The Weirwood on the Volcano

by Basileus

Summary

Westros does not truly recover from the violent end of the Targaryen dynasty and the disintegration of the Seven Kingdoms starts long before the War of the Five Kings. The Gods had tossed a coin once, and the realm pays for it. Yet the Gods may choose to toss another coin once more, which might shatter the realm again, or give it its one chance of salvation. AU.

- Inspired by out where the dreams all hide by liesmyth
Prologue: The Kingmaker

Chapter Summary

A Second Lord Commander of the Kingsguard resents having to play Kingmaker, as he remembers how his family had paid the first time for interfering with the succession.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Disclaimer: I own Nothing.

Dorne, 283 AL.

The messenger could not have come at a worse time, Ser Gerold Hightower thought as the rider dismounted. The Stark girl had gone into labour a few hours ago, and the maester and the wet-nurse were fretting about. He had lost count of the number of times he had heard “too young” and “birthing fever” and had to step outside the Tower to escape it all. Rhaegar would not be too happy if anything happened to the girl, but this was not an adversary swords could protect her from. She had not spoken much since her silver prince had left, but then again, she was mostly silent (aside from that one initial explosive outburst) after discovering what happened to her father and brother. Ser Gerold was glad that she had not tried to run away, as she had threatened then; he did not relish the thought of having to drag an unwilling girl back on the orders of the Prince he had sworn to serve. One test his vows did not have to endure, he thought as the messenger approached him.

“How does the war go?” he asked, even though he was almost certain the man would not know anything of importance. Lord Alayne Dayne prized discretion above all, and was not about to trust anyone with important information, especially not where Lyanna Stark was concerned. Ser Gerold had met few men half as honorable, and were it not for his handicap, it would Alayne, not Arthur who would have been the brother more befitting the White. Despite his disability, Lord Dayne’s mind was as sharp as ever, and no one questioned his love for his brother or his loyalty to the Iron Throne. Without his help, they would have simply perished of thirst in the deserts of Dorne and despite the recent dearth of messages, he had done an admirable job of keeping them informed about what was happening in the outside world.

“I do not know my Lord,’ the messenger replied ‘Lord Dayne told me to pass these on to you.’

Ser Gerold was surprised to see that there were two letters. The first was from Lord Dayne, expected to be a summary about what went on in the outside world. The second bore the seal of the Spider and was addressed to him. So he has finally found us out, he thought, as he decided to read put that aside for now.

That proved to be a mistake, as his head spun after reading the first few words from Lord Dayne.
His first instinct was to ride back to Kings Landing, but he knew that would serve nothing. He needed to speak with his brothers and pray that old age had made him senile enough to misread the missive.

He found Arthur and Oswell outside the birthing room, standing guard against a foe beyond their power to defeat. Arthur smiled on seeing him, and his grin widened after seeing the parchment in his hands.

‘Alayne has written?’, asked the Sword of the Morning.

‘Read it, read it aloud for all to hear!’ snapped Ser Gerold.

Arthur looked surprised but took the letter. His face paled within moments of setting sight on the contents, but he obeyed his command.

‘Checkmate. Rhaegar lost Trident-dead along with Jon Darry, and Lewyn. Selmy injured, probably dead too. Lannister’s sacked King’s Landing to gain favor with the victors. Elia, Aegon and Rhaenys killed by Lannister bannermen. Jaime Lannister killed the King. Its all over. Forget the girl and run to Dragonstone immediately. The Queen was sent there along with Viserys.’

‘How can this be?!’, Oswell screamed. ‘We had more men than them, seasoned and experienced commanders, and we lost to a whoring drunkard and a green second son! And Rhaegar! What will happen to the Seven Kingdoms now?’

Arthur had gone completely still after reading the letter, probably in shock. Ser Gerold still wondered how Lord Dayne’s hand held steady while writing the letter.

‘Jon, Lewyn, Barristan dead! And that oathbreaking Lannister scum betrayed us! We must ride out to dispense justice at once!’ Oswell continued to rant.

‘Shut up!!’ roared Arthur Dayne, face clinched in pain. It must be the hardest for him Ser Gerold thought, he was very close to both Rhaegar and Elia, and he had been the one to knight Jaime Lannister.

‘Our duty is to defend the King, who might be born any moment as we speak’, finished Ser Arthur.

The King. Oh how Ser Gerold would love to forget that detail. It was easy to think of Lyanna Stark as ‘the girl’, when Elia Martell still lived, despite both Rhaegar and Arthur claiming that she wed Rhaegar under a heart-tree, in true Targaryen fashion. Ser Gerold was sure that he did not approve, the Faith looked down upon a man taking a second wife while the first lived. Then again, in the eyes of the Faith, the sins of House Targaryen were already prodigious, with their generations of incest. Still Polygamy was not something that had been carried out since Maegor the Cruel. The Old King and Queen Alyssanne had seen to that, although the practice was not explicitly forbidden. Aegon III was the last King to have considered it, when Jaehaera Targaryen failed to bear a child. There was no love lost between the couple, and the Queen chose poison over shame, clearing the last obstacle for the Dragonbane.

Polygamy had proven hard enough to defend even with dragons, and he did not think for a moment that the Lords would consider this union to have any legitimacy. Yet, with Aegon dead, the alternative was truly frightening—Viserys, who had grown up under the shadow of Aerys’ madness, unlike Rhaegar (though he was not sure if that had made any difference).

*Please let Rhaegar be right and it be a girl, he prayed, I do not want to become a second Criston Cole.*
It had to be a boy, with silver hair and indigo eyes—to spite him all the more, he thought, as the Kingsguard stepped into the room. No question about who the father is, the Lord Commander thought. And the girl was too weak to survive a trip to Dragonstone. A decision had to be made then and there.

‘What is his name?’, asked Ser Arthur Dayne.

‘Jon’, replied the girl, weakly but defiantly.

Oswell reeled over in maniacal laughter. ‘This is the woman you hope to make Queen Arthur! This fool is supposed replace Elia, who doesn’t even realize the gravity of the situation!’.

Arthur’s face whitened, and he clenched his knuckles, but did not move. The girl simply looked at them in confusion.

‘I am sorry that you have to hear ill news so soon after your ordeal my lady,’ Arthur spoke, ‘but this cannot wait. Robert Baratheon killed Rhaegar at the Trident. We have lost, and King’s Landing has fallen. The King is dead, as is Princess Elia, Prince Aegon and Princess Rhaenys. The Queen and Prince Viserys fled to Dragonstone.’

The girl did not look like she was capable of speech anymore, an expression of abject horror on her face. He was proven wrong a moment later when a moan came out of her face, which suspiciously sounded like Elia.

‘Why are you still here then? Shouldn’t you be with your new King now?’ Lyanna Stark spoke after what appeared to be long moment.

‘We are with our new King, Your Grace’, spoke Ser Arthur.

‘Not if she insists on calling him Jon’, muttered Oswell.

‘He is not a pawn for you in this game!’ screamed the girl with unexpected force.

Ser Gerold made his choice at that moment. For all that I wished to not be Criston Cole, I am the Kingmaker now, Ser Gerold thought. And my choice shall decide the course of History in Westros.

‘King Viserys has no need for possible pretenders, especially in this hour of crisis. As Kingsguard my duty is to protect the King, although you may rest assured I won’t be as cruel as Clegane.’
‘What are you talking about?’, the girl spoke, shock still clear on her face.

‘Gregor Clegane smashed Prince Aegon’s skull down. I won’t be half so cruel, a pillow will be adequate’ spoke Ser Gerold, his voice becoming harsher as he recalled the details from the Spider’s letter. ‘No Daemon Blackfyre for King Viserys III, and no one for Starks to rally behind in future.’

‘No!’ screamed the girl, ‘You cannot!’

‘It will be either the Crown or the pillow!’ roared Ser Gerold. ‘Make your choice now Your Grace! Hand him over to Ser Arthur if you want him to live.’

Trembling, the girl complied, shifting his mind to the next priority. Oswell beat him to expressing his feelings though.

‘We need a name befitting a Valyrian monarch, not something used by Northern savages.’

*We do indeed. Aegon is out, as is Aerys, Rhaegar and Viserys. Maegor is political suicide, as is Aenys or Baelor. Daemon cannot be considered for the same reason. Too few people remember Maekar, but it is the Targaryen legacy we need to base our future campaigns on. Daeron may be a good choice, or Aemon after the Dragonknight and the master who Rhaegar liked so much. But there was no king Aemon before.*

Then the answer came to him, as he remembered another pale face with large violet eyes, surrounded by silver hair. The sickly King stood beside the painting of another who had borne his name, firstborn son of King Aenys Targaryen and Lady Jorelle Stark [1], the King who had defeated the Faith and gave the realm six decades of peace.

‘Jaehaerys Targaryen, Third of his name’ he declared. ‘As the Regent, the Queen must be informed at once about the birth of her grandson’. Mother of the King or not, Rhaella Targaryen was his Queen, not Lyanna Stark. He hoped that naming the babe after her father[2] will make her think favorably about her grandson and not oppose his choice of King in this hour of crisis.

‘Well then,’ Arthur spoke, ‘We must be glad that his father had already left us with all that is needed for coronation’.

He had, starting with Aegon III’s crown and Dark Sister, for his own Visenya Targaryen. He was wrong about the sex though, something Ser Gerold was now glad for. This babe represented their only chance of victory and vengeance, should Lord Stark see it fit to adhere to the words of his wife’s family, *Family, Duty and Honor.*

The risk of dragging in a Dornish Septon was too high, and it was he who had to proclaim Jaehaerys Targaren, Third of his Name as the King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms and Protector of the Realm. The Stark girl was still rather disapproving, but fell in line with her son’s sworn protectors quickly enough. She truly did not want to be Queen, Ser Gerold thought in marvel, but at least she understands the need to keep the boy safe from the Lannister-Baratheon combine. Lord Alayne shot off ravens to both the Queen and Lord Stark, but he did have his apprehensions about the plan. *Your plan is sound,* he had written, *and yet I cannot bring myself to agree wholeheartedly with this. Ashara disagrees with your characterization of Ned Stark, though I have told her she is just being a naïve girl. Nonetheless, I am somewhat apprehensive, though I will obey the King.*
The Queen responded with haste, and Ser Gerold was relieved to know that she fully supported his decision to bypass Viserys. It was obvious that her bias for Rhaegar and hatred of her brother won the day, and she appreciated his desire to not see the second coming of Aerys II on the Iron Throne. The Velaryon fleet was prepared to attack King’s Landing at any moment. One flaming arrow into the wildfire stockpile, she wrote, and the enemy decapitated and the war won. She also approved of his decision to ally with Lord Stark and offer him the position of Hand, should he back his nephew. Rhaella Targaryen was not generally supportive of her brother-husband’s actions, and she had fought tooth and nail to prevent the Stark burning, rightly foreseeing the civil war to come.

Damn you, Criston Cole, thought Ser Gerold, were it not for the Dance, it would be her I served. The eldest inherit according to Valyrian law, and the Queen would have made a far better ruler than her brother.

Ser Gerold was also surprised to know that the Queen was with child. A girl, she hoped, writing ‘I do not intend to fail the son as badly as I failed the father.’

Lord Stark however, had not responded, and the first word about his movements came from Lord Dayne. Stark had lifted the siege of Storm’s End and had made the Tyrells bend the knee to Robert Baratheon. The loss of the Reach was effectively a death sentence for the Targaryen cause, and Lord Dayne repeated his earlier advice of running to Dragonstone, since Dorne too would yield soon enough. However, Lyanna Stark was in no state to travel; she had barely survived the childbirth, and was in a stupor most of the time. Lord Dayne had suggested poison, but Ser Gerold had refused to entertain the notion. Unlike Ser Jaime, he was no Oathbreaker. Besides, the weather had turned for the worse, making any voyage to Dragonstone unsafe, especially with the now hostile Redwyne Navy on the Eastern Sea. The free Cities were another option Lord Dayne had suggested, but all three of the sworn brothers were united in their opposition: The Kingsguard do not flee. Leaving Westros is abandoning the cause of the True King. Exile is not a pill we will swallow.

Ser Gerold was no fool, and he knew what was going to come, though he still hoped that they could somehow escape to the Island seat of House Targaryen. Thus when he saw Ned Stark and his companions approached the Tower, his first command was return the King to his mother. Better die a King being defended by the Kingsguard than die a beggar far away, was what he told his brothers. Arthur hesitated on hearing that, but then all three marched out, secure in the knowledge that they would die that day, in service to the Last Targaryen King of Westros.

Chapter End Notes

[1]: We do not know who Aenys Targaryen married till now, and so this is just a
guess. However, it will not be surprising if he had married a Stark. I've read it somewhere that he did not marry a sister, and that seems plausible for alliance building. Umber mentions 'it was the dragons we married but the dragons are no more' before crowning Robb Stark and calling for secession. Torrhen Stark might have knelt, but his men would have wanted something in return to comply with this, suggesting a marital alliance to bind the North (the way Dorne was finally bound 200 years later). A Princess marrying into House Stark is plausible, except there are no records of a dragon being anywhere around Winterfell, in the days when Targaryens still had dragons. A Stark woman marrying into the Targaryens is an alternate solution, one that seems plausible as Jaehaerys I defeated the Faith at a relatively young age, where his father and uncle had failed. It might mean he had a powerbase independent of the Faith (The Northmen) or that he was not a product of incest or both. His sister-wife Alyssanne had blue eyes, rather surprisingly. Targaryens were unlikely to be marrying into the recently elevated House Tully, but a former Royal house was a possible option.

[2]: Jaehaerys II Targaryen: Second son of Aegon V, made King after Summerhall. Sickly and weak of constitution, he lasted three years before being succeeded by his son Aeris II.
The Last Queen

Chapter Summary

A woman proves herself to be far more capable than her brother or son ever were.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Disclaimer: I own nothing.

Dragonstone, 283 AL.

Rhaella Targaryen collapsed on her seat. Varys’ letter collaborated Lord Dayne’s message, and the short piece Bonnifer Hasty had sent a few weeks ago. It was all over, Lord Commander Hightower was dead, along with Ser Arthur and Ser Oswell. Lyanna Stark was dead too, and her bones were already on the road to Winterfell. Varys and Bonnifer had not mentioned her grandson, but they were not even aware he existed. She had never trusted the Spider, and had agreed with Lord Hightower’s decision to exclude him from the planning. And Bonnifer had only written out of shared affection in days past. Lord Dayne had been the only one to mention Jaehaerys, and it was a brief sentence about how a sudden childhood malady had cut his life short. *Or the story Stark wants me to know, and Dayne cooperated to spare me another horror tale.* She had no delusions about what had happened to her grandchildren, although she would not have thought Lord Stark as a kinslayer.

Then again, neglect kills a babe just as easily. *The honorable Lord Stark has one less spot on his family’s honor.* No mention of the babe was made anywhere else, and she suspected even Robert Baratheon did not know the details, free to deify his lost love. Aerys’s ashes were thrown into the Blackwater, but the last King’s bones probably lay in a ditch somewhere. She at least hoped that Lord Dayne would try to give a decent burial if he could. The people in Dragonstone thought Viserys King, and only Lord Velaryon and Ser Willem Darry knew better. There was no coronation at first, as Rhaella was too consumed with grief. Then Ser Gerold had written, and Rhaella had been clinging on the hope of seeing her grandson on the Throne since, keeping silent till the situation with the Starks was worked out. Until now, when she finally reconciled herself to the reality of the situation.

*Jaehaerys Targargen. A cursed name to be born with,* the Queen thought. *The Old King had lived eight decades, and had sucked the life out of all those who came to follow.* Aegon II’s son Jaehaerys, murdered at the age of six during the Dance; her father, born sickly and who only reigned for three years and finally her last grandchild.

She looked outside as the storm raged. The storm had destroyed her last weapon. The navy was gone, along with any hopes she had of landing one final blow on Tywin and Robert. It was over; she realized glancing into the choppy waters, though her cousin, Lord Monterys Velaryon would disagree. *He is trapped in Driftmark though, his ships probably as ruined as mine.* *Satisfied now Argilac? You have won at last, but I will be damned before I let myself fall the same way as my son had.*
Viserys will never rule. Even neglecting all the ways her second son was like his father, there was simply no way to win the war now. *Exile in the Free Cities for us three*, as the babe kicked, a broodmare for some great Lord, who sees it as a chance to have heirs with the blood of the Forty.

That will never happen. I am the last true descendant of the Conqueror, the Last dragon with the blood of the Forty [1] through my veins. Grandaughter, daughter, sister, wife and grandmother of Kings, I will break before I bend.

She thought of her father, begging her to keep Aerys under control from his deathbed. It’s all your fault Uncle Duncan, she thought bitterly, you left him with the weight of the crown, knowing it will bury him. And bury him it did, my father lasted three years on that infernal throne. Yet try as she could, she could not hate Rhaegar for having his own Jenny of Oldstones [2]. We were always too similar, and I wish I could have had run with my knight in shining armor the way you ran with your wolf maiden. She liked Elia, but she knew precisely how much love was there in their marriage, and she did empathize with her son, trapped in a loveless marriage for prophecies and preserving the blood of the dragon.

As if you were a dragon Aerys, she thought, a disgrace and a fool. Aegon V had intended to change the succession law back to the Old Valyrian style, after the final defeat of the Blackfyres. But Summerhall got in the way, and her father had too little political capital to spare, with his poor health. So it had been Aerys and not her on Aegon’s throne, and now it led to this.

Rhaella Targaryen was no fool, and she knew that a big chunk of garrison she brought from the mainland would defect as soon as Stannis got a fleet to sail up. *The storm hasn’t reached mainland, three weeks at most before it all ends.* The Castle however, would not fall so fast. The Targaryens had held Dragonstone for half a millennia, and the Westernmost outfit of the Valyrian Freehold would not bow to an Andal easily. *It was a good run, Rhaella thought, we outran death for five centuries, but now we must fall and join the other thirty nine.*

The babe kicked again, and a brief flicker of regret ran through her for what she must do. But not much sorrow, nearly all of it had gone to Rhaegar. She thought about taking moon tea, but she dismissed it immediately, she was far too far much along. *I will not fall to the birthing bed. I am no Lyanna Stark.*

*Besides we do not have that much time left.* Stannis’s fleet will sail up soon and it will all end. A smattering the east, a little less in the west, that is all that will be left of the forty. The realm is a jealous mistress. We gave it nigh three centuries of respite from continuous warfare between Kingdoms, but it all must end.

I wonder how long you can hold the realm together, cousin. How long will Elia’s brothers tolerate you? Even if Doran has milk in his veins and not blood, how long will the rest of the Rhoyner tolerate Andal supremacy? And I wonder how many in the North will approve of the first Stark to have ever knelt to an Andal in eight thousand years, once the dust settles. The realm will bleed, but at least it is not my responsibility any more. No, my only duty is to not let Dragonstone be stained with dragonblood, nor be paraded in shame through Kings Landing. The end is nigh, but I shall enjoy my last dance, before it all ends.

