprawled in the snow, eyes dimming, breath shallow. Laenor lay slumped beside him, covered in wounds, one leg twisted unnaturally. In the dragon’s final moments, Seasmoke had shifted to cushion its rider’s fall, sparing Laenor from certain death.

The Night King loomed over them, his gaze fixed on the dragon’s fading, bloodshot eyes.

“Roar~~”

Seasmoke’s mouth opened, a final, desperate breath escaping as it summoned the last of his strength. With a ferocious surge, it unleashed a torrent of Dragonfire, searing hot and mixed with sorrow, its light-silver scales glinting in the fire’s fierce glow. The flames blazed with an intense heat, consuming every ounce of its life force.

One second. Two seconds...

The fire died, leaving the snow charred and blackened. Yet, as the smoke cleared, the Night King stood unscathed, his form dark against the charred ground, eyes cold and impassive.

Seasmoke's pupils contracted, its wing twitching as it made one last feeble attempt to bite, its mighty jaws opening with a final, defiant snap.

*Bang!*

The dragon's head fell, its vision consumed by darkness as his massive body settled into stillness.

The wind picked up, swirling snow in silent spirals. The Night's Watchmen, just arriving at the scene, halted, paralyzed by the frigid gust that swept past them, a coldness deeper than the North's chill.

And as they stood, the wind seemed to howl with a lament, a solemn requiem that filled the air as if the very snow and wind mourned the fallen dragon, their silent sorrow heavy on the bitter night.

...

Two days later, in the icy stronghold of Eastwatch-by-the-Sea...

Corlys, draped in a coat fashioned from the pelt of a snow bear, paced along the Great Wall as usual, braving the biting wind. As he passed, sailors from the Velaryon fleet stood at attention.

"My lord," they saluted.

One of them, a capable young man with short, silver-and-gold hair, was assisting the commander by distributing charcoal fires and hot soup to the men.

"Alyn, what's the situation?" Corlys called out, catching sight of him.

Alyn halted, stepping forward quickly to respond. "My lord, we're well-supplied, even after sharing resources with Castle Black."

"Mm." Corlys nodded thoughtfully.

After a brief pause, Alyn added, "My brother sent word. The Golden Plains garrison has been settled. He asks if we should proceed directly to Eastwatch-by-the-Sea to assist?"

"Not yet," Corlys replied, his face growing serious. "War is not accomplished in a day, and we can't commit all of our strength to it just yet. Tell your brother to return to Driftmark Island first."

"Yes, my lord." Alyn gave a firm nod and turned to ensure the sailors were properly equipped with dragon glass weapons.

Corlys observed this with a hint of relief.

Just then, hurried footsteps approached from behind.

"Corlys, come quickly!" Rhaenys's voice broke through the wind, trembling slightly with urgency.

Corlys turned, his brow furrowing. "What's happened that has you so anxious?"

“A letter! It’s from Laenor.” Rhaenys held out an opened letter, her hand unsteady.

Corlys’s gaze turned grave as he took the letter, feeling its crinkled edges under his fingers. Just as he began to read, a sudden roar thundered across the open wilderness, reverberating for miles around.

They turned together, eyes wide with alarm.

Meleys’s fierce pupils glinted with a feral light as it rose slowly, its dark red wings casting a shadow across the landscape. The beast exuded an intense aura of menace, like a crimson bolt of lightning ready to unleash divine wrath.

“Meleys... what’s wrong with it?” Corlys’s eyes widened, sensing something amiss.

Despite its advanced age of seventy years, Meleys had grown increasingly lethargic. Ever since arriving in the North, the dragon had taken to sleeping at the base of the city walls, rarely stirring. For it to awaken in such a state... something was dreadfully wrong.

A deep rumbling rose as snow and wind whipped into a tempest outside the Great Wall. The swirling storm blurred the landscape, but through the chaos, dark figures appeared.

Corlys clenched his fists, his gaze sweeping over the distant horde. “The Others are here.”

