Wolves and Titans

by M1ke_H0ncho

Summary

What happens when the Starks come across Squad Levi of the Survey Corps on the moors outside of Winterfell. How will these new soldiers change the future of A Song of Ice and Fire.

Notes

So, this is my first fic that I'm publishing. I have a few different ones in the can, but thought I'd throw this one out to test the waters. Always looking for constructive feedback. I'm not too much of a writer, and I must have gone threw this first chapter at least five times before saying "F*CK IT! POST IT!" I will try to get chapters up at a decent pace. I'm hoping that actually publishing this will light a fire under my ass to keep the story going. I have a few
chapters already done, so we will see what I can do.

******SPOILER WARNING!!!!********
The first few chapters of this fic contain major spoilers for Attack on Titan that come from the manga past the Uprising Arc of Season 3, so read at your own risk.

This starts before the events of AGOT, but after the events of Season 3 of AoT.

Also, don’t expect much if any smut. As a writer I tend to do the cable television cut when things get steamy and come back post coitus, so sorry if you were looking forward to that.

Lastly, I do not own any of the characters in this fic. They are the property of their respective owners. Oh, and HBO. This was just a fun idea that stuck in my head and wouldn’t go away. So, enjoy.

See the end of the work for more notes.
JON I

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Jon was still riding at the back of the party as they broke out of the Wolfswood. The sun was shining through the bright blue cloudless sky. It was a beautiful northern summer day with only a small bite to the crisp air.

He had been so distracted looking at the small white direwolf pup clutched to his chest that he hadn't bothered to catch up to his brothers and Theon. He had felt slightly disappointed when they had first found the five pups. He would've liked to keep on, but knew Lady Stark would've had a fit if the Bastard got one and one of her trueborn children had to go without. So, Jon had said he wouldn't take one when offered. Unfortunately, his father had seen the look cross his face before he had been able to school his features. Lord Stark had answered that with a sad frown and a sympathetic look of understanding. However, the pup in his arms had made a few slight whines before Jon could reach his horse. When Jon had found his pup he understood why he had initially
been looked over. Being separated from his mother's corpse and litter mates his white fur had made him almost completely camouflaged amongst the snow.

Then his mind started going over what the deserter had said before he lost his head. White Walkers. Though Robb, Theon, and his father had dismissed the man's claims immediately as the ravings of a mad man. Jon couldn't shake the feeling that he could have possibly been telling the truth. A small tremor of fear rode up his spine thinking about Old Nan's tales of the Long Night. If the White Walkers had really risen up again north of the Wall it would be well worth at least asking the Lord Commander what reports he has been getting from the far north. If all else failed Jon figured he could just look into it himself when, Father, finally allowed him to join the Watch. He only had a few more years to deal with Lady Stark's glares because, Father, had relented enough to say that he could once he reached the age of eight and ten if no other options drew his attention.

He had thought of a few possible options while growing up. Options were limited for bastards for the most part, but an acknowledged highborn bastard had a lot more freedom. He knew at his age he was too old to earn a knight hood through squiring. If he was to become a knight now it would have to be through deed or valor. He could always go to White Harbor and learn to sail the seas and become a merchant sailor. He was sure his father would be happy to assist financially at first if that was a choice he wanted to pursue. He could always become a sworn sword for Arya when she finally left Winterfell to marry. He knew Sansa would never accept his company. The prim lady that she was wouldn't want her bastard half-brother around.

There was the option of traveling to Dorne. He knew bastards were treated differently and with more respect there. He could possible join a house hold guard. There was also the option in Dorne of going to Starfall and seeing if he could uncover any knowledge of his mother. He had heard rumors growing up that Ashara Dayne may be the one, and it was known his father had stopped there to deliver Dawn after his fight with Ser Arthur Dayne. He knew though that if his father found out he wanted to head to Dorne he would be denied. His father's unwillingness to divulge any knowledge of his mother had been one of the most infuriating mysteries of his life.

Then, there was the option of joining the Night's Watch. Jon knew his birth wouldn't be used against him there. His uncle Benjen had told him a few times a man at the Watch gets what he earns and his past be damned. One of the few things holding him back from that option was the look his father would get whenever it was mentioned. He knew Lord Stark didn't want him to swear his life away at the Wall, but he wasn't really helping in the decision making. He had to know that Jon wouldn't tolerate Lady Stark's looks and insults for all his life. Lastly, there was this new information to look into. Though, Jon wouldn't be able to investigate it freely. He would have to listen to the commands of his officers and the Lord Commander.

Jon's musings were cut short when all the wolf pups simultaneously began whining and barking. Even the white pup in his arms became restless and fidgety though he still didn't make a noise.

Suddenly, across the moors a giant bolt of yellow lightening struck the ground from the still cloudless sky, and was accompanied by a massive explosion. The shock from the impact almost threw everyone from their mounts as the trees were violently thrashed about from the force, and Jon had to pull his reins tight with his one free hand to stop his horse from bolting. As he came back under control Jon stroked his neck to calm him further.

When he directed his attention to where the lightening had stuck he felt his breath catch. The wind was blowing the smoke away revealing four massive giants. Three of them had to be at least half the height of the walls of Winterfell. One looked like a muscular naked man, the second looked like a knight covered head to toe in golden armor and was almost twice as broad as the first one,
and the third looked like a woman who had been flayed but still had a full head of sandy blonde hair. The fourth looked like a flayed man and towered over twice the height of the other three yet was only a torso, head, and arms. They stood there limp their arms and heads hanging as though they fell asleep standing and steam was pouring off their bodies.

A loud pop drew his attention to the silhouettes of people some how flying around the giants like flies buzzing around a stable hand. Jon heard the sound of steel being drawn as the members of the Stark Guard drew their swords. Robb spurred his horse towards the giants as their father called out for him to stop, but his protests were lost in the wind as Theon took off to follow. Jory cursed under his breath and followed his Lord's heir. Ser Rodrick kept muttering “Seven Hells” to himself and his father shot him an exasperated look before signaling with his head for them to follow his reckless heir and ward. Jon quickly kicked his mount in the sides and the rest of the guards took off following behind his father.

Closing the distance Jon could make out eight people swarming the giants. When they seemed to notice they weren't moving all eight landed on the shoulders of the 'naked' giant. Two people moved towards the base of its neck. Jon's eyes went wide as a large cloud of steam exploded from its skin and another person emerged as red muscle strands snapped from their face. The other two helped their comrade emerge as three more similar explosions occurred at the necks of the other giants.

Immediately, five of the people on the 'naked' giant's shoulders flew towards the newly emerged people with loud pops and hisses as ropes shot from their waists to the other giants. Sunlight flashed off steel as the five of them all brandished swords in each of their hands.

Jon held his breath as the distance closed and they raised their swords to strike. They pulled back immediately when Lord Stark's voice rang out across the open field, “STOP. THIS. IMMEDIATELY!” It was the lord's voice, as they all called it, that demanded immediate attention and could silence the most boisterous lords of the north.

The swords dropped to their sides as they swung down and landed on the shoulders of the giants. Two on the massive flayed one, two on the knight, and one on the woman. All heads and eyes turned to their party as his father pushed past Robb and Theon to the front. Two of the people looked at each other for a moment before they both jumped off the shoulder of the 'naked' giant. As they fell ropes shot out of their waists with the same pop-hiss into the back of the giant. They swung down landing into a slight jog. As their feet hit ground the ropes snapped out of the giant and retracted into little boxes on their waists.

The man and what turned out to be a woman walked towards Jon's party. They both wore brown leather riding boots that came up over their knees, white breeches that had brown leather straps winding around their legs, and dark green cloaks that stopped at their waists. Resting on each of their thighs they had strange scabbards that were rectangular and green. The woman was a few inches taller than the man and had her chestnut brown hair pulled back into a high pony tail with her bangs loose, and over her amber eyes she wore a strange pair of lenses held in place by a band. Her companion had short raven black hair that was parted on the right and his eyes could almost be considered Stark Grey though a little darker.

As they neared Jory and the rest of the guards raised their blades in silent warning. The woman froze in her steps and raised her brows. She quickly scanned their party before she nodded slightly in understanding and crossing her arms over her body she sheathed both of her swords. The man followed suit, but he kept a suspicious eye on them with his hands resting on the hilts.

Jon watched his father dismounted his horse after he handed the wolf pup held in his arm to Jory.
He walked up and stopped a few paces from the strangers. He seemed to assess the two for a moment before speaking “I am Lord Eddard Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North.”

The woman bowed her head slightly before answering in a melodic voice, “Hello, I'm Squad Leader Hange Zoe, and this is my counterpart Captain Levi Ackermann.” The man identified as Levi nodded his head slightly at his introduction.

“How did you come to be here?” His lord father asked.

“Frankly, My Lord, I don't even know where here is.” Hange spoke as she looked around. “One moment we were in the Stoess District trying to apprehend those three,” she pointed over her shoulder at the three who had just exited the giants, “and the next we are here with you.”

“Well you are now in the Northern Kingdom of Westeros. Over there is my ancestral castle of Winterfell.” He was cut off by the thundering of horse hooves. When Jon looked over twenty more of the Stark Guard were galloping in their direction from the castle, and the battlements were flooded with people trying to see what the commotion was all about. They halted their approach at the signal of their lord. “Can you get your men down here?”

Levi nodded in answer, spun around, and yelled “Hey, Twerps, get down here!” Jon observed the sigil that was sewn on his cloak while his back was turned. It consisted of a white feathered wing overlapping a blue feathered wing on a grey shield that was quartered by white borders.

Multiple pops and hisses sounded as the others made their way down from the giants. Jon was surprised to see more women mixed in the group, and even more surprised that with the exception of Hange and Levi all the others were all around Jon and Robb's age. One of the girls drew Jon's attention immediately. The way her eyes were slightly almond shaped and the narrow shape of her chin reminded him of the people of Yi-Ti he had read and seen drawings of in Maester Luwin’s books. Around her neck she had a dark red scarf. Like Levi she had raven black hair, but her eyes were bright silvery grey bordered in black.

The boy next to her was the one that had been helped from the 'naked' giant. He had short dark brown hair and bright emerald green eyes. Under his eyes the skin was wrinkled, red, irritated, and as he stood there steam continued to pour off of him.

Behind the group of strangers the giants' bodies suddenly started steaming and cracking like they were to collapse at any moment. “What is happening?” Robb called out alarmed.

“Oh, that?” Hange answered quickly, “That is their titan bodies breaking down. In a few hours you won't be able to tell they were there at all.”

“Seven Hells.” He heard Ser Rodrik mutter once again.

Lord Stark spoke to the group then, “I am going to take to Winterfell. I want all of you to surrender your arms and you will be guarded at all times in my castle as I see fit.” His father must have seen the apprehension that crossed most of their faces and the captain looked like he was about to object, so he quickly continued. “In our land no harm will come to you as long as you reside under my roof, and obey my rules,” he stopped momentarily to look over the last three who had reluctantly joined the group yet still kept some distance, “Any of you. It is an affront to our gods for you to be hurt or for you to hurt anyone while in our home as guests. I want to be clear you may be guarded and observed, but you are not prisoners. I mean to get to the bottom of this. Is that understood?” the whole group nodded in answer.

Jon watched as Tomard and Alyn went through the strangers collecting their weapons. As Alyn
passed by him to distribute them amongst the Stark troop he snuck a glance at them. He had never seen anything like them before. The scabbards were large metal boxes with a strange cylinder on the top along with some type of tube hanging off it. The hilts were of a design that Jon doubt would be of much use in a sword fight. Instead of a crossguard there was a curved 'finger guard', but even that looked like it could move. It was all very peculiar.

When the guards had finally relieved all the new comers of their arms, and had them secured to their saddles his father addressed them once more. “Good, now all of you mount up double with my guards and head to the castle.” He turned his attention once again to the separate group, “My Lady, ride with my son, Jon,” his father directed at the blonde girl of the group while pointing at Jon, “You two men hop on with my son Robb and Theon.”

As the young woman approached Jon's horse he could hear Theon grumbling about why he got the beautiful blonde and he got stuck with the men. Jon couldn't help the slight smirk that came to his face at that.

When said girl got to him he noticed her beautiful blue-grey eyes. She had a slight hawkish nose and even with the steaming wrinkles on her cheeks Jon couldn't help but think she was beautiful. Her honey blonde hair was pulled back into a tight bun with random ends sticking out and like most of the other women her bangs were hanging loose to blow in the wind. Instead of the green cloak the others were wearing she was donned in a strange beige top that was long sleeved yet stopped half way down her torso. On her left breast and shoulders she also bore a different sigil. Instead of wings she had a green unicorn with a white mane and horn on the quartered shield. He held out his right hand for her to take. She quickly grabbed his forearm and with practiced ease hoisted herself up behind him.

Once she was settled he looked to her over his shoulder. “My name is Jon.”

“I know, your father already told me.” She answered in a clipped tone. Jon looked forward to hide the sheepish look that over took his face in embarrassment once he remembered that his father had indeed spoke his name. He just lightly heeled the horse into a slow canter. It was silent for a few moments until he faintly heard her voice again, “My name is Annie.” Jon let a tiny smile take his face as the gates of Winterfell grew larger.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading

Next: EDDARD I
The smell of bacon and toast met Eddard as he made the turn into the hallway leading to the great hall. The smells were accompanied by the sounds of multiple voices talking and laughing. As he entered the hall the sight that met him brought a smile to his face. The Survey Corps members as they liked to be called had integrated themselves well with his family quickly. It had helped that most of the Corps members and his children were mostly of an age with each other. At the insistence of his family they had abandoned taking their meals on the dais. They now ate at the larger trestle tables below, so they could eat with their new friends.

His wife Catelyn sat at the head end of the table with an open chair next to her that he took. She waived for a servant to fetch his breakfast. She was dressed in a simple fur collared blue-grey gown that made her Tully Blue eyes seem even brighter. Her copper hair was pulled into one long braid that draped over her right shoulder.

To her left on the side of the table was Squad Leader Hange Zoe. However, she had insisted they all just call her Hange. They were a military unit but kept things fairly informal to promote camaraderie. She had her chestnut hair pulled back into a pony tail yet leaving the bangs in the front loose. This hair style seemed to be the trend where they came from minus Mikasa and Historia. Mikasa's hair being too short, and Historia preferring a low pony tail pulled in at the base of her neck. She had her 'goggles' as she called them resting up on her forehead while she ate.

Hange was dressed in a white cotton tunic, brown breeches, and her over-the-knee brown boots. When they had first arrived their garb had not been conductive to the Northern Climate, and his household had quickly gotten their guests more appropriate attire. Over her tunic she wore the tan jacket they all had, and over the back of all their chairs were the new longer fur lined green cloaks. Sansa, Jeyne Poole, and Beth Cassel had taken to the challenge of making the new cloaks with abandon. In the moon they had been here the girls had manged to not only create the cloaks, but
Also embroider the emblem of the Survey Corps 'The Wings of Freedom' onto their backs.

Next to Hange was Maester Luwin in his grey maester robes. Cat, Hange, and Luwin were in a deep conversation in between bites of their breakfast. Hange wasn't quite of an age with Cat only being in her mid twenties, but they were still close enough for the new woman to provide some womanly companionship to his wife.

Sansa and Jeyne Poole were the next two. His oldest daughter was dressed in a northern style dress of almost the same green as the Survey Corps. The color made her auburn hair seem even brighter. Jeyne's was in a blueish grey of the same style. Jeyne's brown hair was pulled up into northern braids matching Sansa's.

Next was Sasha Braus and Connie Springer. Sasha at the moment was being engaged in conversation by Sansa and Jeyne. She was a pretty girl with her jet black hair and her amber eyes that were almost gold with a slight dusting of freckles across her nose. Ned chuckled to himself as she stole a slice of bacon off Connie's plate while he was distracted by a question from Bran. Ned had never seen someone eat as much as Sasha. If it wasn't for how rigorous the Scouts were during training he wasn't sure she would be able to keep her slim figure. She wasn't the strongest of them sword wise but she made up for it with her marksmenship. A skill that had seen Theon's ego damaged when she bested him with a bow in the yard several times already. He wasn't surprised to see Sasha sat next to Connie. The two always seemed to be together. Ned wasn't sure if there was anything romantic about their connection, but he was sure they were definitely close.

Connie was the shortest of them, and with his stature he could almost be confused for a crannogman. What he lacked in height he made up for in tenacity. The boy seemed to have endless energy in the yard and could go one on one with some of Winterfell's best guards.

Next was his middle son Bran. Whereas his brothers both seemed more Tully than Stark, Bran, was a perfect mix between the two houses. He had blue-gray eyes and his hair was a dark auburn. Depending on the light it could be red or brown. He has dreams of becoming a knight and being around a group of young warriors was definitely motivating him even more.

Bran was seated next to Jean Kirstein. If one didn't know any better you would think at first glance he was a Stark. He had brown hair, grey eyes, and the long face associated with the Starks of the North. Jean was a very outspoken person and seemed to always take verbal jabs at Eren. There seemed to be some deep seated competitiveness between the two of them.

After Jean was Jon and Annie at the end. Annie could be mistaken for a member of the Arryn family with her sandy blonde hair and blue-grey eyes. She generally put up a front of aloofness and tended to avoid speaking or interacting with anyone. However, it seemed Jon had managed to breach that wall. Lately, they seemed to be in each others' company...a lot. Ned didn't know if anything untoward had happened yet, but he could see the small smiles and blushes they both seemed to have after interacting.

Maybe Annie could put a halt to Jon's foolish plans to go vow his life away at the Wall. Jon had trapped him in a corner with that plan. He couldn't protect Jon at the Wall and it would violate his promise to Lyanna. However, he couldn't fight too hard on the decision. It would bring too much attention to why a high lord would want to keep his bastard around. However, if Annie could get him to forget that idea he could find them a small castle and some land. Then, he could be Robb's bannerman, and maybe then Cat would forget her foolish suspicions that Jon was trying to usurp their children.