For the first time in years she thought of Theodora, the first female Imperator [3] of the Valyrian Freehold, the ruler who did not flee when her subjects rose up in an uprising, declaring that if she were to die, she would die in imperial purple. She bathed Valyria with fire and blood and had ultimately prevailed, enshrining the right of women to rule. The Targaryens were never Imperators, and so we never used purple. Our colours are black and red, and we called ourselves King, not Imperator. But in the end we are the same, only that you prevailed while I must fall.
She decided to call Ser Willem. She would need his help for the planning, and in return he could run wherever he wished, with as much gold he wanted. The old man was loyal to a fault and would probably be the only one to see the sense in this, having lost three brothers in the Trident. After that she would descend to the crypts, where all the ashes of the dead kings were kept (save Aegon II; Rhaenyra and the ‘Queen that never was’ [4] were honored there, as were Aegon Dragonbane’s brothers [5], but not the man he thought an usurper and was forced to accept in public). She was suddenly glad she had the babe now, for after all, only death could pay for life.

A month had passed since then, and Stannis was finally here. Thanks to her planning and Ser Darry’s execution, only the garrison outside had defected immediately. The Castle was under siege, and supplies were running out. Stannis at least can appreciate. It is almost time anyways.

I apologize Aunt Rhælæ, but I have no regrets [6]. This is how things must be. The people inside were restless, and she was prepared for the coup. It happened as expected, with her and Viserys being locked inside the study, where she was to wait for the usurper’s brother, while Baratheon men flooded in to loot the fortress of the Conqueror.

Ser Darry led Stannis into the room, leaving the door wide open behind. Stannis was gaunter than before and more grey hairs, she noted, a brief blast of vindictiveness coming to her mind. Stannis, she noted, still did not look into her in the eye.

I wish he was less like Steffon, she thought. Aloud she spoke ‘Lord Stannis, why this unexpected pleasure?’

Stannis visibly flinched, but his voice held steady ‘You and your son are ordered to come with me to Kings Landing.’

‘And who are you, that I must bow so low?’ hissed Rhaella.

‘You lost the war, and it would be better if you cooperate.’

‘I may have lost, Stannis, but a dragon never kneels!’ she said as she slammed her hands onto the table.

The lever sprang into action as expected, and the five urns of wildfire in the room exploded setting the hidden barrels of oil aflame. The doorway had caved in, cutting off any hope of escape. *Wildfire is my Moondancer against this usurper, but unlike Princess Baela, I won’t live to see my triumph.*[7]

‘There is no way out Stannis. Ser Willem and I spent two months on this. The whole castle is filled with oil and wildfire, and we will all burn now, as my men are burning all your ships. You were deluded to imagine that Dragonstone would abandon the Targaryens so easily.’

Stannis tried to move towards her, and she was pleased to see the false step worked. A spout of fire roasting a man was not one of her favourite sights but for once she took pleasure in it. The devices worked like a charm, all the precautions Daeron II had taken fearing a Blackfyre conquest finally being used. *We are not so different now Aerys. Might as well try for a fresh start in the void, when we finally find rest.*

‘Mother!’, Viserys screamed, frightened as the flames drew near.
‘Hush little dragon, fire cannot kill us.’

That at least she knew was a lie, but this was a better death than the alternative. She was no longer sure of anything as the flames surrounded them, as their flesh burned and Viserys screamed, but she could have sworn she heard several screeches before her legs gave way.

Valar morghulis, thought the Last Queen as it all went black.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies for the long note, I swear I will try to keep these short in future. These are Canon unless noted otherwise.

[1] The Forty: The Forty families of dragon-riders that ruled Valyria. The Targaryens were not one of the stronger/notable ones, but they were the only ones to survive, having escaped to Dragonstone a century before the Doom of Valyria.

[2] Duncan Targaryen: First son of Aegon V, the Unlikely. Married for love, to a simple girl called Jenny of Oldstones. Lost his claim to the throne is the process, making his sickly younger brother Jaehaerys heir. Died in Summerhall with Aegon V, avoiding any potential succession crisis. No known heirs.

[3] Imperator: This is not canon, but rather real history. The Latin term from which we derive the word Emperor today. Used by Roman Emperors till Heraclius in the 7th Century. Theodora is also non canon, inspired by a real Roman Empress of the same name, the wife of Justinian I in the 6th Century. She famously refused to leave Constantinople in the wake of riots that almost overthrew her husband, declaring she'd rather die an Empress. He husband got the courage to fight back then, and survived, becoming the greatest later-day Roman Emperor (often called the last Roman).

Back to Canon

[4] Queen that never was: Rhaenys Targaryen, only child of Prince Aemon, King Jaehaerys I's first son. Passed over in succession by her grandfather the Old King, in favour of her paternal Uncle Baelon, in direct violation of both Andal and Valyrian law. First instance of an agnatic succession, an instance that would ultimately lead to the Dance of the Dragons. Rhaenys never rebelled for the Throne, but she supported Rhaenyra Targaryen's claim (her good-daughter), perishing in a battle against Aegon II and his brother, Aemond.

[5] Jacerys, Lucerys and Joffrey Velaryon: First three sons of Rhaenyra Targaryen with Laenor Velaryon (Rhaenys's son), half brothers of the future Aegon III and Viserys II. All three died during the Dance.

[6] Rhaeelle Targaryen: Daughter of Aegon V, sister of Jaehaerys II. Grandmother of Robert Baratheon, and the reason behind his claim to the Iron Throne (even though it was Ned Stark and Jon Arryn whose men fought and won the Rebellion, along with House Tully. Stormlands were under siege due to the Reach.)

[7] Baela Targaryen: Paternal half-sister of Aegon III and Viserys II, granddaughter of Rhaenys Targaryen. One of the blacks, she was the last defender of Dragonstone against Aegon II. As a girl of 14, she rose up with her dragon Moondancer (barely larger than a horse) to take on Aegon II and his dragon. Moondancer died, and she was
injured. Aegon II's dragon however never recovered from its injuries, and Baela Targaryen probably lived long enough to see her brother on the Iron Throne.
Kings Landing, 289 AL

Lord Jon Arryn was surprised when Grand Maester Pycelle nearly ran into the room. It was a letter from Dorne, the Old man gasped, bearing the seal of House Martell and not Dayne. Lord Arryn took the letter, and gently shushed the old man out, telling him that he will be made aware of any important developments. *The ones I think Tywin Lannister needs to know anyways.*

The contents of the letter however, could not be kept a secret for long. He briefly thought about trying to find Robert to give him the news, but he dismissed it almost immediately. The King had no interest in statecraft, and it would be better to simply tell the Small Council first in the afternoon. But he still found it hard to believe that Alayne Dayne, his Dornish counterpart was dead. The Chief Minister to Prince Doran Martell had successfully engineered the secession of Dorne from the Seven Kingdoms, but had not lived long enough to truly savour his victory.

_He was twenty years younger than me, and still went first, thought Lord Arryn. It will be a great loss to Dorne, and possibly also for us._ Alayne Dayne may had been the one to spearhead the secession, and engineer the defeat of Reachmen sent to put down the rebellion, but he was one of the moderate voices for peace. Though he never admitted it, Lord Arryn feared Alayne Dayne more than Tywin Lannister, and often guiltily thanked the Gods for denying the man the ability to walk. Yet Dayne had held Oberyn Martell in check from his chair, something his successor might not be able to achieve. _Anders Yronwood is no friend of Prince Oberyn, but it will be difficult for him to control the man from starting another war._ Dorne may not be able to win, but it could deal considerable damage to the southern parts of the Reach and Stormlands. _And should Velaryon want to make trouble..._

_War must be avoided. I hope Prince Doran knows that._ Keeping the remnants of the Seven Kingdoms together was already a difficult task without war.

*It all began with Dragonstone. Robert should have known better than to send an inexperienced battle-commander. But I was just as at fault—all of us had underestimated Rhaella Targaryen. I wonder if she herself had realized what her actions would cause._

Too few people had survived to give a complete account, but Lord Arryn had tried his best to stitch their conflicting accounts together. The external garrison brought from the mainland had defected ‘to the true King’ immediately after Stannis landed. There was no attempt to stop a landing, which
in hindsight seemed suspicious. But at that moment everyone had thought that it was due to the storm that had destroyed the Navy, and Lord Velaryon was unable to put together any obstacle. Stannis, a suspicious man by nature, had disarmed all these soldiers and only used his men for the siege. The Castle fell in a week, due to a coup from within. Ser Willem Darry was dragged out by the traitors, and he begged Stannis publicly to spare the Queen and Prince Viserys, locked in the study. Ser Willem was famed for his honor, but still Stannis emptied the Castle of its earlier inhabitants (save the Royal prisoners), before asking Darry to take him to the Queen. Most of the men who had defected were outside and disarmed, while Stannis took nearly all armed Baratheon men inside. That was a costly mistake, as Rhaella Targaryen burned the castle down, and the last Baratheon soldiers were ambushed by the erstwhile traitors, who accessed carefully hidden weapons kept with the smallfolk. Never could have Lord Arryn imagined that the Queen will arm the smallfolk of Dragonstone, but that is exactly what she had done, leading to a massive rout of Baratheon men. Robert had sent a thousand for the sack, and only one ship with fifty men made it back.

The depth of the Queen’s plan still impressed Lord Arryn, as the old officers of the Royal Navy seized the Baratheon ships instead of burning them. Lord Velaryon cobbled together a small fleet as well, and with the loyalist fleet that fled Gulltown, declared the Eastern Islands free from the Seven Kingdoms. Robert was furious and he got the larger Redwyne Navy to attack, along with the small force Lord Manderly was able to cobble together. Velaryon however got Pentos and Tyrosh to intervene, and the resulting battle at sea was a crushing defeat for King Robert. While the consequences were being worked out, Dorne too declared its secession.

The King was enraged, but Lord Arryn, and Ned Stark convinced him there was nothing to be done, especially on the account of the defeat of the Reachmen sent to put down the rebellion. Dorne had stopped the Aegon the Conqueror, and there was no way a realm just out of war could defeat House Martell in their desert home or take on the might of the Free Cities without a working Navy. Lord Tywin hadn’t liked it, but the rest of the Small Council had concurred with the faction suing for peace, especially in light of the defeat in Sea. Thus Dorne was free and the Islands could style themselves as ‘West Valyria’.

Most of the trade between the Kings Landing and the Free Cities lay within the sphere of influence of Driftmark, something Lord Velaryon capitalized heavily on, in his new position as the ‘Exarch of West Valyria’. It shocked Lord Arryn that a Lord of Valyrian descent was now a glorified Pirate, but he did not complain as long as heavy taxes on ships from ‘unfavoured states’ was all the Sea Snake wanted. They had been suggestions of abandoning King’s Landing in favor of Storm's End which were almost immediately abandoned. The pretense of a continuity from Aegon I was too essential for such a move to be viable. In the South, Lord Alayne Dayne had become the second in command to Prince Doran, and had been able to work out a formula for peace with Ned Stark, united over the grief of losing a brother and sister to the war, as well as over the child who shared their blood.

Lord Arryn still found it shocking that Ned had a bastard. Robert and Elbert [1] had teased Ned for fancying Ashara Dayne after Harrenhall. Though he had not spoken then, he thought that the Star of Starfall was a tall hope for the sullen second son of the North. Ashara Dayne was renowned for her beauty all over the Seven Kingdoms, and she remained unwed by choice, though Lord Arryn did find her behavior scandalous.

Then the revolution happened and Ned had to step forward to honor his brother’s betrothal, and Lord Arryn himself had to wed the bride’s sister. Ned had offered to marry Lysa, and let him have Catelyn, but he used Brandon’s memory to prevent that. In truth he wanted Ned to have the prettier wife, since all he truly needed was a womb. Ned was young and could afford to have delusions about the world, but Lord Jon Arryn did not. Still, thinking of Catelyn and her two children made
him regret that choice at times. Ned at least would have had a bastard to succeed him, no matter how much his Goodfather would have hated it. *I would do anything for a son, even a bastard,* thought Lord Arryn. *Harry is the only hope for the Vale now.*

His mind returned back to Dorne and strange relationship between Ned and Lord Dayne. *Ned probably knows about Dayne already.* Ned had been responsible for the death of both Alayne’s siblings, Arthur in combat and Ashara from shame. Lady Dayne had thrown herself off a Tower in Starfall, and her corpse washed up the next day. Lord Alayne, consumed with grief, had wanted nothing to do with her bastard, and that was how Ned Stark found himself saddled with his son. *Apparently he looks like his Dornish uncles.* At least Ned placed the boy with the Reeds of Greywater Watch, instead of shaming his wife, under some misguided notion of honour. But Alayne and Ned had grown close later, both out of a desperate desire to avoid war that cost them nearly all their family, and revulsion about Elia Martell’s death.

He had in fact tried to tie Dorne to the Seven Kingdoms via a betrothal between Allyria, Lord Dayne’s last sister, and Benjen Stark. There were no girls of House Martell who were available to marry Renly, nor was such a union likely in the light of Princess Elia’s fate. A union between the Second families of the Two Realms would have helped with peace, especially over the strange understanding between Lord Dayne and Lord Stark. King Robert and Prince Doran had approved, but Lord Hoster was furious. *Too much Dayne influence in Winterfell,* he had written. *Your goodbrother already has a son from that House, and should his uncle and aunt persuade his father to legitimize him, it will bring great shame to your goodsister.* The marriage however had been stiffly opposed by Lord Dayne, and Benjen himself, who took the Black soon after.

*Perhaps Sansa and Alayne’s son to preserve the peace?* He discounted the option immediately, undermining Ned in the North was a far worse move. *They did not want to kneel again, after all the blood they had shed for Robert.* As the only Lord Paramount with a pure Andal lineage, Lord Jon would be the first to admit the destruction wrecked by the Andals on the realms of the First men, but he was still surprised by animosity Northmen still held for Andals. *They never knelt in eight thousand years,* while the Kings of the Rock, Reach and Storm slowly became Andal. Torrhen bowed only to the Conqueror, and were rewarded with having a grandson be King [2]. The Targaryens had never interfered with the North, and Lord Rickard was the first Stark to have considered Andal matches for his children, something that had led to much grief. Northmen had never knelt to House Baratheon, and he was aware that Lord Eddard Stark was the only reason the North remained with the Seven Kingdoms. Though men thought him weak for kneeling to an Andal, when Alayne Dayne and Monterys Velaryon had not, eight thousand years of loyalty did not vanish in a generation.

*It does have a breaking point though,* thought Lord Arryn. *One generation, two at most before North goes the way of Dorne.* Southron matches of Lord Stark’s children could delay that, but it would also increase hostility between House Stark and its bannermen. *All your children must marry and stay in the North,* Lord Arryn had written. *Especially the girls, make them realize you are one of them and not some Vale fosterling.* Ned had taken his advice, and had been able to go beyond, by getting Lord Bolton’s son fostered with him in Winterfell. *The greatest foe of House Stark neutralized.* It was indeed fortunate Lord Bolton sought a Vale House to foster Domeric, and I was told immediately. Ned did the rest, and I’m proud of him.

Isolating the North however, could not prevent the inevitable political disintegration of the Seven Kingdoms. *Please let me die before I have to witness that, although I suppose I bear no small part of the blame.* Robert was not Aegon the Conqueror as I envisioned, more of Aegon the Unworthy, without a Daeron to take over.

His mind drifted back many years, to the Great Council of 258. *He was a new lord then, Lord*
Jasper Arryn having died a year earlier. The issue however was of great importance, with Prince Duncan wanting to break his betrothal to Lady Tyrell, in order to marry a commoner. The Lords were outraged, especially those of the Reach. The Prince’s sister had been the one to offer a solution at the end of it. Rhaelle Targaryen may have wed a man thirty years her elder to secure Storm’s End for her father in the middle of the a Blackfyre invasion, but she had wanted to see her brother happy. Now, as Lady of Storm’s End on behalf of her young son, she was able to get the Lords to agree to a compromise that would replace Duncan with Jaehaerys in the succession.

It was the last day when the King spoke. ‘I may have to call you again soon my Lords. I believe this is the time to review succession laws, introduced during the extreme emergency of the Dance of the Dragons. The time is now ripe, and the Blackfyre pretenders are dead. I would like to hear more of your thoughts on this soon.’ He noticed the beautiful young lady next to him, round with child and wondered if she was to be the next Queen, due to Prince Jaehaerys’s poor health.

But Summerhall happened, and Rhaella Targaryen never sat on the Iron Throne. I offered it to her son once, who proved himself unworthy of it. Aerys had to be removed, all the lords had agreed by Harrenhall. But Rhaegar refused and our nightmare began.

I never thought Robert would sit on that Throne. My only duty was to survival when I declared him King. I could have hardly declared for Aegon, still under Aerys’ thumb in Kings Landing. I always thought that we could just send Robert over with Lyanna to Storm’s End once it ended, as a good compromise for peace. The realm would not have split then, but Tywin Lannister destroyed that one hope.

He still remembered seeing the bodies of the children, realizing that there will never be peace with either the Queen or Dorne. Ned was yelling about justice but he saw Robert’s glance at the Throne, and realized what a demon he had unleashed. There was still hope then. I would not have let Viserys on that Throne while I lived, and Robert could have been a good king, even the Conqueror had lusted for power. Except he wasn’t and Lord Arryn often felt that all the compromises to his honor that he had to endure, in order to appease Tywin Lannister and avoid another war, were for naught.

Please let me die before it all breaks apart. Let history be kind to this foolish old man with good intent.

More grave news poured in within the week, the Greyjoys had rebelled and Lord Tywin’s fleet burned at Lannisport. Jon Arryn knew that he would have to seek Ned Stark’s help, no matter the cost, and he only prayed Velaryon would not seize the moment and sail into the Blackwater. All the wildfire in the city had been destroyed post the Dragonstone incident and there were essentially no defenses against a powerful enemy fleet. The Queen and the children had been sent to Storm’s End, and he only prayed Lysa could get to the Eyrie soon.

And so it begins, thought the Lord Hand. Time to Dance.

Chapter End Notes

Much shorter than before:

Now details: Doran Martell did not call for secession in the series as he hoped for a Targaryen restoration, with Arianne as Viserys's Queen. Yet all the dragons are gone, along with any hopes of getting revenge that way. Doran's next option is secession, which is what he does, taking advantage of the chaos. He knows they cannot conquer Dorne, even Aegon I and Daeron I failed, and he foresees the Seven Kingdoms falling apart soon (as anyone with half a brain would). He thus seizes the moment (with prodding from people like Alayne) and calls for freedom.

