**Changed Destinies.**

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/12997059.

Rating: Mature
Archive Warning: Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death, Rape/Non-Consensual
Category: F/F, F/M
Fandom: Game of Thrones (TV), A Song of Ice and Fire - George R. R. Martin
Character: Rhaella Targaryen, Lyanna Stark, Ned Stark, Robert Baratheon, Jon Snow, Daeron III Targaryen, Jon Snow, Barristan Selmy, Daenerys Targaryen, Viserys III Targaryen, Brynden Tully, Jon Arryn, Oberyn Martell, Sand Snakes (ASoIaF), Rhaenys Targaryen, Catelyn Tully Stark, Randyll Tarly, Mace Tyrell, light smut - Character
Additional Tags: AU, R Plus L Equals J, Jon Snow is a Targaryen, Fix-It, Mentions of Sex, future smut, #Targaryenswin, Alternate end to the rebellion, Violence, Tywin is a cunt, Rhaella is a badass, Rhaella is also a cruel bitch when she needs to, Rhaenys lives!, Ned is the new Cregan Stark, Hour of the Wolf all over again, Robert is not King, No Jonsa, Multiple POVs, BAMF!Rhaella, Incest, Brother/Sister Incest, targcest, Stannis the Mannis!
Stats: Published: 2017-12-12 Updated: 2018-04-16 Chapters: 4/? Words: 25124

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**Changed Destinies.**

by Daemon_Belaerys

**Summary**

How different could things be if some people made different choices? A King is not hastily declared in the Rebellion, while in King's Landing, Rhaella shows that the dragonsblood is far from dormant as she takes steps to ensure her family's survival.

A fix it fic, that will have at least another update, and possibly turn into a series.

**Notes**

A big shoutout to my good friend KadenIV who helped me write some of this stuff, you're the best mate.
Another thanks to my other friends Avery_Fontaine and ScholaroftheArchive who both got 'previews' when this was still work in progress and gave me their thoughts on it.

But yes, I dedicate this work to my friend Avery_Fontaine whose short recent 'Ned fic' inspired this work, fire_n_blood who has a nice Jon/Rhaenys fic him/herself and also ssjmrxi and CadenceIX for their excellent works (and hopes for updates) and lastly Alex13 and frethucreg for their nice long and frankly awesome reviews.

PS: to frethucreg, I'd like to note that I was the first of those few you challenged to actually get Arianne pregnant in my fic. Just thought I'd mention it.
Chapter 1

Todays Disclaimer was murdered in the Sack of King's Landing, so please, say a few prayers in his memory.

Riverrun, after Battle of the Bells:

Eddard 'Ned' Stark was tired, tired and angry. For the past five hours he had been stuck in a war council with Robert, his old foster father Jon Arryn and his new goodfather Hoster Tully, as well as the most powerful Lords they all had at their disposal. Greatjon Umber, Wyman Manderly, Rickard Karstark and Roose Bolton for him. Yohn Royce, Horton Redfort, Benedar Belmore and though no Lord, Ser Symon Templeton had near as much influence as most Lords, and more than many. Hoster had his own brother Brynden the Blackfish, Lords Mallister, Bracken, Blackwood and Piper. Robert's own advisers were noticeably absent, most having either died during the battle of Ashford or in one of the small battles that nearly bled Robert dry, forcing him to take refuge in the Stoney Sept.

For hours they had all been arguing back and forth, where should they take their army now that they were all ‘properly united’ as Hoster said, not knowing how close Ned came to give in to the urge to decapitate the greedy Lord. Brandon had been betrothed to Cat he didn’t deny that, but he himself was already wed to Ashara, choosing to marry the woman he loved when they finally reached White Harbour after their perilous flight from the Vale.

He had done as Hoster demanded and wed Cat, and he felt pity for his dead brother’s promised bride. He had said the words in a sept, held at a figurative swordpoint, him already being wed to Ashara mattered not Hoster said, a marriage in front of the wierwoods was not a ‘proper’ marriage, well, Hoster would one day eat those words, that Ned swore. If they won he would seek an annulment, he had wed Ashara in the sept in White Harbour after all, and she was already with child once he left for the war in the south.

At least after five hours they had managed to agree on where they should march if nothing else, but now they faced new complications, complications made by Robert himself, his friend and almost brother.

“I will be King,” Robert said proudly as he banged his hand on the table. “I’ll overthrow those sisterfucking bastards and take the Iron Throne.”

Ned closed his eyes in pain as he saw Jon Arryn give the matter a good thought, his foster father was actually contemplating it. On the other hand, both the Greatjon and Rickard Karstark were both
bellowing insults at Robert.

“Ned,” Robert looked to him for support.

“No Robert,” he said at last. “My ancestor bent the knee to Aegon, not Orys Baratheon,” he held up a hand to forestall Robert, shooting an angry glare at Jon Arryn at the same time for not protesting this plan. “Aerys will die,” Ned said, his voice cold as ice, “and I intend to have words with Rhaegar, he’ll either die on the field, or if he survives he can damn well choose between the Black or the block, but that still leaves Aegon who is Rhaegar’s rightful heir, or Viserys even. I’ll have no part in any choice that deliberately seeks to murder babes and children. A Great Council can be held once we’ve defeated Rhaegar and taken King’s Landing.”

It was fortunate that the Greatjon was positioned to intercept Robert, as his friend had flown towards Ned with his arms outstretched. “See?” Ned asked as he pointed at Robert who was almost frothing at the mouth. “This is who you would call King? I love Robert as a brother, but surely I cannot be the only one here to see that he is unfit for the throne.”

At least Hoster and his Lords supported him here, though it was the least Hoster could do after telling Ned to either marry his daughter or be put in chains until he could be turned over to Rhaegar. “Cease your tantrum and act like a man, Baratheon,” Lord Jason Mallister snapped. “Your castle is under siege, and all your Lords are either dead, captive or have abandoned you, all you’ve left is three thousand men, You are not in any position to claim kingship.”

“He’s right Robert,” Jon Arryn said at last, “You could present a claim based on your grandmother Rhaelle, but I must agree with my fellow Lords, a Great Council would be better in the long run, better than to murder children to get your will.”

At first Ned thought Robert would still refuse, until finally, his body drooped and he nodded, “Fine,” he gave his assent, before chuckling, “I’d probably make a terrible King either way,” and once more Ned was amazed at how swiftly Robert could change the tone in a room, whereas moments before they had all been tense and angry, now they were grinning or laughing, even Roose Bolton was smiling slightly.

“Then we are agreed?” Ned questioned. It wasn’t that he had anything more important to do, but he was eager to get out of the room and have some privacy.

“Almost,” Jon said with a wry smile. “A vote perhaps, to decide who is leading all of this.”
Ned felt a chill creep up his spine. Had they decided to push for Robert as King there would be no point to it all, but now...Ned really didn’t like the look on his foster father’s face.

“I nominate Ned,” Robert boomed, “He’s the one who has his wits about him,” Ned doubted that was the reason Robert voted for Ned, no, judging by Robert’s grin, his friend knew exactly how Ned felt about it all, but Ned was powerless to stop it as Jon Arryn and Hoster Tully were next, and before he knew it he was the ‘official’ leader of the Rebellion, all because of his blasted honour and wishes to make sure the children were spared.

“Very well,” Ned said with a heavy heart. “Now please, let us rest for the night, we have an early march.” And with that everyone started to phase out of the room, leaving Ned to his thoughts. Despite the loss the Royalists suffered at the Stony Sept, it had not been a complete defeat. Most of Robert’s army had been smashed or scattered by that point, and while the army Ned, Hoster and Jon Arryn brought to the field scattered Connington’s forces, most of them had retreated in good order back to the Crownlands where they were already gathering under Prince Rhaegar, with rumours having reached them that the Dornish were finally marching as well.

So it was imperative that they march now. They didn’t have the numbers, and no one knew what Tywin Lannister was doing, but if they waited much longer, chances were that Mace Tyrell would either capture Storm’s End, freeing up his army of fifty thousand men, or perhaps Tarly or Rowan would finally get through to his wine soaked brain and get him to realize that he could easily hold the siege with just twenty or even ten thousand men and send the rest to help Rhaegar clean up the rebels.

Ned shuddered, the thought of Rhaegar facing them with an army twice or thrice the size of their own was not a pleasant one at all, and so they would march now, and if they were lucky, they could capture Rhaegar alive. He had no idea how wrong he would be...

A long march later they faced Rhaegar and the Royal army on the trident, but nothing happened as Ned had hoped. Compared to the Battle of the Bells, the Battle of the Trident was pure butchery. Fighting in tightly packed formations in the middle of the river, where one wrong step could see you below the water with no chance of getting up as you were trapped among the throngs of fighting men. Ned himself had been fortunate to escape it all with naught but a few bruises, his armour saving his life more than once. Others hadn’t been so fortunate. Robert was badly wounded, and Rhaegar was dead, his chest was crushed by one mighty swing of Robert’s warhammer, his mangled body was still resting inside Ned’s tent while Ned was gathering up all their cavalry to try and reach King’s Landing before Tywin could, their scouts having informed them that Tywin was marching in haste with a host of at least ten thousand men.
Rhaella didn’t know what she was supposed to do anymore. Should she collapse and weep at the
death of her beloved son? Curse and swear vengeance upon his killer, or perhaps come to her son’s
killer on hands and knees, begging for mercy.

She would do none of these things. She was a Dragon, Queen of the Seven Kingdoms. There was
still time for one last play. She may have to wear one mask to the public, that of a demure and quiet
woman, frightened of her brother husband, but she was more, so much more than that. Her screams
every night her husband visited her chambers were real, no doubts about it. Aerys was still her
superior in physical strength, and neither his claws, nor frantic rutting was at all pleasing.

Rhaegar might be dead, but not all hope was lost. If Ser Gerold had done as she asked, then her new
gooddaughter was already sailing to Dragonstone, if she wasn’t there already. She had come ‘this’
close to having Rhaegar thrown over her knee when she first received word from him in Dorne.
What on earth was her son thinking, having a pregnant Lady of six and ten locked away in a tower
with naught but a pair of serving maids to attend to her? She had dispatched Elia’s former lady in
waiting, Ashara Dayne, who had shown up in the city with a slightly swelling belly a few days after
she received Gerold’s letter. The lass knew where this ‘Tower of Joy’ was, and would no doubt
prefer to birth her bastard in the safety of her home rather than in King’s Landing. And lastly, if
Gerold had trouble persuading Sers Arthur and Oswell, the Dayne girl had promised to bring fifty
men to the tower, to be led by Gerold, so the other two Kingsguard and the Stark lass had little
choice.

And now, Rhaella was making the ‘finishing’ touches on her plan. Since Rhaegar’s death she had
kept her husband distracted easily enough, a mention here or a mention there of Starks or Baratheons
and he’d be off on hateful rants for hours, all the while, leal men, such as her cousin, the Master of
Ships Lucerys Velaryon emptied the Royal Treasury onto the Royal Fleet in preparation for
Rhaella’s departure.

She had sent her friend (and once love) Ser Bonnifer Hasty with ten good men to deliver a letter to
Randyll Tarly. Hopefully he would receive the letter in time to return to the city with a fresh army to
defend it. She almost snorted. She may not be learned in war, but surely it couldn’t take fifty
thousand men to besiege a castle defended by a few hundred only? Mace Tyrell’s laziness or was it
cowardice perhaps, had cost her beloved son his life, and if she managed to turn this around she was
going to make sure that Mace Tyrell paid for his insolence.

A knock on the door broke her out of her thoughts and her first gooddaughter stepped through the
door. Elia Martell was a beautiful woman, if somewhat lessened since the birth of her second child.
“Your Grace,” Elia said demurely as she gave Rhaella a curtsy.
“Elia,” Rhaella acknowledged as she gestured for her to come in. “To what do I owe your late night visit?”

“I-I was hoping you might assist me. I’ve pleaded, begged the King on my very knees to let you take us with you, or at least the children.”

‘Ah’ Rhaella thought. The children, of course Elia would come begging to Rhaella to save her children when she herself had failed. Elia didn’t like Rhaella, fearing that she would find out the truth, and Rhaella didn’t like Elia, mostly for how she acted when alone with Rhaegar and then had a completely different life when he wasn’t around.

“I’ll take Rhaenys,” Rhaella admitted at last.

“And Aegon?” Rhaella felt a pang of sympathy for the frail Dornish Princess. She, just like Rhaella was a mother, and loved her children.

“Aegon is not my grandchild,” Rhaella admitted at last, almost laughing at how Elia’s eyes widened or how ridiculous she looked with her mouth gaping in shock. “My dear,” Rhaella laid a hand on Elia’s cheek. “Did you think I did not know? Rhaegar was always lost in his books,” she admitted sadly, “But I know well the looks you and Ser Arthur shared, nor am I a stranger to the noises I’ve heard from your chambers on some of the evenings he was supposed to stand as your guard.”

“But-but I didn’t, you...” Elia was at a loss for words.

“For all that she does not look like it with her dark hair and skin, Rhaenys is a product of my son’s loins, she is my granddaughter, yet were I to inform my husband of the truth of Aegon, she would find herself on a pyre same as you and your bastard...so I kept my mouth shut, Rhaegar could be told once Aerys was gone.”

Elia collapsed to her knees, sobbing. “You’re wrong” she sobbed. “I swear it.”

“But of course you would say so,” Rhaella said sadly. “After all, who do you think told Rhaegar to woo the Stark girl? Oh yes,” Rhaella said as Elia turned her shocked eyes to hers. “I knew that my son would need to beget heirs, and you cannot give him any more, nor would I have my Viserys anywhere close to the monstrosity that is the Iron Throne,” she calmly brushed Elia’s tears away. “I’ll bring my grand daughter with me as I leave tonight, you have until then to say your goodbyes,” and then she left Elia behind as she went to find her husband.
Aerys was seated on the Throne when she found him, Ser Jaime stood below at the foot of the Iron Throne, looking uncomfortable, other than that the great throne room was empty and silent as a crypt. “My sweet wife, come back for more have we?” her brother cackled with a hungry leer on his face, and Rhaella grimaced, the marks her brother had left on her after taking her a few ours earlier were still throbbing with pain. ‘You can do this,’ she told herself, ‘you must do this, for Rhaenys.’

“I come to beg a favour My King,” she told her brother as she climbed the sharp steps of the Throne, her head bent and eyes staring at the blackened swords that made up the Throne.

“A favour?” Aerys asked her, for once sounding genuinely confused.

“Yes,” Rhaella said. “Permit me to take Rhaenys with me, surely with Elia and Aegon here you need no more leverage, she’s but a girl, and dornish beside.”

“Yes,” her brother admitted slowly. “There is little of the Dragon in her, but, NO,” he screamed suddenly. “I WILL NOT HAVE IT, SHE STAYS.”

Rhaella bit back a grimace and tried not to vomit as she sank to her knees, carefully so not to cut herself on the sharp steps. “Please brother,” she pleaded with him as she did her best to look at him with a face of admiration, all the while her hands worked loosen his belt. It was going to work she knew, her brother’s cock was already hardening, and his face was now lustful rather than enraged. “Permit me to bring my grand daughter with me, to keep me company while I am without your presence,” and then she sank her mouth onto his cock, her lips closing around it, and as Aerys moaned she knew that had won. She did her best not to gag at his taste, and while not an expert by any means she knew enough to bring him to release quickly. Closing her eyes and keeping her face calm she swallowed the few pathetic dribbles of his seed and removed him from her mouth, giving his flaccid cock a kiss before putting it back in his trousers.