At the other end of the table were Historia Reiss and Armin Arlet. At first glance anyone could be forgiven for assuming the two were siblings. They both had yellow blonde hair that could rival
Lannisters and both had bright blue eyes. Historia was one of the sweetest young ladies that he had ever met. On her lap contently sat his youngest son Rickon as they both ate off of Historia's plate. The boy had been taken with her immediately. Not that he could blame his son at all. Historia was a beauty that could rival most high born maids in the Seven Kingdoms.

Armin was a rare breed himself. The one thing that Armin had in common with Jon to both their detriment were that they could be called pretty. He knew that Jon's came from his Valyrian blood showing through slightly, but he couldn't explain Armin's situation. He was a very intelligent and bookish type. He was the worst in the yard even behind the Scouts' women. Most men would find insult in that, but considering the women he was being compared to it didn't carry much weight. Even Historia with her small build could hold her own in a duel with some of the guards. Armin was currently face deep in a book reading between bites. Normally, Catelyn would frown on having a book at the table, but considering the young man was trying to learn all he could of the world he and his friends had inadvertently found themselves she let it slide.

Jory and Beth Cassel were the next two at the table. Ned knew that Beth had purposefully picked the spot to sit next to Bertolt. Bertolt Hoover was another that could pass for a northerner with his tall build and dark brown hair and eyes. He knew that the poor boy harbored feelings for Annie by his forlorn expression whenever he saw her interacting with Jon. However, all the boy had to do was look to his right and the little blonde Beth would turn crimson in a blush. She had been taken by the boy almost the minute they had met.

After Bertolt came Reiner Braun. Reiner was just a bit shorter than Bertolt, but was of stockier build. He had blonde hair and hazel eyes, and he seemed to give off a big brother type aura. He was always trying to look out for the other members of the group, and was also an accomplished soldier. Ned had witnessed his prowess in the yard whether armed or just hand to hand, but despite his size could get bested by Annie.

Robb and Theon followed Reiner, and then there was Eren. Eren Jeager had dark brown hair and bright emerald green eyes. To say Eren was intense would be a total understatement. Whatever the young man seemed to do he put his all into. Though, he was constantly bested by many of the others you had to give the boy credit for his tenacity and in-exhaustive energy.

Mikasa Ackermann sat next to Eren. She was a beautiful mix of races between what would be Westerosi and Yi Ti here, but where they came from they called her Oriental. She had Raven black hair that was chin length and her eyes were a steel silver. She was generally quiet and stuck to the background, but she was currently being chatted up by Arya. Ned's youngest girl had her hair styled like Sasha's. She had wanted to cut it to be like Mikasa's, but Ned had managed to talk her into emulating the other warrior women knowing that Cat would have lost her mind if Arya had hacked her hair in such a way. Arya had become Mikasa's shadow after she had taken on Robb, Jon, and Theon simultaneously and came out barely breathing any heavier. The three boys had had the workout of a lifetime against the girl.

Ned had smiled to see that Jon was able to hold his own for a bit against her after Robb and Theon had yeilded. Jon had always been a better swordsman than the other two much to Cat's detriment. He had never called Jon out on it, but he had noticed the only time that Robb was ever able to win was if Cat had been standing next to him observing the boys. It must have been one of Jon's ways to try to not bring anymore of Cat's hatred upon him.

That brought Ned to Captain Levi Ackermann who was seated to his immediate right. The captain had hair as black as Mikasa's and ice grey eyes. Accompanied by the stoic look he generally had on his face, Levi, could almost pass for a Bolton if it wasn't for his short height. Though they themselves weren't fully sure how, they knew that Levi and Mikasa were cousins to some degree.
From what Ned had learned the Ackermanns used to be a type of Kingsguard family. At some point they had experiments done on them to enhance their abilities that would awaken during a traumatic experience. Their skills were above and beyond anything Ned had ever seen before. He had watched Levi spar in the yard against ten opponents at once while wielding two bastard swords. A feat of skill and precision that could have easily surpassed the legendary Ser Arthur Dayne.

Ned ate his meal in silence as he watched the interactions around the table. He was happy he had been able to squash the fight between Reiner, Bertholt, Annie, and the rest of the Scouts. The first night they had been in Winterfell they had all called it an early night. Whatever had brought them to Westeros had drained them all more than they initially realized. Most of them were having trouble even staying awake during supper. The exception being Sasha of course. She couldn't seem to eat enough, and she acted like she had never seen that much food. Ned was sure she would faint if she ever beheld a feast.

That night the three outcasts had sat at the far end of the table with Jon. He had watched them have very limited conversation. Where the rest of the Scouts had been put up in the guest house Ned thought it was best to have the other three in the open rooms around Jon's. Thinking of it, Ned, realized that could have also contributed to Annie and Jon connecting so well. After dinner everyone had just gone to their chambers for the night. His children on the other hand had spent the rest of the night with their direwolf pups.

The next day he had met the three outcasts in his solar to get to the bottom of their rift with the other Scouts. It had taken some convincing to get the them to open up, but being the father to two (technically three) teen boys and two preteen girls had taught him how to get them to open up. Ned was not ready for what they were going to dump in his lap.

Apparently they were members of the same ethnic group as the other scouts, but grew up in an entirely different country called Marlay. In Marlay they were persecuted and kept segregated in certain areas in what boiled down to glorified prisons. Certain members of their ethnic group who were called Eldians could earn more freedoms and benefits by volunteering their children to become soldiers.

They were trained as early as six in how to be the primary infantry force for the Marlayans. During this training the exceptional children would get selected to inherit titan abilities, the giant forms they could transform into. They were raised to believe that the Eldians that lived in the walls, that the other Scouts came from, are devils hiding to escape justice for their crimes throughout history. They had basically brainwashed these children into hating their own people.

Reiner explained that their mission was to infiltrate the walls to locate a special titan ability called the Coordinate. They had breached the wall allowing hundreds of pure titans, titans that are stuck in giant form and essentially mindless, to run rampart and cause chaos. After the initial attack they had joined the local military to get closer to the royal family whom they believed possessed this Coordinate. Years later during another breach that Bertolt had created they discovered that Eren also had titan abilities.

This started creating emotional conflicts for themselves. They had just spent three years befriending the men and women they would now have to betray, and at the same time learning that the devils they were sent to eradicate didn't truly exist. They had hoped to salvage their mission by having Annie apprehend Eren and then they would go back to Marlay with him, so they could have another titan force on their side. The Scouts were somewhat on to them by that time and Annie had ended up being captured herself.
When Zeke, Eren's older brother, had come to aid their mission it had ended with Reiner and Bertolt being revealed. After a costly battle with the Scouts they had escaped, but had planned to go back to rescue Annie. It was during that rescue that they had been confronted by the Scouts once more and during that skirmish was when they had appeared on the moors outside Winterfell.

Ned had observed them while they told their tales. He could see that they held a lot of emotional pain for the things they had done and whom they had done it to. Reiner had been near tears when telling how they had been the cause of Eren seeing his own mother be eaten by a titan.

Seeing that they truly were remorseful he decided to help them patch things up. He explained to them that they were victims of circumstance and manipulation. Adding that how it sounded from the outside that their history had actually been skewed by the victors. The Marlayans sounded more like the aggressors and that the Eldians were actually always the persecuted ones. They were also children that shouldn't have been fighting. At the age they were given titan abilities Ned was still using wooden training swords.

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After their meeting he had called the rest of the Scouts to join him and the outcasts in the library where there would be room enough for everyone. There Ned had the three sit next to him as he explained everything they had informed him of. He could tell by the looks on the Scouts’ faces there was a lot of information being told that they were hearing for the first time. When he inquired as to how they didn't know any of this, Hange, had explained that members of the royal family who possessed the Coordinate could change the memories of all the Eldians inside the walls at will. The only exception being the Ackermann family. Ned also learned that they never learned any history from before the walls had gone up. The meeting had been very heated and emotional, but by the end there seemed to be an understanding among everyone.

It didn't happen over night, but Ned was able to watch over the last moon as the wounds were healed and they slowly all became comrades again. He had even once come upon Eren and Reiner sharing a laugh in the training yard. Sansa had even replaced the unicorn patches on Annie's jacket with wings. It wasn't all roses and sunshine just yet, though, Mikasa would still shoot the other three occasional looks that said she would separate their heads the first chance she got. He also couldn't help but notice that Annie and Levi avoided all interactions if at all possible. Considering what happened to his troops, Ned, couldn't really blame him for having murderous intentions where Annie was involved.

Ned was brought out of his musings by a gasp from the other end of the table. He looked up from his plate to see Armin putting the book he was holding up in front of Historia. His heart momentarily froze when he saw that the three-headed dragon of House Targaryen emblazoned on the front. It took a moment for Ned to realize Armin had been reading a copy of 'The History of the Dragon Dynasty'. The fear that his secret would be discovered was ever looming, but as he watched Armin animatedly whisper something to Historia she just nodded as if uninterested. Ned relaxed immediately and went to continue his meal. The slice of bacon was halfway to his mouth when it froze with Armin's voice addressing him. “Lord Stark, when are you planning on telling people that Jon is the true king?”

Ned was frozen stiff looking a fool with his mouth agape, and a piece of bacon just dangling in his fingers. He had faced the most fearsome warrior alive at the time in single combat and yet he felt more fear in this moment than ever before. Thankfully the silence was broken by the voice of his oldest son. “Jon, the king? Jon can't be the king. He is baseborn.”

“Is he though?” Armin fired back immediately. Ned felt his mouth going dry and the bacon he had
been holding slipped from his fingers to fall back to his plate.

“Of course he is, Stupid!” Arya piped up speaking to Armin as if he was of age with Rickon. “He is our brother. He can't be the king because Starks aren't kings anymore.”

“That's because Jon isn't a Stark, baseborn, or your brother. He is a Tragaryen, and your cousin.” Armin answered back. Ned was still so shocked he was rendered mute by the conversation, but out of the corner of his eye he could she Cat who seemed to be getting angrier by the second this conversation continued. She always hated Jon being the center of attention at anytime. Through the anger in her expression, Ned, could see she held a hint of intrigue at the same time.

“What are you talking about, Brat?” Levi spoke up finally.

“Well, Captain, it is almost exactly like Historia's situation. Plus, the numbers just don't add up.”

“Explain.” Levi ordered in his normal clipped toned.

Armin let out a big breath and then spoke, “Well, firstly, Lord Stark returned to King's Landing at the end of the rebellion with Lyanna Stark's remains and a bastard son. However, there wasn't enough time between the sack and his return for him to father a child, and wait long enough for it to be safe to travel with such a small child. Secondly, Lord Stark fought three members of the Kingsguard at the tower Lyanna was at. If Prince Rhaegar had died at the trident and Aerys died in Kingslanding why would the Kingsguard stay just to hold a girl hostage instead of going to Dragonstone where Viserys and Rhaella were. They were staying to protect their potential king that Lyanna carried, and I suspect died birthing. Third, you lied and said Jon was yours so that King Robert wouldn't kill him like Princess Elia, Rhaenys, and Prince Aegon. Fourth, Lyanna Stark is the only female member of the family to have a statue in the crypts. A place reserved for the lords and former Kings of Winter. Why? Though it was a short time she is the first and only Stark woman to have been Dowager Queen of the Seven Kingdoms. Lastly,” Armin slid the open book he was reading across the table, “Minus the longer face, Jon, looks exactly like Aegon the Conqueror with black hair.”

Robb snatched the book up where it laid in the middle of the table. Ned watched as both Robb and Theon kept looking at the book and glancing up at Jon. Who seemed to be experiencing the same level of shock as himself. Of all the ways that Ned had imagined telling Jon the truth it had never been at a table full of people who were borderline strangers. The entire table seemed to be holding their breath for any type of confirmation. Armin's theory seemed to be accepted by everyone when a sudden “Seven Hells!” escaped Theon's mouth.

Everyone jumped simultaneously as a chair went crashing to the floor. Jon stormed out the main door into the the yard as his black cloak trailed behind him and Ghost's tiny legs rushed to follow his companion. As the door slammed shut all eyes seemed to turn to him. Ned was still unable to speak as everyone's eyes were on him. The silence was broken by Cat's angry voice, “Ned?” It was only one word yet carried all the weight of the world in it. Eddard could only hang his head and let out a defeated sigh. That was apparently all the answer his wife needed as the legs of her chair scrapped against the stone floor and she fled through the side door towards the family quarters.

Chapter End Notes

So, there it is! Armin is such a smart little guy.
I did the reveal this way because I felt as a new comer from the outside looking in it wouldn't be that hard for Armin to figure out. I always felt the secret was flimsy to begin with. I feel the reason it was able to stay secret was all due to Ned Stark. His reputation preceded him a lot, and I feel the other lords wanted to believe it. The whole "well if Eddard Stark can have a bastard then maybe I'm not that bad myself" mentality. Basically, they all thought it was the truth because they wanted it to be the truth.

Thanks for reading!
EDDARD II

Chapter Summary

Ned broods, but problem solves. Jon is hiding away

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay. I want to stay a certain amount of chapters ahead of publishing and I had some personal stuff going on that was draining my desire to type. I got back on the horse though, so here we are.

Once again: This fic is all for fun and all established characters are the property of their respective creators.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day was turning beautiful after a brief summer snow early in the morning. It ended up being a slight dusting that was melting quickly as the sun rose in the now clear sky. The breeze was just strong enough to slightly pull at his cloak. He was perched in his normal spot on the balcony over looking the training yard. Bran, Sasha, Armin, and Arya were in the archery lanes practicing their marksmanship with Rickon observing straddling the lane fencing. The rest were with Ser Rodrick and Captain Levi practicing their sword skills. Currently the group was stood around the railings observing Eren's duel with Robb. Hange was probably off with Maester Luwin again, Historia had been practicing her marksmanship but had left to aid Catelyn with the housekeeping. Annie was also missing, but Ned was sure that she was most likely scouring Winterfell to find Jon.

It had been two days since the revelation of Jon's true parentage during breakfast. Jory, Beth, Theon, and Jeyne swore to secrecy not to say anything. They had all grown up in Winterfell and were basically considered extended family, so Eddard knew they wouldn't risk anyone in the pack. Unfortunately, it wasn't entirely that easy.

Cat was still being silent to him. She had slept in her old chambers for the last couple nights. She was still the perfect dutiful wife when seen around the castle or at meals, but once the day was essentially done she would retire back to her chambers and hide out. Not that he could really blame her. He had lied to her for fifteen years, so he wasn't expecting her to just let it blow over. He was fearing when she did want to talk though. He knew that was one storm he would be happy to have just blow over, but knowing it wouldn't, the anticipation, just made it that much worse.

Ned was still worried that one of the servants might have accidentally heard and not thinking throw it into the rumor mill of the castle. If word got out of the North that the Targaryen heir had been hidden for this long by the king's so called best friend chaos would ensue. Then, he had to worry about whether his bannermen would help protect Jon or just want to throw him to the lions and stags. He knew that Howland Reed would close off the Neck to not let any army come north and harm the Starks. They still had two coasts though. Robert would be the type to allow the Ironborn
to keep whatever they pillaged if his wrath was brought upon the them. Though Robert may draw the line somewhere, Tywin Lannister, would try to wipe every Stark out completely like he did with the Reynes, Tarbecks, and attempted with the Targaryens.

They would hopefully have allies in the Riverlands. Knowing that Cat was never betrayed might help sway Hoster Tully. As far as the Vale goes, Ned, could only hope that they would stay neutral. With Ned being Lord Arryn's foster son and good brother he may just stay out of his foster sons' fight. Dorne would definitely stay south and not fight. They would see Jon's existence as an insult to Princess Elia and since they hated Robert they would elect to just sit back and watch.

The Reach would be a wild card. They were historically staunch Targaryen loyalists since they owed their position as Lords Paramount to the dragons. Now, though, they could go either way. They could side with Robert bribing him with a betrothal for his oldest son to Margaery Tyrell, or they could try to bride Ned with a betrothal for Jon with the same girl. It all depended on whether the Tyrells wanted her to be queen now or later after Robert passed.

He knew two people that wouldn't exactly be enthused about the Tyrells wanting a betrothal. If it came to that they would just have to deal with it and do their duty. At least that would be something he and Jon could have in common too. Giving up a woman you love for the one you have to have for duty. Jon, he, knew would do what was asked of him, but Annie could be an entire different story. He couldn't say he knew her too well, but from his observations the most likely outcome would be her just burying it and moving on. Unfortunately, it would add to her already closed off personality. If there was someone who had already given up too much to duty it was her. Her along with Bertolt and Reiner had to sacrifice their childhood and innocence in the name of duty to the whims of others. The death that had come from pursuing her mission had definitely weighed on her a lot. Plus it had made her seem closed off to her comrades, but Ned told himself he would do the same thing if he would have to eventually betray those same people. Thinking of which, those same thoughts could probably explain why he doesn't speak to Robert as often as he could. Well the wounds from the sacking of King's Landing played it's part in that too.

As if summoned by his thoughts he glanced sandy blonde hair out of the corner of his eye as she came to stop next to him. When he looked over at her she had a gloomy disposition on her face, her shoulders were pulled in on herself, and her hands were most likely clasped together in the pouch of what he was told was called a hoodie. She didn't look up at him, but he could tell that she was scanning the yard for her prey. He decided to save her the effort, "Jon, isn't down there." He heard Annie let out what sounded like a defeated sigh. "Give him some time, Annie, his world got completely turned upside down. He always retreats back into himself when something chaotic happens. He'll hide out a bit to deal with his emotions then he'll be back to normal. The frustrating thing is he knows this castle better than anyone, so if he doesn't want to be found he won't be.”

“No kidding.” She replied with a sharp snarky tone.

“He is probably roaming around the Wolfswood to blow off steam.”

“No he isn't.” She looked up to his face before lowering her eyes as if embarrassed, “I went by his room and his bed was slept in and his sword belt was still hanging on the wall.”

Ned smiled to himself at the girl's shyness, “Well, then I know exactly-”

“EREN!” Mikasa's raised voice broke into their conversation. Mikasa rushed into the dueling ring to check on the boy as he laid on his back training sword a few feet from his right hand in the dirt. “Mikasa, I don't need you fussing over me, GEEZ! You're not my mother!” The boy shouted back angrily as he got back to his feet and retrieved his sword.