Lord Velaryon: The main books don't give the impression that much, but Velaryon was a formidable power. Lord Corlys Velaryon was considered the greatest Lord to back Rhaenyra Targaryen in the Dance, even above Stark and Arryn. Their close ties to the Targaryens (most non Targaryen brides for the royal family came from that family, that was the second to preserve the blood of Old Valyria) and their strategic location in Driftmark (from where they can block trade to KL if they want) makes them a force to reckon with. Velaryon may have fallen with the Targaryens, in the post-Dance decline, but they are still the greatest Naval power on the East Coast. Lord Velaryon sees the Queen as a martyr and intends to keep the flame of Valyria burning as long as he can. Not a stable, long term solution really, but the backing of the Free Cities gives him time, while his enemy declines.
A Thousand Eyes and One

Chapter Summary

Or Bloodraven's parenting skills and someone getting an extremely questionable birthday gift.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I own Nothing.

293 AL

The boy was ten today, and for the first time in many years he felt the heavy weight of time. *Maekar’s grandson’s great-grandson, born more than a century after me.* Yet the boy was the only reason he had clung on for so long. *I thought I did not care, after Maekar threw me into the dungeons, and Aegon freed me only to pack me off to the Wall.* He had hoped to spend the rest of his days with the Children, and let the rain and sun bleach his bones, far north of Civilization, without a care about the world. *I gave the realm all I could, and now my services are no longer required. Let the true-born Targaryens rot.*

Yet he had discovered he still cared in the worst way possible. He had stopped focusing on the South for long, but he did check on Aemon from time to time. *Daeron had loved that boy, and he was never half as rude as his father.* It was his misfortune that he was in Aemon’s mind when he received the letter from Lord Arryn in Kings Landing, a late missive informing the Watch about the change in regime. He still felt Aemon’s legs give way as his own, and the long wail still rang in his mind. Aemon had tried to jump up, but time was a cruel mistress. He still remembered being trapped in the maester’s mind, as he lay weeping on the floor, cursing all the prophecies of the world. He remembered trying to rise from his tree-chair as well, only to find that time had defeated him as much as it had defeated Aemon.

For the first time in decades he had looked south, desperate to find some trace of his family. The only one he found was Rhaella in Dragonstone, and his relief disappeared almost immediately on realizing what she intended to do. He tried to stop her. *Live and fight for another day fool,* he wanted to yell in her head. But she was more formidable than her granduncle, and pushed him out her mind before setting off the wildfire. He still remembered Viserys’s frightened screams, as the last of hope for his family burned. Aemon had already prepared to leave for Driftmark by then, and he wondered what he hoped to achieve at this age. It had taken all his strength to dissuade him, desperate to not have his last family to die in a fruitless cause. Aemon had no hope of actually reaching Driftmark and his mother’s family, and would have either died on the way or be beheaded for oath-breaking. Still, Aemon had only been appeased once he heard of Monterys Velaryons victory in sea, and since that day greedily devoured any information about the troubles of Robert Baratheon. *He takes pleasure in the way his mother’s family and his grandmother’s people* [1] *are undoing the work by generations of our forefathers.*
But that’s what we have sunk to, two old men desperate for revenge in some way. Aemon could do very little, and even his power did not stretch that far down south. But he could hinder Robert Baratheon, make his life hard in little petty ways, and encourage men to rebel, a shadow of the power he had wielded as Aerys’s Hand.

Two brothers I hated to two I loved. Aerys and Baelor were more my of brothers than Bittersteel or that Blackfyre who thought himself to be a God for having the Dragonbane’s blood. Maekar was never too fond of him though, jealous of the attention he had received from the boy’s brothers and father. He was also at fault for never cultivating the relationship that much, underestimating the fourth son. Then he killed Baelor and the Spring Sickness came to take Baelor’s sons and Daeron. Aerys never consummated his marriage to Aelinor, and Rhaegel was mad, leaving Maekar the crown.

Two brothers I hated to two I loved. Aerys and Baelor were more my of brothers than Bittersteel or that Blackfyre who thought himself to be a God for having the Dragonbane’s blood. Maekar was never too fond of him though, jealous of the attention he had received from the boy’s brothers and father. He was also at fault for never cultivating the relationship that much, underestimating the fourth son. Then he killed Baelor and the Spring Sickness came to take Baelor’s sons and Daeron. Aerys never consummated his marriage to Aelinor, and Rhaegel was mad, leaving Maekar the crown.

I never thought I would feel anything for Maekar’s line, except maybe for poor Aemon. Yet it is for the last of his descendants that I still live for. He had been shocked to sense a Targaryen in Greywater Watch, a year after the sack; as his mind drifted across the land, unsure of what to do. Howland Reed’s mind was too risky to invade, but Ned Stark’s wasn’t, and he was aware of the fate of the Last King of Westros. Stark made a mistake leaving the boy in the Neck. Reed may never harm him, but he will always hold him accountable for the death of his lost love. They might protect him for Lyanna Stark, but they will despise him for the same.

Such is the fate of any born different than those around him, especially with the epithet ‘bastard’. Daeron had been the only one to care for him at first, an albino bastard brother who their father hated. They called him Daeron the Good for a reason. Queen Naerys was surprisingly kind to her husband’s bastard, and Daeron’s Dornish wife had laughed at the way Westrosi treated their illegitimate children. They were my family, and yet I must live while they can rest. Such is the reward of a kinslayer.

Daemon Blackfyre had not even been the first. That honor had gone to Queen Naerys, who had nearly gone mad with the onset of the Blackfyre rebellion. The pious woman had lived most of her life scared of her brother-husband, and she was convinced that their early defeats were a message from the Seven, as punishment for her adultery. The Queen was convinced that the only way to save her son was to confess her sins, and had sought his help. She had only confirmed what he had suspected for a long time, Daeron was too good to be brother to any of the Great Bastards. Yet her plan of a public confession would have been disastrous, and no connection to the Dragonknight could have saved the bookish Daeron if he was found illegitimate. Therefore he did his duty and slipped nightshade into her drink. It was necessary, just as both King Jaehaerys and King Viserys had to save the realm from their disastrous predecessors [3]. Yet of all the deaths he had been responsible for, Naerys Targaryen was the one who haunted him the most. She was innocent, as innocent as the babes Lannister butchered and yet it could not be helped.

It was easy to get close to the boy, but harder to make him listen. Too much Daeron in him to do what needs to be done. He had spent nine years trying to gain the boy’s trust, and trying to help him control his prodigious powers, far greater than mine in any case-must be the Stark blood mixing with the Targaryen. The Old King had been a formidable sorcerer too, an art he used to great effect against the Faith. Yet it was he, Jaehaerys I who had driven the art underground, as a part of the compromise with the Faith. Visenya Targaryen would have rolled in her grave. Five millennia of knowledge sacrificed to appease savages.

Yet there was still hope, for Rhaella Targaryen had succeeded where all before, right down to her grandfather, had failed. The upswelling from the cold current makes the seas around Dragonstone fertile fishing ground, something that finally came advantageous. It was difficult making it move, but the promise of more fertile feeding grounds did the job. Not for the last time, he hated himself
for being too weak to lead the battle himself. *It will have to be him, Jaehaerys Targaryen the Third. Hopefully this name-day gift will convince him to drop his books and harp.* He still had his doubts, showing the bodies of his siblings had simply thrown the boy into depression instead of rage. And even discovering the chest with the letter, crown and sword—which finally confirmed the story for the boy—had not really led him to think of leading wars. Yet this will be a gift like none other, and will probably appeal to the intellectual side. Though some might argue the coin landed on the right side with this boy, he knew better. Such a soft heart could not survive the devastation of war, as well as the necessities of war. *Aerys was like that too. Maekar wasn’t, and that was something I respected about him.*

Aemon did not know—it was simply too risky, and besides it was impossible to tell. *I only hope we live to see our triumph.* The boy was waking up now, and it was time to let him know that he was getting a gift. He briefly turned to the gift itself, and commanded it to move faster. *Hopefully this will make him come to terms with the dragon within, and kill the boy to let the man be born.*

*It will take a Jaehaerys to rule, not a Jon.*

Chapter End Notes

[1] Aemon's grandmother was Myriah Martell of Dorne. I made his mother a Velaryon, as that's what the Targs marry after they run out of sisters.

[2] The Aerys mentioned here is Aerys I, not the Mad King. Daeron is Daeron II 'The Good'-Baelor, Aerys, Rhaegel, Maekar and Aelinor are his children.

[3] Jaehaerys I succeeded Maegor the Cruel who died under strange circumstances. Viserys II succeeded his nephew Baelor the Blessed, and is suspected to have poisoned him.

Next on—we move to the time-period of the books. More action, and less talk. Less isolated soliloquies too.
The Kinslayer

Chapter Summary

In which a certain Lord of Dreadfort encounters various reptilian fauna of the Neck.

Chapter Notes

We now reach the time of Civil War. Some parts of it will be covered in here, as POV now moves with person, across both space and time.

Also—though I hate to fish for reviews, I would really appreciate a comment/kudos if you like the work/have something to say. This is my first fic, and so I would greatly appreciate feedback.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I own nothing

The Twins, 299AL.

Domeric Bolton looked at his room in disdain. Now I understand why the Freys are not famed for their hospitality. His only consolation was that his King’s quarters were barely better, but that was to be expected after Robb had shamed House Frey. I should have prevented that, but I was barely better off then, unable to believe that Theon will actually kill Bran and Rickon and hang their bodies from a tower for all to see.

Robb had far too much to manage after he was crowned, not the least of which was proving himself to his men while dealing with Lady Catelyn’s nagging. I should have stopped him from releasing Theon, but like the fool I am, I finally acquiesced to it. Now we reap what we had sown and at the worst possible moment too. We are at war while Winter is coming. Domeric Bolton was of the North and he had not forgotten winter, but he feared that his King had, in his quest to defend his grandsire’s lands. Robb might have given us the freedom his father had denied, but Lord Eddard had never led us to defeat in South. Tarly had destroyed Robett Glover’s army in Duskendale, making their situation truly dire. Robb Stark might not have lost a battle he had fought, but his commanders had lost as many as they had won. And thanks to Greyjoy, he is the first Stark since the Wall was built to have lost the North. All the Lords were united in marching north, and capturing Moat Caitlin with the help of Lord Reed, but the King was still undecided. He is under tremendous stress but he should not test them so. It is not our duty to guard Tully lands forever while our crops remain in the field, not when Lord Stark is dead and there is no hope truly getting his sisters back.
Forgive me Sansa, but that is the truth. There is nothing that can be done, after Lady Catelyn freed the Kingslayer. That had been another disaster that had earned the Young Wolf the enmity of Karhold. The ensuing execution of Rickard Karstark had not sat well with most lords, even loyal ones like Glover and Umber. A march North to fight the Ironborn was the only way to avoid further discontent. And we need to prepare for winter too, we cannot starve thousands for two girls. He guiltily thought of his former betrothed, married to the Imp and trapped inside King’s Landing, and a flash of anger ran through him. If only Lord Stark had been man enough to turn Baratheon down, we would be all safe north of the Neck, while these Southron fools fought. Sansa and I might have even been wed by now, but Lord Stark lacked half the guts the Cripple in the chair had. Dorne showed the right way to deal with things.

To be fair, Lord Stark had tried, even Domeric could admit that. He had not been happy with Robert’s proposal to betroth Sansa to Joffrey, and break her betrothal to Domeric. Lady Catelyn had been all excited over the idea of making her daughter Queen, as if her earlier betrothal was not an issue. I had never been good enough for her, far more Northern than any of her sons. And I am not Rhaegar Targaryen, no matter how much I play the harp. He was the one who broke the betrothal, to the relief of both Starks, though Robb was furious over it. His father too had been very unhappy, muttering something that sounded very much like Andal filth. Domeric was no fool though, he knew a lot of the Northmen held similar views, and he was as much a hostage as Greyjoy, present to stop his father from taking advantage of anti-Southron feelings. Thus, the loss of the betrothal had not been much of a loss, but it still stung. Sansa Stark had been a true Northern beauty, as beautiful as her aunt was, and the only one in Lady Catelyn’s brood that was of the North.

There was a knock on his door, and he turned to see his father enter. The man placed a dagger in his hands, saying that the Freys could get too rowdy during the Wedding. He would know, he married one just a week ago. Still, Domeric appreciated the gesture. Peace and quiet was all he wanted, and it would be delightful if he could threaten some of his stepmother’s family. Might as well warn Smalljon and Dacey, though they would be in thick of the revelry. The King too I suppose, his nerves might appreciate a small warning in advance.

Twelve hours later, Lord Domeric Bolton thanked the Gods that he did.

299 AL, The Neck.

The crangogman told them that they were only an hour from Greywater Watch, and not a moment too soon. Too many men were wounded and weary to last much longer in the elements. He still could not believe that they had been able to escape, though the cost had been very high. Grey Wind had somehow managed to get free, and had attacked a musician just as they began playing The Rains. That caught the Freys badly off, and their attack was chaotic, though the wolf was dead soon. Dacey and Smalljon Umber were the only others with weapons, and he had joined them in trying to fend of the attack. Ser Brynden helped too, the old Knight was more experienced than any of them, and though he was distracted with guarding his niece, they managed to overturn a table and get a more defensible position. He then turned to seek his father out, ready to thank him for his gift. Instead, his father had fallen face first into the ground, stabbed in the back by the same dagger he had given his son. I guess I am an accursed kinslayer now, but at least I saved Robb. The Greatjon had been able to join them, and they were somehow able to make it out amidst the chaos. Karhold and Dreadfort men had joined Freys in butchering the other Northmen, and they would have been caught too, if it was not for a pack of wolves running into the battle and a flock of ravens descending upon the Twins. The Old Gods sent their emissaries to attack the enemy and help us escape, though they did not see it fit to help Lord Tully. Dacey and Smalljon were dead too, caught in the fighting without any route to escape.
It was Lord Umber who suggested the Neck, and to seek out Lord Reed. Robb had agreed, if only because there was no other option. The Riverlands were no longer safe, thanks to the number of hostages House Frey held and after this debacle, he was quite certain very few of the men would want to fight anywhere south of the Neck.

Lord Umber had an ulterior motive for choosing the Neck, one that he made no effort to keep hidden. Robb’s bastard brother lived with the Reeds, and the Northmen had finally decided Dayne blood was better than Tully. Robb had been forced to make his brother heir before setting out to the Twins, as the only other option was a minor Vale House. Robb had not liked that one bit, and Lady Catelyn had been furious, but Domeric had persuaded him accept the political reality. *It is all until you have children of your own.* Domeric was now grateful that he had succeeded, because otherwise the men would have butchered them soon after leaving the Twins, than to await the King’s judgment.

**Nowhere to run in enemy territory. No safe route to the Vale or to White Harbor for escaping to the Free Cities. No, Ser Brynden’s plan was the best.** The Old Knight had somehow been able to convince Umber that it would be better to allow Robb to abdicate in public in favour of his brother than be overthrown thus. Domeric had listed the political advantages of such a move, and though Lord Umber didn’t trust him, the man had finally acceded.

*And so the Maester of Greywater Watch becomes King.* Robb had told him about his brother, who he visited once a year. *Looks like a girl and spends all day in books and with a harp, just like you Dom, but he doesn’t even ride! I wonder how he even eats meat with that soft heart of his,* was what Robb had said of his brother, a description that had stopped Domeric from seeking out his own bastard brothers. It galled him that Sansa would lose her inheritance but it had to be. *They will not accept a Lord of Lannister blood, especially when they have a Stark of their own in Greywater Watch.*

*Starks have had held the North for eight thousand years. Not all of them could have been great warriors, and this Maester King would probably succeed in holding Moat Cailin, and manage supplies for winter. That’s all they want now. He might even be able to get something out of Anders Yronwood than flowery speeches, thanks to his Dornish blood, and those violet eyes might make Lord Velaryon write something more than arrogant insults. For all the Daynes claim of being Rhoyntish, they are most likely a renegade House of Valyria itself.*

*That’s what they are hoping for, not the nephew of the Sword of the Morning, the finest Knight of the Kingsguard. The nephew of Alayne Dayne, who freed an entire Kingdom without rising from his chair, is what they want, who can deliver them from this pit Robb has led them into. Someone who was uninfluenced by Southrons, raised fully in the North.*

*You must abdicate,* the Blackfish had told Robb, *if your brother is as you describe, he will probably let you live if you do. Else your men will be the ones to butcher you, and there is nowhere left to run.* Lady Catelyn had been horrified to hear her Uncle’s plan. *I will not let Ashara Dayne’s son rule the North!*, she had yelled, but Domeric had to silence her. *Your trueborn sister did not help her family in this greatest hour of need. His bastard half-brother can do little worse. Subjecting ourselves to his mercy is the best road ahead.*

Lord Howland Reed stood outside his keep, and he noticed that Robb forced himself to meet his eyes. *This was Lord Stark’s closest friend, and his children are dead thanks to Theon.* Lord Reed greeted them civilly enough, and did not express any surprise when Robb asked to meet Jon. Robb’s half-brother was apparently in the Godswood, and Lord Reed led him towards it, which lay outside of the Keep. He was unsurprised to see the whole party follow them. No doubt they all were planning to witness Robb’s moment of humiliation. Even Lady Catelyn had accompanied
them, probably to set her eyes on the next King of the North.

They heard the music quite a while before reaching the place itself. *The Dance of the Dragons*, he thought, *Robb was right, he is quite good.*

As expected, he was underneath the Weirwood tree, long silver hair covering those haunting violet eyes, playing the harp. The complete black dress was a surprise though, *thinking of joining the Watch?*

‘Jon’, spoke Lord Reed. ‘Your brother is here to see you.’

Jon Snow raised his head, and Domeric heard a sharp gasp from the Blackfish behind him. He could have sworn he heard him mutter ‘Aegon’ too, and he agreed, though he doubted they were thinking of the same King. Ser Brynden was probably thinking of the Fifth, alongside whom he had fought the Blackfyres, and though he could see the semblance, he personally thought Snow resembled the Third much more, if the pictures in the books were any indication. *The Daynes have to be Valyrian after all, looks like Lord Velaryon might listen.*

‘Lord Stark,’ spoke Jon Snow, ‘an unexpected pleasure.’

Domeric noticed that Robb clenched his fists, and no one corrected Snow for not using ‘King Robb’ or ‘Your grace’. He hoped Robb was mature enough to not rise up to the challenge. But he wasn’t.

‘I have decided to legitimize you’, spoke Robb.

Jon Snow did not flinch, but a thin smile broke on his face. ‘Thank you for the offer Lord Stark, but it is not a service I had ever required from you.’

‘Jon’, began Lord Reed.

‘If you suddenly decided to provide me with the tale of the Knight of the Laughing Tree or the Tower of Joy, I can assure you that it will be unnecessary. I know, and have known for a long time.’

Reed stepped back as if he had been slapped.

‘How?’, whispered Howland Reed.

‘You knew that Jojen had the greensight, but you conveniently forgot that another family in Westeros shared such a gift. In any case, you should have hidden that chest better; I found it when I was eight, papers, sword and all.’