“Ser Jaime,” Aerys wheezed. “Make sure that my grand daughter goes with the Queen once she leaves.”

“Thank you brother,” Rhaella smiled, before slowly descending back to the floor, it was probably the last time she would ever see Aerys, for which she was glad.

“I-I’m sorry My Queen,” Jaime said softly as he escorted her back to the Royal apartments, his face was beet red.
“Don’t,” Rhaella told him as she gave his cheek a kind stroke, in many ways the handsome Knight was still little more than a boy, trapped in a city with a cruel and mad King. “I sacrificed a bit of my pride to ensure the safety of my granddaughter.”

“If-if the rebels lose, I swear to you, you’ll return to this city a widow.”

“Speak not of such things,” Rhaella snapped. “tis treason to do so, and the walls in this place has ever had ears, more so after the Spider came along.”

Jaime nodded. “I apologize.”

The rest of their walk was spent in silence. Rhaenys was already asleep by the time they arrived and Ser Jaime gingerly took her in his arms, where the sleeping Princess unconsciously curled up. Elia was another matter, her form was heaving with silent sobs, while at the same time she was filled with relief that at least one of her children would escape the city. “You’ll look after her won’t you?” Elia asked.

“I will,” Rhaella promised. They both knew that, even should the rebels lose, Elia would no longer be permitted to be around her daughter. The hug was a surprise, and unwanted, but Rhaella accepted it anyhow, stroking Elia’s back and kissing her upon the head. “Be strong Elia of Dorne,” Rhaella told her as they separated, Elia back to where her bastard was resting in his crib, and Rhaella towards the docks, and from there it was on to Dragonstone.

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Ned:

Ned was racing towards the Red Keep, more than two hundred men at his heels, while the rest of the army was breaking off into groups into the city. When they arrived smoke was already pouring from numerous fires inside the city, and the clanging of swords and screams of fear and pain was loud enough to be heard a mile off. Tywin Lannister was already inside the city with his army, and his army was doing what Westerlanders were famous for. He had ordered the Blackfish and Yohn Royce, his best commanders to bring the Westerlanders to heel and arrest any of them according to their crimes, while he himself took two hundred Umber men and rode straight for the Red Keep to get to Aerys.
He should have known it was too late. The Greatjon himself went to secure Maegor’s Holdfast and make certain that the Princess Elia and her children were kept out of harms way, and to bring Aerys if he was there, while Ned himself rode into the Throne Room. There he was greeted with the sight of Aerys, the man who had murdered his father and brother, dead at the foot of the Throne, blood was pooling around him from a slit throat as well as a well placed sword thrust in the back, and the culprit was clear. Seated atop the Iron Throne was Ser Jaime Lannister, his white cloak splattered with red, and his bloody sword resting atop his knees. ‘Oathbreaker, Kingslayer,’ he thought as he looked at the young man.

“Ahh Stark, I’ve kept the Throne warm for you,” Jaime Said, his smug tone and arrogant features made Ned want to throttle the man.

“Throw Ser Jaime in the Black Cells,” Ned told Mors Umber, who grinned nastily as three of his burly men climbed the steps of the Throne and dragged Ser Jaime with them.

“My Lord,” a man wearing Lannister colours tried to protest as he walked towards Ned.

“And you are?” Ned asked him.

“Ser Elys Westerling,” the man said, proudly puffing out his chest.

“And I am Roland Crakehall,” another man cut in, the boar of Crakehall proudly displayed on his surcoat.

“Very well,” Ned said and gave a nod to Mors who snapped his fingers, and both noblemen were seized in big strong hands of Umber men. “You'll be enjoying the Black Cells until you can be tried for the atrocities you’ve been accomplice to in this city,” Ned told them while they tried in vain to protest. Ned then turned towards their men who were looking unsure of what to do when surrounded by well over a hundred northmen of unnatural size, clad in thick furs and most carrying huge axes or hammers. “Drop your weapons and consent to a trial at a later date, or I’ll serve out justice here and now,” he told them while hefting Ice, the big greatsword of valyrian steel was already dripping blood after he had used it to cut down a few soldiers who tried to stop him earlier. The men quickly dropped their weapons and were escorted outside by a few soldiers to be kept under guard.

It was at this point that the Greatjon entered, and for a moment Ned was frightened by the older man. A giant of a man, well over seven feet tall with a thick brown beard, Greatjon Umber looked intimidating on a good day but now… His face was set in a burning rage, as were the eyes of the
men following him, and strangely every harsh northern face was streaked with tears, and between
them bound in thick chains were two men. One of them was a plump piggish man with a manticore
sigil, while the other needed no introduction. Taller even than the Greatjon, the Mountain that Rides
was dressed in a long yellow surcoat with three black dogs on it, a surcoat currently stained by
blood, his arms and chest was encased in thick steel plate, while his legs were bare, fortunately the
surcoat concealed the man’s crotch.

Also carried by the Umber men was the bodies of Elia Martell and a babe. Ned almost hurled at
seeing it up close. The babe was near unrecognisable, the head little more than a gathering of blood
brains and a few tufts of silvery blonde hair, while Elia Martell was cleaved in half at the waist, her
face set in in fear and agony, and a man’s seed was slowly dribbling out from her womanly parts.
While Ned wanted nothing more than to remove both their heads and be done with it, he knew that
he would need their testimony. That Tywin Lannister was behind the atrocities in the city were
beyond doubt, but Ned couldn’t condemn a man such as Tywin Lannister without people testifying
to getting the orders. That didn’t mean Ned couldn’t make Clegane and Lorch’s stay unpleasant
though.

“Jon, Make sure they can’t go anywhere, and then put them in the Black Cells,” he told the Greatjon.

The Greatjon was almost shocked that Ned would give such an order before turning on the two
captives. Accepting a hammer from one of his men, he took it to Lorch’s knee first, the man
screaming much like the pig he looked like, and then it was the Mountain’s turn. So big and strong
was the Mountain, that even for the Greatjon it took three swings before the Mountain’s howl
greeted them, a result of the shattered knee he received, and then both men were carried off, moaning
or screaming in pain and anger.

“Jon...” Ned heaved for breath, his body was trembling, in pain and disgust. “New orders, I want
every Lord of the Westerlands in this city brought to the Black Cells in chains, I do not care if it is
Tywin Lannister himself, they go to the cells all of them, kill any who resist”

“Aye Ned,” the big man replied with his gruff voice before pausing. “And what of the Knights,
common footsoldiers?”

Ned thought long and hard for a moment. “Separate them, the Knights can be locked away here in
the keep, the levies rounded up and kept outside the walls under strict guard...” he paused for a
moment before looking directly at the Greatjon, his long face as cold as the Wall itself. “Try to make
sure the men are sorted based on their crimes if they’re caught in the act, and check them all
thoroughly, I’ll be damned if I let a single one of these... these scum return to the Westerlands with
so much as a bent copper in their pockets.”

Ned watched as the Greatjon left to carry out his orders and then started to walk towards the Black
The descent through the dungeon levels of the Red Keep, was not the same solemn, peaceful feeling that Ned had grown accustomed to, in his games as a child with his siblings in the subterranean levels of Winterfell’s keep. No, the lower four levels of the keep Maegor had commissioned filled him with a sense of dread and foreboding as he reached the end of the third flight of stairs. There were four levels beneath the Red Keep that Maegor had commanded be built. Dungeons were what made the first three of these, and the Black Cells were the harshest of them. But even those dark, lightless holes in the walls were said to pale in comparison to the torture chambers the lay beneath them. They did say Maegor was cruel.

‘The black cells,’ he thought as he looked up the corridor lit only by the few torches evenly spaced along the doors of each cell. He could hear the moaning and sobbing of men as he walked the hall, each cell most likely holding men Aerys had deemed dangerous beyond measure, and now Tywin’s mutt and his pack of mad dogs have joined them. But it wasn’t Tywin’s pets he had come to see, - they too, he would have to see and hear their peace before Ice gave them peace, - but not now. Now he was looking to find Lord Tywin’s own son.

‘The boy who killed his King.’ Ned contemplated the fact. The lad had sworn an oath. Protect your king, obey his orders and keep his secrets were among the words of that oath and Jaime Lannister had fulfilled it by driving the blade he had sworn on, through his king’s back.

He walked past the cells of men he knew of, the Monsters of Maegor’s Holdfast they were being called now, Gregor Clegane – The Mountain that rides, and when Ned had seen him knelt before him in chains he could barely picture a horse alive large enough to carry the man – and Amory Lorch, the child killer. The sobs were loudest here, on this side of the cells, and Ned remembered the sight of little Aegon, bloody and unrecognizable, his mother the Princess, in half, a man’s seed flowing from between her legs. Then Ned remembered the broken knees the two men sported.

‘If those knees be half the pain those men dealt to a babe and his mother, then half the justice is already served.’ He thought with disgust and revulsion.

Beside Amory’s own cell was that of Lord Tywin’s son. He looked at the gruff and bulky guardsmen that served as the key keeper of the cells on this floor, an older man, older than Brandon had been and almost as big as Robert and nodded. The man stood and bowed before Ned.

“Which one’s you want opened m’lord,” The man said through a thick beard as he scratched his shaved scalp.

“The Lannister’s, I would break words, with the son of Tywin Lannister.” Ned said clear enough for the man behind the door to hear him.
“As you will m’lord. ‘eard he’s the Kingslayer now. ‘eard you found him on the throne with the King’s own blood still warm on his white cloak.” The man said in his Fleabottom accent as he unlocked and opened the thick wooden door, to the dark room before handing Ned a torch.

Ned nodded in the man’s general direction and entered Ser Jaime’s cell, but waited until the door closed behind him before he placed the torch in it’s holster. He looked at the tall, blonde knight that stood leaned against the wall that faced the door, a ghost of a smirk on Jaime’s face as his green eyes shone sharply in the torchlight.

“Oh, Eddard Stark – well I do suppose it is Lord Stark. Or is it Your Grace now?” Ser Jaime said smugly before pushing himself off the wall to stand and bow before Ned. “What an honour it is to be hosting you, even in this – my most humble of abodes. Do tell me, Your Grace, to what do I owe the pleasure of this occasion?” When he looked up at Ned, Eddard had to resist the urge to strike the insolent knight.

How could someone be so cheerful and smug after killing the King they have sworn to protect? Ned thought as he stared down the lordling and crossed his arms. “You kill a king and find space for jape and jest? Truly Ser Jaime, you Lannisters do not cease to amaze. You broke an oath, Kingslayer, and you killed a King, your King.” Ned said solemnly and shook his head in distaste, “Surely you’ve come to realise, even in that Southron wonderland you live in, that the words you speak to me now, are like to be the last you utter in this life?”

“That thing wasn’t my King. Would you call a man who raped his wife constantly, was cruel and abusive towards his own children, King? You would call the man who killed your kin, had your father burned alive, King? Who forced your brother to strangle himself in vain attempts to reach a sword that wouldn’t have saved his father from the flames?”

Ned was silent, and even with the hard mask of a Lord’s face he couldn’t hide the widening of his eyes at the revelation. He had heard and been told of his father and brother’s execution, but had just assumed that the Mad King had had them both burned. Jaime though, continued, taking Ned’s silence as ignorance.

“Oh, you didn’t know? Well, do let me enlighten you, honourable Lord Stark. I was there in the throne room when Mad Aerys called for kindling and a stake. “Wood and flame,” he screamed with glee and mirth, his voice was harsh, he’d spent near an hour shouting down the objections of his council.” Jaime had begun pacing the with of his cell up and down, as if this was one of the most haunting things he had seen in his entire life.

“He laughed a wicked laugh then, when he had your father kneel before him in his armour. My ‘brother’s’ and I stood our vigil and watched, as was our duty. “Today the dragon, shows the wolf true hospitality.” The whole room stood silent as Lord Rickard was tied to the post, and doused in the green liquid. The old man was coughing and spiting as some got in his mouth. And still we
watched. “If you can reach your sword, Pup, you can save your father.” He laughed as the sword was placed before your brother and a wire noose tied about his neck.”

Jaime stopped his pacing then and looked Ned straight in the eye, a glassy look in his as the torch flickered a moment and drew him out of the terror of the memory.

“I stood there and watched, doing my duty. Obeying my king and fulfilling my oath,” Jaime said finally as his back hit the wall and he slumped to the ground of the cell. “I stood there and watched as a man, who’s only crime was be the father to your hot headed brother, was boiled and burned alive in his own armour and his son strangled himself and near slit his throat against the wire that would never have been long enough to allow him reach the blade.

Ned was shaking, so angry was he. He had known that his brother and father wouldn’t have died well, but as cruel as this. “And yet you stood there and just watched!” he said coldly.

“Five hundred men just stood there and watched. Five hundred men and the room was silent as a crypt,” Jaime shrugged slightly, “except the screams of course.”

“You served the Mad King well, when serving was safe,” Eddard shot back disapprovingly, “And when it was not you showed your true colours by ramming the blade you swore to him through his back.”

“I made choice, save my King and burn or save the city.”

Ned was silent, “Explain,” he snapped.

The smug Lannister laughed, “You didn’t know?” he asked, voice dripping with condescension. “Old Scab has spent the last days placing wildfire beneath the entire city, the Sept of Baelor, the Red Keep, the Dragon Pit, all the major streets. When he called for Rossart I knew what he intended, he was going to burn the city and rise from the ashes as a dragon… or so he thought, right until the moment I pierced his heart and slit his throat.”

Ned twitched, Aerys’ madness apparently ran deeper than he thought possible. “You know of where these caches are?” he asked.

“Oh yes,” Jaime said nonchalantly, “I had the great honour of escorting Rossart and his fire obsessed devotees to each location.”
“Very well,” Ned said. “Once the city is under control you’ll lead men to each of these locations so that the wildfire can be removed safely.”

Rhaella.

A week Rhaella had spent on Dragonstone, so far, and there had been no news from the capitol. All in all things were better than she could have expected. Viserys was happy so long as he could play with his toys, and Rhaenys, her darling grand daughter preferred to spend as much time with Rhaella as she could.

The girl asked for her ‘mama’, ‘papa’ and ‘Egg’ every now and then, but was easily distracted, and Rhaella counted the child fortunate that she was so young. If they survived this terrible war she would have little memory of her brother or parents, which could be considered a blessing by some, there would be regret, and thoughts of what could have been, but the emotional devastation of her parents and brother dying would be lessened, and with time, these past months would be naught but a few half forgotten memories and occasional nightmare, or so she hoped, she herself would never forget how she had collapsed once word reached her that her beloved son was dead at Robert’s hands.

“Your Grace,” it was Ser Willem Darry, one of the few who was permitte dto enter her chambers without knocking, that spoke to her. “Lord Commander Hightower is here with the Princess Lyanna.”