Ned felt for the young woman's pain as she stopped a few steps away from the boy with a dejected
look on her face. She reached up with her left hand and started fidgeting with the dark red scarf that always adorned her neck. “It's painful how oblivious that boy is.” Annie cut in.

Ned turned to the young woman at his side, “It really is frustrating dealing with a boy that doesn't realize what is in front of him.” He saw the corner of her mouth twitch as her cheeks became pink. Ned chuckled knowing she caught onto what he was inferring. “Excuse me, Annie, let me deal with this block head.”

“Of course, Lord Stark.”

As Annie departed his company Ned turned to address the yard, “Eren, may I speak with you a moment.” The boy's green eyes turned up to the walkway locking onto himself. He quickly nodded and handed his training sword off to Connie before he jogged across the yard and bounded up the wooden stairs.

“What can I do for you, Lord Stark?”

“Eren, we need to talk about Mikasa.” As he spoke the girls name he watch a flame light in the younger man's eyes. It surprised Ned how the boy was quick to show his frustration and yell at the girl. Yet, anyone else tried he would instantly come to her defense. He quickly held his hand up, “Relax, Eren, it isn't anything bad.” Ned chuckled as the boy relaxed.

“What about Mikasa, My Lord?”

“Would you indulge an older man to impart some wisdom on you?” Eren nodded in confirmation, so he continued. “I have observed you all a lot since you got here, and I've noticed you don't snap at anyone else when they try to help you. Yet, you do every time Mikasa tries.” Ned quickly held his hand up again to stop him from speaking when Eren's mouth opened to retort. “I know from your stories how you and her came to be together and I know you may feel that she mother hens you, but that is because she loves you. It isn't the same type of love she has for Armin or the others. That girl is in love with you and you only ever seem to push her away with your actions.”

“You need to be careful, Eren, she is dedicated now, but the more you push her away and snap at her eventually she will realize it isn't worth her effort anymore. Have you ever noticed she plays with her scarf every time you say something mean or rude to her?” When the boy shook his head Ned continued, “She is doing that to remind herself you are good and worth the effort. That keeps her for now, but it won't forever. Even right now if we look her eyes will be on you.” When they both looked over Ned's suspicions were proven true. However, the young woman still had the dejected hurt look on her face. “You see that expression, Eren? You did that. She was smiling watching you duel till you yelled at her.” Ned heard the younger man let out a frustrated sigh.

“You guys have tried several times to recreate the way you ended up here to no avail. You have no Titans to worry about here, Eren, try to live life for yourself. Besides, Mikasa, is a very beautiful young lady. If you don't keep her to yourself the young lords of the North may start trying to pursue her hand in marriage.” Eren's eyes went wide at that, “I'm not telling you to get married tomorrow or anything, but maybe take her for a walk in the Godswood and ask her what she wants.”

Eren nodded in answer before he spoke, “I never thought she felt that way. It always felt like she was just coddling me.”

Ned smiled and chuckled, “Well, apparently you are the last to know, and you better get used to it. Passionate women can be overwhelming sometimes.” Eren smiled widely and joined in the laugh with him. “Why don't you go now. Take her by the glass gardens, give her one of the Winter Roses in there. Spend some quiet time just the two of you.”
“I will, Lord Stark....Thank you.” The younger man started down the stairs, but stopped a few down and turned back. “At the risk of over stepping, My Lord, maybe you should follow some of your own advice.”

He couldn't stop the chuckle that quickly left his lips at the boldness of the boy. “Aye, you are probably right on that one, Son.”

Eren shot him a lopsided smile before resuming his trek down the stairs. The boy quickly made his way across the yard to Mikasa who at the moment had an inquisitive look upon her face. When he made it to the girl. Eren stopped beside her putting his hand on her lower back as he leaned in and whispered to her. Ned watched as the young girl nodded to what Eren was saying and they quickly departed the training yard together. Ned smiled to himself as he watched the young couple head in the direction of the glass gardens.

The smile left his face as he thought of his next destination. With a resigned sigh Ned turned from the training yard heading to where he knew Jon would have secluded himself.

Chapter End Notes

So, this is no where my favorite chapter. If feels somewhat clunky. How about that Eremika? I was about as subtle as a sledge hammer, hahaha. Let's be honest though. Eren is thick headed as hell, so maybe having old Ned tell him what is what was best. IDK.
He stood on the eastern battlements facing towards the Kingsroad with Ghost curled up at his feet. The sky was beginning to turn shades of purple as the sun set behind him. As the moon rose the first twinkling stars of night were coming into existence.

His mind was still processing all he had learned earlier in the day. For two days he had tortured himself over his own existence. He had gone from the bastard of the most honorable man in the Seven Kingdoms to a bastard of the crown prince and the circumstances of his birth causing thousands to die in Robert's Rebellion including his half-siblings and their mother. He had inflicted so much pain on the country before he even drew his first breath which incidentally had also killed his own mother.

It was one of the few times his brooding hadn't helped him sort things through. He had kept spiraling and feeling worse and worse. If his adoptive father hadn't found him when he did he was sure he would have thrown everything away got his sword belt, horse, and Ghost and just headed straight to the Wall.

Fortunately, his 'father' had found him and explained everything for him in more depth. How, the Rebellion was actually fought over the murder of his grandfather and uncle. Jon had snorted in derision when he realized that his grandfather had been murdered by his other grandfather in a twisted version of a trial by combat. The rebelling lords officially rose when the Mad King demanded Eddard Stark and Robert Baratheon's heads delivered to the Red Keep and Lord Jon Arryn refused. He told Jon of how he had to put aside his love for Ashara Dayne to fulfill the contract his father had put in place between House Stark and House Tully and receive their support in the rebellion. His father's potential betrothal to Ashara before the war is what had led to the rumors of her being Jon's mother when he was younger.
Then, Lord Stark had elaborated on his birth parents' relationship. He told Jon that at the end he discovered that Lyanna had never been abducted. He had snorted then telling Jon he should have known better from the beginning that Lyra would have never been abducted. She would have died before allowing anyone to abscond with her, but he had followed along right with Brandon and Robert's assumptions.

After they had talked a bit, Lord Stark, had pulled a crowbar out from under his cloak. He had proceeded around his mother's statue to the wall behind her. Jon had watched speechless as he had pried the bar into some mortar between the bricks. With a hard grunt he had opened a hidden door behind the tomb. Jon's breathe had left him when he took in the contents of the previously secret room. Suspended on a stand was a set of black steel armor with a full face helmet adorned with dragon wings. A faded red three-headed dragon was painted instead of the rubies he knew his father had worn at the Trident. Next to the armor on the wall hung a worn sword belt. The cross guard of the hilt resembled flames burning out of an oval shaped ruby a little smaller than Jon's palm. The grip was grey faded black leather that looked as if it would crumble if he touched it and the pommel was wrought in the image of more flames.

Then there was a set of shelves holding several trunks and wax sealed ceramic tubes which Lord Stark told him contained the records of his parents marriage and of Jon's own birth. When Jon had asked if he carried his actual birth name, Lord Stark, had informed him that like other Targaryen children that looked more Westerosi than Valyrian he had been given the Westorosi name Jon after the old Northern King Jon Stark and the prince's friend Jon Connington. Which his adoptive father had just said he was named in honor of Jon Arryn to sell his own lie.

What sat on top of the shelves was what had initially stolen Jon's breath. On a small three legged stand sat a blue scaled egg that had small pearl white highlights. His father had followed his his eyes and handed him the egg. He had told Jon that his birth father had left it in the tower with his mother for Jon to have. It was also the only object that he had allowed Jon to take out of the hidden room. His 'father' told him he was old enough to understand the importance of making sure it stayed hidden in his room. It wasn't too much of a problem considering none of the maids ever bothered with his room at all. They always just left his clean linens and wood for his hearth on the table by his door.

His musings were cut off by the sound of footsteps crunching on the gravel that coated the stone walkways to stop the guards from loosing their footing on the walls. When he turned he was greeted by the blue-grey eyes of Annie. Instead of the normal bun she had her hair in a single thick braid that draped over her left shoulder. Her green cloak was rising behind her revealing the tan jacket (as they called it) and her grey hoodie.

She had gone without the white one she normally wore for a few days so the seamstresses could copy its pattern. Now she owned hoodies in black, grey, Stark Blue, and several more white ones. The seamstresses had also marveled over the scouts trousers which they were told was made out of a fabric called denim that had been bleached white. The seamstresses had been amazed and thankfully Hange had told them that denim was a twill fabric made from cotton that helped increase its durability. Since then half of the weavers had been working none stop following the instructions Hange had given them and trying to churn out denim. Not just for the Scouts, but the household guard as well to make their garments more resistant to tears.

“How are you feeling?” Annie asked as she stopped next to him and faced the same direction looking out over the moors.

“Better now that I spoke with my father. I'm still trying to get my mind to settle though. It is all a lot to take in in such a short time.”
Annie nodded her head in agreement. She then turned her attention to what Jon was holding in his hands. “What's that you have there? And why aren't you wearing gloves?”

Jon looked down at the egg in his hands as the last light of day reflected off of the iridescent pearl highlights making rainbows dance in his vision. “A dragon egg my birth father left for me.” He chuckled as her mouth fell agape, “As far as my gloves go I don't need to wear them when holding this. It gives off enough heat on its own.”

Annie's eyebrows shot up almost touching her hairline. Jon then watched as she slid her grey doe skin gloves off her hands. She nodded her head toward the egg, “May I?” Jon nodded in answer as he handed her the egg. He watched her brows furrow and her eyes snapped back up to him. “It's cold! It feels like I'm just holding a stone, but you said it feels warm.”

Jon nodded as he answered, “I swear to you when I hold it it is warm. Like a hot bath you can just barely tolerate.” Annie slightly frowned in response as she extended her arms to hand the egg back. As it came into his grip a sharp pain hit the pad of his left palm. He reflexively dropped the egg and just as quickly caught it before it hit the ground.

When he turned his palm he saw a long cut across the pad. He turned the egg in his hands seeing the culprit. One of the scales tips was bent out and coated in Jon's blood along with other smears turning the blue scales into a shade of purple.

Jon and Annie were unprepared for what happened next. Before their eyes the blood all over the egg seemed to soak into the surface disappearing completely.

“What was that?!” Annie exclaimed suddenly.

“I have no idea.” He quickly replied, but his curiosity had been sparked by the event. He held the egg in his right hand and squeezed his left over it. Bright red blood dripped freely from his wound spattering across the shell. They both watched in silence as all the blood soaked into the egg once again leaving no evidence it had even been there.

After a few minutes of Jon repeating his strange experiment, Annie, broke the silence they had been observing the egg under, “We should get that cut looked at by Luwin, Jon.”

Jon just nodded his reply still enamored at the strange object in his hands. As they made their way off the walls Jon kept the egg held to his chest and kept at a pace that wouldn't allow his cloak to open and reveal his prize. As they made their way across the yard he could feel a tugging sensation on his hand as if the egg was a suckling babe, but instead of milk the egg was feeding off of his life's blood. “We should probably drop the egg off in my chambers before going to the maester's tower.”

When they got to his room Jon stood in the middle of the space looking for a place to hide the egg as Annie and Ghost both just silently observed. He suddenly had a strong urge compel him towards the hearth of his room. He couldn't understand what was driving his motivations but he had quickly built a small square bed out of logs. He set the egg in the middle and lit the fire. He sat there for a few moments mesmerized by the flames dancing and licking up the sides of the egg.

He had no idea how long he had been staring at the fire and it's contents when Annie's voice cut through to him, “Jon, the maester.”

He shook the daze out of his head and nodded getting to his feet.
Later that evening Jon and Annie were making their way back to his chambers. The visit with Maester Luwin had been simple enough. He had told Jon that the cut didn't require stitches however he would be out of the training yard for at least a fortnight for his hand to start healing properly.

After that they had headed to the great hall for supper. There were smiles around the table from his family for him as he approached and surprisingly even Lady Catelyn had smiled to him. He knew that was a relationship that was going to be strange going forward. He hated the way she had treated him before, but he couldn't help the snort that escaped him at the irony of the situation. She had been so worried about him usurping Robb and his siblings, but in truth it was actually himself who had been usurped. Well, technically Aegon had been usurped when the Lannisters had their rabid dogs butcher his siblings and step-mother.

He opened his chamber door and closed it after Annie and Ghost had entered. They both shrugged off their cloaks throwing them onto his bed as they made their way to the rug in front of the fireplace. By now the flames were dying down, but Jon had the sudden desire rise in him to 'feed' the egg some more. It felt as if the egg was calling out to him like a babe squalling for its mother. Without him even realizing it he had pulled his dagger from his belt and the point was making its way to his palm again.

His motions were stopped by Annie grabbing his wrist before he could cut himself. Gently taking the blade from his grip Annie answered the question that was on his face. “I won't require a trip to Maester Luwin that would also require explaining two visits in one night.”

Jon nodded his head agreeing with her logic and sat back and watched. Annie grimaced as she sliced the dagger down her forearm instead of her palm. Blood came pouring out of the fresh wound as she held it over the small flames and egg. The shell greedily drank up the thick liquid as it streamed over its surface. Jon watched mesmerized as the flames started to grow and change from the normal reds and oranges to a bright light-blue. He quickly pulled Annie away when the flames suddenly snapped into a small inferno. Annie scrunched her eyes in concentration as the wound along her arm began to steam and heal itself.

The flames in the hearth began to grow even more out of control. The room was completely lit in an eerie blue color and Jon could feel sweat beading on his forehead from the sudden rise in temperature of the room. The fire quickly turned a blinding white as the sound of stone cracking started echoing through the room. Jon instinctively grabbed Annie and threw her to the floor as he covered her with his body. Ghost let out a loud whine as he scurried under Jon's bed for shelter. The next instant it seemed as if thunder had struck his room as the hearth exploded sending stone and mortar fragments everywhere. The sound echoed through the castle as it died back down and silence took over once more.

Jon could feel blood trickle down his face from where a small piece of stone had collided with his forehead, but otherwise he seemed to be unhurt. He looked at Annie still sheltered below his body, “Are you okay?” His own voice sounded muffled with his ears still ringing from the explosion. Annie just nodded back at him, but her eyes were still wide.

“WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT?!” Jon turned towards the voice to see Bertolt leaning through the gap the hearth had blown between their rooms. Steam pouring off his body as it healed the wounds he had sustained from the explosion.

Jon got back to his feet offering a hand to Annie and pulling her up. Ghost crawled from under the bed and loped to Jon's side. He knelt to check the direwolf pup over for injuries. As he was running
a hand along his back, Ghost, jerked his head towards where the hearth used to be. He watched the pup tilt his head as if something had drawn his curiosity. Then, as the ringing in his ears died down he heard the sound that must have caught Ghost's attention. “Do you two hear that chirping noise?”

Bertolt answered before Annie, “It sounds like it is coming from the debris.”

Jon approached the decimated area with Ghost by his side as the chirping continued. When he was just a couple feet away their was a sudden shift in the debris causing Ghost to let out a surprised bark as he jumped in fright. Jon knelt down near where the movement had occurred and moved a piece of stone revealing a large chunk of the egg's shell. He reached out and grasped the shell lifting it in a quick motion.

“WHAT THE FUCK?!” he heard the normally quiet Bertolt exclaim again, but Jon himself was rendered speechless by the sight in front of him. Staring up at him with its bright silver eyes was a dragon hatchling about the size of a house cat. It was covered in light-blue scales the same shade of a Winter Rose. A small pair of opalescent white horns accompanied by a crown of even smaller ones adorned its head, and the spines down its back matched as well. When the dragon became bored with their impromptu staring contest it began hopping towards Jon with it's tiny wings outspread to help its balance. Jon cupped his hands together and the baby dragon hopped into them and began rubbing its horned head against the padded base of his thumb.

He just continued to stare down at the magnificent creature in his hands as he felt Annie's clutch his shoulders while she peered from over him. Bertolt just stood there still dumbstruck from what he was witnessing. They all snapped their heads to the door of Jon's chamber at the sound of a loud gasp. There in the doorway was his entire family all with their mouths agape at what was before them. The baby dragon spread its wings and screeched at all the new comers filling the halls of Winterfell with the song of dragons.

Chapter End Notes

So, I wanted to add my own take on dragon hatching. This seems way easier than what Daenerys goes through to hatch hers. I'm going with the fact that Jon's isn't as old to be petrified. Also, you add the magic of both Jon's blood lines. Then, add Annie's magic blood to the mix, and POOF a much bigger dragon fledgling.

Oh, and there will be a big time skip after this chapter taking us to 'canon' time frame.
JON III

Chapter Summary

The royal party arrives at Winterfell

Chapter Notes

Sorry about the long wait. Life just kept getting in the way. Anyways, enough from me let's get to what you came for.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

(two years later)

The whole Winterfell household with the exception of the Scouts were gathered in the courtyard awaiting the arrival of the Usurper's party. Jon was standing behind the Stark family between Theon and Ser Rodrik. In front of him was Lady Catelyn with Rickon to her left, so she could keep control of the wild boy. Lord Stark was to her right followed by Robb, Sansa, Arya, and finally Bran.

Aunt Catelyn had been apologetic when she told Jon he would have to stand behind the family. She told him she knew the king wouldn't care, but the Lannister Queen would take offense to even seeing 'The Bastard of Winterfell'. Jon had agreed with his lady aunt. It still hurt a little to be seen separate from his family, but knew more than ever that appearances must be kept. The last two years had seen a great change in his relationship with Lady Catelyn. A few days after the revelation of his parentage had come out they had talked. They both knew their relationship wouldn't be fixed overnight, but Jon was happy the effort they both put in and with what changes they had made.

They still had to seem to keep their distance in public. The Lady having a sudden change in demeanor to 'The Bastard' would cause the servants tongues to start wagging. That didn't stop Aunt Catelyn from making him new clothes when he needed them, though. Including the doublet he was currently wearing. She had made it for his last name day. It was black wool with a white red eyed direwolf bordered in red stitch sewn on the left breast. She had used Ghost as the inspiration, but Jon knew his aunt had included red to show his paternal father's house colors.