*Greensight? A gift similar to that, shared by only one other family? No, it cannot be what I’m thinking, it is not possible at all.*

‘Then you know what is required of you’, spoke Lord Reed, barely above a whisper.

‘Expected? Expected by whom? A King without a Kingdom has few responsibilities, something Lord Stark and I are probably both rather grateful for.’

‘Had I been born a girl, as my father had envisioned, I would have avenged my siblings a long time ago. But I was born a man, with the name of a Conciliator instead of a Conqueror. I chose to do what you and Eddard Stark wanted, lead a life of peace and rot in a far-away backwater, since I am no Visenya Targaryen or Jacerys Velaryon [1]. But now you tell me, sixteen years later, that you
suddenly have need of me, when those who were trained into the art of ruling over all these years have proven themselves to be supremely incompetent?"

‘Have you gone mad boy?’ snapped Catelyn Stark, but she was ignored as Snow continued to speak. ‘The Gods tossed a coin, Lord Reed, and it landed on the wrong face. But I will be damned before I let a Lannister sit easy on my brother’s Throne, and so now it is time to toss the coin again and see if the Gods have changed their will.’

He saw Snow toss a gold dragon into the air, and his eyes followed the trajectory of the coin. The dragon came at the top, not the King and a thin smile broke on Jon Snow’s face as he stood up. *The Gods have changed their minds after all, Eddard Stark was a fool to have played with fire.*

Lord Reed had gone very pale, and his next words were barely more than a whisper. ‘What are you going to do Jon?’

‘We both know that is not my name, and so you might as well stop saying it. As for what I intend to do-Vaiythe du Caraxes.’

He had to cover his ears to escape that keen screech that rang out in answer. He looked at Snow, *no, definitely not Snow,* who was looking upwards into the clouds. He followed his gaze, and nearly collapsed in shock as he saw a great black shape descending upon them, with wings wider than a field.

The dragon landed just behind the musician, its great eyes as big as a man. Men around him trembled in fear, and knelt. Snow ignored all of it though, as he jumped into the air, *no, not jumped,* no man can jump that high, and the long neck of the dragon slipped underneath him.

‘Your grace!’ yelled Lord Reed in shock.

‘Try to not get yourself killed next time, Lord Stark. I did not intervene in the Twins for nothing. And now, duty beckons, I have a long overdue meeting with Lord Tywin. *Valar dohaeris.*’

And Domeric could only watch in awe as the dragon leapt up into the sky, taking with it the Last Targaryen in Westros.

A strangled cry escaped Lord Umber’s neck that sounded suspiciously like *Lya.* Lord Reed nodded, and turned to face them all. ‘Looks like there is a long story I need to tell you now.’

‘But what of us,’ whimpered Lady Catelyn.

‘The King commands you to live, and so live you must, my lady’ spoke Lord Umber with finality.

*Just when I thought the War of the Four Kings was over did it have to start anew[2], thought Domeric. The War of the Five Kings now truly begins.*

Chapter End Notes

[1]. Visenya Targaryen, First of her Name-Sister wife of Aegon I. The most dangerous of all Targaryen, or even Westrosi women.
Jacerys Velaryon, firstborn son of Rhaenyra Targaryen. Perished in battle to win the Throne for his mother.
[2] Stannis is long dead. The four Kings were Joffrey, Robb, Renly and Balon (and
their respective heirs). Now a Targaryen joins the mix (Robb is not yet overthrown, and can stir some trouble if he wants to).

Shit just got real. This was the longest chapter ever and hardest to write. Jon/Jaehaerys's motivations and psyche will be analyzed later, as this chapter was meant to just be high drama.

For anyone who is wondering, Jon did not hide a dragon in the Neck. He sent it back off into the sea, but it does stay relatively close, and can be summoned fast enough. Jon had already planned to leave when he turned 16 (the coin chose the direction), and so he brought it close. The Twins—he had intervened as a warg with both Grey Wind and the other animals, although it was truly speaking it was Domeric who saved them (methinks the Dragon is a bit too conceited).
The Sea Snake

Chapter Summary

Lord Velaryon contemplates the politics of the shadow, as well as the future of Valyrians in Westros.

Chapter Notes

I own nothing.

Also please leave kudos/comment if you like this/have something to see. I appreciate criticism and feedback.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Sea Snake

Blackwater Bay, 299AL.

Lord Monterys Velaryon stepped out of his cabin just in time to observe the first rays of the sun shine on his destination. Dragonstone, he thought, so near and yet so far. He had not been to Dragonstone for over fifteen years, when his ships came to take the last of the people away to Driftmark, as well as remove the ashes of the last dragons. The remains of Rhaella Targaryen and her son had been put to rest in the sea, the crypts of Dragonstone being no longer accessible. They call this the War of the Four Kings, but there was already a year with four Kings in it, three of whom barely ruled. Aerys II, Aegon VI, Jaehaerys III and finally Viserys III, the last King. He clenched his hands as he thought about it, he and Rhaella were ready to move out and attack King’s Landing with full force, ready to show the usurper that the dragon was not dead. But the storm happened, and their ships were smashed against rocks in their own harbors. He was trapped in Driftmark at the end of it, unable to go to Dragonstone and try to save his cousin. Still he had tried, and had a rag-tag fleet ready before the raven came. Rhaella told me to stay put; that she planned to engage Stannis on land in Dragonstone. I obeyed, thinking that she had a plan prepared. She had, but it was different from what he had expected, and he had only realized it when the Queen had not come out of the first ship that came from Dragonstone. What were you thinking Rhaella, to use your own death to advance our cause? What purpose did you hope it will serve?

Did you foresee that it will make the last of our men refuse to yield, so much so that we would risk it all to take on Robert Baratheon’s men in the sea? That had been the greatest battle in his life, and he had to make heavy concessions to both Pentos and Tyrosh to get their aid in time. Even so, it had been a close thing, and they were saved by another storm, wherein they sought shelter in coves around Dragonstone. The Redwynes and Manderlys did not know about those and they perished at sea. A crushing victory at a terrible price. If Lord Tywin brought his ships east, there would have been no hope for us at all.

Dorne saved us that time by declaring secession. Till then, we did not know why we fought and
what we sought to achieve. Dorne opened our eyes. Robert Baratheon was forced to focus on the southern theatre and that gave him enough time to strike a deal with Volantis. Volantenes still had aspirations of grandeur about Valyria, and they were more than willing to aid him, once he requested it on the behalf of the Westernmost province of the Freehold. And sold all our captives to them. It helped that the Targaryens were dead, since there was no love lost between them and the Free Cities. With Volantis, Pentos and Tyrosh backing him, and with control over all the trade routes to King’s Landing, he forced the usurper to capitulate. Jon Arryn and Ned Stark were both too willing to capitulate, honorable men who had lost stomach for fighting by then. Stark and Arryn had put Lannister down and forced peace with both Dorne and the new state of West Valyria. Lord Velaryon knew it was not really a long term solution, since they were too close to Kings Landing for Westrosi Kings to ignore them for long. But it gave us time, time to wait and strengthen ourselves while the Seven Kingdoms go into decline and split apart. For a hundred years between the Doom and the Conquest, these Islands were all that remained of Old Valyria. But there was a Targaryen in Dragonstone then, ready to ride out atop Balerion to take on any foolish westrosi who dared challenge us. Now we must play a game in the shadows to live. Varys had been of considerable help, and he now felt ashamed of himself for doubting that man during the rebellion. Knowledge is power, and thanks to Varys, I am not short of it. It was certainly useful to know which merchants dared to try to get to the Free Cities without paying his dues. And it was certainly useful to know when the merchant guild tried to convince Robert to hire sellswords to attack them. That fool thought it as a way of winning glory over his more cautious Hand, and yet he only drove the Realm in further debt while we prevailed. That had been his lucky break, as Arryn, refusing to take further loans from Lannister or Tyrell, had sought out the Iron Bank in Braavos and the Bank asked him to ensure all dues were paid. It was simple really, to stop all Westrosi merchants from trading with Essos and have them create trouble for Arryn. A silent war over money was easier to win than a real one. He had profited greatly from these enterprises, as well as the heavy taxation from ships that were not from favored Free Cities (who were too eager to aid him hinder their competitors). Dorne had done similar, stop all direct trade with the Seven Kingdoms. We could afford to rely only on Free Cities, but they are too big to survive on that alone, especially with me creating trouble for them. The Greyjoy rebellion had been a lucky break. Both he and Prince Doran had consulted over whether they should take advantage of it, but they had not, in the end. The Stark-Tully-Arryn-Baratheon-Lannister alliance was still there, and would be there as long as Robert lived. While there might have been disagreements over offensive warfare, all five would have been united over defensive war. But the four years it took them to put the Iron Islands down drained even Robert of desire to battle. He was surprised that they had lasted so long, and that Arryn had not capitulated again, especially since they basically had no capable Naval leader since the late Stannis Baratheon. Then again, Northmen hate the Ironborn as much as Lannister does, so Stark probably held sway. It was then he had blockaded King’s Landing, for not paying the Iron Bank. Lord Arryn had to strip the Red Keep down of any valuables, quite a lot of which I kept or bought from the Bank, and Robert had not even raged like he used to, after he returned. He thought it might have been an excellent time to inform the Arryn about the activities of the Queen with her brother, but had desisted. It would have brought no benefits, the Tyrells had a bride lined up, and the Westerlands would have probably been defeated, both Stark and Arryn were itching for an excuse. It would have made a martyr of Robert, the one thing to be avoided at any cost. Rather, letting the realm split after he died, when his Queen and brother would fight was a better way. The Reach and Stormlands against the rest. I did not factor in Stark getting involved, which complicated the game for me. For some time it seemed like Robb Stark could neutralize Tywin, making Renly Baratheon, joined by Barristan Selmy, the truly formidable force. Renly had the potential to stitch the realm together so he had to
go. A Faceless man did the job elegantly, except that Loras Tyrell was present when Renly died. The Stormlords blamed Tyrell, resulting a massive battle. He had not expected the Tyrell’s to join the Lannisters though, flies drawn to rotting meat. Robb Stark’s failure to contain Lord Tywin, and the defeat of the Baratheon forces under Selmy in the siege of King’s Landing had ensured the Lannisters held power, albeit weakly. Selmy still held Storm’s End for Robert’s bastard, Edric Storm, who Renly had legitimized as his heir. And I have profited greatly from it, the Imp paid me whatever I demanded in return for letting his sell-swords though, before Renly died and Tywin broke through.

It is finally time for us to strike. We cannot survive forever on the mercy of the Free Cities. There are still enough loyalists left in the Crownlands for us to strike. Crackclaw point for instance, has already sent men. If we capture some parts of the old Crownlands, maybe King’s Landing itself, we would be in a position to make a new Kingdom for ourselves. Varys has men inside, and we have not fought in this war yet, despite entreaties from all sides. If we strike right, we can prevail and drive them out of King’s Landing to Highgarden or the Rock. The time could not be better, especially with the Ironborn pillaging the West and drawing their attention there.

All for you Rhaella, its all up to me now, as the closest thing left to a Targaryen in Westros.

He heard someone clear their neck behind, and turned to see his bastard nephew. My late elder brother was not particularly careful with regards to bedding women, and yet he left Driftmark to me when he died unwed in the Trident. He was fond of Aurane though, and had raised the boy like he was his own, as much as Sylvia or Monfrey. Aurane was uneasy though, and so was he. There were rumours that the curse of the Last Queen hung over Dragonstone. No ships had approached the Island in over fourteen years and returned to tell the tale. He had lost far too many men in these waters, and so had others.

I am not afraid of you cousin, or some silly superstition. We come to seek your blessing and to pray at the Conqueror’s Sept, and then we march to carry your last wishes out. If we are afraid of a curse, we might as well give up the battle and flee to the Free Cities. Today, in Dragonstone, shall I embrace the Targaryen legacy, as the last of our kind, with the blood of King Aegon V’s sister Rhae in my veins, and lead my men to Victory. The same blood as your mother, Rhaella-will you not grant me victory, even though I be more Snake than Dragon?

Dragonstone, 299 AL.

They heard the screeches as soon as they landed, and it was impossible to not notice the dragons that came out to face them. Men grew pale with fear, and were about to turn tail. Yet he commanded them to pause, fleeing to wooden ships against dragons was utmost folly. Besides, now I can see how hot the blood of Valyria burns within me after all. Aurane too stepped forward, determined to succeed. One of us probably will, though the other may not escape. The bastard Addam of Hull mastered Ser Laenor Velaryon’s dragon for Queen Rhaenyra, but his brother Alyn was nearly killed by another dragon. They were legitimized for their service though, and it is Alyn’s blood we share, not Addams. Still the rewards are too great for us to hesitate.

Yet they never got the chance. Another, louder screech rang out in the air, and the men looked up to see a great shadow descend upon them. Men grew pale with fear, and were about to turn tail. Yet he commanded them to pause, fleeing to wooden ships against dragons was utmost folly. Besides, now I can see how hot the blood of Valyria burns within me after all. Aurane too stepped forward, determined to succeed. One of us probably will, though the other may not escape. The bastard Addam of Hull mastered Ser Laenor Velaryon’s dragon for Queen Rhaenyra, but his brother Alyn was nearly killed by another dragon. They were legitimized for their service though, and it is Alyn’s blood we share, not Addams. Still the rewards are too great for us to hesitate.

Yet they never got the chance. Another, louder screech rang out in the air, and the men looked up to see a great shadow descend upon them. Gods be good, that creature is even larger than Balerion! The other dragons fled after seeing this beast, and men this time did scream and break ranks, but the creature did not breathe fire or otherwise seem inclined to violence. It landed right before them, and only then did he notice the rider.
Clothed completely in black, with silver hair and violet eyes, the rider leapt off the back of the creature to face them. Velaryon’s eyes went immediately upon his brow, which was graced by a simple gold band. *Gods be good! The Dragonbane’s crown! The sword too, I would recognize Dark Sister anywhere! But those were lost, used to honor one of our last Kings who we lost to Stark or a childhood malady. Unless…*

‘It is a pleasure to finally meet you Lord Velaryon’ spoke Jaehaerys III Targaryen.

His response was to raise his sword in the air, and yell. After a moment’s hesitation, Aurane and the men did the same. And for the first time since the Doom, the air was loud with the cry of ‘Hail Imperator!’ from men who had never seen Valyria, and yet from which they claimed descent, cultural or otherwise.

Jaehaerys Targaryen offered a stiff bow in response, and then men broke into a further loud cheer.

‘We have much to discuss, Your Grace.’

‘That we do Lord Velaryon, and I suppose the Old Sept will be as fine a place to converse as any other.’

*The Gods are truly kind, Rhaella. Victory is now finally within our reach and I only wish you lived long enough to see this day for yourself.*

*With luck, there will be a Targaryen King on the Iron Throne by the first day of the next century.*

Chapter End Notes

**General notes:**

Velaryon-Targaryen family connection: King Aegon V's sister married into the Velaryon family. Monterys and his brother are her grandchildren. Her daughter had married King Jaehaerys II, making Monterys first cousins with Rhaella. There is quite some gap in age there, Monterys being just slightly older than Rhaegar (he was the second son who became Lord post Trident).

Aurane is actually treated well, and is not exactly planning to be a backstabber. He does like his cousins, and hates Robert et.al for killing his father.

Selmy had nowhere to go-Stannis dead, Rhaella and children dead. There is quite some regret there, but he joins Renly. He doesnt like Loras too much (kind of like what Jaime thinks, but more stuck up), and is responsible for a lot of trouble with Tyrells. He survived the battle for KL, (no Wildfire, its a taboo word after Rhaella) and is leading the last souther resistance to Lannisters, which is crumbling. The Greyjoys are pillaging the whole west coast, since the Redwyne fleet is just a shadow of its former self, sapping strength from both Lannister and Baratheon. Velaryon knows nothing about Red Wedding etc.

The timing is interesting too, late 299AL-getting close to Joff+Marg marriage. People are concentrating in KL for fun to begin.

And Bloodraven's lessons will start paying off. The metaphorical coin actually has three sides, as Westros will see.

The next POV will be a very Canon Character. Start guessing :D
**Chapter Summary**

In which Lady Sansa Stark develops an appreciation of what Royalty is all about and the People cannot be ignored for too long.

**Chapter Notes**

My apologies for this inordinate lateness—but real life exists and makes life hard. Disclaimers: I own nothing and this fic does not reflect my views. If historians are believed to share the views of the people they wrote about, the world would be sad place. Same for authors in general, especially about times different from ours. Just a few comments: Appearance flipped Starks: Sansa, Arya, Jon. Rest look same as Cannon.

This begins on the morning of the purple wedding.

Please do comment/leave kudos :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

---

*Kings Landing, 300 AL. New Years Day.*

Sansa Stark looked up at the imposing structure of the Sept of Baelor, as a hundred unpleasant memories flooded to her mind. *Father, please forgive me for my folly, by which I ended up killing you. Please look after Arya and keep her safe.* But she knew her thoughts were for naught. *Life is not a song, and the monsters always win in real life.* Today was the day the greatest monster in her life would get what he wants, she thought looking down at the elaborate banners raised to herald the King’s marriage. *Joffrey’s rule will now be secure with the support of Highgarden, while my family rots.* She prayed that Robb and her mother were still safe, though most of the court were convinced that they were dead. *The Northmen will not forget the hospitality of House Frey so easily. Too many of their sons have died for Robb Stark’s folly—was what her husband had told her in private. And so this is how it ends, Bran and Rickon killed by Theon, Arya in some ditch in the Riverlands and me to rot here, to provide the Lannisters with a claim to the North.* It would never work, even a fool knew that much. Her father and Robb had ensured that just having Stark blood would no longer make the North kneel, but Tywin still intended to try. At least no one could accuse him of not find a suitable wife for his son, an attempt of appeasement to justify denying the Rock. *A cripple and an Imp were my options instead of a fine Prince. Though I suppose neither is half as bad the prince in real life. I was such a fool then, to think that it would be so wonderful to go South and leave Domeric behind.*

Margaery’s smiles were getting on her nerves though. *Poor girl does not know what she is getting herself into. May the Seven look after her.* It had been her idea to come here to pray, and the Queen had jumped in as well, to make a public show of piety. The Queen of Thorns had also come, with nearly every hightborn girl in the Red Keep. The Queen had also ordered her to come, ‘so that people see that my goodsister worships real Gods, not Northern savagery’ was how she had
phrased it. Still, she was glad to be out of the Keep, even if it was with a dozen Gold Cloaks and Reach Knights. As if I could have survived Flea bottom anyways. There is nowhere to run for the bird who grew up in the golden cage. Security was very important though, the people were not happy at all. The high taxes that had been levied in order to pay for Essosi sellswords had already led to a riot when Myrcella had been sent off to Dorne. Lord Tywin’s refusal of Tyrell aid to pay for the wedding and rely on the Crown’s coffers had further complicated the scenario. King’s Landing is like a keg of wildfire now. The fear of gold cloaks and knights keep the smallfolk away, but for how long? Even the dragons had learnt the price of defying the people’s will, as Maester Luwin had said. The Queen had defeated her brother only to have the people riot and cost her five dragons and a son. Rhaenyra Targaryen’s lesson had apparently been lost with Lord Tywin, still basking in the glory of his triumph. The Rains of Castamere scares everyone down, but for how long? Lord Velaryon is up in the Blackwater, waiting. If the people were angry enough to want the Mad King back the last time they had rioted, what would they do when he sails up to King’s Landing?