The revelation of Rhaegar’s marriage to Lyanna had been a surprise to the people Rhaella had brought with her to Dragonstone, but Royal protocol was deeply ingrained in all of them, so they had adjusted remarkably well. “Come Rhaenys,” Rhaella told her grand daughter. “Time to meet Lya.”

“Lya’s to be my new mama?” Rhaenys asked her while gazing up at her with wide eyes.

“Yes sweetling,” Rhaella kissed Rhaenys’ head. The poor girl didn’t truly understand why she was to have a new ‘mama’ but she had been happy and eager to learn that she would have a new brother or sister soon, and had been incessantly asking questions ever since. Rhaella just hoped that Lyanna would take the girl as one of her own. Not that Rhaenys wouldn’t have Rhaella too, but Lyanna was much younger, and would probably be a better mother figure for the girl. Taking Rhaenys’ hand, Rhaella followed Ser Willem to the great hall in Dragonstone to wait on Lyanna Stark.
Already waiting was a small honour guard of twenty men, clad in the livery of House Targaryen, as well as the few leal Lords and Councillors available to her. Her distant cousin Lucerys Velaryon, an ageing man of sixty seven, but still hale, and a fine mind for naval warfare, as was befitting for a man who had been Master of Ships and Grand Admiral of the Royal Fleet for well over thirty years. Stood beside him was his nephew Corlys who was the current Lord of Driftmark, and Corlys’ two sons, Monford Velaryon, and Aurane the bastard.

Also present was Guncer Sunglass, Lord of Sweetport Sound and Ardrian Celtigar, the ‘Red Crab’, Lord of Crab Isle.

Any official welcome was cancelled the minute that the three remaining Kingsguard came into the hall, Sers Oswell and Arthur supporting a pale Lyanna Stark whose belly was swollen with child. The young woman’s face was drawn and gaunt, her hair was matted with sweat, and she had trouble standing under her own power. “Fetch the Maester,” Rhaella barked as she gestured for the Kingsguard to take Lyanna to the chambers that had been set aside for her.

“Is Lya going to be ok?” Rhaenys asked with a weak voice.

“Of course sweetling,” Rhaella assured her. “She is just tired from her travels I think.” Rhaella took Ser Willem to the side for a moment. “Take the Princess to the kitchens while I speak with the Maester,” she whispered to the old Knight who bowed.

“Would you like to come with me Princess,” he asked her as he went down to one knee before Rhaenys. “I hear they have lemon cakes and apple pie in the kitchens, and with a Princess by my side I surely won’t be denied a taste.”

Rhaella smiled fondly as her grand daughter let out a giggle and followed Ser Willem to bother the cooks. Giving one last glance towards the retreating pair, she steeled herself and walked to the chambers Lyanna had been taken to.

Maester Bors, an aged man from the Stormlands was already at work examining Lyanna who was lying on the bed, her eyes opening and closing slowly. “Well?” Rhaella asked, demanding an explanation.

“My Queen,” Ser Gerold stepped forward. “Even before Rh...the Prince left, the Princess Lyanna had a difficult pregnancy, she had trouble keeping food down, and was plagued by fevers,” He gave a quick glance at Lyanna before lowering his voice. “Ever since the Prince died she’s barely eaten,
his death but the latest heartache for her I fear," he said grimly, deliberately avoiding any mention of
the woman’s father and brother who were both murdered by Aerys.

Rhaella looked over at the Maester who was already coaching Lyanna to swallow this or that
poultice, while one of Lyanna’s maids was wiping her forehead with a wet cloth, trying to reduce the
fever.

Deeming his work finished the Maester walked over to Rhaella. “The Princess is weakened
considerably I fear, ‘tis unlikely she’ll survive the birthing bed.”

Rhaella swallowed, she may not know the girl except through the few letters she had shared with
her, but she had no desire to see her die birthing her grandchild, especially not since this situation
was partially of her own doing. “And the babe?” Rhaella asked calmly.

“Difficult to say,” Maester Bors, admitted. “I’m an old man now, and must confess to not have much
experience delivering children, but the hardest part lies with the Princess, it’ll be up to her to give
life.”

Rhaella nodded stiffly, it was as she feared, though learning that Bors was hardly qualified for the
task at hand was not at all welcome news, and she wondered why the Citadel had seen fit to replace
Maester Garm who had been the one to successfully deliver both Rhaenys and Aegon, and keep Elia
alive after the process too, a feat which according to others should have been impossible, and yet he
had been called back to the Citadel on some important errand apparently, and died a few weeks later
of a bad belly, so Bors who had only been intended as a temporary placeholder had been assigned to
Dragonstone permanently.

“Leave me with my gooddaughter,” Rhaella commanded, causing the room’s occupants to leave
swiftly. Last out of the door was Ser Arthur who gave a nod and positioned himself outside to keep
guard.

“Oh my sweet child,” Rhaella moaned as she took a seat beside Lyanna, taking one of her clammy
hands in her own, while stroking her dark hair with the other. “I’m so, so sorry.”

“I don’t want to die,” Lyanna said, her voice trembling as she held back her tears. “I want to live, to
hold my son.”

“You will,” Rhaella assured her, though the words rang false in her ears. “You must be strong
Lyanna, be strong for your son.”

“Why did this happen?” Lyanna asked with her broken voice.

“I do not know my dear,” Rhaella admitted. “You sent word did you not?”

“Yes… one letter to father, and another one to Riverrun, to be delivered to Brandon once he arrived.”

“Something must have happened,” Rhaella said angrily. She’d had her suspicions that foul play was behind the Rebellion for some time now. “I’ve exchanged messages with Lord Rickard for near a year before all this, in the end he agreed to the marriage, though he had yet to inform your brothers it seems.”

Rhaella looked down at Lyanna whose eyes were drooping with exhaustion now. “Go to sleep my dear, you need all the strength you can get soon enough.”

The Huntsman:

Lord Randyll Tarly didn’t quite know what to think when his army of twenty thousand armoured riders came upon King’s Landing. They head learnt on their journey that the city had been sacked by Tywin Lannister, or so the hundreds of fleeing refugees they’d come across told them. At that point Randyll just hoped that Tywin had taken the King and the Royal family as captives, and that mayhap the city gates had not been repaired from Tywin’s storm so that Randyll could charge in and retake it.

So when he spotted the Targaryen banner still fly from the Red Keep he was somewhat confused, even more so when he saw rows upon rows of Lannister men in chains and hard at work, disposing of bodies, rubble and all manner of other tasks, all of them guarded by men flying the banners of the rebels, and riding towards him was a small group of riders, flying the banners of House Stark, Tully, Arryn and Baratheon, as well as a white flag to signal parley.

“Rowan you’re with me,” He told to his fellow Lord from the Reach, and then he rode forth, a dozen Knights following behind him.
They met the opposing party a few hundred paces from his army and Randyll could point out Eddard Stark, Jon Arryn, Brynden Tully as well as Robert Baratheon whose arm was in a sling, and judging from how gingerly he sat in the saddle he had other wounds as well. “Arryn,” he chose to talk with Arryn, who was the most experienced of the rebel leaders.

“Lord Tarly,” It was Eddard Stark who spoke in return, nodding respectfully at him. “King Aerys is dead, Princess Elia and Prince Aegon both were butchered by the Lannisters,” he turned and gestured to the Lannister soldiers who were still hard at work. “I've the Lords of the Westerlands who were present locked up in the Black Cells, as well as the murderers of the Prince and Princess, all ready for a trial.”

Randyll was surprised, and suspicious. Stark was acting, not as a rebel, but a leal servant of the crown. “And yet, you have an army inside the city, and army which I might add was in direct rebellion against the King.”

Lord Stark nodded solemnly. “I've made no effort to hide the fact that I was leading an army to depose Aerys, both for the crimes he comitted against my father and brother, but also for unjustly calling for both mine and Robert’s head when no crime had been committed.”

“At least you take responsibility for your actions,” Randyll said, a tinge of respect in his tone, “So what now? What do you intend to do Lord Stark, because I must inform you that I’ve been charged by the Queen to retake this city.”

“You are welcome to it,” Stark said, causing Randyll to raise his eyebrows, he’d never expected that reply. “I came south for justice and I've had it, now I just need my sister found.”

“So you think you can just come south and rebel against the King and then leave when it’s all over? And what of Prince Rhaegar, he lies dead because of you,” it was Lord Rowan who spoke now, fury in his voice, but his fury was nothing compared to the look of coldest ice that crept across Lord Stark’s face.

“Rhaegar lies dead because he started this war by absconding with my sister. He then chose to place himself in harms way by entering the battlefield, I can assure you My Lord that I have no desire for further war. Our plan has been since before we left for the trident to depose Aerys the Mad, and then convene a Great Council to ratify the succession, though with Aegon’s death I hardly see the point, Prince Viserys will no doubt be chosen over Princess Rhaenys.”

‘A Great Council,’ Randyll thought as he mulled it over. It would settle the matter, and if it brought peace… “What are your terms Lord Stark?” he asked, if he could get the city without swinging a sword it would be well worth it, provided Stark’s terms were agreeable.
“None of the rebel Lords will be punished for rebelling,” was his first demand. “The call for mine and Robert’s heads was an unlawful one, and our Bannermen followed their Lords to war as they are obliged to do. Second, Lord Tyrell will permit provisions be brought in to Storm’s End.”

Randyll had expected much steeper demands, and while it would be up to the King’s regent to actually confirm the agreement, Randyll was a man of his word, and as such would throw in his support for upholding the terms. “And the prisoners?”

Stark shrugged slightly. “I’ve put the levies to work clearing out the damage they caused, as well as removing the cashes of wildfire Aerys stashed beneath the city.”

Randyll, choked… He knew, everyone knew that Aerys was mad, but he still had a duty to follow his King and Lord’s command… but to bury wildfire beneath the city, he hadn’t thought Aerys to be so truly lost as that.

“The Lords of the Westerlands that we caught are still in the Black Cells, where they’ll stay until a new King has been confirmed so that they may be tried for their crimes against the city, same with the multitude of their soldiers we caught raping, stealing or killing.”

Randyll felt his lips tighten. For all that Stark was a rebel, he was a man that Randyll approved of, he’d likely do the same had he been the one to catch the Lannisters in the act. “How did they take the city so quickly?” Randyll asked, none of the refugees they had come across could give them an answer.

“Best we can tell, Maester Pycelle convinced Aerys to open the gates, once Tywin arrived claiming loyalty and friendship. The moment the gates opened he set his dogs loose on the city.” Starks face grew even grimmer if that was possible, “We’ve found it hard to do a proper accounting, but best as we can tell near seventy thousand men women and children were murdered, and a good four thousand women and children were raped, we’ve caught most of the rapers in the act so they are ready for judgement, all I need is the crown’s permission once we have a new King, and our peace terms are accepted.”

“On behalf of the royalists I accept your terms Lord Stark.”

Lord Stark gave a nod. “Then My Lord, King’s Landing is officially yours, though you’ll understand if our army stays, there is still work to be done in the city, and I’ll be damned before I let any of Tywin’s dogs weasel off.”
Randyll nodded. “I find this most agreeable,” he turned to Mathis Rowan. “Rowan, lead two thousand men back to Storms End to inform our Lord of Highgarden of the terms that have been agreed upon, and see to it that Lord Stannis and his men get some food, they’ve damn well earned it by now.”

Rowan nodded and left, his own Knights following him, while Randyll was left with his six Knights, as well as the former rebels. “How many men do you have in the city?” he asked as they all rode slowly towards the city, his own army slowly starting to move as well as they received their new orders.

It was Robert Baratheon who answered, his voice was gruff and tired. “We’ve seventeen thousand in or around the city, keeping an eye on the prisoners, as well as helping to rebuild, another six thousand are on patrols in groups of five hundred, from here and up to the Trident and to the God’s Eye to sweep for bandits. The rest of our men are encamped at Maidenpool, Lord Harroway’s Town, Darry and Harrenhall, mostly wounded men receiving treatment or recuperating.”

Randyll nodded, A sound tactic, he himself had already delegated two thousand men from the Reach army to patrol the Stormlands for bandits ever since the Siege of Storm’s End began. “Then I suppose we need to send word to the Queen on Dragonstone.”

Jon Arryn shook his head. “We’ve already sent word with Ser Barristan who was wounded at the Trident to invite her back to the city, provided our terms are kept.”

“Then we had best get to work don’t we?” Randyll asked rethorically as he put his horse into a gallop, if the Queen accepted the terms she might be here within the next few weeks, and Randyll had no intention of letting her come anywhere near the city if there was still wildfire around...

The Bold:

Even wounded as he was, Barristan still moved with a grace that was beyond most men. For near all his life he had been, first a Knight and then Kingsguard, and never had he felt more of a failure than he did as he sped up towards the keep of Dragonstone as swift as he could. He had seen such promise in Rhaegar, and he had failed, Rhaegar had died while he himself had lived. He had been attended by the personal Maester of the man who had killed his Prince, his chosen King, and now, he had been sent back to his Queen like a scolded dog returning to its master, or so he felt like anyhow.
Once he arrived at the keep he was graced by the presence of his brother in arms Ser Oswell, who looked tired and apprehensive.

“Barristan,” Oswell said as he pulled Barristan into a short hug. “You’ve chosen a fortuitous moment to arrive I think.”

“Oh?” Barristan asked, while trying to keep his surprise down. Last he knew, Oswell was protecting Lyanna Stark somewhere safe, more than that Raegar had not shared with him, promising him the full story once the battle had been won.

“Princess Lyanna is in labour.”

Barristan stumbled, Lyanna Stark… a Princess? So Rhaegar had wed her. He had known that Rhaegar was in love with the she-wolf, and did not doubt for a moment that the pair had run away together, the story of rape and abduction was just that; a story. But he had never expected that they had wed.

“But… Elia,” Barristan stuttered.

“Elia could not give the Prince more children,” Oswell admitted. “The High Septon saw that as a compelling factor, and then of course there is a precedent…”

Barristan understood Oswell’s hesitation. For all that Maegor the Cruel was not remembered fondly, neither had his, or Aegon the First’s polygamous marriages ever been denounced or declared invalid after their deaths, and in the end the Faith had bowed to the Crown, granting them many concessions including a promise not to interfere in Targaryen marriage traditions, of which polygamy was considered acceptable. So while frowned upon, there as literally nothing that would point at Rhaegar’s child by Lyanna Stark being illegitimate if Rhaegar had taken the girl to wife.

“But this is good news is it not?” Barristan asked.

Oswell grimaced. “The Princess Lyanna has been weak and lethargic ever since the death of first her father and brother, and then her Prince,” he swallowed. “It’s doubtful she will survive the birth, and then there is the succession to think on, the Queen has not crowned Viserys for the chance of Lyanna birthing a son.”
Barristan winced at that. If Lyanna Stark’s son was crowned then the Martells would be furious, if Viserys was crowned it was likely that the rebels would return to warring for the babe’s rights, or mayhap just declare their independence, and none except the Dornish would even consider the idea of crowning Rhaenys. In any case they would be left with a long regency. “I can see where this will cause problems,” he admitted.

Oswell nodded. “Thought it pains the Queen, she has admitted that if ‘tis a boy he’ll have to wed Rhaenys, that and a position of the council will be the only way to appease the Dornish she fears.”