Through the howling wind and snow, a vast army of wights marched toward the Wall, countless as ants in an anthill. Their shadowy forms filled the land, and dark clouds loomed over them.

“Roar!”

A piercing dragon’s cry echoed—a strange, eerie sound, as if some dark force constricted its throat.

From the dark clouds above, a dragon with icy blue eyes crashed through, diving headfirst toward the Wall, before rising and hovering above the wight army. Atop the dragon, a pale figure rode in the saddle.

“The Night... the Night King?” Rhaenys’s eyes flared with defiance as she gritted her teeth.

With a thunderous rumble, Meleys landed on the city wall, spreading its wings wide, shielding its rider from the piercing cold as the winds screamed around them.

Chapter 690: The Red Dragon and the Ice Dragon

“How could this be?” Corlys could hardly stand in the wind as he stared straight at the pale dragon.

The appearance was all too familiar. But now, its vertical pupils had turned ice blue, and its scales were as pale as snow. Not only was one of its horns broken, but its wing membranes were damaged to varying degrees. It looked like a seriously injured dragon that had survived a brutal battle.

“Roar!” The pale dragon let out a long howl, raising its head as its muzzle split open in an unnatural manner, revealing a broken jawbone.

Above, the Night King raised his head proudly, and his dragon took flight, soaring toward the impregnable Wall. In his hand, he raised a spear of ice crystals.

Boom! A silent cry reverberated, and the army of dead responded with a collective roar. The pale dragon swooped down, its gullet filled with frost-white dragonfire. The Night's Watchmen stood dumbstruck, paralyzed by terror.

They all realized something crucial—the White Walkers who once couldn't get over the Wall now had the power to leap it.

"We have to stop it, Meleys," Rhaenys said with fierce determination, quickly climbing onto the dragon's back. Once she fastened the saddle, Meleys flapped its wings and soared into the sky.

"Dragonfire!" Rhaenys glanced back at her husband and gave the command with steely resolve.

"Roar!" Meleys, swift as lightning, hurtled toward the pale dragon and unleashed a cascade of crimson dragonfire.

Corlys stood on the battlements, watching in shock as his wife rode out to confront their ancient enemies. She'd vowed, "Don't take a single step back, Corlys," determined to keep the White Walkers at bay. The weight of her words hit him deeply, and emotions surged within him. Turning to his men, he shouted, "Prepare for battle, quickly! Draw your weapons!"

Alyn poked his head out from behind the battlements and shouted, "Draw your weapons!" as he raised his dragonglass spear. The rallying cry spread across Eastwatch-by-the-Sea, and both the Night's Watch and House Velaryon's sailors took up their longbows and Dragoncry arrows, lighting bonfires atop the battlements.

Today, the decisive battle between humanity and the White Walkers would begin. None could stand aside.

"Roar!" Meleys soared into the air, striking first by unleashing a blanket of Dragonfire. The pale dragon's ice-blue pupils blinked in defiance as it rose to meet the challenge, spitting frost-white dragonfire, cold as absolute zero.

Zilla zilla...

Red and white flames collided violently, casting up a spray of steam. The scarlet dragonfire burned with a heat that could melt steel, carrying the scorching essence of a dragon's fury. The frost-white dragonfire, colder than a thousand years of ice, held it at bay.

Boom! Both dragons halted their fires, and the thick fog shrouding the sky exploded. Half of the fog was cold, half was hot, and as it swirled together in the frigid air, it quickly precipitated, sinking like a dense sheet of ice.

"Roar!" The pale dragon burst out of the fog, shaking its head to dislodge clinging frost. The Night King scanned below, searching for his elusive enemy.

Just then, the thick fog churned again.

"Roar!" A piercing roar shattered the sky as scarlet dragonfire flared from behind, crackling and snapping. Before the pale dragon could react, it felt the bite on its left wing, sharp fangs digging into its shoulder blade.

"Roar!" it shrieked in panic, flapping its wings wildly, and turned to see the scarlet dragon's vertical pupils glaring back.

The Night King's icy expression faltered, and he almost stood from his dragon's back.