Shouts broke out behind her, and she turned to see a rider running fast towards them. The Knight dismounted, and bowed to Queen Cersei.

‘Your grace, some ships have been sighted up the Blackwater. It may not be much, simply Essosi Lords coming to honor his invitation to His Grace’s wedding, but the Lord Tywin thinks that you should stay within the Sept lest the smallfolk create trouble over some little thing. They would not dare defile the Holy Sept of the Gods.’

‘An excellent idea,’ quipped the Queen of Thorns. ‘At my age I don’t want to be raped the way the Stokeworth girl was in the last riots. I would still like to speak, thank you very much.’

Cersei gnashed her teeth, but Sansa knew that she agreed in principle. The Sept of Baelor was one of the safest places in King’s Landing, and she was proud enough to not risk losing face by retreating before reaching her destination. ‘We continue’, spoke the Queen, as they went on their way to the Sept.

The Sept was mostly empty when they reached there, and the Queen immediately ordered them up to a Tower instead of praying, so that she could see what was happening outside. The flight of stairs was long, but the Queen got what she wanted. It is harder for the men in their armor, but Sansa found herself quite unable to pity any knights at that moment, after the treatment from the Kingsguard.

The Queen had positioned herself in front of the window overlooking the harbor, and Sansa was not inclined to join her. Margaery however had pulled her to the one overlooking the Red Keep, and they had just reached the opening, when the screech rang out.

It was the single most horrifying thing Sansa had ever heard, an assessment that many people in the room shared, judging from the number that had dropped down to floor with their hands over their ears. She and Margaery lifted their head up to glance outside, once they were sure that the sound was over. She almost wished she had not though, for she saw a gigantic creature in the air, gliding towards the Red Keep, without even beating its vast leathery wings. The monsters always win and there cannot be a greater monster a dragon. My family is traitor to both Targaryen and Lannister, but at least Joffrey will burn.

A sound came from behind them, and they turned to see that the Queen was kneeling on the floor. Only a single phrase escaped her lips –‘But How?’. Olenna Tyrell, however recovered her wits
much faster and she yelled some order at the Reach Knights. Blood splattered in Sept of Baelor for
the second time, as the Reach Knights quickly disposed of the Gold Cloaks, the superior training
and discipline making it a one-sided slaughter.

‘We fought for King Aerys last time, and the Iron Throne never forgets’, whispered Olenna Tyrell
as she slumped against the wall.

‘You think you’ll get away with this, don’t you?!’ screamed Cersei Lannister. ‘My family has
killed dragons and—’

‘Your adversary this time is more formidable than an unarmed man or a babe of four with a cat.
The Targaryens are not Reynes or Tarbecks. House Lannister should have learnt its lesson from the
Dance.’

‘Jaime and my father—’

‘Will be able to do nothing. Lannisters may have forgotten, but we of the Reach still remember the
Field of Fire and the fate of House Gardener. And the folly of the Hightowers to fiddle with the
succession. Though Velaryon may have killed Paxter Redwyne, my nephew and goodson, I will
still make peace, if only to see the rest of my family survive this war.’

The pale faced Margaery nodded her assent, and Cersei was prevented from replying by the loud
chants from the streets. Sansa looked out to see a sight that was as marvelous as it was shocking.
There was no rioting, as she had feared, instead the people were tearing down the Lannister-
Baratheon banners, aided by the Gold Cloaks themselves. More and more Three Headed Dragon
banners were coming up, after being abandoned for sixteen years, and loud cries of ‘Fire and
Blood’ made its way up to the Tower.

‘Chose his time well, whoever it is. The Three hundredth anniversary of Aegon’s Landing is bound
to stir memories. The small-folk of Kings Landing remember the peace they had from the End of
the Dance to the Lannister sack, when they did not have to fear ships coming down the Blackwater
to attack,’ spoke the Queen of Thorns.

‘The Gold Cloaks—’ Cersei weakly tried to say.

‘Obeyed you and your father for gold and the fear of the Rains. Velaryon’s pocket and the dragon
are adequate to supplant both. They betrayed Ned Stark for you, and so I’m surprised at your
naivette. Or did you fuck the Commander to secure his loyalty too?’

‘How dare you—’

‘Marbrand could not have managed all his men anyways. And you are really in no position to talk.
You and the Stark girl are valuable hostages for Lord Targaryen, which would help assure him of
the Reach’s loyalty. It’s all over’

Like the bodies of Prince Rhaegar’s children assured Lannister support for King Robert, though I
suppose this King will want to see the deed. I wonder if Margaery still gets her marriage tonight.
She had no regrets though, if she could see Cersei and Joffrey go down with her.

‘I hope this King knows what he is doing though,’ muttered Olenna Tyrell. ‘Rhaenyra got the City
as easily as him, but still lost due to her own folly.’

It ended as Olenna predicted, when Velaryon men entered the Sept, welcomed in by the High
Septon. Cersei was off to the black cells for now, as the silver haired commander cheerfully
explained, though he would have preferred throwing her to the crowd. Olenna and the
Reachwomen were to be kept in the Tower of the Hand. The Tyrell men had been confined to their rooms, but they had laid down their arms and were unharmed.

The commander however told her that he was to escort her to the King immediately. And so she found herself on a horse with Aurane Waters, riding off to the Red Keep. She had asked him how the King had known where to find her, and had received a one word answer: ‘Varys.’ Of course.

Dread rose within her as she walked down the corridors of the Red Keep, to the library where the King was apparently waiting. Father always told me I looked like his sister, and so will her fate be mine? Lyanna Stark had captivated the interest of a Targaryen Prince leading the realm to ruin. So will I be used to avenge the dead? Am I supposed to be his concubine now, his reward for this victory?

She was surprised to find that she was not disgusted, like she was with King Robert’s affections. That girl was long dead. If this is the way I can save the North then so be it. If by sating his lust I can get him to give the North to my bastard brother or Domeric, then I welcome that. If not, I at least intend to see Cersei and Joffrey dead in the worst way possible.

‘Who is he, anyways? I thought all the Targaryens were dead’. She had asked Aurane, but he had only smirked at her. Now, she was extremely apprehensive as she approached the door. Too much rests on me.

Aurane knocked on the door, and a response came in High Valyrian. Aurane then pushed the door open, and she saw the figure sitting behind the desk, a wide open heavy tome lying on the table.

‘Imperator Jaehaerys Targaryen, Third of His Name’ proclaimed Aurane Waters. ‘I bring to you Lady Sansa of House Lannister, wife of the Imp.’

She noticed a flash of rage in the violet eyes but it disappeared fast enough for it to have been a mistake. Still, that made her realize that she might be here as a Lannister more than a Stark, and dread rose up her throat.

‘That will be all Aurane, close the door as you leave’ spoke the new King, ‘Lady Stark, if you could be as kind enough to step forward.’

She heard the door close behind her, as she stepped forward into the light coming from the window. The thought I must be brave rang in her mind as the King stood up to move closer.

‘You look like her’ was his first words, as she had feared.

‘Who, your Grace’, she spoke, voice thick with fear.

But his next words caught her completely off guard. ‘My mother, I was told that you look a lot like her and I can see that to be true. And you do not have anything to fear from me, cousin.’

Can it be? And she found herself whispering ‘but that will make you—‘

‘Lyanna Stark’s son, yes.’

That does not make me safe yet. I am still a daughter of a traitor, married to a Lannister. And sisters are fair game for Targaryens, to say nothing of cousins. There was something feral in those eyes that she did not trust. However, there is hope that this monster is not my enemy.

She found herself being helped to a chair, as the King continued to speak. ‘Are you well? Is there a need to get a Maester?’
‘No your Grace, I am simply tired. I have not eaten since we left for the Sept in the morning.’

‘And now it is the afternoon. My apologies Lady Sansa, but there are things that cannot wait.’

She now sat in rapt attention, awaiting the blow that was sure to fall. Yet his words surprised her again. ‘Are you with child my lady?’ spoke the King.

Dread rose up her throat again. **Is this he was waiting to know before having me? All it will take is a Maester to examine me and he will know.** Aloud, she spoke ‘No, your Grace. My marriage was unconsummated.’

She saw the silver eyebrows rise up. ‘Lord Varys had told me as much, but you still will have to be examined by a Maester and Septa, and follow their instructions. My apologies, Lady Sansa, but House Lannister is at an end, and I cannot permit the circumstances to force me to be a kinslayer. If this is as you say, I do not think you will have too many objections to being widowed tomorrow.’

She was shocked to find that she cared. ‘He is not a bad person, he is not his father or sister.’

‘No, he is not,’ agreed Jaehaerys Targaryen, ‘but he will join them in death.’

‘This is not a fate he deserves.’

‘What people deserve is curious thing indeed. Did my brother and sister deserve their fate at the hands of Clegane and Lorch? This is war in case you did not notice.’

‘That was not his fault. It was his father who had ordered—’

‘Tell me Lady Sansa, why did the Imp treble taxes here to hire sell-swords instead of jumping into a ship for Essos, knowing what would happen if the people got their hands on him?’

She knew the answer, but did not want to say it. ‘For family’, she whispered.

‘Precisely, and I do this for mine. In fact, I am surprised by this desire for clemency, after all the Lannisters have done to House Stark. The people of King’s Landing welcomed me in, without a drop of my men’s blood being shed. They want the head of the Imp that has caused them so much hardship, despite the damage the invading Baratheon men would have done. As their King though, I have no desire to deny them this gift.’

‘So you do this for the smallfolk?’ challenged Sansa.

‘I do it as it is best course forward, and it also happens to align with the desires of the smallfolk. You might not want to attend the executions though, if you fear it will harm your sensibilities.’

‘What is it that you have planned?’

Jaehaerys walked up to her and whispered it into her ears. She was now sure that was not imagining the feral gleam.

‘Tommen too?’ , she whispered.

**The Rains** all the way. Pity they sent the girl off to Dorne, will make things a bit harder.’

*I would be unwise to forget he is not simply my cousin, he is also the Mad King’s grandson.*

‘You must attend the coronation though, just after the executions tomorrow. Back to the Sept of Baelor again, after the public executions at the tourney grounds.’
‘Certainly, your grace.’

‘You can’t go North just yet, the Freys hold Manderly’s son hostage so White Harbor is not safe. However, you are not a hostage here and can stay wherever you want or join the Tyrells should you wish. Once things settle down here, I will have you sent to the Neck, where your mother and Lord Robb is. I would presume that Lords Bolton and Reed have ensured that they are still alive.’

And Sansa was grateful for that. At least he is not my enemy, this went better than I had expected.

‘And Sansa,’ spoke the King, as he rose to open the door for her, ‘Do not expect me to act so familiar in public.’

No, she would not expect that. ‘I perfectly understand your Grace, good day to you.’

**The Next Day**

She had attended the executions after all. All the Lannisters in the City, Addam Marbrand, Grand Maester Pycelle, and any Lords who were a part of the Sack of King’s Landing during Robert’s rebellion. She had to admit the King was good at this game, with the way he handled the whole event. *Probably secured his reign by this one move alone.*

She pitied Tommen and Tyron, but her hate for Joffrey had made her attend. Therefore she had stood witness as the former Queen and her son, along with Lord Tywin and their family were torn apart by a pack of starving dogs in tourney grounds. *A death from dragonfire is too noble for them,* the King said. The cries still rang in her head, and she did have to look away to avoid seeing what happened to Tommen. *The music too.* It seemed like all the musicians in the City were ordered to play *The Rains of Castamere* from the beginning till the last body stopped moving. *No one will ever fear the name Lannister again.*

*A New Age and the New King,* she thought as Lord Velaryon, the true-born person with undisputedly the most Targaryen blood addressed the crowd and told them of Prince Rhaegar’s second marriage, and that Lord Commander Gerold Hightower and Queen Rhaella had recognized Jaehaerys as the true King after Aegon had died. The High Septon publicly recognized the union ‘to be in accordance with the most ancient traditions of the Royal House of Targaryen’ (she suspected the man did not want to share the fate of the Lannisters) and further accepted Ser Gerold’s coronation in Dorne. Lord Mace Tyrell proclaimed that he believed the old proclamations and letters of the Queen and The Lord Commander to be authentic. The people were then sounded for objections, though none came. *There are no more Targaryens left, and if Velaryon, who is now heir, says it is acceptable, it is. Few would risk defying a dragon and share the fate of the Lannisters.* The High Septon then repeated the Act of Coronation, placing Aegon III’s gold band atop the head of her cousin. Lord Mace, Lords Tarly and Rowan, and many other Reach Lords or their representatives bent the knee in public and swore a Holy Oath. *He is quite an expert in this game. Pious men like Tarly and Rowan will never go back on this oath.* She too bent the knee, as the representative of House Stark. *No matter that I do not have the authority.*

Lord Baelish had suffered a gruesome fate, although that had not happened in public. Aurane had told her of his attempts to convince the King that he could deliver the Vale. The King apparently had not cared, and a desperate Lord Baelish had tried to prove his loyalty by showing him letters that suggested he was in an affair with Aunt Lysa. Some letters apparently also mentioned that Aunt Lysa had poisoned Lord Arryn (apparently Lord Varys thought the same) and her cousin Robert might not even be an Arryn. Not even that however, was enough to save Lord Baelish for embezzling the gold from the treasury. He had been burned the night before. She did wonder how did the King get Baelish to talk, but Aurane had laughed and said ‘*The Imperator has his ways.*’
Not much of her pity was wasted on the man who was inappropriate with her little sister and betrayed her father.

She was asked to attend the next Council meeting as a guest, surprising her. All about gestures. The question of what was next was heavy on everyone’s minds. The Crownlands and the Reach were secured, but the rest were still an issue. The King seemed confident that the war-torn North and Riverlands would bend its knee, and his view was generally accepted. The remaining forces under Ser Barristan in Storm’s End were the bigger challenge, but there were enough men to wage war and win, especially with a dragon. The Vale too was not much of a challenge. Visenya Targaryen showed the road to the Vale a long time ago, spoke the King. A sustained campaign was needed to move on against the Westerlands and the Iron Islands, and preparations were already on way.

Dorne was the biggest issue. Lord Velaryon and The King himself preferred to call for negotiations to hand Myrcella over, and decide on Dorne’s future, while the Reach Lords wanted war. It was however decided by a letter that arrived in the middle of the meeting, from a desperate Storm Lord ready to ‘abandon the bastard and bow to the True King Joffrey’ as the Dornish had attacked the Storm Lands. Lord Tywin’s invitation for the Dornish to attack the Stormlands were apparently not ignored by Dorne as many had thought, but rather delayed. They had attacked after the nearby Reach Lords had left for King’s Landing for the Wedding, so that they could invade the Southern parts of the Reach too. Lord Tywin’s plan to harm the Tyrell and the rebel Storm Lords in one blow.

This could not be ignored, and the war faction had won unanimously. Lords Tarly and Velaryon were to prepare forces for marching to the Stormlands immediately, while the King would leave in a day to secure the Vale.

So my return North will be delayed, as these southrons have to finish this game. No Reach troops could now be spared to secure Riverlands, and the King was going to the Vale to get their help for this purpose.

And this was how Sansa Stark found herself bow’d before the Heart Tree. Gods, please keep my last remaining family safe. Mother, Robb, Uncle Edmure, Aunt Lysa, Robert. Jaehaerys too, for no matter what he thinks, he is still a human like us.

The Old Gods gave me the Monster I wanted. Please do not take it away from me too.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies again for the super-long chapter. I wanted 7 main POV’s +
Prologue+Epilogue hence this monstrosity.
The next chapter is non canon POV.
Now details:
KL riots do happen in Tyrion’s watch and some lady does get badly raped (pure canon)
Robert pervs over Sansa, Dear Joff follows the example. LF pervs over Arya.
Invitations to Essos: Custom to send invites to everyone. Who gives enough fucks to come is another story.
Tyrion sells Myrcella to Dorne hoping for backup against the Renly+ combine. There is realpolitik here, sure there was Eliagate etc, but Dorne has to survive for long term,
and fertile Reach or Storm lands cannot hurt. Actually ruling instead of jumping up and down can even silence a viper. Tywin tries to build on it to cut down Tyrell power.

Baelish, Tywin etc confess very little. But warging powers of a king are useful. That book in the library is a state of accounts of the kingdom, not philosophy etc.

Will add more as I come up with it.
The Bastard

Chapter Summary

In which we observe how Westros evolves through the eyes of a second Orys Baratheon.

Chapter Notes

I own nothing.

Everyone wanted a Dornish POV and Oberyn was actually my first choice to be honest. But I realized that I actually want to advance the story a bit more than what an Oberyn POV would allow. So I had to choose someone who will literally be in the thick of things, namely Aurane Waters. It does make this fic get a little unbalanced (3 Valyrian POVs out of 8 already), so I would make an offer: I was planning to put up a series of one-shot POVs of characters. If anyone wants me to do a particular character POV (or multiple ones), please put in a request in the comments. I will try to justice to as many as I can, after wrapping this one up.

In this POV we go over a lot of things in the last chapter again, from the eyes of Aurane Waters. There was a lot going on in that chapter, and Sansa’s POV is slightly confused too-about what exactly happens, as she is away from action most of the time. It was still important for the Baelor scene though.

As always, comments and feedback are appreciated.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dragonstone, 299AL

*The dragon is huge,* was the only thought in Aurane Water’s mind, as the black reptile landed just before them. The other dragons had been scared away by its screech. *The men too, they broke ranks but it is fortunate that they haven’t run for the ships yet. Wood won’t hold against fire.*

He suddenly realized that the creature wasn’t attacking them, Rather it stood placidly on the coast, and lowered its neck. A figure in black jumped down and faced them. *He has violet eyes, and silver hair;* Aurane noticed, *just like Uncle Monterys, Sylvia, Monfrey and me.* The man looked like he was around Aurane’s age, yet there was something regal and dignified about him, a thought that was strengthened by the simple gold band atop his head. *Who is he anyways, to have a dragon and come here? The last Targaryens died here.* He turned to face his uncle, only to see that the man was gaping at the new arrival, a look of wonder in his eyes.

‘It is a pleasure to meet you Lord Velaryon’, spoke the new arrival.