Barristan had to agree with Oswell, as well as share the Queen’s concern. She had after all been wed off to a brother she had not wanted, and it had brought her little joy in life, so to force her grandchildren to do the same must wear at her, and then of course there was the fact that it was brother and sister who would be wedding each other, at a young age too no doubt. Barristan shivered slightly. He had swiftly developed a habit of not thinking too hard about the relationships the Targaryens had with each other, brother wedding sister was unnatural, a sin in most cultures, even Dorne considered the act an abomination, and yet Targaryens were no mere mortals, they had the Blood of the Dragon.

Once they entered the castle proper, Oswell led him towards where the Princess Lyanna was giving birth, and yet they were swiftly diverted to the great hall, and upon entering, Barristan knew why.

The Queen was seated in the ancient throne of carved dragonglass, and in her arms she held a small whimpering bundle, and Princess Rhaenys was seated in her lap, looking down at her new brother. Prince Viserys himself was standing beside the large throne, a solemn look on his young face, while everyone else in the hall, near two hundred men were on their knees with their heads bowed, Only Ser Arthur and Lord Commander Gerold were still standing, already stationed to protect the new King.

“Ser Barristan, Ser Oswell,” Rhaella said, her tone sharp. “I bid you bend the knee to your new King, His Grace Daeron of House Targaryen, the Third of his Name, Rightful King of the Andals, the Rhoynar and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms,” And both he and Oswell withdrew their swords and went down on one knee, their heads bent, and as one it seemed everyone in the room chanted, “The King is Dead, Long Live the King...”

AN:
Well...again this was supposed to be a oneshot, but it got away from me, that and I like the idea very much so I’ll see if I develop this into a series of its own. Part two will hopefully be up
Part 2 will most likely be Rhaella returning to King’s Landing, trials, rewards, punishments, shuffling about of the Small Council etc, lots of ‘politics’ setting the stage for the later story where Jon(Daeron) is older, yes, Jon is named Daeron this time around (mostly because Rhaella knows how the Dornish will react if they call him Aegon)

Now I’m sure there will be comments about Rhaella and how she acted towards Elia. All I will say at this point is that what Rhaella believes may or may not be the truth, so you’ll have to guess/decide for yourself if Aegon actually is Rhaegar’s son, or if Elia cheated on Rhaegar. I’m certainly not telling at this point.

Oh and I’d love to hear your thoughts about who told Brandon that Lya had been raped/kidnapped. I can assure you, it’s not who most people think.

Lastly, a thanks to KadenIV once again for helping me write the Ned/Jaime conversation.

Cheers

Daemon Belaerys.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Rhaella returns to King’s Landing.

Chapter Notes

I still don't have a beta, and wrote the last half of this while tired, so I apologize in advance for any grammar/spelling mistakes. I'll go over it again when I wake up to try and catch anything that I may have overlooked.

Congratulations to the few people who guessed right.

Ned:

Although usually not one to turn to drink, Ned knew that he needed one now. Word had reached them earlier that the Royal Fleet had been spotted on the horizon, carrying Queen Rhaella, Princess Rhaenys and the young Prince Viserys who like as not was probably going to be crowned the new King, and to Ned’s hope also Lyanna.

Though the pair might despise each other, Ned and Randyll Tarly did respect one another enough to work together to interrogate the multitudes of prisoners they held, and Varys had been one of the first ones. As much as Ned had wanted to keep Varys locked up, the man had proven to be willing to cooperate. Every nugget of information he provided had been verified, some of which sent Ned’s blood boiling with fury, so in the end, the spymaster had been released, and had been helping with what he could ever since.

It had been Varys who informed Ned that Lyanna Stark had made it to Dragonstone, accompanied by three Kingsguard, and her belly swollen with child, Ned just hoped she would survive the birthing process, and that she would still consider wedding Robert, it was more important than ever now to try and mend bridges in the Realm, any son or daughter of hers he’d raise for her, so to spare Robert from raising Rhaegar’s seed in his own castle.
Another tip from Varys had led him to the letters he held in his hand, as well as to seek out Ethan Glover who was recuperating from his stay in the Black Cells, and what he had learned… He had been strongly tempted to start taking heads, but he’d stopped himself. He had spoken with a few of his closest advisers, as well as Jon Arryn, and though Jon had been almost as displeased as Ned, he had advised him to play cautiously, which was what he was doing. Ostensibly the rebels would face no punishment, but it would be up to Queen Rhaella to ratify those terms. She could well renge on them fully, a fact that Lord Tarly was well aware of, and there were enough Reachmen in the city to make any further conflict very difficult.

“Ah Ned.” Ned looked up to see his goodfather Hoster Tully enter the room, a wide smile on his face as he took a seat before Ned. “You can go,” Hoster said, trying to dismiss the other occupants of the room, the Greatjon who stood behind Ned, his beefy arms crossed over his chest and eyes as thin as slits. Ethan Glover, was leaning casually against the mantelpiece, softly caressing a spiked mace, while Roose Bolton, clad in his pink fluted plate armour was seated in a shadowy corner, slowly peeling an orange with a wicked blade of Valyrian steel.

“They’re staying, Lord Tully.” Ned said calmly, his voice as cool as winter. “I would have words with you you see.”

“Of course,” Hoster said, though his voice was remarkably less cheery, and his eyes flitted back and forth between the Greatjon, Glover and Bolton. “What would we discuss?”

“My sister,” Ned said, “or rather more precisely, what happened when my sister left Harrenhall in the company of her future goodsister, your daughter Lysa, and of course, the Tully guardsmen charged with their protection.”

Hoster paled.

“Struck speechless I see,” Ned said crushingly.

The Greatjon spat angrily at the floor behind him. “I hear many southerners are the same when caught in their lies.”

“Ned...” Hoster gulped, “whatever you might think-”

“Think,” Ned hissed. “Thanks to Ethan here, I am aware of the fact that it was your daughter, and her guards who accosted Brandon and told him that Rhaegar had raped and kidnapped my sister, and
yet, when I searched through some of the correspondence the Royal family left behind I’ve come across no less then twelve letter between my father and the Queen, brokering a marriage between my sister and the Prince, and lastly there’s this,” Ned held out a letter with flowing handwriting for Hoster to see, a letter that was signed and stamped by Prince Rhaegar. “Do you know what this letter says Hoster?”

Hoster, refused to answer.

“I’ll not read it all, it is supposed to be private after all, but I can tell you that Rhaegar is writing to his mother to inform him that he and my sister are leaving to wed, and that Lady Lysa had promised to inform Brandon, as well as pass on the letter Lord Stark, my father sent south to my sister… so I must ask why? Why Hoster, why did my brother race off to King’s Landing to call for the head of Prince Rhaegar?”

“…”

Ned stood up. “You know this man behind me?” he asked Hoster as he pointed over to where Roose Bolton was sat, just in time for Hoster to see Roose peel yet another orange in a manner of seconds. “Lord Bolton has been so very kind to help us interrogate prisoners, why I hear that even the Mountain only needed five minutes with Roose before he was willing to confess to any manner of crimes.” Ned let a dark smirk cross his face for a moment, and both Ethan Glover and the Greatjon shared his grin. “I need some air my Lords,” he told them. “You just wait here My Lord Tully, I’m sure that you and Lord Bolton has plenty to talk about.”

“WAIT! WAIT! I’ll tell you,” Hoster begged before they had even reached the door.

“It was Lysa,” he wailed . “ She was angry with me after...after I sent Petyr away, she was angry with Cat who got to have the man she wanted, so she told Brandon a lie,” Hoster was sobbing uncontrollably now. “She thought Brandon would spend months searching for Lyanna instead of wedding my Cat, she never thought it would go as bad as it did, what was I supposed to do? She didn’t tell me until Brandon and Rickard were both dead.”

“I hope you’ve said your goodbyes Tully,” the Greatjon snarled furiously, has hands, just like Ned’s own were twitching, almost begging to be allowed to grasp a sword and plunge it into to greedy craven before them.

“The Queen is arriving within the hour I hear,” Ned said, his voice still as cool as ice. “By the time she arrives you’ll be on your way to take the Black, or dead.”
“What?” Hoster gasped. “I-I won’t take the Black, I c-cant.”

“Can’t?” Ned asked him. “I beg to differ, no less than near fifteen hundred men from the Westerlands already decided to take the black rather than wait around and risk the King’s Justice in the upcoming trials, including Lords Crakehall and Westerling, so you’ll find yourself in good company.”

“No, Lord Stark, please, I-I’m your goodfather, surely you wouldn’t-”

“I fear you are mistaken Lord Tully. I wed my wife Ashara in the Sept in White Harbour, the marriage you forced me into was a sham and I fully intend to seek an annulment.”

“You can’t,” Hoster bleated angrily. “She’s already with child, if she haven’t given birth by this point.”

“And my wife gave birth to my daughter Allyria less than a fortnight ago, my Lord, but you need not fear. My son or daughter by Catelyn will be well taken care of, but that isn’t what we are discussing, we are discussing why you need to take the Black.”

Ned gratefully accepted a mug of ale from Ethan, eager to wet his parched throat. “I have no choice but to inform the Queen about all this, and what do you think will happen then? The chances of the Queen honouring our terms will be astronomical, House Tully will be lucky if they’re left in charge of so much as a cabbage patch. Your name and castle attainted and seized by the Crown, your brother and children, exiled if they’re lucky, executed if not, but if you take the Black…” Ned left it there for Hoster to think about, before he placed a small bottle filled with clear liquid on a desk.

“No sooner had Ned spoken before Hoster took the small bottle and drank it all. It took less than a minute before Hoster keeled over, he convulsed briefly and then fell still. Ned picked up and rang a little bell, causing two men to enter the room to carry away the body of the now dead Lord.

“That didn’t take long,” Randyll Tarly commented as he too stepped into the large room that Ned had made into his current home. “Someday perhaps you’ll share the secret for how you get men to crack so swiftly.”

The Greatjon and Glover both let out great barks of laughter at that. “Quite simple My Lord,” Ned
replied calmly. “I speak a few soft words about House Bolton and then I make to leave the room, with Lord Roose staying behind, often with something edible and his knife in hand, they all crack after that.”

Lord Tarly looked at Roose, as if begging him to prove him wrong.

“My Lord Stark is quite correct,” Roose Bolton said, his voice even more detached than Ned’s. “I’ve peeled and eaten more fruit and sausage the last moons than I have in my whole life I should think.”

Lord Tarly looked as if he wished to comment further but then shook his head. He may not like them, and he would certainly never understand Northerners, but he respected them at least. “The Queen has arrived, and requests your presence Lord Stark.”

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**Rhaella:**

It had been harder than she’d thought, returning to King’s Landing. As ever, the smell of shit permeated the city, but there was now a stench of death that even now, more than a moon’s turn later still hadn’t left fully. The streets themselves were still filled however with throngs of smallfolk, cheering and waving dragon banners to welcome the Targaryens back to the city.

“A warm welcome,” cousin Lucerys said, the former Master of Ships was currently wearing the pointed hand on a chain, proclaiming to all that he was the new Hand of the King.

“It would take more than my brother’s madness to turn the city against our family, especially since they’ve seen nothing but peace since the Dance of Dragons,” Rhaella reminded him.

She glanced around and was pleased to see the multitude of awed faces gazing at them, and she knew she cut a striking figure. With Aerys no longer around to torment her, she had no reason any longer to play the part she had found necessary for her own health.

Gone were the modest white hoods and dresses of a septa, now she was adorned in her true colours, the colours of her house, adorned in her finest black dress, the three headed dragon of her house present from her hip to the edge of her dress, covered slightly by the billowing red cloak flowing behind her, cascading like blood, a bright crimson red flowing so that all could see. She was a true dragon. Fire and blood.
No longer was she afraid of mad Kings, for the true King laid in her arm, her sweet precious grandson, protected by the strongest Kingsguard the land had known or seen. As Rhaella gazed upon the people of Kings Landing once more, she saw how some tried to hide the expressions of fear that they held. Though they should fear her, for she was a true dragon. A dragon who was no longer caged, no longer lashed and whipped by the Mad King. She was free, able to show her strength and power. She was a burning fire, capable of bringing destruction upon those who gazed, though also capable of bringing warmth and comfort, as a true Queen should.

The people cast glances to the procession, cast glances to Rhaenys and Viserys, proceeded by loyal men at arms. And finally they placed their eyes upon her, Lyanna, who laid motionless on her funeral pier, limp and lifeless, her skin was pale, but even in death the she-wolf was still beautiful, and many an eye turned wet and averted toward the ground, while others still looked upon the infant King resting in her arms and then back to Lyanna and came to the same conclusion, a son of Rhaegar still lived.

As they continued to ride through the city towards the Red Keep, Rhaella was pleased to see that the missives she had received from Varys and Lord Tarly were correct. The Lannister soldiers who had apparently attacked the city after entering under a guise of friendship were all hard at work, their arms and armor stripped from them, only their Lannister red clothing identifying them from where they were moving rubble, laying down bricks for new houses, or digging in the street, though she’d have to ask why they were doing so at a later point, and lastly, all of them were shackled, with either men from the former Rebel army or loyalists from the Reach and Crownlands keeping a guard on them.

She would have to step carefully soon. She was expected to honour the terms Lord Tarly had agreed to, and for the most part she would. Eddard Stark and Robert Baratheon both had been in the right to rise up against her dead husband when he called for their heads, and she had gained a measure of respect for Jon Arryn for having loyalty enough to the two young men he had fostered since boyhood to rise up in arms against Aerys.

Robert would be the biggest problem she knew. He had killed her firstborn son, her beloved Rhaegar, and if the rumours were true even tried to proclaim himself King for a brief moment. The news that Lyanna had wed Rhaegar, and subsequently died birthing Rhaegar’s son would fall ill to the prickly Baratheon, that she knew, and she was under no illusions that Robert would have his own demands before returning to the King’s Peace, she only hoped that the price was one she could bare, because she needed the rebels to accept the King’s Peace, and the sooner the better, the Lords of the Reach would no doubt have their own demands, and there was the matter of Dorne as well.

Speaking of Baratheon, he made himself known almost the moment their procession entered the inner courtyard of the Red Keep, a horrible heartbroken wail, similar to the one Rhaella had made once she learnt of Rhaegar’s death erupted from the tall man the moment he laid eyes on Lyanna’s body.
“My Queen,” Gerold questioned as he laid a hand on the pommel of his sword.

Rhaella studied Baratheon closer. He was on his knees, sobbing before the bier that Lyanna laid on, his hands hid his face as his body shook. “Let him grieve,” she said uncomfortably. Even though he had killed her son, she could not help but feel some sympathy for the man, judging by his agonized wails he had truly loved her. She let herself be helped off the horse, making sure to hold her grandson securely in her arms while Gerold lifted her to the ground. “I’ll speak with Lord Stark first in the throne room.”

“Aye Your Grace,” Gerold saluted her before pausing momentarily. “And the Prince and Princess?”

“Rhaenys goes with me,” Rhaella said after a moments pause. “Have Ser Oswell take Viserys back to his rooms.”