His relationship with his aunt wasn't the only change in the last two years. The Scouts had for the most part moved to a small holdfast around an hour ride away from Winterfell deep in the Wolfswood. They still spent a lot of their time in the castle, but had to move to keep their operations secret. Hange had figured out the 'Burst Stone' gas they used to power their O.D.M. Gear was actually titan steam and the 'Burst Stone' was actually the strange crystal Annie and Eren were able to create. Hange had drawn up designs and with the help of Mikken they had created what she called a broiler shed in the barracks building of the holdfast.

They had had a small feast when Eren and Mikasa had become betrothed. It had been Mikasa's
nameday and Eren gifted her a silver ring with a single emerald on it when he asked her if she would marry him. Sansa, Jeyne, Beth, Sasha, and Historia had all swooned around Mikasa to get a look at the ring all through the night.

Shortly after the Scouts had arrived they had learned that the land they came from also operated on a twelve moon cycle year, so the Scouts had just adopted the day that corresponded from their land to be their nameday. On Annie's last one Jon had gifted her a sword he had commissioned from Mikken. It was a longsword that had a slightly skinnier blade and the grip was fashioned thinner to accommodate a woman's grip. It was a fairly standard northern style sword with the one embellishment being a blue-grey moonstone in the pommel to match her eyes. Later that night they had shared their first kiss below the Weirwood in the Godswood. Since that night they shared many more kisses and they were what Annie called 'dating' it wasn't quite a betrothal, but they belonged to each other all the same, similar to what Eren and Mikasa had been doing before they became betrothed.

Lyax was also a big part of the last couple years of his life. His gorgeous dragon also lived by the holdfast the Scouts inhabited. The day after she had hatched Jon had requested that Maester Luwin renew his efforts in teaching him High Valyrian. It was a difficult language to handle with his Northern accent, but it had been efficient enough for Jon to be able to train and somewhat control her. He tried to disappear to the holdfast a few times a week to see both Lyax and Annie. He had also implored her through their bond that she needed to hunt at night to avoid being seen by the people of the region. With her having free reign of the skies of the north in just two years she had gone from the size of a cat to that of the river longboats that came up the White Knife from White Harbor. Her wingspan was easily a hundred feet from tip to tip. He was still nervous to attempt to fly her, but she had already stressed the desire multiple times to him.

Ghost in the same amount of time had grown from the small pup he had found to standing at an equal shoulder height with him. It was surprising that though he had been the runt of the litter now only Grey Wind was larger. There was also the Wolf Dreams that he and his adoptive siblings had. They had all kept that secret to themselves for a time. Unsurprisingly, Rickon had been the first to break the ice of that taboo by telling them one day how he had hunted as Shaggydog. After that they had all revealed that they had been in their wolves at one point or another. The only thing Jon left off was how he could do the same with Lyax. The difference, though, was that he could only speak to her through their joined minds. He couldn't control the dragon the way he could Ghost. There were many nights during his sleep where he could connect with Lyax and Ghost simultaneously and the dragon would assist the direwolf pack in hunting prey in the Wolfswood.

As for himself the last two years had changed him greatly. He was now the tallest of the family having at least an inch over both Robb and his 'father'. He had grown into a lean yet defined frame showing his paternal heritage where as Robb was stockier and showed the full strength of the Stark lineage. He still managed to best Robb in the yard by utilizing his speed and agility to overcome Robb's more powerful strikes. It also helped that whenever he visited the holdfast he would spar with Levi and the other Scouts. Annie had taken to abusing him in the yard with unarmed combat, and so over time he had become the best fighter in Winterfell. He had also started regularly having stubble on his chin and cheeks. He knew he would look silly at this point trying to grow a full beard or mustache, so he generally kept it short. However, his face was currently baby smooth. Lady Catelyn had made Jon, Theon, and Robb get completely shaved for the arrival of the 'royal' party.

They had found out the king and his party were on their way a moon ago. A raven had arrived with word that Lord Stark's foster father Lord Jon Arryn had died suddenly of a fever, and that the king was making his way to Winterfell. Jon had noticed that since then Lord and Lady Stark seemed to have a cloud hanging over them. Robb felt the problem stemmed from that most likely the king
was going to ask Lord Stark to be the new Hand of the King.

The blaring of trumpets pulled Jon from his thoughts and drew his attention to the main gate of the castle. A few moments after the call ended riders started entering the castle in pairs. The first two wore Baratheon livery and carried banners adorned with the black crowned stag of the 'king' on a field of yellow. They were followed by a pair in Lannister armor bearing banners of a golden lion on a crimson background representing the queen. Two pairs of Kingsguard followed in their white and gold armor with their white cloaks billowing out behind them. Then came a large destrier that despite its size seemed to be struggling to handle the rather robust man riding it.

Jon along with the rest of the yard followed his 'father's' lead and knelt when the fat king had entered. He kept his eyes turned down as the the sounds of the fat oaf trying to dismount his horse. After a few moments he heard the man huffing as he approached the Stark family. From the shadow that came across the ground he knew he had to be standing in front of his 'father'. As the sound of movement Jon looked up to see his father making to stand, and once again the entire yard followed Lord Stark's lead.

When he was standing again Jon finally got a chance to appraise the 'king' up close for the first time. The man stood a good 6 inches taller than his father and he had bright blue eyes. Though his hair looked wiry, unkempt, and was accompanied by an equally grey and unkempt beard. His face was flushed and red from effort of moving his abundant mass around, and even in the chill of the north Jon could see a sheen of sweat on the fat king's forehead. The 'king's' clothing were the finest thing about him. He wore a fur cloak similar to the Starks, a black velvet jerking with golden antlers sewn below the collar, and leather trousers. Overall Jon could easily say he was disappointed with his first impression of the man that had killed his birth father and taken his family's throne.

The king and his father stared at one another in silence for a minute before the former broke it, “You got fat.” Jon was just barely able to stop his eyebrows raising from the irony of the fat king's statement. He watched the back of his 'father's' head and saw him give a slight nod back towards the king. They continued to stare at one another before the king broke out into a loud gut laugh and enveloped his 'father' into a tight brotherly hug, “Gods! It's been too damned long, Ned!” Jon watched as the king directed his attention to Lady Stark. “CAAAAT!”

“Your Grace.” Lady Catelyn replied as the king wrapped her in a affectionate yet still proper embrace. The king then rubbed the top of Rickon's head as his 'father' directed his attention to Robb and the rest of his siblings. As the king moved down the line Jon's attention was drawn to the approach of the queen.

The queen had to be one of the most beautiful women Jon had ever laid eyes on. She had golden blonde hair that was in one thick braid to make travel easier. Her eyes shone green like two bright emeralds and she had her lips stained bright red. Her skin was unblemished, smooth, and creamy pale. She wore a fur collared cloak that was dyed crimson in color. The look on her face spoke of how truly unhappy she was at having to walk into Winterfell as opposed to riding in her house carriage which had been too large to fit through the gate.

Beside her was a knight of the Kingsguard with the same color eyes and feathered golden blonde hair. Jon knew in a moment it was Ser Jaime Lannister, the Kingslayer. After learning of his true parentage Jon found he could never blame the knight for murdering his grandfather. He held no love in his heart for the Mad King burning his other grandfather and strangling his uncle. No, the anger came from Lannister failing to protect his step-mother and his siblings.
Behind her trailed the youngest royal children. The Princess Myrcella looked like a miniature version of the queen. Golden blonde hair with emerald eyes. Jon could already tell the young girl would grow into a beautiful woman like her mother despite the baby fat that still shaped her face. As her mother scowled Myrcella had a look of bewilderment and awe on her face as she took in the ancient castle surrounding her.

Beside the princess was Prince Tommen. He too had the golden hair and green eyes of his mother, but unlike the rest of the Lannisters, Tommen, was a plump little boy huffing along by his sister. Like his sister the youngest prince was taking in the castle and people surrounding him in wonderment.

The last and oldest prince stayed mounted on his horse. A arrogant sneer adorned his face ruining what could have been potentially a young handsome face. Jon also didn't like the way the prince's eyes kept drifting towards Sansa. Next to the prince on his horse was a bulking man in dark grey steel armor. His helmet was wrought in the image of a snarling dog. The mouth pulled open, so you could see his grim face that was half covered in burn scars.

“Your Grace,” Lord Stark spoke as he bowed and kissed the back of the queen's hand while Lady Catelyn curtsied to her. The queen acknowledged Jon's family with an unimpressed look upon her face. She looked as though she would prefer being anywhere else in the world besides Winterfell.

As his father was about to speak the king interrupted him, “Take me to your crypt, Ned, I wish to pay my respects.” Jon's fists clenched so tight the leather of his gloves let off a slight cracking noise as he felt his anger instantly rise.

It was quickly doused when the queen spoke, “We have been traveling a month, My Love, surely the dead can wait.” The words that left the queen's mouth were sweet, but lacked any ounce of care what so ever. Even a deaf man would've been able to tell that she held no love for the king. She just didn't want the embarrassment of her husband rushing off to pay his respects to a dead woman.

The king just stood there glaring at the queen. He broke his silent stand off with her when he turned his head and addressed Jon's 'father' with a simple, “Ned.” His 'father' just lowered his eyes as he made to follow the king with two Kingsguard in their wake.

The queen let out a irritated huff, and turned to make her way back to the younger royal children. She stopped abruptly when Arya's voiced carried across the yard louder than she probably intended asking, “Where's the Imp?”

“Will you shut up?” Sansa responded immediately in a horrified tone. The queen stood there scowling for a moment before making her way to who could only be her twin brother the Kingslayer. Ser Jaime Lannister was just as handsome as the other Lannisters. His golden hair hung to his shoulders and waved slightly with the breeze. She leaned in and whispered something to the knight Jon couldn't hear. When she pulled back the Kingslayer had a smirk on his lips and shook his head in exasperation as he made his way to the main gates.

Lady Catelyn along with the household maids approached the royal family to help get them and their luggage settled into the castle before the welcoming feast later that night. Feeling a tug on his arm Jon turned towards Theon, “Let's see what kind of trouble we can get into with the queen's handmaids, Snow.” The Iron Islander said with his signature smirk as he waggled his brows.

“Are you trying to get me murdered by Annie, Greyjoy?” Jon responded with a chuckle. Theon just let out an amused huff in response. “I think I'll get the wolves out and let them run around the Godswood till it is time to get ready for the feast. No sense in leaving them cooped up all day.”
“Alright, I'll come with you. No doubt Robb will be busy with the royals for the rest of the day.” The cocky smirk widened on his face, “Besides, the maids will be easier targets tonight after they have some wine in them to loosen 'em up.”

Jon could only smile and shake his head at Theon's antics. As the two were turning to make their way to the kennels Jon froze when he saw one of the Kingsguard staring at him. He was an older man with his hair thinning on top of his head, but plenty of snow white hair still on the sides. His blue eyes connected with Jon's grey and they stood there frozen staring at each other. The older man's face held an inquisitive look as if somehow he recognized him. Theon's call pulled him out of the faceoff and he walked quickly to catch up to the Greyjoy heir.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!
Chapter Summary

The 'Royal' family has infected Winterfell, and Ned makes initial plans for heading to King's Landing.

Chapter Notes

After this chapter we get a bit of a break from the Jon/ Ned back and forth, so we can get some POV from other characters. I've hit a bit of a block on my next Ned chapter which has taken a bit of wind from my sails. However, to try to get the gears back in motion a wrote a chapter a bit further in the story from the view of an OC. I think it will add a differetn dimension to an event we are all familiar with.

Anyways, let's get to what you have come for.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He stood in his normal spot on the covered walkway over looking the training yard. The older boys were in the yard sparring to release their pent up energy from their grief. The week the royal family arrived had been stressful, but overall peaceful until Bran had fell. Since then a solemn feeling had descended over the whole castle.

It had started with such promise, though. The king's arrival had gone relatively well minus the royal couple's stubborn standoff in the courtyard. Down in the crypts he had to put up with Robert lamenting on the love he lost, but truly never had. Then, the king had offered him the position of Hand of the King. He had tried to politely refuse, but as always Robert didn't want to hear it. Ned was able to deflect enough to say he had to discuss it over with Catelyn along with the proposed betrothal of Sansa to the Crown Prince.

That same night they had the welcoming feast for the royals. It was a lavish affair overall. The North was not known for throwing huge celebrations outside of the Harvest Feasts. The king of course had embarrassed himself throughout the night. Robert groped any serving girl that came with in reach and even at one pint had a busty woman sat in his lap as he kissed and groped her in front of the entire hall.

The queen was dismal company. Ned and Cat tried multiple times to engage her in conversation to only get bored and uninterested responses. The only thing that held her attention was her wine goblet.

The children were a different story all together. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves the entire night. The younger children were limited to just one cup of wine, but the older boys were allowed to have at it. Thankfully, they still managed themselves with dignity and honor by not getting intoxicated.

Though he normally wouldn't partake he did take Cat for a turn on the floor when dancing began.
much to her delight. After two songs Robb took over for him, so he could return to the dais.

He watched as throughout the night partners were changed frequently. Robb had danced with Cat, Sansa, Jeyne, Beth, Annie, Mikasa, Sasha, and Historia. Jon had originally been dragged to the floor by Annie, but like Robb had changed partners multiple times during the night. Even Arya decided to break her dancing boycott to have a turn with her favorite ‘brother’.

He had his attention drawn from the dance floor when he saw his brother enter the hall. Benjen was decked out in black from head to toe befitting a brother of the Night's Watch. He watched as Benjen stopped to speak with Jon and Annie whom had left the dance floor to have a drink and cool down a bit. Ned watched as he embraced Jon in a hug and kissed the back of Annie's hand.

After they had spoken for a few minutes Benjen broke off from the couple and made his way towards the dais once again. Ned moved to meet him at the side of the hall so they could speak in private. That conversation with Ben had been the beginning of the downfall of the peace. He had kept most of it to himself to keep the spirits of everyone up while the royals were there.

Benjen had told him that more rangers were disappearing beyond the Wall. The ones that did return were reporting that they were finding villages completely abandoned. Ben had told him that when he returned to the Wall he would be going on a ranging to find out what exactly was happening out there himself.

That was bad enough, but later in the night a rider had arrived to Winterfell. They had carried a message from the Eeyrie in the Vale from Cat's sister Lysa. She said that the Lannister's had been responsible for Jon Arryn's death by poisoning him. Ned had tried to argue with Cat that they were just the ravings of a grieving woman, but Cat wouldn't hear it. Between Cat and Maester Luwin the outcome of the disagreement was that Ned would accept the Hand position to be able to investigate exactly what happened to Lord Arryn in the capital and how much of a threat the Lannisters truly were.

Then there was the hunt that Ned had been dragged on by the king. It isn't that he didn't like hunting. Quite the opposite actually, but he enjoyed it with his boys. Not the king's entire hunting party which were about as subtle as a herd of mammoths making their way through the woods. So, it was really no surprise that even by the second day they still hadn't found any game.

The party had stopped just to have luncheon when the rider found them. The poor boy and his horse were exhausted from trying to find the king's hunting party. Once he had caught his breath he delivered his ominous message of Bran falling. The words had barely registered before he realized that Robb and Theon were already back on their horses racing back to Winterfell.

It took them till mid afternoon to make it back to the castle. The air had been ringing with the howls of direwolves in mourning, and Ned's heart had been racing as he made his way to the Maester's Turret. Robb and Theon were already standing outside the door in the crowded hallway. There was Jon who had Annie's arms around his waist while she whispered something to him, Sansa was being consoled by Historia, Arya was bouncing Rickon in her arms trying to calm the boy, Sasha was crying on Connie's shoulder, Mikasa was leaned back against Eren's chest with his arms around her both wearing angry steeled expressions. Bertholt was consoling Beth Cassel, Jean was speaking lowly to Jeyne Poole whom was nodding her head along with whatever the boy was telling her. Reiner was next to Robb with a scowl on his face. When they heard his approaching steps all eyes shifted to him and Jory who followed closely in his wake. Robb just nodded his head towards the door, and Ned wasted no more time entering the room.

When he entered the room Maester Luwin was speaking with Hange by the maester's desk over a book, and his wife was seated next to the recovery bed as Armin stood beside her with a reassuring
hand on her shoulder. Levi was leaning on the wall armed with a sword belt and a determined look on his face. The Captain obviously had the same unease that the situation that Ned did. When Ned's presence caught everyone's attention Cat ran into his arms sobbing.

Bran was on what looked like a wooden plank. There was a piece of wood on either side of his head that rested against his shoulders. They were strapped in place keeping his head immobile along with the rest of his body being strapped down. Luwin had explained it had been Hange’s idea. She had said that if they braced his head from where he had fallen that could mitigate the risk of further injury. She had also explained that if Bran recovered enough to be able to walk he would never be the same. He may eventually be able to ride, but his days of fully fighting were done. Bran even in the best case scenario would require a cane for the rest of his life.

Hange also told him that there were ways they could help him heal along the way. Where they were from they called it physical therapy and it consisted of different exercises that would help strengthen Bran back up. She added they could help by building a wheeled chair for him if/till he could walk again. Combined with Maester Luwin's reassurance that if Bran survived the night the worst would be behind them Ned allowed himself to relax a little.

Unfortunately, the king wanted to be on his way back to the capital, but understanding the situation had given Ned another fortnight to prepare for their departure. Since then the castle had been in constant motion getting the supplies, carts, and men that Ned would take with them to the capital. Sansa and Arya would also accompany Ned. Sansa for her possible betrothal to the prince and Arya at Cat’s insistence that the capital could erase some of the girl's wildness. Ned doubted it himself but didn’t want to argue with his grieving wife.

Movement in the corner of his eye brought him out of his thoughts. Captain Levi stepped up beside him at the railing. The shorter man was dressed in a brown leather brigandine, over a black gambeson, with black trousers, and knee high black boots. A sword and dagger were strapped around his waist. Ned had requested that the Scouts stay incognito while the royal family was visiting and stay dressed in Stark regalia to blend into the household.

“You wanted to see me, Lord Stark?” the captain spoke in his usual no nonsense tone.

“Yes, thank you for coming, Levi.” Ned took a moment to organize his thoughts on the request he was about to make to. “I wanted to ask if you and some of your people would come with me to King's Landing? I don't want to take too many of my household guards, but your presence would definitely strengthen our presence while still being lower numbers.”