His uncle’s response was to thrust his sword up in the air and yell *‘Hail Imperator!’ What is going on, Aurane thought, Imperator? Uncle Monterys is heir now. Still, it is a bad idea to anger a*
dragonrider, especially with a mount of that size. So he lent his voice to the chorus that had rang out following his uncle’s example, and watched the man offer a stiff bow.

‘We have much to discuss now, Your Grace’, spoke his uncle.

‘That we do Lord Velaryon, and I suppose the Old Sept will be as fine a place to converse as any other,’ spoke the man who his uncle had declared King.

‘You cannot go alone, my Lord,’ Aurane yelled, fear rising up his throat.

‘Aurane, His Grace King Jaehaerys is not our adversary,’ replied his uncle.

‘You seem to be extraordinarily well informed Lord Velaryon, something which I feel we should discuss. Nevertheless, I cannot fault the boy for wanting to come. Bring him along if you think he is trustworthy.’

And with that, King Jaehaerys turned around to walk up to the Sept, as if he had walked on this road dozens of times.

The Sept was in a considerable state of disrepair, but it was still standing. Which is good enough, I suppose. King Jaehaerys walked up to the very front, where the Seven stood and turned around to face them.

‘I would be grateful if you could reveal how you are familiar with my name’ were the first words of the King.

‘Your grandmother had told me, Your Grace, the Queen Rhaella.’

‘Is that so? I was under the impression that all communication was solely between Dragonstone and the Tower of Joy. I was not aware Driftmark was involved. Nevertheless, if the Last Queen had found you trustworthy, I suppose you are.’

‘We might as well stop playing this game, your Grace. I know what you are, I felt you for one brief moment. And you need not worry about my nephew, he is trustworthy.’

‘Interesting, may I ask how you are even aware of that?’

‘We Velaryons know how the Old King won his wars without swinging a sword and we all heard the stories about Lord Rivers. It was almost safe to conclude that you shared the gift as well, and I had all the proof I needed when you looked at my eyes while enquiring how I knew of your existence.’

What are they even talking about?

‘Does that not frighten you?’

‘That art had won us wars in the past, your Grace, and I see no reason why this one will be different. I am not a superstitious fool who will not use anything explicitly not endorsed by the Faith. Victory is victory, however it is achieved. And I am not frightened, my intent is bare before you but I have nothing to hide.’

‘I think we will get along very well, Lord Velaryon. I had hoped to reach an understanding with you, and that was why I headed here instead of King’s Landing itself. It was a pleasant surprise to
discover that you had already called the banners, saving a lot of time for preparing for the assault.’

‘We are ready to strike, Your Grace. We also have men in the inside ready to aid. Your presence will help us immensely.’

‘War is not the answer Lord Velaryon, a bloody sack will earn us more ill will than anything else. No, we must play differently. I have heard there was a riot recently there.’

‘Yes, Your Grace. The Imp needed men to fight Renly’s forces while Lord Tywin was held up in the Riverlands. He sought our help, and also of the Dornish but we spurned him. He hired sellswords from Essos, who I allowed to sail past, as the Imp had paid me handsomely for it.’

‘Every penny drained from the enemy is a good one. I take it he hiked taxes?’

‘The food supply from the Reach was also cut off for some time.’

‘Excellent. We simply need to create circumstances for another riot and the City will fall.’

‘The Tyrells are there—’

‘The Tyrells are hopefully not fools enough to challenge a dragon. If they are, the fate of House Gardener awaits them. Without them, the city shall fall; even Rhaenyra Targaryen failed to hold it under such circumstances.’

‘The riots are a fickle thing Your Grace; it can turn against us just as badly, as the Queen had learned.’

‘Have no fear, my Lord. I have a plan.’

After discussing the plan, the King had left, apparently to visit the top of the Dragonmont. Aurane took the chance to ask his uncle about the ‘gift’, as he sensed that asking in front of the king was an unwise move. His uncle merely replied ‘warg’, a word that sent a chill up his spine. Whatever helps us win I guess? Im glad Im not a high lord he will be interested in.

‘Besides, you better get used to him reading your thoughts. You are his personal attendant now.’

I was wrong; things do get worse for me.

Kings Landing, 300 AL.

The voyage had been rather uneventful, except for the massive dragon and its rider. The King had refused to travel in the ship, choosing to be with that monster, Caraxes. The duo was flying overhead, at a sedate pace. Does that creature never need to land? I am not complaining though, it spares me from having to wait on him.

The voyage is at an end. The plan is to raise the Targaryen banners high up and have him fly over the City to send the people in a frenzy. Then we invade. I only hope Lord Varys can keep his end of the bargain.

Chaos had already broken out, inside the walls. He could hear screams and yells from inside.
‘They are rioting already,’ he observed.

Lord Velaryon shook his head. ‘We underestimated how unpopular the Imp has made the Lannisters. They are celebrating. Listen closely.’

And he did, and understood. Though there was a cacophony of sounds coming from within the walls, the loud cries of ‘Fire and Blood’ were easily distinguished. *Is this how all dynasties end?*

*There have been no obstacles raised to landing. No ships have been sent out in offense yet, not that they have many.*

Lord Varys waited for them at the harbor, though his eyes were up at the sky. ‘My Lords,’ were his first words ‘you ought not to have hidden this from me.’

Aurane felt a stab of guilt, but his uncle replied evenly enough: ‘There was no time. His grace joined us only when we had reached Dragonstone.’

‘Is it Lyann—’

‘We don’t have time now Lord Varys, are you ready? I swear I will tell you the whole story once we are done with the City.’

‘Certainly my Lord, I am prepared as ever.’

‘Get the men in the cage, Aurane!’ commanded his uncle.

_The cage, of course. Just the thing I have to hate the most in the world._ An old Valyrian battle device, a cage made out of light metal that could support twenty men. Dragons could drop these inside enemy territory to attack from inside. _A suicide mission without backup, although this is supposed to be different. I wish there was not one kept inside Aegon’s Sept for the Jaehaerys to find._

The plan was a three-pronged attack. The dragon was supposed to land in the Godswood of the Red Keep along with the cage. While the size of the creature imposed heavy constraints on mobility, the plan was to simply create chaos within the Castle and make them run out. _The head of fear._ Lord Velaryon was to lead most of the men through the streets up to the Red Keep, and slaughter all the opposition. _The head of respect._ And finally Lord Varys was supposed to lead the last contingent through the tunnels, straight into the Red Keep itself, to secure it. _The head in the shadow._

The original plan had lacked the dragon, and he was the one supposed to lead the attack via the tunnels. However, his uncle had insisted that the King take him as a guard. _No stray arrows can be allowed to ruin this chance._ He himself had wanted to lead the men underground, but the King had overruled him. _People need to see someone with silver hair on the streets itself._ Lord Celtigar was the one leading the hidden attack. And he had to fly above the surface in the cage, a suicide mission. _If it turns against you, leave immediately and do not care for the men._ was what his uncle had told the King. Jaehaerys had laughed and said he planned as much. _As if I did not know that._ The King was not an unpleasant man to talk to, well-learned and with a sense of humor that his uncle lacked. _Best conversations I have had in years._ And he did permit him a large number of unexpected liberties. _I doubt he had too many people of his age around him before, and so is not too opposed to my attempts to bond with him._ Though _I doubt that will stop him from leaving me behind if it needs be._ The King was ruthless and efficient, something he and his uncle both agreed on after hearing the complete plans.
Caraxes was heading back now, and he steeled himself. *Time to fly*, as he ordered his men to climb into the cage.

It was easier than he had expected. Most of the Tyrell men had ran to the Godswood, as the Lannisters had apparently sealed off Maegor’s. The fat Lord Tyrell had nearly wet himself once Caraxes had landed, and there was no battle. Lord Tyrell and his crippled son were eager to prove that their former loyalty to King Aerys still held strong, and agreed to remain with their contingent as hostages. The two younger sons were ordered to kill the Lannister men, and to inform the other Reach men of the change in loyalties. *Wise of you, my Lord*, Jaehaerys had said, *else I would not have hesitated to serve Fire and Blood.*

Celtigar had also made it in, and Aurane was surprised to learn that the Gold Cloaks had already defected. *Tywin ruled through fear alone, and that is why they did not hesitate to defect to a greater force.* The gates of the City had been thrown wide open, and his uncle should be marching through. The gates of the keep itself had been thrown open. Varys and Celtigar had gone off to crack Maegor’s holdfast while they waited in the Godswood.

Maegor proved easy to crack courtesy Varys, and within it was over within an hour. He joined the King and his uncle as they proceeded to move to the throne room itself, and watch the humiliation of the Lannisters. The Tyrells and their bannermen were confined to the Tower of the Hand, under guard from Velaryon men to avoid foul-play. Lord Mace had been less than happy, but had acquiesced after been reminded of the number of sides he had fought for so far.

The Iron Throne was an impressive structure, far surpassing his expectation. For him though, it much more delightful to see the blond figures chained and prostrated.

‘Lord Tywin Lannister,’ spoke the King, ‘I had long desired to meet you. In fact, I had been planning for this meeting ever since I had heard of what had happened to my brother and sister.’

Lord Tywin looked very pale, but was unable to articulate a reply on account of the gag over his mouth.

‘That was unnecessary, let them speak,’ spoke the King as he tore that down.

Tywin however still did not venture to offer an opinion. *I can’t hear you roar. The Lion of the Rock silent?*

The deposed king however wasn’t, as he yelled something about his father and killing dragons.

‘I am surprised you will mention the story about stabbing a defenseless man in the back, Waters. Jaime Lannister is hardly the person to frighten me with. I was not afraid of that drunken fool either, though a boar got him before I could.’

‘Kill us if you will but do not slander my family!’’, roared Tywin Lannister.

‘As a Targaryen I do not disapprove of incest. In fact, that might have been the finest thing to have come out of House Lannister in years. Pity, Lord Tywin, you might have had your dream of making House Lannister great had you confined yourselves to Reynes and Tarbecks. Dancing with Dragons has its price tag, my lord, which you will soon be intimately associated with. I will teach
you why you should have bowed low when you could have.’

‘Take these scum away to the black cells, along with everyone else in the small Council save Lord Varys,’ commanded the King. ‘Where is Cersei Lannister by the way?’

‘In the Sept of Baelor, your Grace,’ spoke a minor Reach Knight, ‘along with Lady Sansa, Lady Margaery and Lady Olenna.’

‘Aurane,’ the King turned to him and commanded, ‘secure Baelor and bring Sansa Stark to me.’

Baelor was easy to secure as Olenna Tyrell had finished off the Lannister men already. Cersei was to go the Black cells for now. He privately thought that the King was too kind-throwing her into the streets for the crowd to rape should have been the right sentence for the bitch. Lyanna Stark may have led to the overthrow of the Targaryens, but this woman near singlehandedly ruined the whole realm. A year ago I would not have complained, but now it is a harder task for us to reunite.

Lyanna Stark was a treat for the eyes, and he wondered if her aunt was half as beautiful. Probably, seeing that the realm went to war for her. Why does he want to meet her anyways? Family reunion or is he actually interested? Jaehaerys had shut off like a clam whenever he had mentioned women. Not much experience there, eh? Although I doubt I can rib him much more in the future.

He derived a look of pleasure at the rage in Jaehaerys’s eyes when he introduced Sansa as ‘Lady Lannister’. Does not want to be reminded of the family connection, eh?

Sansa Stark had left reasonably soon, and he was asked to come in and join the King.

‘So this is how long you lasted?’ were his first words, even though he was sure nothing had happened. Her clothes were far too tidy, and she had left too soon.

This time the rage was not imagined. ‘This is not a game Aurane. We have serious business right now, and I hope you know your fate should you dare speak thus in public.’

Join the Lannisters tomorrow, undoubtedly. Aloud he did wonder, ‘Why did you want to meet her?’

‘To be sure she was not with child. Varys told me that the marriage was unconsummated, but I must be certain. Being a kinslayer is not how I intend to start my reign, but I will have no choice if she whelps a cat. She confirms Varys’s version, but have the Maester give her moon tea for the next three days.’

‘Pycelle?’

‘No, you imbecile, Laenor-the one we dragged from Driftmark.’

‘What were you up to? Reading already?’

‘State of the finances. It is horrifying; I did not believe that the situation is so bad. Makes me wish I had just flown off to the Free Cities instead.’

‘That bad?’

‘I suspect embezzlement as well as incompetence. But it is really dire, Joffrey’s wedding has drained the exchequer completely. I cannot hike taxes either, rather I must lower them tomorrow,
to appease the smallfolk and prevent a riot. We do not have access to the gold of the Rock yet, and I am not borrowing from the Tyrells. War is an expensive affair.’

‘I think we have enough in Driftmark.’

‘I need to speak with Lord Monterys about that, and also deal with Tyrell properly. Actually, I need to deal with the old master of coin, Baelish first. Just go and tell Maester Laenor to deal with the Stark girl, and dispatch orders to bring the High Septon here. Meet me before Baelish’s cell immediately afterwards.’

‘Whorehouses,’ grumbled the King after the encounter with Baelish, ‘I need a drink before I can meet Tyrell.’

‘It is not so bad, you have a path to the Vale now,’ consoled Aurane.

‘You are not getting a discount for saying that. And, no it does not matter. Visenya Targaryen showed the way to the Vale, three hundred years ago. The only good thing is that I know where to get the money soon. Jon Arryn is lucky to be dead else I would have had him chopped into a thousand pieces alive for bringing this scum to King’s Landing.’

‘You got what you wanted, a written confession to bring the Tully’s down, witnessed by the High Septon himself.’

‘Small comforts,’ grumbled Jaehaerys, as he collapsed in the seat behind the table and grabbed paper to write. ‘Give these orders to the commanders, and tell them I know much money there should be present at each of these locations. They will have to justify lack of every gold dragon, although the squad will get one-tenth of every successful raid. That is if the commanders ensure that the men do their job instead of seeking carnal pleasures in the brothels.’

He privately thought that now was the wrong time to mention that Jaehaerys would not be so stiff if he got any. Aloud he did wonder ‘As if they could hide from you, O’master warg.’

‘Keep your mouth shut fool!’ but a slow smile did creep up his face. ‘I confess it has its advantages. Anyways, send off the orders, and get the High Septon to join me again, in Lord Mace’s room. Afterwards the remnants of the Small Council must meet to decide what happens tomorrow.’

He privately wondered if there had been a smaller council ever, with the King and three advisors-Lord Velaryon, Lord Varys and he himself. Still, things were going well so far. Tyrell had agreed to honor the agreement the Lannisters had forced of writing off all the Crown’s debts to Highgarden (in return for a throne for his daughter, but that was unlikely now). Tyrell had also agreed to swear fealty to House Targaryen, and be pardoned for siding with the Lannisters earlier. Tyrells got off easy, they quickly realized which way the wind was blowing and thus only have had to endure the indignity of being locked in their rooms for one night. The King had agreed to release them after they swore a holy oath in the Sept of Baelor. We don’t have delusions about Mace Tyrell’s piety, but too many of his bannermen, including Tarly and Rowan are pious enough to force him to keep his words.

Besides, his wife and mother already support us completely, Jaehaerys had noted with satisfaction.
Alerie Hightower Tyrell had burst into tears after seeing Lord Commander Gerold Hightower’s proclamation, promising to swear fealty to the King ‘to whom my uncle had sworn himself to’. Olenna Tyrell only wanted her grandchildren, especially the cripple and the girl alive. Opposing dragons was the wrong way to ensure that, and she at least had given up any immediate hopes for the Throne. She was about to kill Joffrey tonight, I have to respect her for that—Jaehaerys had noted with slight surprise. Overall, securing the Reach had proven an easy task, and even Jaehaerys was surprised by the loyalty exhibited by some of the Reach Lords, though he did not show it. That impassive face is his biggest asset towards ruling.

Tarly was going to join the Council tomorrow as Master of Laws, and the details about the coronation had already been decided between the royal party, the Reach and the High Septon. No one wants to get burned, observed Jaehaerys with no small amount of satisfaction.

There were still issues to be settled though, as they sorted through information about Baelish’s hordes in the City itself. Lord Velaryon in fact had some objections with some plans of the King.

‘We cannot simply wipe off two ancient Houses overnight, the people won’t like it. Let us spare some of the children and install them as puppet rulers,’ was how he had begun.

‘Lord Corlys Velaryon said the same to Queen Rhaenyra, and my brother and sister were the ones to suffer for the decision to not finish the Baratheons and Lannisters then. No mercy this time, Lord Tywin had showed us how it is done with The Rains of Castamere.’

‘It might backfire and—‘

‘It won’t. Cersei Lannister is not Helaena Targaryen, and I do not intend to wait and let them gather sympathy. I will strike now while the iron is hot and finish them off.’

‘So you want to begin your reign with The Rains?’

‘If that is how you want to see it.’

‘It may haunt you in future.’

‘I am not concerned about three hundred years down the road. My concern is tomorrow at the moment.’

‘So the death warrant stands?’

‘Precisely. Anyone from the line of Tywin Lannister and Robert Baratheon to be put to death as soon as possible, true-born or bastard. Anyone else who bears the name of Baratheon or Lannister, even if they be of Lannisters of Lannisport has three weeks to take the black or join the silent sisters, else they will meet the same fate. Same goes for anyone having the blood of the main line within two generations, be they true-born or bastard. There isn’t an Arryn left for me to finish, with Baelish’s bastard in the Vale. The Tully case will require greater care, to avoid issues with the Starks.’

‘Lord Varys,’ continued the King, ‘How many of Robert’s bastards are left in the City?’

‘None your Grace. Cersei killed the babe and the boy with the smith within days of taking over.’

‘Less trouble for me to deal with. Finding all of the others will take some time though.’

‘So tomorrow we execute the old power structure completely?’ asked Aurane.
‘Other than Lord Varys, yes. The people should know who they are dealing with.’

‘Getting that many starving dogs will be hard, a bit longer might help.’

‘Starve them overnight. The rest is my concern.’

_Warg_

Lord Velaryon was the next to ask a question, ‘I noticed you mentioned Aegon VI in the list of Kings to be announced during the coronation. If I may ask, why?’

‘Why not?’ said Jaehaerys, ‘he was my older brother and he was King for the brief moment between Aerys’s death and his own, though he was uncrowned. Recognizing that fact does not hurt, and it throws a bone to Dorne.’

‘Resolving the issues with Dorne is the highest priority. I have a feeling that we may have to do without them, but we need to negotiate peace over the border. They also have to hand that Lannister girl over, and we need to speak about trade too. In fact, we have to send a mission to Dorne, as soon as the Vale and Riverlands are stable, and Selmy dealt with,’ finished the King.

‘There was talk of an alliance with the Dornish to attack Selmy, your Grace,’ spoke Lord Varys, ‘and this is something I am woefully unaware of the details. Lord Tywin handled it himself.’

‘I will interrogate Tywin tonight, but do not let word get out. The Reacher Lords are itching for war. Let us catch some sleep now.’

‘One more thing,’ spoke Lord Velaryon ‘Mace might expect you to wed his daughter.’