“The Prince will no doubt be pleased with his toys,” Gerold smiled slightly. “Viserys had always been a sweet boy, and preferred solitary with his toys, much like Rhaegar with his books.”

“Your Grace,” It was the fat oaf, Mace Tyrell who almost came running over, bowing deeply before her, along with half a dozen of his Lords and even more Knights and retainers.

“Lord Tyrell,” Rhaella sniffed. “I will be busy for the rest of the day at the very least, I suspect. You’ll be permitted an audience once we have been settled in again and gotten the most immediate business behind us.”

“B-but Your Grace,” Tyrell blustered. “There’s many things to be discussed, the succession, regency, punishment for the traitors...”

“I said,” Rhaella snapped, “I will deal with these matters promptly,” she narrowed her eyes, That, will be all My Lord, and she was greeted with the fat Lord shrinking back in fear at the venom, nay, the fire in her voice. She looked back at Baratheon whose wailing had started to recede to mere sobs, and then turned her gaze to Rhaegar’s former squire, Ser Richard Lonmouth who had gone to stay with Rhaegar’s children rather than choose sides on a battlefield, and she remembered that he had been fond of Robert, as well as Rhaegar.

“Ser Richard,” she called his attention. “See if you cannot delay Lord Robert,” she spoke his name with the utmost distaste, and almost felt shame. For all that he had killed her son, he was Steffon’s
firstborn, and Rhaella had loved Steffon most out of all her kin, more than what would be considered proper considering she was wed to Aerys. Her love for Steffon not as bright and strong as she had for her sweet Bonnifer, but there had been many a night she had dreamt of lying beneath Steffon.

“I know just the thing,” Ser Richard said slowly, “Assuming the brothels are still open,” his jaw dropped open and his cheeks flushed as he realized what he said. “Forgive me Your Grace, I did not mean to.”

“Do not make apologies Ser,” she calmed him. “I am well aware of Robert’s vices.”

Ser Richard nodded gratefully and sped over to Robert, who surprisingly enough threw his arms around his oft drinking companion, apparently not fighting for Robert was not a great enough crime for the Baratheon Lord to condemn his friend on the spot. As they disappeared from the courtyard, Rhaella let herself be escorted to the throne room where she once again laid her eyes on the Iron Throne and she felt a sense of dread fill her. Ever since it’s forging had that monstrosity of steel and iron inspired men and women to plot. It was a symbol of fear and dominion, much like the dragons themselves had been, and the dragon skulls that decorated the throne room only added to its foreboding feel, yet, looking down into the grey eyes of her nephew she steeled herself. She had to do this, if only for him, but now was fortunately not the time, for which she was grateful, instead she took a seat behind a table that had been brought in for her, Daeron was still in her arms, while Rhaenys sat on her own chair beside Rhaella, trying to make her new brother laugh.

It brought a well of affection into Rhaella’s heart. Rhaenys was still so young, young enough to not truly understand that Elia and Aegon were never coming back, and having a new brother was currently the most exciting thing for her, although she’d had to correct the girl a few times when she called the boy ‘Egg’, which was understandable.

Daeron looked remarkably like his elder ‘brother’ sake for the grey eyes, and thick streak of black hair near his forehead, a ‘dragonstreak’ as people oft called it, though the last one she knew of who possessed it were Princes Valarr and Matarys, though in their case the colour was reversed, predominantly dark brown hair with a silver streak, compared to Daeron’s silver hair and black streak.

She let out another soft smile as Daeron let out a happy gurgle when Rhaenys tickled his nose with some of her black locks of hair, and felt a sudden onrush of guilt. ‘I hope you can forgive me my sweets,’ she thought sadly. Like herself, there was a chance that Rhaenys would also be wed to a brother she cared little for, though it seemed the opposite at the moment, it was still too soon to say if Daeron would be a good man and more importantly in Rhaenys’ case, a husband. Dorne would not accept anything less than Rhaenys as Queen and Elia’s murderers brought to justice, but none of the other Kingdoms would accept a Queen over a King, and so she had doomed her grandchildren to a marriage with each other mere moments after Daeron was born.
“Lord Stark My Queen,” Barristan called out, and moment after Eddard Stark strode into the room and over to her. He was younger than she’d thought, she realized as she looked upon the tall northerner, but his eyes. His eyes were old, like so many others, the senseless civil war had destroyed what precious innocence remaining in him, instead was a man who many were already calling ‘Cregan come again’ or even ‘the Old Wolf’ regardless of the fact that he had barely seen twenty namedays.

“Lord Stark,” Rhaella stood up. “Your nephew, and rightful King.”

Ned Stark swallowed as he accepted the boy in shaking hands, though judging by how easily he placed the boy in the crook of his arm it wasn’t the first time he’d held a babe. The cold look upon his face melted as he stared in wonder at the little child. “He has her eyes,” he remarked with a broken whisper. He turned his eyes up on her, and she noticed that they had been filled with tears. “I...assume my sister is...”

“Dead,” Rhaella said softly. “She loved her son though, her last words were of him.”

“His name?”

“Daeron,” Rhaella said.

“A good name,” Ned admitted, “And a good blend of northern and dragon blood it seems.”

“Yes,” Rhaella admitted. “I must confess to be curious, what would you have done if Robert had managed to crown himself?”

“My friend Lord Reed and I discussed the possibility that Lya might be with child,” he let out a broken chuckle. “The Crannogmen of the Neck have many talents, regardless of how her child looked at birth, there would’ve been no doubt that he was my son.”

Rhaella felt her eyebrows raise. She knew that some in her family had possessed the gift of magic, as did the red priests and warlocks of the east, but she’d never heard a word about the Crannogmen. “Fortunately that will not be necessary,” Rhaella said. “My grandson is King, and as his regent I must ask you to bend the knee and accept the King’s Peace.”
“I will not raise a hand against my own blood,” Ned said. “But I would be a fool were I not to ask what this would cost me.”

“Naught but your time and support,” Rhaella admitted as she took her seat again, smiling slightly as Rhaenys crawled into her lap, careful to avoid putting pressure on her belly where she knew Aerys’ last child was growing. “Until everything is resolved here in King’s Landing I am in need of you to act as your ancestor Cregan once did.”


“Perhaps,” Rhaella countered. “Yet he did what he felt best for his people, and he was strong when Aegon III was naught more than a boy, incapable of making those decisions.” Rhaella sighed. “Regardless of the fact that I have cast of the mask my brother forced me to wear, I am still a woman, the Lords of the Realm, on both sides will want to assert their authority. I cannot be too harsh on the former rebels, neither can I shower you with rewards.” She paused. “Without your help I fear that my grandson will be forced to suffer a long regency council.”

“There will be no punishments?” Ned asked carefully.

“I would be remiss in my duties were I not to take hostages,” Rhaella admitted. “You have a younger brother do you not? No doubt the North would feel better were their future King to have a Stark by his side? Send your brother south to help rear and protect his nephew, perhaps convince a few of your fellow northerners to leave a son or nephew here,” Ned looked fit to object before Rhaella stopped him. “Officially they would be hostages to ensure the North’s obedience, unofficially, they would all have a contingent of guards, far more than usual who would look over their charges.”

“And if they also happened to look out for their future King,” Ned trailed off.

“Yes, now you see it,” Rhaella gave a sly grin. “When Cregan left for the North a large part of his army stayed behind, everyone from the nobility to the smallfolk mocked Cregan Stark, such a failure that even his own men abandoned him, none but House Targaryen has ever learnt that they were Cregan’s last gift to King Aegon. Two thousand men who sacrificed their future to protect the young King while Cregan returned north to deal with winter.”

“This...can be arranged,” Ned admitted after a moment’s hesitation. “Hother Umber would be best I think, the old man is far more cunning than a northman has any right to be.”
Rhaella let out a sigh of relief, at least that was dealt with. “On the morrow I shall have to entertain Lord Tyrell and his bannermen, they will attempt to force a regency council, by that time I need the former rebels firmly on my side, and willing to support me, can this be done?”

Ned thought long and hard for a moment, apparently steeling himself as he looked down on his nephew again. “It’ll take some hard work,” he admitted. “I’ll have to do what Cregan did. Name me hand and I’ll judge the Westerlanders by tomorrow, that’ll put some steel in the glove as they say.”
He took a deep breath. “There must be at least one of us on the Small Council too, my foster father Jon Arryn would be the best choice.”

Rhaella frowned. “Would he accept Master of Coin?” she asked. It was considered the least prominent position on the council.

“He will, if only for the love he bears me, and he’ll be pleased to see my blood on the throne I think.”

“And the Riverlands? The Stormlands?” She was shocked when Ned explained Hoster’s involvement in the whole affair, and felt a grim satisfaction at his fate, and felt a well of pity for her Warden of the North who had been forced into a shameful marriage. “While I cannot officially interfere with the workings of the Faith, I know the High Septon well, and if it is as you say that you wed the Lady Ashara in the eyes of the Seven I have no doubt that he will give you an annulment should I intercede on your behalf,” Ned let out a sigh of relief at that. “And the babe?” she questioned, “What would you wish for it?”

“I would not like to see my son or daughter be separated from the mother, I may not love Cat, but I do not desire to see our child punished for her father’s crime.”

“Then I shall see to it that she and her son are brought up in King’s Landing,” Rhaella said after a moment of thought. “She’ll be my handmaiden, a prestigious position for any noblewoman.”

“And the babe?” Ned questioned.

“I will permit the child to have the Tully name, they can both be the ‘hostages’ from the Riverlands, although I would not deny you the right to foster the child for a few years.”

Ned let out a deep sigh of relief. “Thank you Your Grace...and their Lordship?”
“They’ll keep their castle,” Rhaella admitted. “Though I cannot let them keep the position of Lord Paramount, unlike you or Robert they rebelled, not for a just cause, but out of greed, reducing them to simple Lords is more than generous.”

“I assume Darry will gain the responsibility of Overlord in the Riverlands.”

“Yes,” she agreed. “Raymund might be young with his three and ten years, but his uncle Ser Willem can council him and act as his regent until he ready to take the title, he’ll need it with the additional lands I’m giving him.”

Ned raised a questioning eyebrow, “Additional lands?”

Rhaella gave a sly smile. “Would I be wrong to assume that the Riverlords would find these amended terms more easy to swallow if the Freys were stripped of Lordship?” Ned’s eyes widened and Rhaenys and Daeron joining her, even if they didn’t understand what was so funny. Tha Mallisters can take the western castle, as well as the lands west of the Green Fork, the Darrys will have the eastern castle and lands east of the Green Fork.”

Ned let out an impressed whisper. “I think that just might work,” he admitted. Everyone hated the Freys, and none had been too comfortable at Hoster’s dishonourable actions, even the Blackfish, Hoster’s own brother had been so disgusted that he had forsworn any service to Hoster and joined with Jon Arryn instead, though if he would remain in Jon’s service remained to be seen. Lysa wouldn’t be executed, Ned knew that, but she would be forced into the Silent Sisters, and Jon would have to find himself another wife. Thinking on wives Ned had an idea.

“Might you not have Cat marry Lord Raymund? She’s but a few years his elder, and of proven fertility, and it would help smooth the transition if the Riverlords knew that Tully blood would still run in the line of the Lord Paramount.”

“I suppose it might,” Rhaella admitted. “I would delay it by five years, let the lad grow into a man grown, and her babe should be old enough to foster a few years with you before returning to her.”

“Thank you, Your Grace.”

At this point Daeron started crying and Rhaella almost started to chuckle at how lost the northern Lord looked with a squealing babe in his arms. “He misses his mother,” she said sadly as she took the child and started rocking him, and within moments he was asleep in her arms, and Rhaella almost
woke him again when Rhaenys made a hushing motion at Lord Eddard, and imperious finger over her lips.

“And the Stormlands, do you have an idea about them?”

Ned winced. “Were Robert still their Lord I might.”

Rhaella looked up sharply, “What do you mean?”

“I had to explain to Robert when I found the correspondence between you and my father. He did not want to believe at first, but he accepted in these last days, and knew that there was little chance he would wed Lyanna now...” Ned shook his head fondly. “Apparently if it means staying here in Westeros as a Lord of Storm’s End and all its responsibilities and without Lyanna, he would rather go east and, in his own words, ‘make himself a sellsword company that even Bittersteel would be envious of’ though how on earth he thinks he can find enough men to challenge the dothraki on an open field as he boasts off I have no idea.”

Rhaella almost laughed again. Robert would be foolish enough to gather an army to meet the dothraki on an open field, and with more than a hint of bitterness she had to agree that if any man could do it and win it would be Robert Baratheon. “Robert never had problems finding fools willing to die against overwhelming odds,” she admitted sourly, “So that means I must deal with Stannis?”

“Aye,” Ned admitted, “And while young, there are many of the surviving Stormlords who admire him for how he held Storm’s End, and they will all be pressing for a marriage,” he glanced pointedly at Rhaenys.

Rhaella shook her head. “My granddaughter will wed her brother,” she said, ignoring the look of distaste on Ned’s face, it was to be expected after all. “The Dornish will settle for nothing less,” Rhaella closed her eyes. “I am with child,” she admitted, “But I am still young enough that I should be able to bring more into the world.”

Ned’s eyes widened, “My Queen,” he protested, “Surely you cannot mean to-”

“I have already sacrificed the future of my grandchildren I will not do the same to my son and unborn child if I can avoid it. Tell Lord Stannis,” she swallowed. “Tell him that in return for his support, I will consent to wed him after my child is born, I will... do my duty as a wife in private, provided he supports me as the Queen while in public, a better offer than he’ll receive anywhere else
in the Realm I should think.”

“I will bring your offer to Stannis,” Ned acquiesced. “ I assume you already have a plan for the Reach?”

“Yes, Lord Tarly has a son and Lord Tyrell has a daughter, both born earlier this year, I shall see them betrothed. Tarly will receive the Paramountship of the Reach as well as Warden of the South, Lord Mace will bend when his own bannermen support Tarly over him.”

“Lord Tyrell is a proud man,” Ned cautioned her.

“And a snivelling craven,” Rhaella spat. “What’s more, the fool has already had his eldest son sent to the city to page for him. Lord Willas will stay as a friend and companion to Viserys, and should any of Mace’s sons show promise there is the possibility for a future Kingsguard position.”

“Any of us would gladly take one of Lord Tyrell’s sons as a squire when they get older,” Ser Barristan interjected, her loyal Kingsguards having kept their silence so far, the only time they threatened to break their silence was when Rhaella mentioned wedding Stannis, ‘I hope you can forgive me Steffon,’ Rhaella thought.

“Very well,” Ned said at last. “ Though as your temporary hand I must disagree with this plan.”

“Noted,” Rhaella said. “ I would have you bring this offer to Lord Tarly today, and then start the trials and sentencing of the Westerlanders, except for Ser Jaime, I will deal with him myself.”

“Do you have a particular sentence in mind?” Ned asked.

“Nothing too harsh, I would have Tywin and his beasts on the block before sundown, but the others… an increase in taxes for a period of five years, and hostages sent to the city.”

“And what of Ser Kevan?”

“Ser Kevan will leave for the Westerlands today, inform him that he is to act as regent of the Westerlands while his niece Cersei and nephew Tyrion are brought to King’s Landing.”
“And their soldiers?” Ned enquired further, “A fair amount of them have already agreed to take the Black and are already on the move up north.”