“I can arrange that, My- Look at the children playing with their wooden swords, Dog” The prince's shrill voice cut Levi's response off.

Both of their heads swiveled to where the crown prince and his sworn sword Sandor Clegane were approaching his boys in the training yard. They were trailed by several Lannister men-at-arms that laughed loudly at the prince's poor attempt at a jest.

Robb and Jon had immediately ceased their bout when the prince had called out. The two boys turned towards the approaching royal, and they both bowed. When they straightened again Robb acknowledged the prince with a your grace.

“Coming to join the boys in training, Your Grace?” Ser Rodrik asked the prince as the later came to a stop leaning on the railing of the fencing yard.

“Pfft,” The prince responded impolitely, “I don't spar with a wooden sword against children. I only train against men with live steel.”
“That's fair with me.” Robb responded indignantly. Obviously, being called a child twice by the prince whom was several years his junior had riled Ned's heir up.

“That will be no live steel in my yard.” Rodrik cut into the challenges. “If you want to use steel you can use tourney blades, but there will be no edges.”

At this point the commotion had caught the attention of the others training throughout the yard. Other Lannister and Stark guards had started to surround the arena. All this seemed to do was allow the prince a bigger stage to peacock. “The Master-at-Arms of the Red Keep has allowed me to train with live steel for the past two years.” He spoke as patting the sword that hung around his waist.

“Well that is good for the Red Keep, but we are at Winterfell, Your Grace.” the knight responded quickly, “Here I am the Master-at-Arms and none of my charges are using live steel.”

At this point Jon had lost interest and walked to the side of the pen to grab a cup of water. “See, Stark you should be as smart as the bastard and go sit down.” The comment was followed by laughs rippling through the Lannister men. “At least he knows his place.” The prince laughed at his own comment as he started to leave the area, but not before calling one more insult over his shoulder, “Come see me when you decide to be a man, Stark.” Ned watched his son's face change colors in rage to the point of almost matching his hair.

Lannister soldiers began leaving the training ring realizing the show they had been watching had ended anti-climatically. Many following and laughing at what the prince continued to say to his group.

“STOP!”

Everyone immediately froze and all eyes turned towards the bellowing call that had come from under the Lord of Winterfell and the Scouts Captain. The king appeared below them carrying a horn of ale in his hand. “You think you can insult the martial skill of our host and then when challenged slink away like a craven, Boy!”

The prince had frozen with his mouth agape as his father approached him, but the king wasn't done with him, “Take that sword belt off, Boy, and get in that ring. I want to see what those cunts at the Red Keep have been teaching you.”

“I REFUSE TO FIGHT CHILDREN WITH WOO-” The prince's retort was cutoff as the king slapped him across the mouth.

“Who do you think you are talking to, Boy?!” Robert seethed through clenched teeth. “I gave you an order as both your father and king.” Robert seized the prince rough handling him as he untied and wrenched the sword belt off of his son. He handed the belt to Clegane before shoving the prince back towards the training ring. “Get your ass in that ring, or so help me Gods you will spend the rest of your days in dress silks and doing needle work with the ladies! Baratheons are not cravens to challenge and then run away!”

Once the prince had been corralled into the yard the king turned to the knight. “Ser Rodrik, get my boy a tourney sword,” the king looked up at Robb to address him next, “and get yourself one as well, Stark.”

Ned watched as Jon handed the blade to Robb with a grin on his face. He pulled his 'brother' in whispering something into Robb's ear real quick. Ned could hear his son's chuckle in reply. While his sons were speaking Joffrey was being quickly fitted into training armor and a helmet. However, Robb decided to forgo both a helmet and shield.
When they were ready they met in the middle of ring with Ser Rodrik between them. “Boys, I want a good clean bout. Round is over when your opponent is disarmed or yields.”

Before the knight could give the signal for them to begin the king decided to add to the instructions, “He may be the Crown Prince, Stark, but from his boasting you shouldn’t be an issue from him. So, do not hold back. Your king commands it!”

“Yes, Your Grace!” Robb responded almost a little to enthusiastically.

The prince immediately charged at Robb swinging wildly. Robb easily danced away from all of Joffrey's swings or lazily batted it away anytime the blade came too close. Ned could tell that the prince was becoming more frustrated with his lack of success against the Stark Heir. His swings quickly becoming hastier and sloppier.

Robb then decided to go on the offensive. He struck Joffrey's shield hard knocking the prince off balance. When the prince swung in retaliation, Robb, quickly lowered his blade causing Joffrey to overswing. His son quickly cracked the prince in his exposed ribs. Joffrey threw a back swing to try to catch Robb on his retreat. His son just ducked under the blade then feinted a strike at Joffrey's left shoulder. When the Prince's shield rose to catch the blade, Robb, slammed him in the thigh with the flat of his blade.

The prince cursed and swung again. Robb parried the blade feinting towards Joffrey's thigh. The shield dropped to catch the non-existent swing. The yard rang when Robb's sword connected to the side of Joffrey's helmet. The hit disoriented the prince momentarily causing him to drop his guard. That was all the time Robb needed as he forcefully jabbed the tourney sword into the prince's gut. Joffrey immediately doubled over and emptied his stomach of his breakfast.

Vomit ran out the bottom of Joffrey's helmet as a young girl's gut wrenching laughter filled the air. Ned turned to the bridge that connected the barracks with the keep. There in one of the windows was his youngest daughter leaning out laughing as she tried to wipe tears from her eyes.

“Live steel, indeed.” The king spoke pulling Ned's attention back towards the yard. The king's comment caused Arya's laughs to turn into harsh cackles.

The world seemed to slow as the king turned away from the ring. Joffrey dashed across the open space at Robb's back whom was distracted speaking to Theon at the moment. The prince raised the tourney sword above his head both hands on the hilt. Apparently the humiliation of being bested in the ring was too much for the prince to handle and he meant to strike Robb's unprotected head while his back was turned.

CRACK!

The world returned to it's regular pace as the wooden sword snapped across the face plate of Joffrey's helmet. The prince landed spread eagle in the dirt as his tourney sword bounced across the ground. Jon was stood frozen with his arms outstretched now holding only a wooden hilt and six inches of blade. His eyes glued to the king who had spun around at the noise.

Ned watched as rage overtook the king's face again when he realized what had happened. The king looked around the yard till he spotted two Baratheon guards amongst the spectators. “You two! Take my son to his chamber where he will be confined till we leave for King's Landing. I only want Baratheon guards on his door. No one is allowed to enter unless to deliver his meals or empty his chamberpot. Not even the queen.”

“YES, YOUR GRACE!” Both men answered as they hopped the fence into the yard retrieving the
prince's limp body between them. Then they hauled him away to the guest house.

Robert addressed the tall Clegane man by him, “I want that sword belt locked up. That boy will not wear a sword until I deem him worthy of it.” Clegane just nodded in response.

The king's attention then turned to Jon who at this point had dropped his arms to his side. Both of his sons wore expressions like the Gods themselves were about to come down from the sky to vanquish them. The king's expression broke into a roaring laugh as he slapped Jon on the shoulder. “Gods, Boy, that is a hell of a swing you got there!” The king continued to laugh as he walked away shouting for more wine.

Chapter End Notes

As always thanks for reading.

I got inspiration for this scene from GoT the first time Jon spars with Pyp and uses the same jab on him. I thought of Joff throwing up and couldn't resist writing it.
The royal party, his father, and his sisters had departed a few days back, and with it Winterfell had fallen into its normal quiet state. The morning they left had been greeted with a light summer snow that had quickly turned the courtyard into a muddy pit with the servants scurrying around to finalize last minute preparations. Robb knew he would miss his family members that were traveling south, but he couldn't wait to see the backs of the royals.

Ever since Joffrey's sorry excuse for a spar every Lannister man sneered at him. The queen seemed to have a permanent scowl on her face whenever Robb was present. He couldn't care what she thought in the slightest. She was lucky that she was even in the position that she was. If his father didn't care for Robert like a brother they probably would've already sat Jon on his rightful throne. A throne his father's friend stole over the corpses of his cousin's siblings. Robb knew as long as Robert lived his father would never raise the banners to retake the capital. However, Joffrey was not worthy to sit on the throne especially as long as Jon was breathing. Robb would tell the North the truth then, and they would put the rightful king back where he belonged.

Robb had been especially sad to see Arya leave. The castle wouldn't be the same without her running around causing mischief. She had thrown a fit when she found out Nymeria and Lady wouldn't be joining them in King's Landing. Father had stayed firm though, stating that the capital was no place for pony sized direwolves. However, she had cheered up a little when she found out some of the Scouts would be accompanying them.

Robb's mother had been apprehensive at first with the friendship Arya had developed with the Scout girls. She was worried that it would make Arya even more unruly than she already was. Surprisingly, it had the opposite effect. Arya had been so confused over how the girls would dress in breeches while training or handling their duties, but immediately switch to dresses and skirts once done. Arya mimicked them so much that it slowly became less of a fight to get her into dresses. Then what had shocked Robb the most was when Arya started actually trying on her needlework when the Scout Women had taken an interest in it. Needless to say the last two years
had made his mother extremely happy where Arya's developments were concerned. Robb wasn't fooled though. Even if he hadn't caught them yet he was sure that some of the girls were teaching Arya how to fight.

Sansa had been more than thrilled to head south. Her dreams had always been filled with songs, chivalry, knights, and tourneys. She was even happier having her best friend Jeyne Poole going along with her. Until Bran fell all of her chattering had been about how much she couldn't wait to see the capital. She had been somewhat disappointed that their father hadn't confirmed her betrothal to the crown prince, but Robb couldn't have been happier for that small mercy. She would soon see the truth of who Joffrey really was, and thankfully word had spread through the castle of his actions in the yard. Also, if they were to end up wed it would make his future plans extremely more difficult.

The only joy Robb could find in seeing part of his family leave was that his father had taken some of the Scouts with him. Connie, Sasha, Reiner, Bertolt, Armin, and Levi were the Scouts heading south while the rest stayed at Winterfell with Hange. He had seen them that morning packing up wagons of their own. Robb of course knew why they were doing it instead of letting the servants perform the task. Not only did they have their personal effects, but he knew many of those trunks held their O.D.M. Gear and gas canisters. The Scouts had two wagons hitched up piled high with their stuff.

It was a great relief to know Captain Levi was leading the King's Landing group of Scouts to support his father. Even though he had a hundred Stark men and Jory with him, Levi, was a force all his own. Robb could still remember his first spar against him. Levi had taken on Theon, Jon, and himself along with seven other Stark guards all at once. It had been over almost as fast as it started. The man moved so fast it was scary, his reflexes were astounding, and it seemed he always knew your next move before you did. Plus, he did it wielding two bastard swords at the same time. The man had turned into a storm of arms, legs, and blunted steel. He knew Levi along with the others would keep his father and sisters safe. Then there was the added bonus that two of the Scouts heading south happened to be titan shifters.

A series of knocks on the door pulled him from his thoughts. He turned from the window he had been staring out of as it creaked open revealing Maester Luwin. The maester's hands quickly returned to were they were hidden in his sleeves clasped across his abdomen. He wore a grim expression on his face as he stepped further into Bran's room.

They had been able to move him from the maester's recovery room to his own chambers a week ago. His little brother laid motionless covered in furs upon his bed. Around his neck was another device Hange created. It was a brown leather collar that had been stuffed with down until it restricted the movement of his neck with out choking him. She had explained that it would stop his neck from moving too much while he healed. Under the furs his limbs had been strapped together for the same purpose. They had to leave him like that until he awoke and could tell them himself how he felt and where his pain lingered. They had been reassured a little when Hange had poked his toes with the tip of her dagger. They had taken a moment to respond, but they had twitched a little which the woman said was a very good sign.

Above his bed hung a prayer wheel his mother had weaved during her long vigil over her comatose son. His mother still sat on the opposite side of his bed sewing. Behind her was a cot that the servants had brought in for her to sleep on. She had vehemently refused to leave Bran's side. So, the cot was a consolation Robb had been able to make to get his mother to sleep. Otherwise she was likely to hurt herself when she succumbed to exhaustion.

The maester stopped beside Jon whom was leaning back against the stone wall by the hearth. He
was dressed in a black leather jerkin over a white tunic, black leather trousers, knee high black boots, and around his waist were his sword and dagger. Jon was the most changed of anyone over the past two years. Once his heritage was revealed thanks to Armin the sullen bastard that seemed to hide in the shadows slowly disappeared. These days he carried himself with a lot more confidence. Annie had to be credited with as much of the change as Jon knowing the truth of himself.

When the Scouts had first arrived Annie was similar in personality to Jon. She was very standoffish and hated any attention being brought upon her. However, she would often be found in the company of Jon. A sort of kindred spirit type of thing. After the Scouts had realized they weren't going to be able to get home recreating the event that brought them here after multiple failed attempts she started opening up more. With her opening up, Jon, came out of his shell more.

Robb was happy his brother-cousin had found a lady that gave him so much affection. It had thankfully chased that idiotic idea of the Wall clean out of his head. His father had even talked of finding a castle or holdfast for them if they decided to get married and form a new house. Things between two had really progressed on Annie's last name day when Jon gifted her a new longsword. The blade was a testament to Northern Steel. Like other northern blades it was of simply design, but the moonstone in the pommel sparkled like Annie's eyes in the sun.

Annie was also the cause of the one and only time he had ever truly been jealous of Jon. The night of the welcoming feast for King Robert she had looked amazing. She had been dressed in a grey northern style dress that hugged her curves tightly. On the bodice was a pair of wings sewn in silver thread that followed the curve of her bust. Her sandy blonde hair was done up in northern braids forming a crown around her head and falling loose down her shoulders. Jon had been beaming anytime she was latched to his arm.

Even with the little jealousy he had for his 'brother' already having a beautiful woman to call his own it didn't stop him from having a great time at the feast. As the ale flowed he had loosened up a lot more and found himself spending most of the night dancing. He had started the night doing a turn each with Sansa and his mother. Then he had taken a turn with young Myrcella Baratheon as he was obligated as the host's heir. Then, other ladies had come to dance with the Heir of Winterfell. With so many of the Lords of the North traveling to Winterfell with their families to see the king there was no shortage of dancing partners. Alys Starke had looked radiant in a black dress covered in small white suns, her hair had run loose past her shoulders, and her cool grey eyes had enraptured Robb. They had danced for three songs before Theon had cut in, and they had switched partners. Robb, found himself dancing with Jeyne Poole. After Jeyne had been Dacey Mormont. She was a northern beauty that was more than a few years older than himself. Dacey was followed by Wynafryd Manderly who looked resplendent in her blue-green gown. Then, Wylla Manderly with her bright green hair and boisterous personality. She had Robb laughing through their whole dance. He had also danced with Beth, Sasha, Historia, Annie had taken a turn with him, and the most surprising was when Mikasa even took a turn with him. It was a overall good night despite Arya throwing food at Sansa and the king dishonoring his wife in the view of most of the north. Robb didn't mind the last part too much. The king's actions would make Robb's plans a little easier with so many lords seeing the type of man Robert Baratheon really was.

The maester cleared his throat as he turned his attention to Robb's Mother, “My Lady, will you be able to attend tomorrow? No doubt you want to know how much this royal visit cost us?”

His mother didn't look up from her embroidery when she responded coldly, “That is the responsibility of the steward, Maester.”

“Vayon Poole went south with Lord Stark, My Lady, we have quite a few positions that need to be
filled.” Luwin gently responded.

Her eyes shot up as she threw the hoop holding the fabric to the ground in frustration. “Mother,” Robb cut her off before she said anything rude. “Jon and I can handle the books and appointments tomorrow.”

His mother glanced at him gratefully before retrieving her embroidery from the ground as Jon spoke, “You'll have to handle at least the morning by yourself, Robb, Annie and I need to go to the holdfast and check on Lyax. I haven't been able to get to her since the king was here. Didn't want to risk a curious party following me.”

Robb nodded as he turned his attention to Luwin, “Maester, have the books ready and a list of suggested names for the appointments that need filled. We'll go through them in the morning and select the best candidates.”

Maester Luwin bowed his head and he turned to leave the room. His grey robes swishing and his chain clanking as he made his retreat from the chamber. He let out a long sigh under his breath dreading the coming morning. The last thing he wanted was to be stuck in meetings all day going through books. At least the appointments would require him speaking with the potential candidates, and that would be a small reprieve from the tedious paperwork. It had only been a few days and he already wondered how his father was able to do this for the last seventeen years without losing his mind.

A mournful howl hit his ears followed soon by the rest of the direwolf pack taking up the call. The howling was followed a moment later by bells ringing out across Winterfell. Robb spun looking out the window. Shock froze him for a moment as flames growing out of the windows on the library tower met his eyes. Guards and servants were rushing around the courtyard calling out the warning of fire to rouse the rest of the castle.

Robb quickly made his way to the chamber's door, “Mother, stay here with Bran. There is a fire in the Library Tower. Jon let’s go.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: Catelyn I

Thanks for reading!!!
CATELYN I

Chapter Summary

Cat reflects and a plot is thwarted

Chapter Notes

First off I want to say thank you to everyone that comments and supports this little crossover. Just 7 chapters and over 1600 hits and 50 kudos. I am honestly blown away. As my first fic I didn't expect that much so soon. Once again thank you all!

In good news I was able to push through my block on how to work a chapter I was having issues with. Since then I was able to get two more rough chapters done in as many days. So, this train is back to running on schedule.

By my rough outline we still have a few chapters till we get to a big action sequence I'm looking forward to writing. Then a few more till we get to some sweet sweet Titan action.

Now time for what you actually came here for:

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She was left alone with Bran after the two boys had raced off to deal with the fire. She gently placed her embroidery into her sewing basket that was resting to her left. As she stood from her chair a relieved moan escaped her lips as she stretched out her cramped muscles and her back popped in a few spots as it arched. A grim reminder that time was slowly catching up to her body. She lamented to herself that she shouldn't be feeling like this already. She was only three and thirty. Seven Hells, she could still give her lord husband more children without real risk if said man wasn't on his way to King's Landing. She blew out a long breath as her arms fell back to her side.