‘Considering what happened to her last husband and her betrothed? Not going to happen, I do not want an Alicent Hightower. However I do have a suitable match planned for her. Council dismissed. If anyone wants to see Baelish burn, accompany me. Else, good night to you all.’

_The Next Day._

Aurane understood why the King had chosen dogs over the dragon or a headman. _I do not have to be a Targaryen to kill them, let them see a Stark dog can gut the Lannister cat too._

‘And now, the sentence served to House Lannister for murdering my brother and sister, along with Princess Elia,’ announced the King.

Sansa was looking away, but he could not help but look at the bloody scene before him. It was unlike anything he had ever seen, and yet the smallfolk were all intently staring.

_And who are you, the proud Lord said_ – Cersei’s eyes widening on realizing their fate

_That I must bow so low_ – Tywin’s legs giving way

_So he spoke, and so he spoke, the Lord of Castamere_ – guttural screams coming from the arena

_No one left to hear_ – the silence.
It was sheer genius to play the *Rains of Castamere* in the background. *Tywin’s legacy appropriated, while he meets a humiliating end and his House comes to an end. No one will dare defy this King again.*

The coronation ceremony went well enough, and the Council meeting was going well until the news of Dornish invasion of the Stormlands came. The King immediately declared that the territorial integrity of the realm had to be maintained, and ordered Lord Tarly to prepare Reachmen for battle.

Aurane was not sure of this plan of the King, of flying to the Vale to secure it. On one hand, it aided making the City safer from the North, but it deprived them of their greatest weapon. Lord Tarly was confident that he could take the Dornish on without requiring further aid, but the King had disagreed. He, Aurane Waters, was to lead, one fifth of the Crownsland forces to help Lord Tarly and the King was to join them as soon the Vale was secure.

Privately Aurane knew the King was angry. His original plan of engaging the Lannister forces in the Riverlands and getting his hands on Gregor Clegane had to be postponed. Still, marshaling the Vale would help the cause. Vale forces could be used to clean the Riverlands, and later invade and subdue the Westerlands themselves, after the South calmed down. So Aurane could only watch as Jaehaerys took off North, with letters between Lysa Arryn and Baelish in his pocket.

Jaime Lannister turning up in the City was a surprise. The madman started rambling about Rhaegar finally returning from the Trident and of his need to serve the True King. His uncle had taken pleasure in informing the one handed man of what happened to his mistress, which had finally shut him up. A repeat scene with the dogs was hard and Lannister was simply hanged. The woman with him tried to create trouble until Sansa made her shut up. Sansa had to tell the woman that she was the only Stark in the City, that releasing Lannister had led to the Red Wedding, and she was happy to stay under her cousin’s protection for now. The woman was from the Stormlands, and she was distracted with news of the Dornish trouble there. Apparently she fancied herself a knight and wanted to fight. Lord Tarly was against it, but his uncle chose to humour her. *We Valyrians have plenty of women warriors in our history,* and Tarly had to accept being overruled by Monterys Velaryon, Lord Hand and heir to the Throne.

*Summerhall, 300 AL*

Aurane barely remembered the battle itself. *It was just chaos.* The King had contacted him (via long-distance warging, from the Vale) to warn him that the Dornish army had Essosi sellswords that Tywin had sent them, and Oberyn Martell had abandoned Storm’s End to meet the new threat head on. *It is likely the battle will be at Summerhall,* said the man with a thousand eyes and two.

*As always, he was right.* Lord Tarly had seen sense in his innocuous advice (he could hardly afford to out the King) to use the mountains around Summerhall as a strategically good location, once scouts had confirmed the Dornish were moving off. The battle itself had been rather short, the Dornish ranks had cracked within moments of Caraxes flying in to rain fire, and they had won. Obara Sand, Anders Yronwood and many other major leaders had died, and Oberyn Martell got
dragged to the hastily set up Royal pavilion. Aurane was interested to meet the infamous Red Viper, and joined Lord Tarly and the King in the tent, where they were to ‘negotiate with the Prince.’

‘Prince Oberyn,’ began the King ‘I am extremely disappointed in your decision to side with the people who had murdered my brother and sister.’

If looks could kill, Jaehaerys would have dropped dead in a moment from the stare of the Red Viper. ‘You!’ he screamed ‘you are the reason they are dead!’

‘I find it intriguing that you can blame the unborn for murder, while conveniently overlooking your decision to side with Princess Elia’s murderers. Justify that however you can, especially in light of me executing Tywin Lannister and other Lords who had participated in the Sack. I have sent men after Clegane while you allied with Clegane’s overlords. House Targaryen looks after its own, unlike whatever conception of family you Dornish have.’

‘I would have left Dorne in peace, as a free kingdom if you had not ventured North, or retreated after the regime change. Instead you proclaimed the Lannister bastard as your Queen, and you expect me to show mercy?’

Ah yes, Queen Myrcella. Two words that had thrown him into such a rage that I feared if anything will remain of Dorne.

‘And what will you do, boy? You dragons never defeated us in two hundred years,’ replied the Viper.

‘I am not the Young Dragon, I will not invade to conquer. I will block all your trade with the Free Cities using the Velaryon navy and stop trade with my Kingdom. The Free Cities will be reminded how hot the flames of Valyria burn, should they try to aid you. I will see to it that the Reachmen raid into your territory and plunder and render your borders to a waste. I will fly with my dragon and burn your fields, keeps and towns. But I will not enter to conquer. Only when your starving Lords and smallfolk shall bend, bow and break House Martell, and it is no more, will I enter as the King.’

My initial assessment wasn’t too far off. And judging from the palor of the Viper’s face, the mark had hit close home.

‘Poisoning me won’t work either, Im quite aware of how nightshade works, for instance.’

The second blow, telling the viper the name of the poison that he had just thought of. Oberyn had turned even paler.

‘Look at me’ commanded King Jaehaerys III, and the Red Viper looked, almost unwillingly.

Aurane wasn’t sure what the Viper saw in those eyes, but he was pretty sure that Jaehaerys had not held back in mauling the man’s mind.

‘What must I do?’, whispered Oberyn Martell.

‘Hand Myrcella over, alive so that I may see her dead, for starters. Dorne will have to bend the knee, and join the Seven Kingdoms in the same way as the last time. Keep your inheritance laws and call yourself Prince, but Dorne will integrate or be taught what Fire and Blood means. Trade will be regulated the same way as of the other Kingdoms. You’ll get a seat in the Council in return, and rise as an honored family member of the late Aegon VI. Otherwise, some time in the Black cells of King’s Landing, while I shatter Dorne.’
And as Aurane watched in shock, the Red Viper knelt.

*This is his Field of Fire, the First Commander to have defeated Dorne. The Reach is now truly secure.*

---

**Winterfell, late 300 AL.**

The war essentially had come to an end, with all the rebel forces defeated. Selmy had hoped for clemency, and handed Storm’s End over. Like Jaime Lannister, he too had tried to say something like ‘serve the True King’, but had been hanged for ‘changing Kings faster than bedsheets.’ Edric ‘Storm’ Baratheon had met the same fate, but the other Storm-lords were mostly pardoned. Jaehaerys had gleefully noted that the two wars had not left many to pardon in any case.

Jaehaerys had secured the Vale with ease, with Lysa Arryn jumping out of the Moon Door after seeing the letters. Robert Stone had been sent off with the Royce’s, with the understanding that he will not live long enough. The new lord Arryn, Harold had placed his extraordinary good fortune in the doors of the King, and had offered all help. The Valemen had captured the Twins, though that had cost Edmure Tully his life, and had driven Daven Lannister back to the Westerlands by the time the Reach army had returned North. After Lannisport was almost completely burned to the ground, Damion Lannister had yielded the Rock and preferred the black to death. The same was the fate of most of the Houses in the Westerlands. *New lordships for allies.*

Lord Reed and Umber had cleared Moat Caitlin of the Ironborn and the King had burned Pyke down himself. The Northmen had united around the King, and together the North had been cleaned. He had spent two miserable months in the North, along with the King. They had to fight off a wildling invasion amongst all things.

*But Winter is coming, and the North needs a leader.* Robb Stark was still at the top, but only in name. Sansa had come North with them, and while she commanded far greater respect, it was her cousin who Northmen followed. *Plays along well, by kneeling the Godwood and wearing Stark grey cloaks over the black robes.* Winter meant the need of a proper leadership. Though the King had assured that grain from the Reach will be sent North, there were too many empty lordships to be filled and too much to do.

*He cannot stay and rule here. The realm matters more, no matter what the Northmen demand.* Aurane suspected that Sansa and her new husband, Domeric will be getting the helm, and Robb be pushed to glorified exile in the Capital. A decision had to be made, and so there was the Council of Winterfell, a prelude to the Great Council of 301, to finalize all the new changes to the Seven Kingdoms.

There were many who were pushing for Jaehaerys to take up the Northern throne and pass it on to a son. *Especially we found that thrice damned crown in Lyanna Stark’s grave.* For the Northmen, the presence of Torrhen Stark’s crown automatically signified that Rhaegar had made Lyanna the Queen of the North, making Jaehaerys King over Robb or Sansa. Jaehaerys had thrown the idea into hot water, and firmly declared that the North must rejoin the realm. As a concession, he had guaranteed that the Old Gods will be protected by the State, the same way as the Faith.

Nevertheless, many wanted Winterfell to pass to ‘Lya’s grandchild’. *As if there are any on the way, he has shown no inclination for marriage,* but he was unsure what Jaehaerys had planned.

The Council began by first voiding Robb Stark’s thankfully childless marriage to Jeyne
Westerling. The news of the Westerling involvement in the Red Wedding had been the final straw. Jeyne and her sister were to join a Sept in Oldtown, under the watch of the Hightowers, while their mother got her head chopped off. Only time I actually saw him use Dark Sister.

Jaehaerys thankfully pushed off the pressure from Northern Lords to stay and manage the North, saying that Lord Velaryon had enough on his plate as Hand. Rather surprisingly he pushed for Robb to remain. ‘Lords of the North,’ he spoke ‘Robb Stark is young and had made the follies of youth, aided by incompetent advisors.’ Although you conquered the whole of the Seven Kingdoms at the same age, and faster.

‘I propose that he remains Lord, under careful guidance of me, the King. Lady Stark has not been of the greatest help for the North, and perhaps it will be better for her to serve the Faith to come to terms with the fate of her family.’ In which you had no small part. You organized the deaths of her siblings, and sent her uncle to the Wall. But House Tully deserved it; they were no different than Lannisters, selling daughters for their own gain.

Catelyn Stark tightly nodded. Apparently she had been told what she was going to get and was wise enough to accept. Oldtown as well. This had been decided a long time ago, and even Sansa had agreed after finding out what releasing Jaime Lannister had done. Catelyn had very little left, with all her family dead, and her younger daughter missing.

‘Robb Stark will require a suitable wife as well. This will have to be Southron at this moment, to better unite the realm. But I promise you that she will make every attempt to fit in, and the concerns you have raised about Southron matches will be addressed in the Great Council.’

The Council had ultimately agreed, though it was Jaehaerys who decided who was going to fill the lordships left without heirs, like Cerwyn, Hornwood etc. His time in the North has served him in good stead, though he does tend to favor women or bastards. Still, these Lords will be more loyal to the Iron Throne than Winterfell, which cannot hurt.

Robb Stark will have to fly South with us, to attend the Great Council. I wonder what he has planned for that. Jaehaerys had told him to get married as soon as he could if there was someone he had his eyes on. ‘Bastards have more freedom that I do, for instance’, was the explanation. Jaehaerys and Uncle Monterys had been consulting over lots of things, and he did hear snippets. Still, this council was going to be a big surprise, from what he could judge.

---

King’s Landing, New Years Day, 301 AL

This has to be the smallest Great Council ever. No one was representing the Stormlands, Westerlands or Riverlands. The High Septon, and the Council had been invited as guests, but in reality only seven could vote.

The King, Robb Stark of the North, Harold Arryn of the Vale, Mace Tyrell of Reach, Doran Martell of Dorne, Monterys Velaryon for Crownlands and Rodrick Harlaw for the Iron Islands. Harlaw had been the only lord left after the King was done dealing with the Iron Islanders, and was made the next Lord as Balon Greyjoy’s goodbrother. And none to truly dare defy the king, except maybe Doran.

The first agenda was administrative reorganization, where the King dropped the first bombshell. The Capital was going to be permanently moved to Dragonstone, removing the dipolar system of House Targaryen. King’s Landing was going to be passed to a trustworthy Lord, in the fashion of
White Harbor and Oldtown. The Lord in question happened to be Aurane Aquinius, the recently legitimized friend of the King. *Curse him for remembering that name I mentioned while drunk.*

The Stormlands themselves were to be merged with the Crownlands, and Storm’s End was no longer the Paramount seat. It was to be abandoned for now, but passed to Crown control. The Riverlands were going to the Blackwoods. This was a decision he was aware of, as this had been debated for quite some time. Darry was the natural choice, all had agreed, but Darry was extinct and the Frey-Darry hybrids were out of question. Blackwood was the next, as the family kept the Old Gods, and could thus not be a strong lord paramount, and be a challenge to the Throne. *Another gift to the Northmen, presented as a gift to the family of Lord Brynden Rivers.*

The Rock was going to his Uncle, who yielded Driftmark for building the new Capital over the two Islands. Since managing the Rock was a full time profession, he was resigning as Hand and Lord Domerick Bolton was taking over.

The next bombshell was the succession law. Old Maester Aemon, who they had dragged off from the Wall, addressed the Council, explaining the need for a gender-neutral policy. Doran Martell had offered emphatic support as well. The King proposed that the succession pass through the firstborn child, be it male or female, but the King should retain the right to appoint a successor, if the candidate was a dragonrider and the choice was witnessed by at least five Lords Paramount. Mace Tyrell did look fidgety, but he too acquiesced.

The last was marriages. The Stark-Tully-Baratheon combine had convinced the King to ban marriages between Paramount Houses of different regions without express approval of the Crown. *The Northmen will be happy, no more southron matches for the Starks except the one to come.* Mace Tyrell clenched his lips as he nodded, as the King allowed the first exception by permitting Margaery Tyrell to marry his cousin Robb Stark. *A great honor to marry the closest blood relative of the King, but if they only knew how much love was there between the cousins.*

The King announced his own betrothal as well, to Sylvia Velaryon, eldest child of Lord Monterys. Since Sylvia was ten years younger than the King, the marriage was delayed for ten years. *Smart move, if you were illegitimate, Uncle Monterys was next in line and with this marriage you can cement your rule with ease.*

There were other details, like some family of Lord Varys from Essos getting Lordships in the Westerlands, Garlan Tyrell gaining the seat of the now extinct House Connington, etc. The new Kingsguard was also announced, with Brienne of Tarth being its first female member. Loras Tyrell rejoined the Guard, and Albar Royce was inducted in, along with a Celtigar, a Blackwood, Daemon Sand from Dorne and a crangogman from the Neck.

With that, the Great Council of 301 ended, and the King pulled the new Lord of King’s Landing aside.

‘Marry soon, else I will free Brienne and marry her to you.’

*Sansa is already wed, but I am not giving you the chance of doing that to me. Looks like I have to find a bride really soon. Maybe one of the Hightowers or someone from the Vale, as long as she doesn’t beat me with a sword.*

*A new era now truly begins.*
Chapter End Notes

Apologies for this massive chapter.

We are almost at the end. The next POV/epilogue will be the one I believe is the most eagerly awaited.

If you want me to do a character/s POV, comment below and I will try.
Epilogue: The Weirwood on the Volcano

Chapter Summary

All things must end, no matter how long it takes, thought the King, who history will claim had ruled for ninety three years, though he only spent seventy seven of them on the throne.

Jaehaerys Targaryen reflects on his own life, regrets and determination to not become a second King Viserys I. The first Imperator of Westros steels himself for the inevitable.

Chapter Notes

I own nothing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*He was in the Red Keep and there was no one anywhere. Screams suddenly rang out and he ran in that direction. Yet like always he was too late, as he entered the room, his eyes darting to the child lying on the red cloak, with its skull caved in.*

With a sharp gasp, Jaehaerys III Targaryen rose from the bed and glanced at the bedside table. *It is 377AL, Aemon’s fourteenth nameday, five hours past midnight. This is Dragonstone, not the Red Keep.*

He rose up, only to walk to the window and glance outside. It was still dark, and there were still several hours to go before his earliest commitment of the day. *Nevertheless, sleep shall not return to me again tonight.* He reached out with his mind to find Caraxes and asked his oldest friend to wait for him outside the Keep. A sense of loss filled him as he thought of what he must do. *This was inevitable from the start,* he consoled himself as he put on his black robes, and picked up the package on the bedside table before leaving the room.

Caraxes was where he had asked him to be, and he slowly lifted his frail frame onto the back of the dragon, who gently took off towards the summit. *Thank you for going easy on my old bones, friend.*

The godswood was exactly the same as it always was, silent and forbidding in the hours of dark, on the slopes of the Dragonmont. Even the dragons tried to avoid this place, the only place where weirwood trees grew in profusion south of the Wall, save Summerhall. *The timber is rare enough to serve as a useful source of revenue. Thank you for revealing this secret, Lord Brynden.*

He tried to keep his thoughts off the old dragons, as those were reminders of his own mortality. *It is strange that it took me seventeen years to meet the man who had practically raised me.* It had been 300AL, when he had defeated the wilding invasion at the Wall. It had been the first chance he had in years to go North and meet Lord Brynden, which he did as soon as the wildings were driven off. Aurane had fretted about it, but he had left him on the Wall while riding Caraxes north. *It was*
a journey for me alone. Yet he had almost regretted it, when he saw how little was left of the greatest man he had ever known. I carried out his last request, and his ashes now rest between Daeron II and Aerys I, close to the Maester he liked so much. He had brought Maester Aemon back from the Wall, but the old man had only lived for two more years, passing away in late 302AL.

I am not as yet as old as either of them but neither had to spend seven decades on that accursed throne. Secrets and lies, potions and sorcery, and now I am as ever, the last of my kind. The thoughts of his own mortality had filled his brain for many years, ever since he had flown to Winterfell in 325AL, to escort the new Lord of the North home. Robb Stark dead from a chill at forty two. Rhaegar had been only twelve then, and though Sylvia was prepared to step over if it needed be, he had to live in order to avert disaster. The greatest flaw in all my designs, its overwhelming reliance on the one man at the top. And yet it was too soon to change, too early for the Targaryen rule to be stable otherwise. Thus began my investigations into the secrets of the mortal frame.