“The looters can be let go,” Rhaella admitted at last, “But the murderers and rapers, if you caught any of them are to be punished according to their crime.”

“Good,” Ned admitted, “The Wall will see even more recruits I think.” Ned turned to leave before turning back around. “In light of what is to happen, I would suggest Your Grace recuse yourself for the next few days, I shall inform Lord Tyrell that you are with child and feeling unwell, that way he shall not be slighted over his missed audience tomorrow. The presence of one of the Kingsguard to add weight to my words and new position would be helpful.”

Rhaella nodded and wrote down a few short words on a piece of paper that she then signed and sealed with her dead husband’s seal. “Ser Arthur will accompany you until your business is done, hand this over to Lord Lucerys who is the current acting Hand, he’ll surrender his badge of office to you.”

Ned accepted the letter and then knelt before her. “In your presence I hereby swear my allegiance to my nephew the King, and solemnly accept the task and office you have charged me with, and swear to perform it to my best ability.”

“You may rise Lord Stark.” Ned rose. “I believe it is best that I retire,” she started only to almost groan in horror as Rhaenys skipped over to Ned.

“Are you my new uncle?” she asked with all the bright curiosity of a child, causing the Kingsguard around them to hastily disguise their laughter by identical coughing fits, even Ned seemed amused if the way his lips were twitching was anything to go by.

“I suppose I am,” he admitted with a small smile, only to let out a surprised laugh as Rhaenys threw her arms around his waist.

“All Dornish that one,” Ser Gerold muttered, only to school his face into a blank slate the moment Rhaella turned her glare onto him.

“Come Rhaenys,” Rhaella sighed. “You can play with your uncle Ned later.”
Rhaenys sulked as she mulishly marched back to Rhaella, before turning around to pin Ned Stark with her doelike purple eyes. “You promise?” she asked hopefully.

Ned laughed, “Aye I will,” he admitted at last. “But before then my Princess I have work to do,” and with a last bow to Rhaella he marched out of the throne room, and before the door had even closed behind him he had already called out for ‘Ice’.

“I pity the Westerlanders,” Gerold admitted with a shiver. “That sword of his has kissed more necks, than all the prostitutes of King’s Landing see cocks in a year.”

Rhaella let out an undignified snort. “A Stark calling their sword Ice, how original.”

Gerold shrugged as he led the way back to the Royal apartments. “No one ever accused a Stark of having wits,” he admitted. “Though this one, he actually seems to have some in his skull.”

It was getting late by now and Rhaenys fell asleep nearly the moment her head hit the pillows, and Viserys followed soon after, while Daeron was carefully laid into his crib so not to wake him, his wetnurse Wylla already seated in a chair beside him while singing a soft lullaby. Rhaella gave her grandson a final kiss on the brow and then found her own bed, and she let out a sigh. She had suffered much the last years, not least the death of her firstborn son, but at least Aerys would never bother her doorframe again, and though Lord Stark had some wits he had failed to see Rhaella’s true plan.

She knew the Lord Paramounts had been plotting against her family, why else would they try to have every single one of their families joined in matrimony in a single generation? But now, the Riverlands and Reach would be turned on their heads with new overlords. The Westerlands would be a shadow of what it could be without Lord Tywin and so many of their best knights either killed or sent to the Wall. The northerners would never betray her family, not now when the King was the son of their beloved Lyanna Stark, and the Stormlands, hopefully Stannis would accept her proposal. She had no desire to wed a man eight and ten years her junior, but if it mean peace, and an end to the plot which had most likely been just a few years away from toppling her family completely, then it was a price she was more than willing to pay, and who knows, if everything went to plan her family would soon be back to what it once was, ‘or so I pray,’ she thought as she remembered the five eggs that had been found inside one of the hot caverns beneath Dragonstone, perilously close to a flowing river of molten rock according to the man who had found them, and unlike the egg she herself had been gifted at birth, and later disappeared after Summerhall, these eggs were hot to the touch...

AN: I couldn't mention Bobby B without commenting on dothraki or open fields now could I?
As for Jon's looks, it's kinda like Gerold Dayne. I admit I did this partially because I like it when not every story has Jon looking like 'vanilla' Jon, and I get to indulge my inner 'conspiracy theorist' that Jon might actually have been glamoured by Howland Reed.

Until next time.

Cheers

Daemon Belaerys.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Justice is done, and a new age dawns.

Chapter Notes

Well. A bit shorter this time, but hell, call it a almost Christmas treat. After this I think there's just another chapter or two until I can do some proper timeskip.

Disclaimer: Was burned at the stake, sorry about that.

The Old Lion:

Tywin moaned pitifully when he was brought outside into the sunlight. After who knows how long in the darkness of the Black Cells, the light of day was blinding. How had it all come to this? He had stayed out of the war until he learnt of Rhaegar’s death. Only then had he ridden for King’s Landing at the head of a host of twelve thousand heavy horse. It should have worked, everything had worked as he had anticipated. Pycelle ensured that the gates were opened to them, Gregor and Lorch had done as he ordered and taken care of Rhaegar’s children, though he had later learned that Princess Rhaenys had not been in the capitol.

His men, carefully selected by himself and his various Lords were the most vicious in all the Westerlands, led by veterans from the War of the Ninepenny Kings, they’d made quick wok of the defenders of the city, and then catastrophe. That Eddard Stark would not approve of his actions he had been well aware, but that Stark would have them all thrown into the Black Cells and then bend the knee to the Targaryens hadn’t entered Tywin’s wildest dreams, to think that the ‘Quiet Wolf’ would act in this manner was Tywin’s biggest failure and likely to be his last.

Tytos and Gerion had both fallen trying to defend him, his younger brothers both cut down right in front of him by the large Wyman Manderly who sliced off both their heads with a single mighty heave of his greatsword. Gods knew what had happened to Kevan or any of the other Lords of the Westerlands, all he knew that after what felt like years in perpetual darkness more and more men disappeared from the cells, escorted at swordpoint by Stark and Tarly men. Just hours previously he had seen Jaime led away, his son, his heir and legacy was a shell of what he had once been. His hair dirty and matted, large bags underneath his eyes and his cheeks gaunt and hollow from too little food, no doubt he himself looked much the same, his once strong hands were thin and skeletal, and
his stomach had been screaming for food for days or even weeks, the single plate of slop not even fit for peasants he received every other day was hardly enough to sate his hunger.

As his eyes adjusted to the bright daylight he could see what was in store for him. A large crowd of angry inhabitants of the city filled the ruins of the Dragonpit, all the way up to the top of the walls where the beginning of the once domed roof had been. Standing or sitting on hastily erected stands, and in the centre stood a simple wooden block. The sand around it was crimson with blood already. Standing beside the block was Lord Eddard Stark, wearing the same badge of office that Tywin himself had worn for twenty years, his hands grasped the ancestral sword of House Stark, the smoky ripples of valyrian steel hidden under a thick coat of glistening blood, further behind Lord Stark was a large pile of headless bodies, and Tywin could only pray that Jaime was not among them.

“Gregor Clegane,” it was Stannis Baratheon who was speaking. He too stood with Lord Stark on the raised dais, a scroll filled with the names of the condemned in his hands.

Tywin felt a small measure of satisfaction at seeing the young man. Tywin may have lost the war due to the fickle nature of Stark and his alliance of savages, but at least the rebels seemed to have paid for it. He knew that Stannis had been slowly starving out in Storm’s End and it showed. Much like Jaime his cheeks were gaunt and hollow, and his clothes sat uncomfortably on his emaciated frame.

Tywin saw a large northerner, less than half a head shorter than Celgane, though impressively he was wider, led his faithful dog of war to the block. The so called Mountain-that-rides was limping painfully towards the block, pushed by the northerner behind him, as well as dragged by four others with chains around his arms. Clegane tried to resist, that is until the big northman bashed him over the back of the head with the haft of his big sword, nearly the size of the one Clegane favoured, and then Clegane found his head on the block, held down by the large northman’s leg pressing down on his back.

“Gregor Clegane,” Ned Stark started. “You’ve been found guilty of attacking this city after entering under a banner of friendship, the murder of Aegon, the Crown Prince, and the rape and murder of his mother Princess Elia Martell of Dorne, as such in the name of His Grace King Daeron of House Targaryen, the Third of his name, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms and Protector of the Realm, I Eddard of the House Stark, Hand of the King, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North do sentence you to die.”

It was custom for the condemned to speak any final words, yet Tywin had seen Clegane led out, his jaw had obviously been broken at some point, probably to deny him the chance for any final words. All Clegane could do was scream angrily, before the screams stopped abruptly as Lord Eddard’s sword removed his head with a single swing of Ice.

Stark let the crowds cheer at the death of Clegane for a few moments before calling for order yet
again, while Clegane’s lifeless body was carried away.

“Tywin Lannister,” Stannis Baratheon called, and Tywin found himself pushed towards the block, and suddenly, he felt fear. Never before had he felt fear, not such as this. His dream of House Lannister triumphant was in ashes, destroyed by the savage northerners in favour if these filthy incestridden valyrian foreigners. His legacy would be nothing more than a warning from now on, ‘Remember what happened when the Lion thought to devour the Dragon’ people would no doubt say, and he weakly tried to resist. He was Tywin Lannister, he used to be King in all but name, his daughter should have been Queen and his blood should sit the throne, he couldn’t die like this. And to his great surprise he wouldn’t, he was led past the block, carried up on top of the carefully piled corpses and tied to a stake in the centre, only as the gag was placed in his mouth did he understand. ‘No’ he tried to shout, but it was too late. He was already gagged.

“Tywin Lannister.”

Tywin almost couldn’t believe his own eyes when he laid eyes on Queen Rhaella. Gone was the meek woman who had always shied from his presence, replaced by a true Queen, garbed in red and black. The Queen wore a skirt of mail, and her arms and hands covered in metal spaulders and vambraces. Her once loose hair was gathered together in a single waist length braid with a circlet of black iron atop her head. Surrounded by the Kingsguard whose cold expressions mirrored her own, and incredulously he noted that she had even brought her young son Viserys, as well as two grandchildren.

Princess Rhaenys was garbed in pure black, sake for a small red three headed dragon embroidered on her chest, and one of the Queen’s handmaidens held the infant King he had heard about. Rhaella stopped beside Lords Stark and Stannis, both men looked uncomfortable, no doubt knowing what the Queen had planned. At a gesture a pair of men opened a chest and fetched out five large oval shapes, ‘dragon eggs,’ he thought with panic, as the men placed the eggs around him in a circle. He struggled a bit again, trying in vain to escape his bonds, while hysterically remarking to himself the irony of the Queen finally succumbing to the madness of her family after her victory had been achieved. The very same men who placed the eggs at his feet were now dousing him, and the corpses he stood on with oil, so at least the incestuous bitch had sense enough to not use wildfire.

The Queen opened her mouth once more, the thousands of people in the Dragonpit hanging on to her every word, most of them with anticipation rather than the dread he’d assumed they would show, Targaryens and fire and all that. “You came into this city under the guise of friendship and raped, pillaged, burned and murdered my people, no more,” her voice was harsh and cold as steel, a far cry from the frightened mewls she used to spew. “Five hundred of your brutes lie dead beneath you, their blood, and your death by fire, will restore my House to its former glory, as well as ensure that the name Tywin will forever more be spoken as a curse, in the name of my grandson, the true and rightful King of Westeros, I sentence you to death by fire,” she accepted a torch from a very discomfited Eddard Stark, and gave Tywin a last, cruel smile, and then she threw the torch onto the pile.
The oil caught fire quickly, and the clothes and flesh of his dead bannermen, doused in oil quickly turned into a raging bonfire and Tywin screamed. The blaze was so hot, so hungry that he could feel the skin sloughing off his bones, and in his last moment he could hear five distinct ‘cracks’ and high pitched screams and then darkness...

Stannis:

Stannis couldn’t keep his eyes away from the blaze. He wanted to, but he couldn’t, he needed to see, to understand. Lord Eddard had spoken with him the day before, right after Robert took with him almost five hundred men on three ships and sailed away to Essos, declaring that he was ‘done with this shithole of a Kingdom’. Now that he was the official Lord of Storm’s End and the Stormlands he was already being badgered by his Lords, all of them demanding he wed their daughters, sisters or nieces, or perhaps demand a royal marriage. Their ‘spoils' for technically winning the war as it were.

And then Stark presented the Queen’s offer to him. Wed her, play the part of a dutiful husband in public, and secure her grandson’s reign as Master of Laws. A small part of him, the part that sounded like Robert screamed in furious denial, but Stannis was a man of duty. Had his father been alive he would no doubt had beseeched Stannis to do his duty, and as the King’s regent, the Queen was by all laws of the land the reigning monarch until the King came of age. Her word were the King’s words.

The war was over, peace had returned, and Stannis and Robert both had bent the knee, Robert had taken one look at the infant King and stormed out as quick as he could once the pomp and circumstance was done with. In the Rebellion Stannis had been conflicted, having to choose between his brother or his King, but now, now Stannis was Lord of the Stormlands, and his brother most likely gone from Westeros’ shores for good, so he would do his duty, and hopefully his bannermen would be content, if not, they would learn to live with it.

Appraising his Queen, the woman he was set to wed he was pleased to see that there was no trace of madness in her eyes, just cold, hard determination. Some might say that Lord Tywin’s execution was an affront to the Gods, but House Targaryen had ever gone their own way, he should know, he counted more Targaryen relatives in his family than any other in Westeros save the Velaryons, and considering how high the death toll and damage to the city itself had been in Lord Tywin’s cowardly attack, it was a fate well deserved.

He was… pleased, with the woman he was set to wed. He had some hesitations, she was eight and ten years his elder, but she was still beautiful, even clad in armour and stern of face, none in the Realm would deny her beauty, and if her actions were anything to go by she was far more clever,
and ruthless than one would think, a worthy Queen, and Lady of Storm’s End.

The blaze was dying out, having burnt unnaturally quickly, and then a tumultuous series of gasps and screams echoed through the Dragonpit. Out of the dying pyre crawled five winged creatures, the size of small dogs, each one as different and magnificent as the one before. One was the colour of gold, a ridge of black horns and spines, while another was green and bronze in colour. One had scales of pure glimmering silver, it’s spines and horns the colour of blood, the fourth was a dark brown, almost black while the last to crawl out of the flame had scales of blood red, with a strange pattern of yellows and orange, almost like the flames that had given them birth.

“Dragons,” Prince Viserys and Rhaenys both shouted eagerly while near everyone else stared in shock, some had fainted, while others held their chest as they struggled to stay upright on trembling legs, even Stannis was feeling faint.

“Yes,” Rhaella said victoriously as she strode over to the small beasts. Submissively they all ‘bowed’ before her as she studied them, eventually three of them, the brown and green one both crawled up her body before resting atop her shoulders. “Come my sweets,” Rhaella gestured for the Prince and Princess who both scrambled over to try and pick their dragon.

“Mine is Balerion,” Viserys said proudly as he held the silver dragon to his chest, it had apparently chosen him at sight as it had moved towards him before Viserys had even neared it.