"Attack, Meleys," Rhaenys commanded, undeterred by the violent shaking of her body as her dragon grappled with its foe.

Crack! A sharp snap echoed as bone broke under the pale dragon's muzzle. The creature thrashed desperately, swinging its head to snap at the scarlet dragon's neck, managing only to chip off a copper-colored scale.

Meleys, the fastest dragon in Westeros, twisted out of reach with a streamlined grace. Its body, honed for swift flight, bore a dense crown of horns along its neck, deflecting both the wind and any would-be attackers.

"Roar!" The pale dragon spat out the broken scale and began gathering dragonfire deep in its throat.

Meleys's vertical pupils locked onto it, and as soon as the creature moved, he instantly abandoned the struggle, dodging with sharp instinct.

Boom! Frosty white dragonfire burst forth, but the scarlet shadow had already slipped away. The Night King's ice-blue eyes flashed with doubt as he stood up, scanning the skies around him.

"Roar!" A shrill roar came from the upper right, striking from the Night King's blind spot.

"Dracarys, Meleys!" Rhaenys's silver, gold, and black hair whipped in the wind, and the corners of her eyes, lined with fine streaks of determination, flashed with murderous intent.

Boom! Meleys dove from above like a streak of red lightning, blazing a fiery path downward. The pale dragon, too slow to evade, was struck mid-flight.

The Night King shielded his eyes as the fiery burst engulfed both himself and his mount. Meleys glanced back, slipping nimbly out of the flames and soaring above the ghoul army below.

Down on the battlefield, waves of undead had begun to swarm the city walls.

"Don't waste arrows—use the fire oil!" Corlys ordered, shoving aside sailors who were firing wildly and struggling to roll barrels into position.

Boom! Boom! Barrel after barrel plummeted from the battlements, bursting into flames as they hit the ground. The fire oil splattered upon impact, spreading a blazing barrier at the base of the walls.

Rhaenys swallowed, her throat parched. "Dracarys, Meleys," she commanded, her voice steady even as exhaustion from the intense battle mounted.

Thanks to Meleys's exceptional speed, the smaller, more rigid corpse dragon was bested again and again. Meleys swooped low, spewing dragonfire across the battlefield. In mere seconds, the crimson flames tore through the horde of undead, erecting a wall of fire that held the ghoul army at bay.

Rhaenys took a few steadying breaths, her face blackened with soot, her skin dry and parched from the heat of the flames. But a sudden chill crawled up her spine, an unsettling sense of dread.

Turning quickly, her gaze darted to the sky.

"Roar!" The thick black smoke dispersed, revealing the pale dragon emerging, battered yet determined. It aimed its dragonfire toward Meleys, who continued to glide with ease above.

The pale dragon's scales were charred black, and its wing membranes were riddled with holes, yet somehow it still flew. A layer of frost encased its shattered shoulder, its collapsed jaw hung lifeless, and its eyes were split open in a grotesque manner.

Rhaenys's eyes widened in shock; she had not expected it to still be capable of fighting. Her gaze shifted to the ghostly figure on its back, and a flash of fear passed through her.

The Night King's armor was scorched, but he remained unscathed. His ice-blue eyes met hers, and without a word, he raised an ice spear.

Rhaenys inhaled sharply, her voice rising in alarm. "Get out of the way, Meleys!"

Boom! Frosty dragonfire hurtled down, crashing with lethal precision. Meleys dodged, its movements swift, skirting the edges of the freezing blaze.

Rhaenys exhaled in relief but kept her focus trained on the sky. The sheer resilience of her enemy amazed her; its methods were beyond anything she'd encountered before.

Whoosh! Frost dragonfire obscured her view, and suddenly an ice spear hurtled toward them, piercing the air at alarming speed.

Rhaenys's heart pounded, her body freezing in place as the spear shot forward, heading directly for Meleys's head.

Rhaenys shuddered in alarm, but it was already too late for her to give orders.

At this critical moment, the pupils of the man and the dragon vibrated, and an inexplicable connection resonated strongly.