She made her way to the window going around Bran's bed. Her legs feeling stiff from the amount of time she had been sitting in the chair these past weeks. She opened the glass panels and leaned slightly out the window. A breeze of fresh air greeted her face as the smell of smoke filled her nostrils. The courtyard was a cacophony of sound as people ran around to battle the fire.

Her attention was pulled to the left below her as Robb and Jon came bursting out of the keep into the yard. The two started shouting orders as they ran towards the Library Tower where a bucket chain was already beginning to take shape. She found her eyes locking onto the back of the boy she had despised for so long.

It seemed like some twisted moral lesson the gods had played on her. She had been a cruel vengeful woman to that boy. When the truth came out she had felt so ashamed of how she had acted, and that she had always taken her anger at Ned out on Jon. She had always felt that Ned loved the boy's mother more than her, and the truth proved those suspicions to be true. Instead of some harlot bedding a married man it had been his sister. Catelyn could understand that love he
bore then. Besides, it coincided with her own house's words Family, Duty, Honor. Family always comes first.

The hurt and anger had come from the lies. She understood how he couldn't have told her the truth at the beginning. They barely knew each other. However, they had been married fifteen years and had five children. At some point she should have proven herself trustworthy. Yet, Ned had kept that secret from her and the family. True, the consequences of that getting out could have been grave for them all. She had to wonder though if Armin hadn't figured it out how long would Ned have kept the secret. Would he have allowed his nephew to live and die with the scorn of being a bastard. Not only from herself, but everyone else as well.

She had been so angry at Ned she hadn't spoken to him for two days. He had finally shown up at her chambers on the third day. He had told her that he had just left the crypts after speaking with Jon. They had had a very one-sided row that night. She had screamed and yelled at him till her voice was hoarse. She hadn't shared a bed with him for a moon after that, and it was still another two moons before she coupled with him again.

That first night Ned had come to her chambers to speak would be the night their lives changed forever. They had been speaking for hours after she had gone hoarse. Their talk had been interrupted by a loud explosion echoing through the halls of the castle as the walls shook. Ned had immediately bolted for the door with herself quick on his heels. In the hall they were joined by their children who insisted on following even when Ned had told them to go back to their rooms.

They had found Theon and Reiner standing in their doorways staring farther down the hall to where Jon's chamber had smoke curling out of the doorway. The door was in two pieces leaning against the opposite wall. When they stopped in the threshold, Cat, will never forget the sight that greeted her. The room was filled with thinning smoke as dust and ash settled on all the furniture. Where the hearths that separated the rooms should have been was a gaping hole that Bertolt was leaning through staring at Jon as steam poured off his body. Jon was kneeling on the ground with Annie standing over his shoulder. They were both pale from head to toe from the amount of ash that coated them.

An involuntarily gasp had escaped her lips when she saw what was cupped in Jon's hands, and caused the creature to turn its sparkling silver eyes her direction. She wasn't sure if she was hallucinating or if she had gone mad, but in Jon's hands was a baby dragon. The creature was a cool light blue that reminded her of the Winter Roses that grew in the glass gardens, and its small head was adorned with pearl white horns.

Poor Bertolt had taken the blame for the damage to the hearths to keep Lyax's existance a secret. They had told everyone that one of his gas tanks for his gear had rolled into the fire causing the explosion. After that Bertolt, Reiner, and Annie were moved to the guest house with the rest of the Survey Corps while Theon and Jon were moved into the family wing.

She was still in a daze about the fact that a dragon had been reborn into the world. She had stayed hidden in Jon's room until she insisted on flying more and more. Thankfully Jon had been wise enough to only let her out of the room at night. That had back fired in time, though. With her having free reign at night she had began hunting on her own and eating more which in turn had fueled her growth. The rapid change in her size had pushed Ned into finding a place to hide her.

That was when the Survey Corps had moved to the hold fast hidden in the Wolfswood. There the Survey Corps could train without watchful eyes and Lyax's existance could be hidden longer. It helped that Annie would be there with her considering she was the only other person that the dragon would let near her on a regular basis.
She had to give lots of credit to Jon on how he handled Lyax. He went to check on the dragon as much as possible, and probably to also steal kisses from Annie. He had asked Maester Luwin the day after Lyax hatched for lessons in Valyrian. He thought that she would more likely respond better to the language of the old dragon lords, and Ned along with Luwin had agreed with the smart decision.

Her relationship with Jon had been a sensitive matter. She knew that it wouldn't be fixed overnight because of how dreadful she had been to him before. On top of that they still had to maintain some distance, so the servants and others wouldn't notice the change in their relationship. Having the truth revealed also showed her how much he meant to her children and how loving their relationships were once she had her prejudices wiped away.

Over time she got to watch Jon's demeanor change. He walked taller now with a lot more confidence. He also smiled and laughed more than he used to. She wasn't completely sure if it was his treatment in the castle, Annie, or maybe a combination of the two that brought all the changes to him. Either way she was more than happy to have the young man around and now she truly knew how faithful of a bannerman her son wou-

“You're not s'pose to be here.”

The sound of the strange voice made her jump and all her muscles tensed as she spun around. Standing there was one of the filthiest men Catelyn had ever seen. Most of his face was hidden in shadow from the old worn leather skull cap he wore, but she could see that he had a long sharp nose and his cheeks were coated in greying scruff. The smell of horse, ale, and his unwashed body assaulted her nose. She wasn't sure at the moment if her eyes were watering from fear or the noxious fumes coming off the man.

“No ones s'pose to be here. It's a mercy.” He spoke in a low voice as he moved his eyes to Bran in the bed. Catelyn felt the blood drain from her face at the man's words. “He's dead already.”

She had been frozen in fear until she saw light gleam off the blade of a dagger. She screamed out and charged the man realizing his intentions. She didn't know how to fight but the Seven be damned if she was just going to stand there and let her little boy be murdered.

She tried seizing his right arm, and was immediately over powered by him. He back handed her with his left hand causing Cat to stumble and fall bent over Bran's bed. The man seized her by the hair. Pain screamed from her scalp as her head was yanked back forcefully. Instinct alone caused her to grab the blade of the dagger with both hands to prevent her throat from being slit. The pain of steel digging into her hands caused her to let out a blood curdling scream.

She managed to fight through and pushed off the edge of the bed with her feet throwing them both into the cabinet behind them. The assassin grunted, but his hold didn't give at all. She could feel her grip on the blade loosening from the amount of blood on the blade lubricating it and allowed it to start slipping. In a last ditch effort to get free she bit into the heel of his thumb. Her mouth filled with the coppery-iron flavor of blood and she wrenched her head back taking a chunk of flesh with her.

“BITCH!!” The man yelled pain lacing his voice as her threw her to the floor at the foot of the bed.

“HELP!” Cat screamed as she scooted backwards on the ground. Her hands left bloody tracks in her wake. Her retreat was halted as she felt the stone wall at her back. The man approached with murder in his empty grey eyes. Cat didn't know what to do. She had no weapon, or means of escape. She was going to die here never to see her Ned or any of her children again, and that her
failure was also going to cost her middle son's life.

Movement over the man's shoulder caught her attention, and when her eyes focused she felt hope immediately well up in herself. Perched on the sill of the open window looking as if she was the Maiden and Warrior in one was Mikasa. Her chin length black hair swirling around her head from the breeze rolling through the window. It took the young women only a moment to assess what was happening.

Cat watched as she leaped from the sill. A pop- hiss resounded in the chamber as a cable shot from her O.D.M. Gear. The anchor sank into the stone wall several feet above Cat's head with a clank as powered stone fell about her. With a burst of steam behind her Mikasa covered the distance across the room almost instantaneously. The would be assassin spun in just enough time to catch a knee right to the face. A sickening crunch filled the room as blood shot from his nose and he crumpled to the floor like a puppet with its strings cut.

Catelyn sat under the Weirwood on the rock that was her husband's favorite spot when he visited the sacred Godswood. It felt good to have the breeze on her face after spending the last two days abed. Her head was still a little fuzzy from milk of the poppy, but the watered down drug helped keep her hands to a dull ache. Hange had insisted she use splints as well as wraps to help, though, they made her hands virtuously useless. The younger woman said it would speed the healing along by not irritating the wounds with unnecessary movement.

Hange had come to her just a bit ago asking where the best private place was to meet. Which brought her and her current company to the Godswood. Cat looked to the faces standing around her. To her right was Robb, Theon, Jon, Annie, Mikasa, Eren, Jean, Historia, Hange, Maester Luwin, and Ser Rodrik to her left. Robb and Jon had set Grey Wind, Ghost, Lady, and Nymeria to guard the gate, so they wouldn't be disturbed. They had all been rounded up quickly to learn what Hange had discovered since the attempted murder of Bran and herself. At that Catelyn turned her eyes to the younger woman and gave her a nod to begin.

"Well, I'll skip everything we already know and get right to what has come to light since." Hange began, "The morning after the attack Ser Rodrik and I took the initiative to look around. I figured that with an attempted assassination Bran didn't fall, but may have been pushed."

"The boy was always sure footed before." Luwin cut in, and everyone responded with nods in silent agreement.

"That was why I took it upon myself to see if I could find anything in the Broken Tower." Hange turned her eyes to Rodrik then, "and Ser Rodrik looked around the castle for any clues about our esteemed guest currently in the dungeon."

Rodrik picked up then as he drew the dagger that the assassin had utilized. It was a gorgeous blade. The grip was black with gold ornament and a decent sized ruby that ended without any form of a crossguard. The blade was single bladed with a blood groove along half the length, and was covered in the smokey grey swirls indicative of Valyrian Steel. "As you can see this blade is far too fine for a common cut throat. Dragon bone handle, gold decoration, and Valyrian Steel. Whomever sponsored this cutthroat has to be fairly wealthy." He passed the blade around the circle to his left, so the rest of the party could look at it. Cat noticed that when the dagger got to Robb, and after observing it a few minutes it disappeared into his cloak. When he saw her looking at him, Robb, gave her one of his mischeivous winks. She didn't know what he had planned for the weapon, but she was sure the result would at least be entertaining.\"We assumed that the man set the fire in the Library Tower as a means of diversion to draw everyone from Bran's room. If, Lady Mikasa, had
not heard your screams for help, My Lady, I fear his plan would've worked.”

“Yes, thank you, Lady Mikasa, you saved both my son's and my life.” Cat turned to address the dark haired girl.

Mikasa's face turned red with the attention and looked down as she mumbled, “It was nothing, My Lady.”

“It wasn't 'nothing' Mikasa.” Robb interjected. “You saved my mother and brother. You will be properly rewarded for that.” Mikasa just nodded not arguing anymore.

Rodrik looked around to make sure that the side bar was done before continuing, “I discovered that he had been hiding in the back of the stables. Where I found a coin purse with ninety silver moons.”

“At least my son's life didn't come cheap.” Cat fumed sarcastically.

“While Ser Rodrik was conducting his search I found some interesting things in the Broken Tower.” Hange spoke looking directly at Cat, “In the chamber on the top floor above where Bran fell I found some evidence. Firstly, there was a spot where the old rushes and dust had been disturbed...a lot. There were stains on the floor that could be associated with some certain bodily fluids.”

Cat immediately picked up on what Hange was saying. While Ser Rodrik, Maester Luwin, and Theon seemed to follow along as well. If the situation hadn't been so serious she would've laughed at the others around the circle whom seemed to not know what the information was inferring. She forgot that even with the amount of mischief they all got into the younger members of the group were still innocent in the private affairs of men and women.

“Secondly, I found this in the tower as well.” Hange reached into her cloak to pull out a roll of leather. She knelt and unrolled it crimping the end to stop it's contents from flying away in the wind. There contrasted against the dark brown leather was a extremely long golden blonde hair. “As you can see this hair is both a more golden blonde and longer length than any other blonde haired person in Winterfell. In fact in the few years we have been here I have only seen one blonde that had this length of hair.”

Hange didn't need to elaborate anymore. By the looks on the faces around the circle they all had come to the same conclusion, Cersei Lannister. “If that isn't enough,” Hange continued, “I spent the better part of yesterday, umm...” she looked at Cat a moment as if weighing what words to use before speaking again, “enthusiastically questioning our guest in the dungeon. It didn't take too much to get him to talk, but Levi ended up being right. In the end it just takes one finger nail and if they are going to talk they will.”

A sheepish look took over Hange's face as if she was expecting Cat to reprimand her torturing their prisoner. She knew Ned wouldn't approve of it, but given the circumstances she couldn't care less and she let Hange know that. “I hold no ill will for your questioning methods, Lady Hange. That man tried to kill my son, and I want to know who sent him. What did he tell you?”

“He said the last day before everyone left Winterfell a man named Trant gave him the dagger and the bag of silver. He was told to wait a few days before attempting the deed, but the how was left entirely up to him.”

“So, a Kingsguard paid a cutthroat to murder my brother?” Robb spat angrily.
“If that is the case only three people could have given him that order. King Robert, Queen Cersei, or Ser Barristan Selmy.” Ser Rodrik spoke up quickly.

“King Robert loves my husband too much to do something like this. He seemed just as heartbroken as Ned about what happened.” Cat addressed everyone, “Ser Barristan's honor is renowned across the Seven Kingdoms, and he would never tarnish that by attempting to murder a comatose child. That leaves us with Cersei. With what, Lady Hange, discovered I feel it is safe to say they she wants Bran silenced. He must have witnessed her infidelity, and she knows Robert's wrath almost better than anyone.”

“What are we to do? Should I call the banners?” Robb asked bristling with anger.

“If it comes to war you know I will stand by you!” Theon threw in enthusiastically.

“No.” Cat responded. “We will do nothing as of yet. There is still much we don't know. We will send a message to your father though. He needs to know what has happened here, and two riders should be able to catch the royal procession fairly quickly and slide in amongst the other Stark men unnoticed.”

Their conversation was broken when the direwolves could be heard barking from their position guarding the gate. Cat looked towards Robb and Jon's direction with Theon between them. Jon at the moment had his eyes closed, but opened a second later. Turning to her, “It's Tomard, Lady Stark, he tried coming in, so it must be important.”

She nodded her head as she responded, “Well, we are pretty much done for now I think. We should go see what he needs.”

When they got to gate the four direwolves were standing just a few feet from the gate with their fur bristling along their backs. Tomard stood on the other side of the bars staring right back at the wolves with fear written across his face. He had been a guard at Winterfell for well over ten years. Now in his late 20's and quite rotund. The poor man had ended up with the moniker of 'Fat Tom' amongst the household. She had at one point even heard the children refer to the man as such. As the lady of the house she had quickly quelled that. She had told them that the man deserved their respect since he was expected to lay down his life for them if the situation called for it. She could still remember them all red faced as she made them apologize. The guard had accepted their apologies, called them right proper little lords, and ruffled their hair. Cat decided to relieve the man of his burden quickly, “Tomard, what is it you needed?”

The guard's eyes quickly shot up meeting hers, “My Lady, Maester Luwin, sent me for you. Little Lord Bran is awake.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading

Next up: Eddard IV
EDDARD IV

Chapter Summary

The first day in King’s Landing

Chapter Notes

Not much to say this week. My trip got cancelled, so I can concentrate more on getting the next few chapters to where I am more happy with them.

Any ways on to what you came for:

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Godswood of the Red Keep was more of a manicured garden than a true Godswood. Ned walked the gravel path towards the Hearttree. The sound of rock crunching under his boots filled the otherwise tranquil environment. As he made his way through the small wooded area his gaze roamed over maple, birch, and poplar trees where he was used to seeing ironwood, spruce, and walnut.

When he reached the clearing that held the Hearttree he stood taking it in. In place of a weirwood stood a thick oak with dragon's breath growing around its base and roots. Ned missed the connection a weirwood would be able to provide to his home, but he knew they were rare in the south. Between the First Men chopping them down to fight against the Children of the Forest and the Andals chopping more down to spread the Faith of the Seven weirwoods in the south were almost non existant. There were a few that remained untouched by southern houses, but they were kept more out of tradition than worship.

He took a seat on a stone bench that sat on the edge of the Hearttree's clearing as he withdrew his sword and an oil rag. Before he began he closed his eyes and let out a long sigh as he allowed the feelings of the Godswood to over take him. There was a slight breeze through the woods coming off the bay and bringing the scent of salt on the air. Without his steps echoing the only sound now was the chirping of small songbirds.

He let out another deep breath before beginning to run the cloth along the length of his sword. The blade truly didn't need any maintenance at this point, but the activity itself was therapeutic. He already missed Ice, but between Cat and Robb he had been convinced to leave the great sword in Winterfell. Their argument that Ned mainly used it for ceremonies and executions, and thus it wouldn't be needed in the capital where they have Ser Ilyn Payne as the King's Justice. He had reluctantly agreed and left the ancestral blade of House Stark in the care of his heir. Though it wasn't the Valyrian blade his sword was still good Northern Steel, and polishing it gave him the much needed alone time that he was denied on the journey south.

On the road to King's Landing, Ned, had found a strange traveling companion in Ser Barristan Selmy. Whenever they were not seeing to their duties; Ned as Hand and Barristan as Lord Commander of the Kingsguard, the legendary knight rode beside him.
Ned had been apprehensive of Ser Barristan's attention at first. He thought maybe the old knight either knew about Jon or at least had suspicions, and was keeping an eye on him for any possible treason. They had tried to keep Jon away from the royals as much as possible, but little could be done when he was in the yard. His coloring would be enough of a distraction from casual viewers, but someone like Ser Barristan wouldn't be fooled. Jon's features, build, and movements would throw red flags up to someone that had spent that much time around Targaryens. Ser Barristan had done that more than anyone still alive with maybe the exception of Lord Tywin. He had been a Kingsguard for the Dragon Dynasty for over thirty years before their reign ended.

Ned's worries had been unfounded in the long run. The old knight just seemed to want some company that wasn't borderline green blood. If they weren't riding silently together they would reminisce of past battles during Robert's Rebellion and the Greyjoy Rebellion. Jory always seemed to magically appear whenever the Greyjoys were discussed, so he could contribute his own tales of those times.