“My cat is named Balerion,” Rhaenys beamed while stroking the head of her own golden dragon, “I think I will call this one Raxes,” she said proudly. “Like the first Rhaenys.”

“Meraxes my sweet,” Rhaella said indulgently, and unless Stannis was mistaken she seemed more...hale than she did before, there was an undeniably ‘glow’ to her, a strength she didn’t know she possessed that had been brought to the fore. “And this one will belong to the King,” she said as she bent down to pick up the red dragon that snapped at her fingers and hissed warningly, before astonishing everyone by leaping into the air to sail over to the King on wobbly wings.

The wetnurse whimpered, but astonishingly held her ground as the dragon landed on her shoulder and crawled down her arm to curl up on top of the King, gamely allowing the King’s fingers to try and discover this new ‘toy’.

“Today,” Rhaella’s voice rang through the Dragonpit once more. “House Targaryen is reborn anew, from the ashes of defeat we have risen from the fire, just like our dragons have.”
Stannis had to admit that the Queen had a gift for fiery speeches. A lot of the nobility looked at the newborn dragons with fear and apprehension, they knew that the days when Targaryen rule was unquestioned were approaching once more, and it sat ill with many of them, yet others, those most loyal to House Targaryen had looks of vindicated triumph, and why shouldn’t they? Those who had shown loyalty and good service to the crown had ever risen high in the service of the Targaryens, even under Aerys most everyone had been safe, provided they were loyal and did not fail the King badly, as Jon Connington had.

So while disgruntled Lords worried about what the future would bring, the smallfolk cheered louder than Stannis had ever heard them, and he knew he had done the right choice. Tywin had underestimated the love the people still held for the dragons, it were the nobles who were growing weary, or even wroth with Aerys’ madness, but it was the smallfolk who made up the majority of their armies, and even a fool could see that they still venerated their Queen, and their infant King. Rhaegar was still remembered fondly, with many a tearful eye at the thought of the Prince’s death, so naturally, his son must be as great, if not greater still in the eyes of the smallfolk, and it was to the thunderous cheers of thousands that Stannis joined the procession back to the Red Keep.

Once there, he had to wait but a few minutes before he was given an audience in the Queen’s solar. The two dragons were already exploring their new territory, while Rhaella was facing the window, looking out at what would undeniably be her domain for the next six and ten years.

“My Queen,” he knelt before her.

“Rise My Lord,” she commanded him. She waited until he stood upright before speaking again. “May I presume that you are here with an answer to my offer?”

Stannis nodded uncomfortably. He was never any good with women, and the Queen was harder to read than most. “I will accept your offer of marriage Your Grace.”

Rhaella nodded stiffly. “Then you understand what is asked?” she enquired. “I will be your wife, as such I shall perform my duty, and not deny you your – your rights in the marriage bed, but in matters of state I shall require your full cooperation.”

Stannis felt a slight flush at the thought of the marriage bed, at twenty years of age he was still a maid, it had been Robert, always Robert who knew how to act around girls, he had certainly spent enough of Storm’s End’s coin to prove that he enjoyed bedding whores. “Of course,” he replied. “You are the Dowager Queen, and Regent, while I am but a Lord.”

“Not just a Lord,” Rhaella admitted. “As my future husband, it will fall to you, more than any other
to educate my grandson the King, your grandson by law in matters of war and state. If this is a duty you cannot perform...”

“I will do my duty My Queen,” Stannis interrupted, wincing slightly at the breach of protocol. “I shall accept this duty, and care for the King as if he was my own son.”

Rhaella nodded approvingly. “Then it is settled,” she agreed. “As you are well aware I am with child, so the wedding will have to be postponed, this will at least allow us to know one another better before the wedding.”

Stannis gave a short nod, before swallowing nervously. “Does – does Your Grace have a date in mind?” he asked.

“Four moons after the birth I think will work well, our betrothal can be announced after tomorrow’s council.”

“As Your Grace commands,” Stannis bowed. “With your leave I will return to the Lord Hand and discuss strategy for the morrow.”

Rhaella nodded before stopping him. “I should like you to take Viserys with you. Gods be good he’ll never bear the burden of the Crown, but I should like for my son to become a guiding hand to my grandson once he gets older, best he starts learning how the Realm runs as soon as possible, Ser Oswell can take you to him.”

Stannis hid his surprise, but nodded anyhow. In many respects Viserys would become his adopted son once he wed the Prince’s mother, and there was truth in what she spoke. If the boy was taught how to rule, then the burden on the King’s shoulders would be lessened, and should the worst come to pass and the King died, then Viserys’ education would already be ongoing.

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Ned:

“That could have gone worse,” Ned admitted to the Small Council as they watched Mace Tyrell storm out. The fat Lord of Highgarden had finally been granted his ‘audience’ only to learn that he would be returning to Highgarden without all his titles but the Lordship of Highgarden, and without his oldest son and heir, and the knowledge that his daughter would be wed to the heir of the man who had been granted his former titles.
Lord Mace had blustered and screamed, until his bannermen, including his cousin and goodbrother Paxter Redwyne all agreed with the Queen’s decision, as well as denounced Mace’s capabilities of running the Reach, granted some of them had likely done so out of fear as many of them had shot concerned and fearful looks at the amber eyes of the three dragons in the room, following their every move.

“It’ll be alright lad,” Ned tried to reassure the young Willas Tyrell who tried desperately to stem his tears, and the young heir to Highgarden gave him a trembling smile when Ned gave his shoulder a comforting squeeze.

The situation with the Reach had been the last official business for the day. The situation with the Riverlands had been settled first. Brynden the Blackfish had been wroth at the beginning, but had cheered up when he learned that the Freys would lose their lands and titles. A great many of them would no doubt be at a loss for what to do, while others would be welcomed back into their mothers houses, such as Mar i yah Darry and her children. And the Blackfish had given him a grateful smile when Ned informed him that he would grant Robb who had been born earlier that week a holdfast in the North if he desired it when he grew older. Result of a sham marriage or not, he was Ned’s firstborn son. The thing that had won him over in the end was when he was offered a spot on the Kingsguard, which would allow the Blackfish to stay with Cat and Robb until Cat would marry Raymund Darry.

The Queen had been hesitant to allow him into the Kingsguard, but in the end it had been Ser Barristan and Ser Gerold who had vouched for him. Riverrun itself would be managed by its Castellan while Edmure fostered alongside his future goodbrother under the tutelage of Ser Willem Darry, who was by all accounts a skilled Knight, and though he had never been a Lord himself, Ser Willem had spent over half his life deeply embedded in the politics of King’s Landing, he knew well how to run a castle.

Of the Kingsguard, Ned had found himself in the uncomfortable position of having to speak up on Ser Jaime’s behalf. Thanks to Ser Jaime the wildfire in the city had been excavated and dumped into the Blackwater where it was detonated at a safe distance. The Queen herself had been amenable to pardoning the young Lannister, though not without punishment. Ser Jaime would go down as the first in history to be discharged from the Kingsguard. The Queen had not been completely heartless, and had permitted Jaime to take up the position of Lord of Casterly Rock and Warden of the West, though he had been forced to agree to marrying a Lady of the Queen’s choosing, and the previous terms still stood, for the next ten years, the Westerlands would have to pay an increase of twenty percent in taxes, and both his siblings would become wards of the Crown, with the Queen herself choosing who they would marry. In the end, Ser Jaime had accepted, and he left that same day to lead what remained of the Westerlanders back to their homes. Of the twelve thousand strong host Tywin had brought to King’s Landing, less than eight thousand returned, many of them with a hand less, or without their cocks, the rest had been executed or taken the Black.
Ned had already been informed what would happen to Cersei. She was giving Tywin’s daughter over to him to find her a husband in the North, as far away from the capitol as possible. Rhaella’s only restriction as that Cersei would not be permitted to wed into a House which could command lesser Lords as well, so it would most likely be a Knightly House. A rarity in the North, but there were a few, and Wyman had promised to look into it.

His foster father Jon Arryn had surprised everyone by asking for the Queen to accept his great nephew Harrold Hardyng as his heir until he could find himself a new wife as soon as Lysa Tully was sworn into the Silent Sisters.

In the meantime the last two positions on the Kingsguard had also been filled. His brother’s squire Ethan Glover had been Knighted by Ser Barristan himself after facing each one of the Kingsguard in a series of duels and then sworn in. The one who took the last spot was Jon Connington who had returned earlier that very day. The former Lord of Griffin’s Roost, had fallen to his knees before the Queen and pleaded for forgiveness. Once he had seen the King, he had broken into renewed tears, calling him ‘My Silver Prince’. Ned had expressed doubts about his capacity as Kingsguard, but the Queen had overridden him, and accepted Connington into the brotherhood chosen to safeguard her grandson. Lordship of Griffin’s Roost would instead go to Jon’s cousin Ronnet Connington.

It was just as the last of the Reachmen were trickling out of the throne room that one of the men sworn to Dragonstone came running in, his breath was heaving and he was bent over, his hands resting on his knees. “The – Dornish – are – here.” He gasped.
“I believe that concludes business for today,” Rhaella said drily. “Lord Stark, the Crown would like to thank you for the duty which you have executed to our satisfaction, but we must now ask of you to resign from your post so that another man might take your place.”

“Your Grace,” Ned Stark bowed deep and removed the cursed chain that held the bade of office for Hand of the King. As soon as the necklace left him he almost felt a ‘weight’ remove itself, and he wondered if mayhap there might not be some truth to the tales that the Iron Throne and the position of Hand might actually be cursed, her for certain felt much better without the blasted thing hanging about his neck. “I thank you for the honour you granted me,” he said as he gave the back of her hand the slightest of kisses before giving her the necklace. “I presume you give me leave to return to the North then?”

“I give it,” Rhaella said with the tiniest of smiles. “Yet I do not doubt you wish to remain with us a bit longer yes? To await your wife and daughter?”

Ned Stark blushed slightly at the mention of his wife whom he had not seen for over a year. “That was my thought yes.”

Rhaella nodded absently as she toyed with the necklace in her hand. “Lucerys my friend, it seems I must ask you to take up the position of Hand of the King once more.”

Old Lucerys Velaryon laughed. “tis always a pleasure to serve My Queen in whichever manner the Realm requires,” he said as he hung the chain about his neck.

It was at that point that a man who could only be Oberyn Martell almost blew the doors open as he stormed in, causing many a man to draw their blades, while Rhaella almost cursed as Daeron awoke and started crying, causing one of his wetnurses, as well as Rhaenys to run over to try and calm him. Heedless of the guards running after him to try and stop him, or the three Kingsguard who approached him with bared steel in their hands, the ill tempered Dornish Prince stopped dead a few yards away from Rhaella and her grandchildren, the razor sharp blades of Ser Barristan and Ser Gerold held unerringly still less than an inch from his throat.
“Prince Oberyn I assume?” Rhaella stated darkly as her grandson finally fell asleep in his wetnurse’s arms. “Explain yourself at once Ser!”

Oberyn opened his mouth, no doubt to shout, but the furious warning glare Rhaella shot him, as well as Gerold’s sword actually shaving away a few strands from his beard made the man reconsider enough to keep his tongue and step back. “I that him then?” he spat bitterly while giving a small nod towards Daeron who was sleeping safely in the arms of his wetnurse. “Is that the wolfspawn whom you expect to replace Elia’s Aegon with?”

Oberyn Martell was furious no doubts about it. His eyes were wild and his face was an unhealthy shade of red. “My uncle, sister and nephew all murdered, their bodies hardly cold before you seek to replace Aegon with – with that northern bastard.”

“You don’t like my brother?” Rhaenys asked with a broken voice.

“Rhaenys...” Oberyn let out a heartfelt sigh and tried to approach his niece, only to recoil as if struck when Rhaenys embraced her grandmother with a sob, clinging to her skirts and refusing to so much as look at Oberyn. “Rhaenys, I am your uncle,” he tried again, letting out a wince as Barristan returned his sword to his neck when he tried to approach once more.

“Uncle Ned is much better,” Rhaenys cried as she turned around to glare at Oberyn, her eyes wet with tears, while her face was twisted in a snarl that was undeniably Targaryen. “He likes Daeron.”

Were Oberyn armed he would’ve impaled Barristan, Oswell and Hightower the moment they hid their laughter with identical faked coughs, and the look on Queen Rhaella’s face, oh how he hated it. ’twas the look of victory, the look of a woman who not only caught her husband abed with someone else, but was given all of his lands and titles while her rake of a spouse was left begging in the streets. Because of his temper he had lost Rhaenys, and The Gods only knew if she would ever forgive him, or forget his words.

“I think it best that Prince Oberyn and I converse in private,” Rhaella said coldly. “Ser Gerold you can stay, the rest of you out!” as if stung the remaining men and women in the large throne room scarpered, Barristan and Oswell reluctantly sheathing their blades while following their King and Princess.

“Now that we are alone at last,” Rhaella started, as if pretending that Gerold Hightower wasn’t standing beside her like a steel clad tower and holding a five feet long piece of razor sharp steel in his
hands, “We can discuss the future.”

Oberyn’s eyes narrowed. “I’ve been sent here at my brother’s behest. Dorne has several demands and we will have them met,” he threatened.

Rhaella actually snorted. “I always thought we gave Dorne too much leeway, and your behaviour now proves me right. Rhaenys will wed her brother **The King** when both are old enough to consummate the marriage—” She held up a hand to cut off Oberyn before he could interject with more of his venom. “That is my command, and you’ll accept it with all the appropriate happiness Ser, I’ll hear no more on it.”

“Elia and Aegon’s murderers, as well as the man who ordered it have all been dealt the King’s justice, Rhaenys will be Queen, meaning that one of yours and Doran’s great nephews will be King, I fail to see what else might be troubling you.”

“Do you think that anyone in Dorne will accept a son of Lyanna Stark as King? The wolf whore who seduced Elia’s husband? Elia, who gave birth to his children, nursed them at her own breast and brutishly murdered all for that northern bitch who couldn’t keep her legs shut—**SMACK**!”

Oberyn was so caught by surprise by the sudden impact of Rhaella’s hand and sharp nails that he actually stumbled back. “Don’t you **DARE** !” Rhaella hissed warningly. “How many married women or even men have you not fornicated with over the years?” she asked, scoffing angrily as he kept silent. “I thought as much. You flit from bed to bed without a care, and between the two of us, we both know that Elia did not keep to one bed either. Just because she was more discrete than my son does not make his actions any worse than yours or Elia’s, at the very least one can say that my son at least had the honour to wed the woman he set his eyes on. You have some queer standards for relationships in Dorne I know,” Rhaella said mockingly, “but those of us from the Blood of Old Valyria have our own customs too. ‘Tis not uncommon for us to take more than one wife, and in some of the older, now extinct Houses, more than one husband,” she narrowed her eyes warningly at Oberyn.

“I expect you, and later Doran to swear fealty to my grandson, to express your joy and blessing at his betrothal to Rhaenys.”

“And if we don’t?” Oberyn asked with a strangled voice.