"Roar!"

Meleys's vertical pupils flashed with brilliance as its body twisted in a sudden, evasive maneuver to the left.

Pop!

Just as it moved, the ice spear grazed its neck and sliced through the scarlet membrane of its wing. Meleys let out a piercing scream; a large hole appeared in its right wing, and its flight path wavered.

"Steady, Meleys." Rhaenys's body swayed as she clutched the saddle handle tightly to prevent herself from falling. "There's still a battle to be won."

Below, the battlefield was a chaotic mess, with the army of wights clawing their way up the Great Wall.

"Roar!"

Meleys barely managed to regain its balance before the pale dragon lunged forward with a roar.

Crack!

The pale dragon retaliated, tearing into Meleys's wounded right wing. Meleys screamed in pain and lashed out with its claws, raking the enemy's chest and spewing hot Dragonfire that spiraled around them, filling the air with thick black smoke.

Rhaenys was sweating from the heat, peering through the haze at her terrifying enemy. The Night King stood within the flames, his hand raised to shield his grimacing face. He reached for his spear but hesitated, realizing he had already thrown his only weapon. Helpless, he could only watch as the dragons clashed above.

One red, one white, they grappled midair, spinning like eagles. Frost and flame sprayed outward, painting the overcast sky in brilliant colors. Below, those on the ground could not see the fierce combat but heard the echoing dragon roars.

In the blink of an eye, two hours had passed.

Boom!

The battlefield below erupted into chaos as a deafening roar echoed from above. The two dragons, exhausted and bloodied, clung to each other as they spiraled downwards, falling through the clouds.

From a thousand-meter height, they plunged to a hundred meters, then continued their descent. Finally, they were less than twenty meters from the ground.

"Roar!"

Meleys stretched out its neck, wrenching its head to shatter the pale dragon's weakened jaw. With a loud rumble, the pale dragon reeled backward, letting out a shriek before crashing to the earth. Snow and debris burst across the battlefield, billowing in a cloud of white smoke.

At that moment, Meleys, dragging its injured leg, rose high into the sky once more. A strange silence blanketed the field below, where Watchers and sailors alike burst into shouts of triumph, their fatigue from two hours of relentless defense forgotten.

The army of wights stopped their assault, staring mutely at the settling smoke.

"Don't stop, keep pushing them back!" Corlys commanded, hesitating only a moment before rallying the troops. Their temporary advantage was hard-won by Rhaenys's tireless battle, and he knew they couldn't squander a single chance.

"Get ready, Meleys," thought Rhaenys, her gaze never wavering from the smoke as she and Corlys's thoughts aligned. The undead army was still intact—a clear sign the Night King was still alive. She knew they couldn't afford even a second of carelessness.

One second, two seconds...

After a few minutes, the smoke slowly began to clear.

"Roar!"

The pale dragon, now torn and battered, crawled out of the haze, half its skull shattered, its wings in tatters.

Thud, thud, thud!

Heavy footsteps echoed as a pale figure emerged from the settling dust. Rhaenys gripped the saddle rope tightly, her eyes narrowed and her body tense, ready for whatever might come.

The Night King walked forward, his ice-blue eyes cold and unfeeling.

"Meleys..." Rhaenys's voice was a tense whisper as she started to speak, watching his every move.

Unexpectedly, the Night King climbed back onto the pale dragon's back, gripping the saddle rope as he adjusted its course.

"Roar..."

A layer of frost covered the pale dragon's body as it staggered into the air, then soared northeast, retreating from the battlefield.

"Roar..."

Meleys's fierce pupils tracked the enemy, low growls rumbling from its throat. Though one of its wings drooped and its scales were battered with wounds, the fire in its eyes remained undimmed. Yet, the pale dragon left without a second glance, gradually accelerating until it disappeared over the Bay of Seals.

'The Night King is escaping into the sea,' Rhaenys thought, her gaze narrowed in confusion. She couldn't understand the retreat.