Then Ser Barristan had formally met Levi. That was a day he won't soon forget if ever. The captain had told Barristan a lot of his own war campaigns. The Scout Commander had told the older knight of how they had to fight giants in a game of survival. He had spoke in great detail about the Battles of Shiganshina, Trost, and the failed mission to try and capture one of the giants. The Lord Commander had paled when Levi had described the multiple times he had been unable to help comrades as they were viciously devoured by blood thirsty behemoths.

When asked where exactly they were from Levi had given Ser Barristan the story that they had all come up with, and for the most part it was not too far from the truth. Essentially they were from a land east of Asshai. They were a closed off society behind high walls to protect themselves from the giants. That their group had eventually become tired of the corruption in their government and the way the lower in society were often culled to the giants to keep the highest born comfortable. They had devised a plan for a rebellion, but had failed. So, their small group fled and was able to break through the giant controlled area. They had decided to get as far away from their land as possible and had found refuge in the north at Winterfell. Thankfully, that had been enough of a story to satiate the Lord Commander's curiosity.

Then Ser Barristan had taken over the story telling. He told Levi of how he had earned the moniker of 'The Bold' at the age of ten jousting against Prince Duncan Targaryen, and later knighted at sixteen for defeating that same opponent and also Ser Duncan the Tall of the Kingsguard. How he had become famous for ending the male Blackfyre line by slaying Maelys the Monstrous in combat during the War of the Ninepenny Kings in the Stepstones. Of being sworn into the brotherhood of the Kingsguard. Then later of dealing with the Kingswood Brotherhood with Ser Arthur Dayne.

The two warriors had talked most of the day. Well, in actuality Ser Barristan did most of the talking. At one point Levi had returned to his normally silent self, and engaging in the conversation when necessary. Ned had been surprised when he had suddenly heard Ser Barristan ask Levi if he would fancy a spar when they set up camp in the evening. Levi had looked at him as if asking for permission, and Ned had answered with a slight nod.

After camp had been made they had journeyed on foot into the woodline at Jory's behest. He had told Ser Barristan that it was better for the camp to not see the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard get bested so bad. Ser Barristan had worn a confused look, but went along with it any way. Ned would give the old knight credit when it came to dealing with Levi. He didn't make the mistake of being overconfident in dealing with Levi’s smaller stature. It still wasn't enough for the knight to handle the leader of the Scouts though. Even with Levi restraining himself at Ned's request. The bout barely lasted a few minutes before the Lord Commander was sitting in the dirt on his arse. Ser Barristan couldn't even land one hit on Levi through the match. Levi's reflexes were so fast it
seemed he knew where Barristan's sword would be before the man himself did. Ned was always impressed watching Levi spar. The people of Bear Island liked to boast they were each worth ten mainlanders, and if that was the case Levi was worth a minimum of one hundred.

The next morning on the road Ser Barristan chuckled as he told Ned he hadn't been bruised that bad from sparring since being a squire. Ned had told the older man it had been the same for himself the one and only time he had made the mistake of sparring with the Scout Leader. Their conversation that day had been cut off when the king had requested that Ned join him for luncheon.

Robert had been fuming when he told him they had received word that Daenerys Targaryen had married a Dothraki Horse Lord. Robert had wanted to immediately send assassins to kill the young girl, but Ned had been adamant that such actions would be foolish. Everyone with sense knew that the Dothraki wouldn't cross the sea. The young Targaryen girl was destined to live the rest of her days in the Dothraki Sea. Ned had hoped that at some point Robert's hatred for all things Targaryen would eventually cool and he could move one. However, the last few weeks with his foster brother had shown him that it had only seemed to grow over time. The man seemed to be incapable of letting go of the past.

Then after a fortnight on the road Ned received word from home. The couriers had rode hard to catch up to the royal party, and had found their way into camp during the night to not draw attention to their mission. The young men had come to his tent just as he was preparing for bed. Ned had thanked them for their service and to find some food and rest. Then to return in the morning for his reply before returning to Winterfell. Once the messengers had left Ned quickly broke the seal of grey wax, and quickly unrolled the sheet of parchment.

It had been a mixed bag of news. The good news was that Bran had finally woken up. His son said he didn't remember what happened, though. According to Maester Luwin he could just slightly wiggle his toes. Hange had told them the best case scenario was that he would need a cane the rest of his life, but that was preferable over not having any use of his legs. Ned knew that he would have to find a suitable reward for the younger woman. Knowing her she would try to politely refuse, but Ned won't hear it. She has done a great boon for House Stark and it won't be forgotten.

Then came the bad news. An assassin had tried to murder his wife and son while he slept. They had been saved by Mikasa whom had heard his wife's screams from the courtyard. The letter said that they suspected that Bran had been pushed from the Broken Tower when he potentially saw the queen in an adulterous activity. Hange had found a man's seed dried on the floor along with an especially long blonde hair. Then after questioning the cutthroat he had said that he was paid seventy silver by Ser Meryn Trant of the Kingsguard.

Catelyn finished the letter saying that they were waiting for word from him how to proceed. She said everyone also sent their best wishes to everyone in his party, for them to be safe, and to keep a good eye on the Lannisters. His wife then left her own private message at the end sending him all her love and that he better come back to her.

Ned had wrote back that for them to wait for word from him before taking any action. He expressed his happiness of Bran awakening, and told Cat to pass his apologies for not being able to be there. He reassured them they would watch the Lannisters tightly. In the morning he had the young messengers break their fast with him. After they were done eating he gave the young men the message, a pouch of gold dragons, and sent them on their way back to Winterfell.

The rest of the travel was rather uneventful. Ned split his time amongst the king and his other riding companions. Arya managed to stay out of trouble by spending her time with the younger
Scout members farther back in the column. Sansa spent her days with Jeyne, Princess Myrcella, and the queen.

When they had finally made it to King's Landing earlier today he was denied the ability to relax after the long travel. The small council had called a meeting and requested his company as soon as possible. Not wanting to keep the other lords waiting he gave charge of the girls over to Septa Mordane, and allowed them to get settled.

After a brief unwanted run in with Jaime Lannister, Ned, made it to the Small Council Chamber. The other members of the council had stood when he entered. There was Lord Varys, the Master of Whispers, whom had been on the council since the Mad King's reign. Grand Maester Pycelle, had also been the Grand Maester and on the Small Council as long as Ned could remember, and the man had presented him with his badge of office. Lord Petyr Baelish, the Master of Coin, was a whores monger whom apparently still had an unhealthy obsession on his wife. Lord Renly Baratheon, Robert's youngest brother and Master of Laws, greeted Ned with a jolly greeting and slap on the back. Last, was Ser Barristan Selmy the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard. Ned noticed that Lord Stannis Baratheon, the Master of Ships, was missing from the room. When he brought it up Renly told him that Stannis had left the capital for Dragonstone shortly after Jon Arryn's death and hasn't returned since.

They sat in relative silence for a few minutes as they all had their eyes on him. After another moment Ned had asked if the king would be joining him. Renly sarcastically replied that Robert never attended the Small Council meetings. When he had looked to Ser Barristan for confirmation the resigned look the old knight wore answered him.

When they began the meeting he learned he was pulled from his family after a long travel essentially to start planning a tourney. He didn't know what had possessed Robert to think he would like or be honored by this. Ned had always been adamant about how he despised tourneys, and always viewed them as just playing at war. When he tried to argue against it most of the council had spoke of ways it could help the capital bring in revenue and help the businesses. Then, the champions purses had been brought up. Forty thousand dragons for the joust champion, twenty thousand for the melee, and ten thousand for the archery. When Ned asked if the crown could support the level of winnings that could only be considered substantial fortunes, Baelish, said he could get a loan from Casterly Rock. That lead Ned to ask about the state of the coffers. His patience snapped when he found out that the realm was in debt to almost six million dragons. Loans that were owed to the Lannisters, Tyrells, the Iron Bank, and even the faith. Ned could no longer keep his anger at bay. He ended the meeting immediately telling the council not to continue plans until he had spoken to the king about this frivolous tourney. He had been stopped in his tracks when Renly once again told him that it was too late to stop. They had been planning the tourney before Robert even left the capital to come to Winterfell. Ned just stormed out heading to the Tower of the Hand and hoping that rest and relaxing would help cool his temper.

When he arrived at the tower that was his new residence it was in a whirlwind of activity. Servants and guards were running around frantically carrying mops, buckets, brooms, and rags. They seemed to be scrubbing every surface in the tower. He had made his way up to tower's dining hall. The sight he was greeted with froze him immediately. Levi stood by the table dressed in just a tunic, trousers, and he had white clothes wrapped around his face and head. He was barking orders and directions, a put out Vayon stood next to him flustered, and members of the household rushed to implement Levi's instructions. Ned had just turned on his heel leaving the tower wanting no part of what was happening. He had heard from the other Scouts about Levi's obsession with cleanliness, but that was the first time he had personally witnessed it in action. That is what had led him to believe the Godswood would be his only respite.
When Ned finally looked up from his sword the Godswood was swathed in shadows and the dark orange light of sunset. He sighed realizing how long he had spent hiding in the Godswood. He stood from the bench stretching his legs. His back ached slightly from the time bent over his sword. He took another deep breath, sheathed his blade, and retrieved the oil cloth from the bench. As he made his way out of the woods he just hoped that Levi's storm in the Tower of the Hand had passed.

Ned came from the stairs into the tower's dining hall hoping to catch everyone still at supper. He instead found the room mostly empty. Seated at the large round wooden table in the center of the room was Captain Levi, Bertolt, and Reiner. All three had tankards of ale in front of them, a flagon sat close to Reiner, and they had been in the middle of a conversation that ceased when he walked in. In the front of the open seat to Levi's left was a covered plate. The metallic dome keeping the food underneath warm for it's intended recipient.

"Lord Stark, we missed you at supper." Reiner spoke as Ned made his way across the room. "We made sure to save you some roast though. Hopefully it isn't too cold." Ned felt a rumble in his stomach as the smell of beef hit his nose. He nodded his thanks to the younger man as he took the seat behind the plate. As he was removing the cover, Levi, handed him a tankard that Reiner had filled and passed over.

The men all sat quietly as he began tucking into his meal which consisted of slices of roast beef, cut green beans, crispy roasted potatoes, and a hearty portion of black bread. The gravy drenched on the beef had started to congeal as it reached room temperature. He was in the midst of chewy a mouth full of potatoes when Bertolt broke the silence, "Lord Stark, what's a tourney? Alyn was telling us today that some of the Baratheon men said there was supposed to be one in your honor soon."

He let out an exasperated sigh after he had finished chewing before answering, "They are celebrations that last about a sennight. The main events though are the archery, melee, and jousting competitions. In between the events there will be feasts, plays, and a market to entertain the guests."

Their heads bobbed in answer to his explanation. Reiner went next, "Are you going to enter any of the events?"

He shook his head, "No, I've never really been any good with a lance, and I don't believe in participating in the melee." He took a quick drink of his ale before continuing. "In the North we look at tourneys as playing war, and I don't want a man to know what I can do if we were to ever meet on the battlefield." The two younger men seemed to contemplate that for a moment while Levi seemed to be impressed by the sentiment. "So, did everyone get settled in?"

"Yes, My Lord," Levi answered, "I'm in the room next to yours, these ones," he waved towards the younger men at the table, "and the others are all on the same floor as your daughters and Jeyne. Vayon got everyone else settled in once we got this place habitable."

Ned snorted into his tankard thinking of the cleaning frenzy that had been happening earlier. "Where is everyone now?"

"Sansa and Jeyne went to go finish unpacking, and Arya is with the others practicing." Reiner answered.

As Ned continued eating the conversation at the table turned back to the tourney. Reiner and Bertolt were going back and forth over whether or not they should compete in any of the events. Levi had finally cut in and told them they should sit it out. First, because it would be the first one
they ever saw so better to see how the events work. Second, as he himself had pointed out, Levi, didn't want to give away what the Scouts were capable of. The more people that thought they were just refugees under the employ of the Starks the better. The two younger men had accepted Levi's reasons, but seemed to still keep their excitement for the spectacle coming their way.

After his meal he had left the table to find a bath and then bed. The day had already been long before they even made it through the gates. The meeting and after had just made it even longer. His full belly made him realize just how tired he actually was.

When he arrived at the floor below the housing quarters the sound of wood clacking together drew his attention. When he peered through the open door he saw Arya and Armin sparring. Their hair matted to their foreheads from sweat as they hacked back and forth. Connie and Sasha sat to the side giving out pointers as needed.

Ned focused his attention on his daughter. It was obvious that she had been training extensively. She appeared to be confident in her abilities, but her body was the issue. She was fast and had overall quick reflexes, but her slight build would be her downfall. Every time their wooden swords clashed in conflict she would be overpowered. Her speed was what allowed her to evade the follow up swings that Armin would send. Arya just wasn't able to go head to head in the regular Westerosi style.

He allowed thoughts of how to help his daughter run through his head as he continued his way up the tower. When he got to the Hand of the King's chambers he stood in the doorway a moment. The chamber was easily larger than the Lord's Chamber and his solar in Winterfell combined. In the center back against the wall was a massive four post bed that could easily fit him and several more people. Along the left wall there was an oak dresser followed by two oak chifferobes. The front half of the room had two plush chairs with a table between them facing the hearth. There was also an intimate sized dining table that possessed four chairs around it. Off to the side sat a large copper tub that had been filled with steaming water while he watched Arya's sparring.

As Ned sunk into the warm water he thought of the following days when he would begin looking into how his foster father truly died.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!!

Next chapter: Bran I
Bran gets to ride again after his fall.

I hope you enjoy this chapter. I had some fun writing it.

The day was sunny and cloudless with just a small bite to the air, but Bran didn't care in the slightest. The cool air of the forest filling his lungs reinvigorated him. He didn't realize how much he missed this while he had been forced to stay inside to convalesce. He took another deep breath enjoying the scent of the moss and decaying leaves of the Wolfswood.

There had been no pressing issues for Robb during the day, so during breakfast he had come up with the idea of everyone taking a ride in the Wolfswood and having a peaceful luncheon together. After they had done their morning training in the yard and gotten cleaned up they met by the stables. Jean and Historia had retrieved baskets of food from the kitchens for everyone. After Hodor everyone got their horses saddled and situated Robb, Jon, Annie, Theon, Jean, Eren, Mikasa, Historia, and himself set off out of the Hunter's Gate of the Castle with Grey Wind, Ghost, Summer, Lady, and Nymeria leading the way.

After riding a while they had come upon a small sunny clearing in which to have their picnic. As everyone else dismounted and started to set up the blankets to relax, Bran, wanted to stay mounted for a bit longer. He loved being able to ride again along with the small amount of freedom it provided. He had allowed Dancer to wander out of the clearing as Robb called for him to not go too far.

He closed his eyes as he felt the breeze brush across his face enjoying his first time out of the castle in moons. He had awoke in his room to the sound of Old Nan's knitting needles clacking away as she worked. He had looked around as much as he could when he realized he was restrained. There was a fire burning in the hearth to the right of her. When he had tried to talk his mouth and throat had been so dry it came out as a rough cough. The old woman's knitting had flown from her hands in fright from the unexpected sudden noise, but that had had quickly given way to a toothless smile. She had told him to just relax, and she had disappeared out the door for a minute. When she returned she told him she had sent a guard to fetch his mother and Maester Luwin while she gave him a cup of water that he greedily drank down.

It had been a few minutes later that his chamber door crashed open. His mother, Maester Luwin, Hange, Robb, Jon, Annie, Eren, Mikasa, Theon, Historia, Jean, Ser Rodrick, and a pack of excited direwolves came pouring into his room. His mother had one of the biggest smiles he had ever seen on her face as tears rolled down her cheeks. She brushed his hair off his forehead and kissed it before cupping his cheeks with her hands. When he told her he was okay she steeped aside for
Luwin to do his job.

He was initially worried about the strange leather collar they had him in, but Hange had explained that it helped support his head so he wouldn't inadvertently hurt himself. Then Maester Luwin had held a candle up in front of his face. He was made to close one eye at a time and follow the candle with his open one. Then he had listened to his heart to make sure that was fine. After that Hange had unstrapped one of his arms, and she lightly poked all his fingers with just the very point of her dagger to test his feeling and reflexes. Then they moved his arm into different positions asking if it hurt at all. Once satisfied they repeated the same procedure on his other arm.

When they got to his legs the process was different. Bran could barely feel the pressure on his feet and toes. When poked the reflexes were a lot slower than his fingers. When Hange told him to push on her hands with his feet he had focused all his energy on the task for her hand to barely budge. When tears of frustration had blurred his vision from the thought of not being able to walk, Hange, had told him to be patient. She explained that with the right exercising he could be up walking in time. She also told him he may end up needing a cane for the rest of his life, and he would never be able to become a knight now.

He had told them that the only pain he really had was in his lower back, so at the end of his examination he was told that he had to wear the collar for the next fortnight just to be safe. He had hated that collar. It made him a lot more sympathetic to the hounds in the kennel. It reminded him of the cones they would put on the dogs to stop them from messing with their snitches.

Then, they had shown him the wheeled chair that had been made for him until he could walk again. It was generally left on the ground floor of the keep, and if Bran needed to be upstairs Robb, Jon, or a guard would normally carry him. Being hefted up and down the stairs like a baby had gotten on Bran's nerves fairly quickly which resolved him push and try harder in his rehabilitation.

The exercises were relatively easy. They was a bunch of stretches and different poses for the most part. The hardest was trying to get him to walk again. In the yard Hange had built dual bars that sat side by side. Bran would try to 'walk' between them. He would use the bars to hold onto while Jon, Robb, Theon, Eren, or Jean would help support him. The few first times it had felt like his legs weren't doing anything, but slowly he could feel them strengthening again. The only good thing about his rehabilitation program was that at meals he got double the amount of meat. Hange said he needed it to help build muscle back up that he lost from sleeping for so long.

Bran hadn't thought of that much at first till he asked Robb one morning, and his brother had told him he had been asleep almost a moon. It hadn't felt that long to him. He had felt like he was awake, but in different places. However, he didn't know how to explain it to Robb without his brother thinking he had gone mad. He knew that they were all able to share their skin with their direwolves, and Jon could influence Lyax a little. This was different somehow. It was more.