Five decades and eight attempts on his life later, he was reasonably certain that he had been successful. The mere idea of a raging Caraxes had silenced many a treacherous thought. It had given him enough time to both centralize for stability, and begin decentralization when the need arrived. The Inner Court that ruled is long dead, Varys, Lord Monterys, Domeric, Sansa, Lady Commander Arya, Aurane and Sylvia. His wife had been the youngest and the last, passing on sixteen years earlier, just six months after his younger cousin. Lady Arya was the finest Kingsguard I ever had, her time with the Faceless men serving her in good stead. He supposed that one reason that they had been so successful was because of the shared demons of Domeric, Arya and him. Each of us had that part, which was almost overjoyed to be given a chance to kill and maim. But that was then and this is now, the realm has not seen a single war in four decades. The Volantenes had been the last, even getting to the great bridge between Dragonstone and Driftmark, but their fleet now lay at the bottom of the seas. The Faith had failed as well. My successors shall have peace on their hands, though they will have to be cautious enough to not lose it.

He watched in silence as the first rays of the sun struck the eastern slopes of the Dragonmont, and he turned around to see if his visitors were coming. He was not disappointed, Melys was already rising up the western slopes, steadily towards the weirwood grove.

The red dragon landed softly for a creature of her size, and the two riders dismounted of the back and walked towards him.

‘Imperator,’ spoke Jaehaera Targaryen as she bowed stiffly. Her son did the same, though his bow was much more spontaneous.

‘I am glad that you are on time Jaehaera, ’ he told his granddaughter, before turning to face Aemon. ‘Happy fourteenth name day.’

‘Thank you very much, Your Grace.’

‘I do have a special surprise for you. I have noticed that you have been rather melancholic ever since your hatchling died, and it is not fair that you have to ask others for a ride. It is time to remedy that. Come, Caraxes.’

It was obvious that neither Jaehaera nor Aemon had expected this, judging from their shocked expressions.

‘I cannot accept this, Your Grace. Caraxes has been yours—’
'And I am far too old while he has far too many years left. It is better for him to have a rider who has the time and energy to fly with him.'

Caraxes walked in front of Aemon, and lowered his great head to see his rider. Aemon didn’t flinch, and he could sense that Caraxes approved.

'I also have a book for you, read it when you have time,’ he said handing over the package. ‘Go fly around for some time now, and enjoy this beautiful morning.’

‘But how will you get down?’

‘Melys has shown herself to be capable to taking two passengers, I will be fine. Go now, and Happy nameday again.’

Jaehaera looked disapproving but she did not interfere. Aemon let out a whoop as he mounted Caraxes and the dragon took off towards the sea. *I havnt sensed him to be so happy in years, this was a good fit. Goodbye, old friend.*

‘Are you sure that was wise?’ asked Jaehaera.

‘You were the one who let your son fly off, so I would presume you know the answer.’

‘It’s just that you two have been bonded for so long—‘

‘He understands what is necessary.’

‘Should we prepare for a Great Council?’

‘You are a damned fool to imagine I will hand the reigns over to a fourteen year old.’

‘I was twenty when you chose me over my father.’

‘In case you forgot, Rhaegar was never the heir to begin with. The throne would have passed to Daeron via Sylvia had you not been born.’

‘His age is unlikely to make any difference since you will live for another score of years anyways.’

‘You are wrong about that, and we need to address it today at the Council.’

‘I am not going to allow you to make me a symbolic first female monarch while the realm knows you prefer Aemon!’ roared Jaehaera.

‘Aemon’s time will come, but it is not now.’

‘You seem rather certain that I will choose him, seeing that you yourself ignored your firstborn.’

‘I think I educated you well enough for you to recognize why Aemon must follow you.’

‘History will look much more favorably upon him than either of us,’ she spoke bitterly. *That we can agree upon.* ‘Each of us have a role to play, without thinking of what Maesters may write a century later. It was up to me to break the power of the lords and make the realm malleable, it will be up to you to build it to greatness, and it will be up to Aemon to take it to the Golden Age.’

‘I do not understand why you like Aemon and hate my father.’
Because Aemon has potential. Rhaegar never did. A good Hand he is, able to keep the clockwork running but would have been a terrible King. ‘I think you know their differences as well as I do.’ All four of my children would have failed in the task, though Elaena and Daeron might have been able to cling onto the realm. Rhaegar’s only success was in fathering Jaehaera, and I suspect she gets all her sense from Elaena.

‘Have you put any thought into who you want as a Hand?’ he continued.

‘Corlys’, she replied defiantly.

A good choice. The forty year old Lord Aquinius had made a good Master of Laws. ‘Does Laenor expect the job?’

‘He is perfectly well aware of your thoughts in this matter.’

‘You have to make your own decisions once you are Queen, Jaehaera.’

‘We both know how much better he is suited to the library than councils.’

‘Do not let him influence Aemon.’

‘How wonderful it must feel like at the top, when you can command your heir to keep her son away from her husband.’

‘We both know why it is necessary.’

Jaehaera suddenly looked young and vulnerable, nothing like the fiery woman of thirty seven. ‘Will the realm accept a bastard as their King after I am no more?’ she whispered.

No matter my best efforts over these years, the opinion about bastards has not changed much, though they are now permitted to bear their mother’s name and share her property. ‘That is precisely why I gave Caraxes to him, so that my will on this matter is clear. Summerhall will back him too, as Daeron is aware of what needs be done and Rhaena is betrothed to him.’

‘Does Uncle Daeron—’

‘We are the only two people alive who know who the father is.’ That had been a scandal, as that was only time he had seen Jaehaera cry. She had entered his study, crying about how she was no longer fit to be heir, a young girl of twenty two. That had been a scandal he had to manage with difficulty, but Aemon had been worth all of it. The marriage to Laenor had happened three years later, as Laenor’s lack of interest in marital activities had ensured that his sister’s bastard was not a factor. Still, they did have children-who were her heirs by all laws, irrespective of who the father was.’

‘Thank you,’ she whispered.

‘You need to first take me down to the Keep. The Council meeting today shall be important.’

Flying down the slopes on the back of another dragon was exhausting. Though Jaehaera had commanded Melys to go slow, the red dragon was not as finely attuned to his needs as Caraxes had been. The view however was fantastic, as the sunlight illuminated the vast at the base of the Dragonmont. The largest Keep in Westros, after Harrenhall, which I had sung out of the stone.
Took one tenth of the thirty years the Red Keep had taken.

The bridge between Driftmark and Dragonstone and Summerhall were built in the same fashion, he thought as he looked at the vast stone structures that will form his legacy. Destroying Storm’s End was the best decision I had ever made, the final end to the Durrendon legacy. Caraxes had smashed the castle into the sea, once Summerhall had been rebuilt, out of stone so that it may never burn down. Three seats of power in the Crownlands, House Aquinius of King’s Landing, House Targaryen of Summerhall and the seat of the King in Dragonstone.

Melys landed in great stone courtyard and took off after her riders had dismounted, flying back up to the Dragonmont. The dragons prefer that much more. I was right to not build a second enclosure to confine them in.

The two of them walked up to the Council Room for the morning’s meeting. Everyone will be attending today, even the non-voting members. But they were extremely surprised to be summoned on this day. He could understand their surprise; name-days were private affairs now, without expensive royal tourneys as such. They must think it is entirely something else, only the Grand Maester has an inkling. He still regretted not sending Laenor to the Citadel when he had wanted to, but it was not yet the right time for a member of the royal family to simply void his claim to the throne, should another emergency arise. As Maester Aemon learned to his cost.

Daeron and Alysanne arrived last night from Summerhall. Their presence will be required above all. Jaehaera too was going to attend, as a permanent invitee on account of both being the heir and the commander of the Crown’s standing army, stationed at Driftmark. Six thousand well trained knights, and a stong navy are adequate to defend the Capital should the need ever arise, along with the dragons.

He looked around the table, all seats were filled. Prince Rhaegar Targaryen-Hand; Lord Corlys Aquinius- Master of Laws, Lord Lucerys Velaryon- Master of coin; Ser Wyndon Manderly-Master of Ships, Lord Commander Hightower of the Kingsguard; Grand Maester Alayne, formely of House Dayne and me the King. Varys had been the last Master of whisperers to have sat in council, but intelligence was far too important for King to relegate it to a subordinate. Still, he had never dishonored Varys, and the man had sat in Council till he had died. Though I gladly did most of the work over the years. The High Septon was also present, as were the Senators for the respective realms. It was a good idea, if I may say so, to ask each Lord Paramount to keep a man in the Capital, to represent the needs of their respective regions. Senators could not vote, but they helped immensely in communication between the regional seats and the Crown. Besides, any Lord Paramount who serves in the Council is his own Senator and thus can vote.

‘Before we begin discussing the affairs of the realm, the Grand Maester has something to tell you,’ he spoke.

‘Thank you, Your Grace,’ began Alayne. ‘I was carrying out the weekly physical examination His Grace last week, and I noticed that several of his organs are beginning to show hints of failure. I have never examined a patient of his age, and so I do not have a concrete idea about how bad is it. However, I do believe there is great cause of concern, and His Grace shared my views.’

Funny that he only started noticing a week ago. I had stopped taking the potions for two months, though I suppose that was how long it took to rid my body of their lingering effects. Aloud, he spoke ‘Never before had a man of ninety three sat on the Iron Throne, and I suppose that makes these events unprecedented. More worrisome than the inevitable failure of my body is the fact that I suspect that my mental faculties are starting to give way, for about two weeks now’. Three months rather, when the dreams resumed after seventy years and a month before I finally decided
it was time to hearken to the calls.

‘Under these circumstances, I fear that I cannot adequately perform the duties of my office, and therefore I intend to settle the succession now and for all.’ Laenor looks frightened, he thinks I have gone mad enough to tamper with the succession now and deny his sister.

‘Therefore, I ask the Council today to act according to the decisions taken by the Great Council of 359 and the ratification by the Great Council by 362; and crown my designated successor. Jaehaera, if you may step forward.’

‘Are there any objections?’ she asked, defiantly facing the Council. None came, and her father was smiling from his seat as the Hand. He will be glad to know that she wants to fire him. I have rarely seen a man so unenamored with power; he would have made a disaster of a King if the earlier laws still stood. His firstborn had not been a bad hand, but he lacked the vision truly required for greatness, and he was far too weak to be a good King. One reason his mother had been my designated successor till his daughter was twenty. And not a moment too soon, Sylvia died two years after that.

‘Since there are none, Jaehaera Targaryen is the next Imperator of the Seven Kingdoms’. I had to officially change the title to the gender-neutral one, just for this very reason, though most people still use King. Perhaps they will change now, as I doubt she will approve of being called Queen. ‘Ring the bells, so that the people of the Capital assemble in the grounds before the Castle, and we can do the formal coronation.’ The Faith had lost that right, after they had rebelled.

The coronation went as expected, with the army cheering their commander of ten years, as she ascended to the top office of the realm. The smallfolk were singing the praises of both monarchs, as he stepped forward and placed Aegon the Conqueror’s crown atop her head, following which she gently lifted Aegon Dragonbane’s crown from his head, symbolizing the complete transfer of power. The Senators came to swear fealty to the new monarch on the behalf of their provinces, and the Royal family and the Council followed. There will not be a Dance of the Dragons this time, not after her father, uncle and brother-husband kneels to her. Took me a long time to prepare this protocol for the transfer of power. He himself swore fealty to the new Queen, ‘for however many years I have left.’

The announcement came next, as she announced that Aemon was her designated successor. He was happy to see the cheers that rang out, Prince Aemon was always well loved, despite his bastardy and his unknown father. Aemon himself nearly ran to his spot, to kneel before his mother and swear to her, following which everyone else knelt and swore to him. It certainly helped that I told them what I had done with Caraxes. Neither Jaehaera nor Aemon will be left helpless, the Gift runs the strongest in both, and the family at least was united over this issue. No Alicent Hightowers in the way.

May the realm have peace now.

He walked into his private chambers, next to the library, that had been prepared and waiting for years. He sat down on the bed and breathed deep. Freedom at last, though it is far too late for me to go see the world now.
I wanted to do that then, when I was younger. I was grateful for the knowledge Lord Brynden had given me but I never wanted the Crown with all its responsibilities. It had not been out of any form of humility, it had simply been his arrogance that he cannot be expected to waste his life in service to stupid, ignorant fools. Bloodraven had tried hard to convince him, but had failed to sway him till he was fifteen.

Why do you want war when you claim to serve the realm? He had asked then, the past is in the past, my parents were fools who dragged the entire realm through war on account of their stupidity. Now there is peace at last which need not be disturbed. He, a boy of ten had not understood how fragile the peace was then, no matter what Brynden had said. It was the bet that changed all of that. Robert Baratheon had been going North and he was shocked to see the fat, whoring, drunkard who was the demon of the Trident. Was my father so incompetent?

Brynden made a bet with me, that the system will not live past Robert. It was simple enough for me to test, enter the mind of the boar while he went hunting. The results however, had proven him wrong, as the realm crumbled before his eyes. He had been horrified at what was happening, and was shocked to actually feel a measure of guilt. That lasted till Brynden reminded me that Baratheon would have died soon, either from drink or from his wife. Even the war however, could not make him care enough. He knew he could have changed the game easily for the North, if he called Caraxes from the Sea and flown out, but he had no desire to help Robb Stark or even waste his life fighting for the throne.

It had been a peasant family that had changed his mind, ironically enough. He was in the mind of a wolf who ventured to ruined farm, ravaged by Clegane and his men. The dead babe, just like Aegon. He could not last in the mind of the creature for a moment longer, and had pulled out. Howland had asked him why he had ran outside and thrown up, but he shook him off. Aegon would have never let such things happen, he refused to believe that his brother-in-blood could be anything other than a great ruler, despite his low opinion of both his father and grandfather.

But Aegon is not here, slain by a war fought over my existence. Rhaenys, Viserys, the Queen in Dragonstone, all of them over the stupidity of two people.

It is your responsibility, Brynden had whispered.

But what can one man do, dragon or not? Even Jacerys Velaryon had failed, felled by crossbows in the Gullet. And I can barely fight with a sword.

Wait, came the reply. Let this war run to its natural conclusion, let the smallfolk suffer so much that they will welcome the only man with a chance to reunify the realm.

That defeats the purpose, he had argued.

It does not, the war was inevitable in many ways. Let them suffer now, so that you heal the realm and save them from a millennium of suffering.

He was still not convinced, but that had not stopped him from saving Robb Stark from the Freys, by warging animals to defend him, and affecting the thoughts of people to ensure he was defended or at least not attacked. We are even now, Lord Eddard, he thought waiting for his sixteenth name day so that he could fly off, though his destination remained undecided. The coin shall decide whether it will be Dragonstone or the Free Cities, but I will wait to at least tell Robb that who I truly am and what he owes me.

The coin showed the dragon, not the head of the king, though he was still not sure whether his mind had influenced the fall of the coin. Nevertheless, the result was the same. Fire and blood it
shall be. Till then, irrespective of my real name, I was Jon Snow, a bastard unsure of his place in the world. At that moment I became Jaehaerys Targaryen, the man to reconquer Westros, and save it from itself.

He had never looked back over all these years, and only rarely did he permit any regrets for all the dreams he had to leave behind. To travel and to understand the workings of Nature, instead of being burdened by bureaucracy. If only I had a worthy child, I would have had quit decades ago. Aegon was in some sense the truly lucky one. You either die a hero or live long enough to be the villain, he understood now. Aegon VI was the Martyr King, while he will forever be Jaehaerys III, the Grieving, clothed in black, unable to let go of the past centuries. Wise, they say to my face, Prudent, the Conqueror reborn and such, and yet I know how history will remember me as the King of Grief, bloodier than Maegor and harsher than Maekar.

Without Sylvia, I do not know what I would have become, as he took another trip down the memory lane, when his twenty-two year self had walked into the library to see a twelve year old Sylvia blush and try to hide a book. A Valyrian Treatise on Mathematics. They had spent the night in the library together, debating the book till dawn. We bonded over learning, and we even penned together books with our discoveries, that we worked on while the world slept. Their marriage had been a happy one as a result, and he had trained Sylvia to succeed him if it needed be. She was no warg, making it her biggest weakness, but she would have been better than any of our children. But she had died before him, and he felt her absence keenly now, when he was all alone.

He walked over to the wine cabinet, and took the small bottle of Volantene white. He walked back to the bed, sat down and gulped the entire contents down his throat. Rhaegar Targaryen better hope that there is no afterlife, else I intend to strangle him the moment I run into him in the pits of hell. A firm rationalist who had never believed in gods, Jaehaerys Targaryen briefly wondered if the dead could die again. I suppose I can test that theory on my father as soon as I am there.

The curtains at last, he thought as he turned off the lamp and lay on the bed. Yet almost immediately the room was lit again with soft white light. Hallucinations from the nightshade, could I not be spared this one humiliation?, he thought as his surroundings disappeared. Then he noticed two small figures in the distance. Here to haunt me till the end?, he thought as he saw the two dead people who had been calling him to join them in his dreams over the last three months. We are definitely not going to end up in the same place.

Yet the bloodstains disappeared and the skull healed itself, and Jaehaerys felt his own astonishment. He started to run towards them, only barely noticing that he was shrinking in size and the black robes had morphed to light blue. The figures were running towards him too, and they were growing up, the boy jumping out of the arms of the girl.

They met in the middle, a tangle of arms and legs, blue, red and green, three little children between six and eight. Their laughter tore the silence, as Jaehaerys looked ahead to see other figures, old and young standing in wait, three-headed dragons on their dresses.

‘Welcome home, brother’ chirped the eight year old girl in green, her dark face glowing in excitement.

The Dragon has Three heads.
It had been a fantastic ride, and I am extremely happy to have succeeded in making many people happy with my first fic. I am especially grateful to L_Cloudy for giving me the key to this fantastic idea (I'd love your take on the last few chapters Cloudy, if you are reading :P ).

I will publish some one shots later when I can: Candidates so far are: Maester Aemon, Jaehaera, Margaery, Septa Catelyn, Oberyn. Please add your suggestion/s (if you have any) in the comments.

Now for the ending: Jaehaerys recognizes that another Dance is very likely, so he goes via a nomination-abdication route to ensure stability for the next few centuries. In principle, any dragonrider who the King wants can be successor, creating a pseudo meritocratic system (derived from the Nerva-Antoinne dynasty/Five Good Emperors of Rome), although Jaehaerys is less Nerva/Trajan than the First Emperor of the Qin. Four houses thus have real clout: Velaryons of the Rock, Aquinius of KL, Targaryens of Summerhall and Dragonstone. The system is stable as long as the successors have brains, although Caraxes helps. For the three centuries of its life, it will be the symbol of transition of power (Jaehaera is the only monarch to not be its rider for a while).

Jaehaerys clings on for long, to see Caraxes have a good rider (a young Aemon would have failed to manage a creature of this size). Potions and herbs etc, to keep running (Serenei of Lys/Shiera Seastar esque). The recurring dreams are his subconscious telling him to give up.

Senator-term derived from Rome, not the US system (for the historically uninitiated.) Jaehaerys himself: Combination of too many historical characters to list, sorry!

Thank you for reading! Please comment/leave kudos if you so desire.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!