“Then, we shall do what Aegon and Daeron both failed at, but we won’t go to Dorne to conquer, oh no. We shall arrive with the greatest army Westeros has ever seen and we shall enter Dorne. Your ports and rivers will be blocked by our fleets, every well poisoned, the soil of every field salted,
 every last hamlet, town and village burned to the ground and your castles will be torn down stone by stone. Only when the people of Dorne themselves come bearing the heads of every knight and noble Lord and Lady before us, only when your very own people Bow, Bend and Break House Martell, will we return for any other purpose than war.”

Oberyn swallowed noisily as he stared up at the majestic face of the woman the entire Realm had whispered spent most of her days fleeing the wrath and attention of her husband. “It seems… Your Grace, that it is you, not your brother the people should have been weary of.”

Rhaella smirked slightly, a look so foreign, and frightening on her normally angelic face that Oberyn in the moment prayed to all the Gods he wouldn’t have to see it again. “Even before my brother lost his wits he had little interest in ruling, my father and grandfather taught me well.”

“I…” Oberyn swallowed again. “I am confident that Doran will accept these terms Your Grace, as will I.”

Rhaella smiled. “Excellent,” she said “but I must warn you my young Prince, that I am a superstitious woman, and if anything should befall my grandson, if he should break his neck falling down some stairs, or succumb from a bad belly, or if he’s struck by a bolt of lightning,” There was nothing but pure rage and contempt on Rhaella’s face now, her eyes almost alight with violet flames, and the dragon perched on her shoulder was eying Oberyn hungrily,” I am going to blame someone in Dorne, and that, I do not forgive, but, besides that, I will continue to treat Dorne with the respect it has commanded since they entered the fold, I will still allow them to keep their succession laws and for House Martell to call themselves ‘Prince of Dorne.’.”

“Thank you, Your Grace,” Oberyn bowed, while doing his best to not react to the sweat he knew was pouring from his body, that remark about a bad belly was definitively aimed at him, as if she’d known that for a brief moment he had been considering one of many poisons he knew about that could’ve gotten rid of the infant King, and then he cursed himself. Had he not raged for countless hours about Aegon’s death, he, Doran, and everyone else in Dorne utterly despised the murder of innocent children, and yet, for a brief moment, he’d considered that very thing, simply for the boy being the son of Lyanna Stark, he was going to be better, he had to be better, that he vowed.

“A final thing before you go for a change of drawers.” she said while wrinkling her nose at the faint hint of urine that now wafted from Oberyn’s trousers (even small that dragon along with Rhaella’s twisted angry features had made him have a slight accident) “Perhaps Doran would be so willing as to let Princess Arianne foster here?” Rhaella voiced. “Why she is Rhaenys’ cousin after all, and who better to teach her how to rule, all while being a Princess, than the Queen herself?”

Oberyn could’ve cursed. When asked like that neither he, nor Doran could very well refuse, and it
also meant that Rhaella would keep him close as well. Doran wouldn’t leave Dorne, they both knew that, and she was clever enough to know that Doran would never let Arianne stay in King’s Landing without close family to protect her. ‘Blasted woman is too clever by far’ Oberyn bemoaned as he resigned himself to the fact that a lot of his time would from now on be spent as a ‘guest’ in the Red Keep. A bird in an extravagant gilded cage, whose only bars preventing his escape would be his two nieces, a chain of love, honour and duty heavier than any mountain in the world. “Of course,” Oberyn said with a sigh and drooped shoulders, “It will be as you ask,” and then he turned and walked slowly out of the Red Keep to try and find a brothel to drown his sorrows in. He had arrived at King’s Landing with a purpose, with clear and firm goals that his brother wanted him to pull through, and for the first time in his life he had lost everything.

“You wished to speak with me Your Grace,” Roose Bolton said softly as he stepped into Rhaella’s solar a few days later.

“Ah yes, Lord Bolton,” Rhaella remarked as she offered him a seat which the pale northern Lord took silently. “If I am not mistaken you are set to return to the North in a few days.”

“I am,” Roose said. “I have a wife and a young son there.”

“The Crown would beg you to remain for an extended period of time,” Lord Stannis Baratheon said from where he was standing beside the Queen Regent and his future wife. “For the nonce the Crown is in need of your services and your particular… talents,” he admitted with a slight frown.

If Roose had any thoughts about what was being asked of him he did not show it, his pale face was as cold as ever. “You are aware that flaying has been outlawed in the North for millennia?” he asked cautiously.

“It is a good thing we are not in the North then,” Rhaella stated succinctly, “furthermore, the needs of your King far outweighs Lord Stark’s wishes, at least here in the Capitol.”

Roose was silent for a moment, scanning the faces of Rhaella, Stannis and Lord Commander Hightower. “What exactly is being asked of me Your Grace?”

Ser Gerold handed over a sealed letter to Roose who opened it. “Lord Commander of the City
Watch and Chief Interrogator of the Crown,” he remarked as he scanned the letter of appointment.

“As Master of Laws I have several duties,” Stannis said. “Part of those duties includes whipping the Goldcloaks into shape, to do that I am in need of competent men who can hopefully help me reduce the rot and corruption that has festered in the Goldcloaks for decades, as well as transform them from barely competent rabble and into a fighting force that Daemon Targaryen himself would be impressed by.”

“Who would be working with me?” he asked.

“Ser Jaremy Rykker, Lyn Corbray and Alliser Thorne have already agreed to take up positions of Captains, all of them hard and skilled men, a certain Sandor Clegane has also volunteered his services.”

“Clegane!” Roose said with surprise.

“Ser Gregor’s younger brother,” Rhaella said with distaste. “The lad swore himself to our service the moment he learned that we were to have his brother executed, apparently Ser Gregor murdered their sister some years back, and young Sandor apparently wants nothing to do with the Lannisters who protected Gregor all these years.”

“How young is he?” Roose asked curiously at the repeated mention of ‘young’.

“Three and ten according to him,” Stannis said, “but the lad is already the size of a man grown, and certainly has both strength and skill with a sword, he is young yet, but it is our hope to groom him for command.”

“How long would Your Grace be in need of my services?”

“Three years ought to do it I think,” Rhaella said kindly, “by that time we’ll hopefully have managed to turn the Goldcloaks into something to be proud of once again.”

“I… accept,” Roose said after a moment of hesitation.
“Excellent,” Rhaella said. “Accompany Ser Gerold and find Oberyn Martell and head to the Black Cells, Pycelle might think we have forgotten him but today is the day we remind him that a Dragon do not forget, nor forgive so easily.”

Roose let out an involuntary shiver at the gleam in Rhaella’s eyes, and felt a momentary pang of sympathy for the aged Grandmaester, he been witness to the punishment already meted out against the Westerlanders, the Tullys and Tyrells, and he gave a shrot prayer to the Old Gods that the Queen Regent would never find out about the times he had exercised his rights to the ‘First Night’, a custom long since prohibited in Westeros, he doubted she would be forgiving if she did. Leaving the Room with Ser Gerold and Lord Stannis he heard Rhaella greet the Spymaster Varys just before the door closed behind him.

“You have news for me I trust Varys?” Rhaella asked as soon as she was certain Lord Roose, Stannis and Ser Gerold were out of hearing range.

“Indeed My Queen,” Varys said softly, his voice as silky and effeminate as ever. “The caches of wildfire are all gone and the popularity of House Targaryen is higher than it has been in decades here in the Capitol.”

“That is good news,” Rhaella said as she let out a relieved sigh, her brother husband’s insanity had weighed heavily on her for years, both in mind as well as in body.

“Yes,” Varys agreed. “The people sing the graces of their beloved ‘Warrior Queen’ often enough, and drink to the babe King’s health, it seems, forgive me for saying so, that the death of your son has made the people more sympathetic to your grandson.”

Rhaella held back her spike of grief at the mention of Rhaegar, knowing that bemoaning the fate of her beloved son would not help. “And the dornish?”

“Better than we had dared hope,” Varys replied. “Prince Oberyn apparently took to a brothel the first night he was here, and in his cups lambasted himself for wishing death on an innocent boy, as well as alienating his niece.”
“Hmm,” Rhaella mused to herself. “Mayhap we should make an effort to embrace the dornish… Offer Prince Oberyn a seat on our council in an advisory position, mayhap ask him to teach my grandson the spear when the time comes,” she turned her sharp eyes directly on Varys, “but keep him under constant watch, I do not wish to take any chances, not until I can be assured of his loyalty.”

“It will be done,” Varys assured her. “There is… another matter,” he confessed. “A few of my birds have sung some fascinating songs. Mace Tyrell is, rightfully wroth and has been trying to stir up trouble with his bannermen, having been overheard on no less than three occasions that he has no intention of wedding away his ‘darling girl’ to the Tarly babe, nor pander to Lord Tarly.”

Rhaella almost snarled. “I spare his life after his fear and laziness almost cost my House everything,” she got a sly glint in her eye. “Something must be done to curtail his behavior,” she remarked. “A scandal perhaps, something that would remove any fangs or remnants of loyalty left to him.”

Varys tittered slightly. “I think I know just the thing Your Grace, his great uncle Lorman was once banished from the shores of Westeros by Lord Luthor after he was found cavorting with another man in a brothel by his own betrothed,” Varys stroked his chin slightly, “Yes, I think I have just the right idea, leave it to me Your Grace and I’ll soon have Lord Mace too ashamed to show his face in even the lowest of taverns in the Realm.”

Varys hesitated for a moment, as if unsure if he should speak or not, until Rhaella bid him to speak his mind. “There is some muttering about the Freys, disliked or no, a lot of lesser Lords did not take it well that the Freys lost all lands and titles, some out of fear that a similar thing may happen to them, while others were invested in the Freys through marriage.”

“Most people have no doubt forgotten this by now, but Lord Walder was accompanying his father to Lord Butterwell’s wedding tourney, the tourney that was a front for a second Blackfyre Rebellion. Lord Walder’s father was warned then, that any more insurrectionist actions from House Frey would see them removed from all claims to title or land.” Rhaella smirked slightly. “Lord Frey held back his men in the hopes of avoiding any fighting, thereby refusing to answer the calls of his Liege Lord or King, a gamble that sadly for him and his kin failed to yield results.”

Varys tittered approvingly. “I shall spread this song among the nobility and smallfolk, hopefully that will put an end to the mutterings.”

“See to it that it is done,” Rhaella said before standing up. “Now if you excuse me dear Spider, I have an overdue meeting with Grandmaester Pycelle.”
The door to Pycelle’s cell opened and Rhaella found the Grandmaester lying huddled in a corner, clad in filthy rags. She looked at the jailor. "Leave. Now." The jailor left a torch in the torch stance on the wall and hurriedly left, with Prince Oberyn, Ser Gerold and Lord Bolton filling into the cell after his departure. Rhaella kept her gaze focused on the Grand Maester, however, as she walked to a nearby chair and sat in it as Gerold and Roose walked to either side of Pycelle’s cowering form.

"My....my queen! How might I be of service to you?" Pycelle whimpered as he attempted to rise from the floor, but was pushed back down onto it by Gerold. "Lord commander, what is the meaning of this?"

"Be silent," Gerold told him as he turned his attention to Rhaella.

"Grandmaester, I hereby accuse you of treason to the Crown. How do you plead?" Rhaella asked coldly.

"My Queen! I am innocent!" Pycelle protested.

Gerold's gauntleted hand smacked the Grandmaester upside his head then, causing the old man to cry out.

"Lord commander," Rhaella called out, gaining Gerold's attention. "refrain from doing that again. Unless I tell you to do so, of course."

"Yes, my queen," Gerold said as Pycelle rose back to his feet.

"I ask you again, Grand Maester, how do you plead?" Rhaella asked again.

"Innocent! My queen, I am innocent! I have only ever served House Targaryen, only the dragons!"

"Then why did you advise my husband to open the gates when Tywin Lannister had his army at the front gates? Are you a damned fool, or a traitor?" Rhaella asked.

"My queen. please, believe me, I had no idea lord Tywin would attack the city!" Pycelle said.
Rhaella looked to Gerold out of the corner of her eye and nodded her head slightly. Gerold then grabbed Pycelle’s right hand and slammed it hard onto floor before stomping onto it with enough force that the sickening snap of bones breaking could be heard, followed by a heartbroken wail of agony from the old man.

Rhaella rose to her feet and walked over to Pycelle, who was rolling on the floor, and stepped onto his broken hand. She knelt down then and lifted his head up so he could see her as she asked, “I ask you once more Grandmaester, How. Do. You. Plead?”

"Innocent Your Grace, Is wear by the Old Gods and the new I am innocent!” Pycelle cried out in pain before Rhaella took her foot off of his broken hand.

“You always were Tywin’s creature,” Rhaella said sadly as she gestured for Roose Bolton to approach. “Well you will listen now, Tywin is dead,” she said, smiling hungrily at the look of panic and despair on his face. “His best men, dead or maimed, his son a hostage and his daughter to be wed of to a Ser Kyle Condon in the North I think it was, you have lost.”

“No, no, no,” Pycelle was muttering.

“Lord Bolton,” how long will he live if you take your knife to him?” Rhaella asked curiously.

“I… must confess to ignorance on the matter,” Roose admitted surly. “My grandfather boasted of having kept a man alive for a full three days after flaying him, but I’ve never had the pleasure of honing my craft on anything else but pigs I fear.”

“And for all his resemblance to one, he is actually a man,” Rhaella admitted drily. “very well Prince Oberyn, it seems you will be permitted to gain some vengeance personally, after all, it is thanks to this swine that Elia and Aegon are dead.”

“I will enjoy this,” Oberyn said with his dornish drawl. “I have so many poisons,” he said enthusiastically as he stalked towards Pycelle, “Oh but you are a learned man in matters of poison are you not?” he asked Pycelle rhetorically, “mayhap you’ve even built up some resistance to it, no, I think we shall have to employ other means,” he looked around for a moment before gesturing for Gerold and Roose to help the fat man onto the table that had been brought in. “Hold him down,” Oberyn said before wetting a large towel in a bucket that he then laid over the old man’s face.
“This is apparently a method of interrogation favoured in the Iron Isles, mirrors the feel of drowning I hear,” Oberyn continued to talk calmly, as if discussing something as inane as the weather, or the smell of shit that still permeated the city, even with all the work being done to improve on the sewage system.

Ser Gerold took the towel and pressed it down onto Pyrcelle’s face while Oberyn slowly emptied the first bucket over the old man who started to twist and sputter in panic while Roose Bolton pressed his hands down onto his chest to keep him prone upon the table.

“I want him broken,” Rhaella said. “Twist his mind until there is nothing left, every secret, every desire and every scheme, I want it all, and when he is of no more use, I want you to ply your craft on him Lord Bolton.”

“It shall be so Your Grace,” Lord Bolton responded before turning his pale eyes back to Pyrcelle who was pleading for mercy...

AN:

Well, this seemed as good a place as any to end it. Next chapter will see some more timeskips, such as Dany’s birth and Rhaella’s marriage to Stannis. I do apologize for my update rate, but no matter how much I would love to be able to pump out a chapter a week my rather hectic Real Life does prevent me from writing as much, or as often as I would like.

For those of you still following me, I hope you liked this update at least, and I can only hope that the next chapter will be written sooner.

And thanks to BlackLight2181 for his help on some parts of this chapter. You rock mate.

Cheers

Daemon Belaerys.

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