"We cannot let them escape, Meleys." She took a deep breath, her teeth clenched as she gave the command to pursue. The Night King was extremely dangerous, and with a wight dragon, he had the power to breach the Great Wall. She couldn't let him slip from her grasp.

"Roar!"

Meleys roared and began to flap its wings to follow.

"Stop, Rhaenys!"

Suddenly, Corlys's voice rang out, calling to her with urgency. "Don't chase it! We can't kill it!"

Rhaenys paused, her hands gripping the saddle ropes as she looked down at her husband. Corlys stood on the battlements, waving his arms with a mixture of desperation and relief. "Don't pursue a retreating enemy. Please, listen to me, okay?"

Rhaenys hesitated, her fingers brushing the dragonglass dagger at her waist. She recalled the warnings from Castle Black—the Night King couldn't be killed easily. Yet, with a dragon and dragonglass, she estimated a fifty percent chance of victory.

"Roar..."

Meleys let out a low growl, its wings hovering mid-motion, ready to punch a path through the sky. It looked back at Rhaenys, silent and waiting. If she chose to pursue, Meleys would not refuse.

Rhaenys's gaze softened, her body sagging as exhaustion finally caught up with her. She looked at Meleys, covered in injuries, and felt a pang of guilt for her beloved companion of so many years. 'What had been a fifty percent chance is now only thirty,' she realized. Chasing the Night King could lead them straight into disaster.

"Old girl, you're tired too, aren't you?" Her expression softened as she leaned forward, her cheek brushing against Meleys's scarlet scales. "Let's go back. You're more important to me than he is."

The Night King already had a wight dragon, and regardless of the threat he posed, they could no longer risk their lives.

"Roar!"

Meleys obeyed Rhaenys's command, turning back towards the Wall and landing gently upon it. As the Night King and his dragon crossed the Bay of Seals, the army of undead ceased their assault and began a slow retreat. The Night's Watch and the sailors, wary of any further conflict, did not block their way and instead allowed the undead to pass.

"Rhaenys, are you okay?"

Corlys pushed through the crowd, his gaze fixed on the scarlet dragon. Rhaenys recognized him and unbuckled her saddle, sliding off Meleys's back and landing directly in her husband's arms.

"I'm so glad you're okay."

Corlys's voice was shaky as he looked her over, concern written across his face, before pulling her into a tight embrace. "Thank the Merling King you're still here with me."

Throughout the intense dragon battle, his heart had been in his throat. Out of love and hope, he had clung to the belief that she would return to him. But now, with his exhausted wife safe by his side, even the boldness of his nine voyages could not mask his fear.

"Relax, Corlys."

Rhaenys leaned into him, her body weary from the exertion of battle. She reached up to stroke his cheek, feeling the roughness of his skin beneath her fingers. "I'm alive, and I'm not that reckless." She managed a faint smile, glad she hadn't acted on impulse and pursued the Night King.

Both she and Meleys had reached their limits, and now she needed the warmth and reassurance of family to steady herself.

"You..." Corlys began, but his words faltered. A sudden wave of dizziness overtook him, and he swayed, his tall frame teetering before collapsing backward.

"Corlys!" Rhaenys's cry echoed as she tried to support her husband's heavy, unconscious form.

"Princess, let me see," Alyn stepped from the crowd, carefully taking hold of the unconscious Lord and checking his condition, flipping open his eyelids and studying his face with a frown.

"How is he?" Rhaenys asked anxiously, her hand tightly gripping Corlys's.

Alyn's brow furrowed. "It doesn't appear to be an injury," he said with a solemn expression. "It's more likely fatigue, perhaps triggering an old ailment."

Rhaenys's heart sank, her fingers clutching Corlys's hand. He was already over seventy, older even than her grandfather, the Old King. Though he was usually healthier and stronger than men half his age, the harsh northern climate and the strain of battle had taken their toll.

"Can he recover?" Rhaenys asked, her voice trembling.

Alyn shook his head regretfully. "I'm sorry. His body has endured so much. Whether he wakes..." He paused, unable to finish.

For a man of Corlys's age, survival often lay in the hands of the gods.