Most of the time he would be in Summer. He had Run through the Wolfswood with his siblings. Lyax flew above helping the pack hunt. He explored the Godwood and chased squirrels and rabbits. Other times he would be in his room laying beside his mother as she absentmindedly pet his head and watched over his unmoving physical body. One time he had followed Mikasa and Eren. The young woman had rubbed his neck as he walked beside them. They had found a secluded area of the Godwood were they sat and Bran had just laid near them as they talked. When he saw Mikasa climb into Eren's lap and start kissing him Bran had realized what they had actually came to the woods for, and quickly got to his feet to bound away.

Other times he had flown through the air. He felt the wind fight and ruffle his wings. Below would
be his father and sisters with the king's retinue. Even though he hadn't been awake when they left
he somehow knew that Levi, Armin, Reiner, Bertolt, Connie, and Sasha were down there. There
was also Jory, Hullen, Vayon, and Jeyne Poole. He had spent hours just soaring in circles above
the convoy below. He would land on branches and watch Arya spar with the younger Scouts.
When she did well he would try to cheer for her, but he would just let out loud caws or squawks.
He had seen his father get into a heated talk with King Robert. He got as close as he dared to be
able to hear what they were speaking of. As he approached on the branches he heard the king
speaking of Targaryens and Dothraki. Bran had been scared that the king knew of Jon, but then his
father said something about a girl, and Dothraki not crossing the sea. Then said that even if they
did cross the sea they would just throw them back. Bran had cawed back his agreement, but had
flown away when they both glanced up at him. As he flew he could barely hear something along
the lines of “Bloody Crows.”

He had been in a vast grassland. The blades grew so high they could hide his sleek form. He ha
been tracking a man. Normally he would avoid men and their metal claws, but prey had been
scarce lately. If he didn't eat soon he knew he would die. He had been tracking the man for a while
when he took an impact to his side so hard he was thrown off his feet. The pain flared a moment
later with the rush of blood matting his fur. He tried to get to his feet, but the pain from his right
shoulder made him falter. When he looked up the tallest man he had ever seen stood over him. He
was in leather breeches that looked patched together, a belt of large golden coins wrapped his
waist, he was bare chested and his copper skin shone in the sun, a long braid of black hair fell to
his waist, and on his face was a long black goatee accompanied by a sneer. Bran had roared out
definitely at the man. He had mustered all the strength he could, and quickly launched himself. As
he swung his left paw the anticipation of feeling his razor sharp claws dig into this arrogant man's
flesh filled him with joy. It was all for naught, though. As he closed the distance his man-prey's
metal claw seemed to come from nowhere, and Bran was claimed by darkness a moment later.

He had been prowling around the bowels of a castle. His soft paws making him relatively silent in
the darkness. In one of the chambers he prowled he had seen massive skulls that could have only
belonged to dragons. He had stood in front of the largest one, and its teeth had been longer than his
whole body. When he grew bored of the skulls he had gone up a stairwell he had found. He
curiously roamed the halls stealthily avoiding the servants. He'd peak his head into any door he
found open. In one he had found a man at a desk writing in a ledger. Bran had never seen the man
before, but the cat he possessed seethed with rage. He was of a slender build, dressed in a mix of
blacks and greys, and at the base of his neck was a silver pin that looked like a bird on a branch.
Bran watched he man take a quick break from writing to sip on a goblet that sat beside him. When
he resumed writing, Bran, could feel the cat suddenly fighting his invasion.

Bran pulled his presence back a little to see what the cat would do. He was suddenly bounding
across the floor, and felt their body launch into the air as black paws reached out in front to grip the
desk. As soon as their back paws touched the desk they launched again. He felt the impact of the
goblet as dark red wine flew from the downed cup drenching both the man and the ledger. The cat
didn't stop to observe or enjoy the havoc they had just created. They leaped from the desk spinning
in the air. They landed facing the open door they had entered. He felt their claws dig into the fabric
of the carpet as they took off, and serpentined through the cracked door. As they raced down the
hall screamed curses followed.

Lately though, if he napped during the day and found himself in the big black cat, Arya, would be
chasing him. She would be cooing trying to get him to come closer, but Bran knew better. He
would take off running and she would pursue him all over the castle. Through their connection he
could sense the cat seemed to enjoy the game as much as he did. It brought back memories of them
playing Hide-and-Seek or Tag around the grounds of Winterfell. Bran had to give Arya her due.
She was fast, but in the body of the big tomcat, Bran, was much faster.
Then another time he had found himself surrounded by snow. When he turned his head he saw the rider on his back. He couldn't make out the man's features. He had his face covered by a black furred hood with a black scarf, and the man was dressed entirely in black. As they had walked deeper into the woods, Bran, could feel the fear raising in the horse that he was co-inhabiting. Fear radiated off the other two horses with them as well. For a long time the only sounds in the woods had their hooves crunching through the fresh snow with the occasional sound of a bird chirping in the distance. The horse Bran was in suddenly halted when the temperature suddenly dropped. The caws of crows started filling the air. The birds wouldn't stop crying out, and the other horses started clomping their feet from anxiety. Suddenly, a screech rent the air as a creature with bright blue eyes charged right at Bran. It was dressed in old worn furs that hung off its body in rags. Half its face was decayed away showing the skull below with dried black blood splotched on what blued skin clung to its face. It had a bronze axe raised as it meant to strike Bran.

He had been frozen by fear, but the horse was able to save them. Their body raised up lashing out with their front legs in panic. The corpse was knocked from its feet, and when their feet touched back down Bran felt the creature's skull crack under their weight. The black brother on his back had been thrown from the saddle by the sudden movement. As Bran looked around more of the creatures had come from the trees, and Bran wasn't able to stop the horse's instincts to flee. As they ran horrendous screams of death followed them. He tried to regain control of the horse, but the instinct to get south and get to the Wall was outweighing any influence he may have had.

The 'dreams' had calmed down since he had awoke. He only had his wolf and cat dreams again, but part of himself missed seeing all the new places.

He had also missed riding. Watching his family be able to come and go from the castle as they wished had worn on him. That was until Tyrion Lannister had returned from the Wall. Bran had been called down to the Great Hall. When he had entered the main doors with Hodor pushing his wheeled chair his eyes had fallen on the dwarf Lannister. Behind the Lannister were two Red Cloaks, and a brother of the Night's Watch like the ones he had seen in his dreams. Bran had angrily corrected Tyrion that he wasn't a cripple when the little lord had made a comment of it. The Imp had just laughed and said then he wasn't a dwarf and his father would be so happy. Bran couldn't help laughing at Tyrion's quick jape which instantly lightened his mood back up.

Then he had asked if Bran liked to ride. Maester Luwin had spoken with a hint of venom that Bran had lost the ability from his fall. Tyrion had just waved him off saying that with the right horse and saddle he could ride once again. Bran's curiosity had been peaked when the man went to hand him a roll of parchment. He had unrolled it to see that it was a design for a new saddle. There were straps and metal bars that would secure his legs, so he wouldn't just slip off the horse.

Tyrion had gone on to say that they would have to train a yearling to respond to voice and rein commands, and that their saddler would know what to do with the design. That with time he could on horseback again and be taller than any of them. When Robb had offered the hospitality of Winterfell, Bran, could sense the coldness in his speech. Tyrion turned it down saying that he would find a bed in the Wintertown brothel, and they would both sleep better. Bran had a feeling he missed something important before he had arrived. When Tyrion left with his guards, Jon, had quickly followed. Bran wasn't too concerned though. He was more enraptured looking at the drawing of the new saddle.

It had taken nearly a week for the new saddle to start getting made. First Mother had tried arguing that it wasn't safe for Bran to start riding, but Hange and Maester Luwin had argued vehemently. Hange had said that riding would help restrengthen his core muscles, and the practice of gripping the horse would help his legs as well. It would also break up the monotony of his rehabilitation exercises. His mother had eventually relented, but said they had to take things slowly. The saddler
and Hange had gone over the design making subtle changes. The metal bars were replaced with leather straps because Hange didn't want his legs so restrained that he couldn't practice getting back into regular horse riding. In the mean time Kase, who had taken over for Hullen as master of horses had started his training of Dancer.

It had taken over a moon for Bran to be able to ride out of the castle. Robb and Jon had overseen his new riding lessons. He had only been allowed a few minutes at first. Both for him and Dancer to get used to their new method. He would be led around the training ring like he had when he first learned how to ride a pony. They had progressed to him taking turns around the courtyard. He had slowly been allowed to pick up speed short of taking Dancer into a full gallop. Bran wanted nothing more than to be able to race his brother and cousin again, but was trying to be patient with the process.

Bushes rustling brought him out of his thoughts. He quickly looked around and realized he had let Dancer wander too far, and the horse had stopped in another clearing of trees while he grazed on the grasses. He couldn't see the clearing that they had originally settled in through the thick forest, and he realized he couldn't hear his brother's or friends' voices at all. As the rustling got louder he felt his heart rate start to raise and a mild panic set in.

As he tried calling out to Summer in his mind his focus was broken by people emerging from the brush. There were at least ten of them, and they were a mixed bag of matted furs and faded black clothing. As they approached him Bran tried to turn Dancer to try and flee, but one of the men reached out quickly seizing the reins.

“What do we have here?” The man that grab the reins said. He was dressed in ragged black clothes, had a guant face with beady blue eyes that held a hint of malice, his dirty blonde hair was caked with dirt and grease shone in the sun rays that could break through the tree tops.

Another man came up to Bran's left side. He too was dressed in black garb. On top of his head sat a mess of dark curls and he wore a sneer on his face, “Get of the horse boy, and maybe you'll live to see the morrow.”

A woman came up beside the man. She had shaggy dark hair that hung to her chin and dark brown eyes. Like the others she had a guant face. Bran assumed they couldn't have eaten much on their trek. “Gods, look at that. That is enough silver for us to pay our entire way.”

Bran looked down realizing she was referring to his direwolf broach that clasped his cloak together. “Aye, hand it over boy and get down now.”

“I can't!” Bran replied. Fear was now coursing it's way through his blood. He knew he was going to die here, and there was nothing he could do about it.

Both men threw Bran's cloak back exposing his legs in the straps. The curly haired man looked up at Bran sneering. “Are you some kind of cripple?”

Bran felt indignation flair back up fighting the fear away. How dare he belittle him. He was of the North, and the blood of the King's of Winter ran through him. These were but widlings and deserters. They had broke their oath and deserved death. “I am, Brandon Stark of Winterfell, and if you don't let me go you will die!”

The man holding the reins chuckled darkly as he began unstrapping his legs, “Cut his little cock off, and shove it in his loud mouth.”

The woman spoke too, “He's a Stark we could take him back to Mance.”
The curly man immediately shot back, “Piss on Mance Rayder, and piss on the North! We are going south, as far south as south goes.”

The woman looked like she was about to argue when another man ran up. Like the rest he was gaunt to the point his cheek bones were protruding. Unlike the other men he wore mix matched furs and skins that were matted and muddy. His green eyes were scanning the trees frantically. “I can hear something in the trees. We need to go and we need to go now!”

“Right.” the curly man said as he tried to unstrap Bran's left leg. The other man's fear must have unnerved him because he fumbled and fought with the buckles.

Several things suddenly happened at once. An arrow head appeared in the third man's chest. Blood spattered across the curly haired man's and the woman's faces. He had just enough time to look down with a confused look before he crumpled to the ground. A white blur streaked across the clearing as another man tried to scream, but was quickly silenced. The air suddenly filled with growls and barks as the direwolves began streaming into the area attacking the group.

Robb, Jon, Annie, Mikasa, and Eren all stepped from the trees swords drawn. The wildings and deserters rushed to confront his friends. Bran watched as the messy haired woman rushed Annie with a fire hardened spear. The side of Annie's mouth just curved into a lopsided evil grin. She stepped to the outside of the woman's thrust as the sword Jon gave her cleaved through the make shift spear severing it in half. Annie allowed the momentum to continue carrying her into a spin and cut right through the woman's neck. Her decapitated head rolled across the ground leaving a path of crimson painted grass.

Bran screamed out in pain as a knife cut into his left thigh. The curly man had lost patience with the straps and had cut his leg in his haste to get Bran out of the saddle. He roughly pulled Bran from the saddle, and the wind was knocked out of him as they both collided with the ground. Pain bloomed behind his eyes as his head hit the ground. When the stars finally receded from his eyes he could feel the bite of steel against his throat. The man was knelt behind him holding Bran to his chest.

As Bran took in the scene before him he noticed that Dancer had bolted in panic, and couldn't blame him. The clearing was absolute carnage. The ground was soaked in blood. Everywhere he looked there were dismembered limbs and other various body parts. The direwolves all possessed blood soaked muzzles, their hackles were raised, and all but Ghost had deadly growls rumbling in their chests that were directed at the man holding Bran hostage. Robb and the others were splattered in various amounts of blood. Their blades still clutched tightly in their hands as blood dripped from the points to the grass below. Theon suddenly appeared between Rob and Jon. He held his bow at a low ready with an arrow already nocked.

“Let me go now, or the boy dies!” As if to prove his seriousness, Bran, felt the blade dig into his throat farther followed by the sensation of blood trickling down his neck.

He saw Robb's blade slowly start to lower, and the others followed suit except for Jon. Jon just kept his gaze locked on the man behind him. A growl broke through the air the next moment. It was the deepest Bran had ever heard and he could feel it vibrate his body through the ground. Bran and his captor both turned to the sound as tree branches snapped higher in the trees.

He felt his heart skip a beat as he watched a long serpentine neck breech between the trees. Bran's eyes followed the frost blue scales up to a massive head. The last time Bran had seen her, Lyax, had been barely larger than a hound. Now, she towered over the pair of them. She was looking down her snout at them with molten silver eyes that seemed to swirl as her pupils narrowed on her prey. Her head was adorned in a crown of opalescent horns that ranged in length from daggers to
the two biggest that rose behind her eyes that were the length of great swords. Her lips peeled back exposing black teeth the length of his forearm and glistened with saliva.

Bran's focus on the dragon was broken when he felt a liquid warmth spread across his back. He felt the knife slack against his neck slightly, so he quickly threw his head back into his captor's face. His gamble worked as his captor's head rocked backward with the crunch of his nose breaking and his grip on Bran slackened just enough. Bran utilized all the strength in his upper body and flung himself to the left away from the dragon. He quickly covered his head with his arms when he quit rolling to protect himself from what was about to happen. Less than a moment later the man screamed in terror before it was cut off by a sickening crunch, and then Bran felt rain upon his back with the smell of copper and iron filling his nose.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry to all you Osha fans out there.

I really enjoyed writing the warg dreams. I thought it would be fun to just let him jump all over the map seeing different things.

I have a question that I would like help with. I have had the idea of little side POV’s. They aren't essential to the central story, but thought they could just be fun. If I do these would you like them in their own chapters, attached at the end of regular chapters, or in theri own separate work in a series? Leave your answer in the comments if you could, please.

Thanks for reading!!
Chapter Summary

Ned's investigation yields some interesting results.

Chapter Notes

I want to thank everyone that continues to follow this.

This was exactly what he had been trying to avoid. Everything was crashing down at once and he had no way to avoid the avalanche. Everything had started so simple, so he was frustrated at how it all went sideways.

Ned had started looking into Jon Arryn's death along with Armin's assistance. They had become frustrated and felt like they weren't making any headway at first. His attention had kept getting pulled towards that Other's Damned Tourney, and on top of that he was trying to keep his daughters happy.

Shortly after they arrived in the capital he had discovered that Arya possessed her own sword. When he laid eyes on it he knew selecting a Braavosi Water Dancer as her instructor had been the right choice. The blade was skinny with a narrow cross guard and a slight grip that would be perfect for her small hands. All in all it looked like a shrunk down version of a Northern long sword. When he had asked her where she got it she stubbornly refused to answer. He had figured it out when his first guess had been Jon, and her eyes had widened slightly.

After that several days a week a man named, Syrio Forel, taught Arya. Ned had lucked out that not only was he a sword master, but he was a former First Sword of Braavos. The only time he had second guessed the training is when he would find Arya doing ridiculous exercises.

He would come across her standing at the top of stairs balancing on one leg then, and she had become the terror of the Red Keep chasing cats. She had claimed that Syrio told her cats were quick and agile and the only way to earn the skill herself was to be able to catch them. In the end he couldn't complain of her progress. Her new skills had allowed her to start putting up a better fight against the Scouts. She still lost more than she won, but progress was progress.

Sansa had been enjoying herself thoroughly. She loved the southern sun, the lighter dresses, and the company of many more ladies. Thankfully arriving at the Red Keep had driven an even bigger wedge between her and the Crown Prince. Stories had reached her ears of Joffrey's misdeeds growing up. The old Sansa would have tried to blow them off as just based in jealousy and that her gallant prince would have never done anything of the sort. This Sansa that had emerged after Jon's revelation, and the Scouts influence was much more grounded. She still had her flights of fancy such as swooning the romance and intrigue of a hidden prince rising from nothing. He had also noticed the way his daughter would look at Reiner, or the way she would blush when he looked or spoke to her.
The more Ned learned of Joffrey he had been glad to not secure the betrothal. Especially when he heard of the kitchen cat incident. Most people would try to write it off as a young boy's behavior. Ned, however, saw the signs for what they were. There was something incredibly wrong with that boy, and the way Cersei coddled him didn't help matters. She let the spoiled prince do whatever his heart desired, and let him avoid any responsibilities or accountability the heir should carry.

Then the tourney had happened. Sansa had been in love with the whole festival, and the young Scouts had been just as enraptured with the pageantry. Arya had missed most of the tourney events due to her dancing lessons, but always seemed to appear for the feasts with a ravenous appetite.

During the jousting Ser Hugh had died from a stray splinter of the Mountain's lance. The young knight had been the best potential lead of his investigation. The young man had been Lord Jon's squire before being knighted after his death. That led Ned to suspect that he too had been murdered. Setting a fresh knight up against the Mountain was almost tantamount to a death sentence. In one fatal jousting accident their investigation was almost back to square one again.

Then he had to smooth down Littlefinger's ruffled feathers. At some point during the tourney he had intended to introduce himself to Sansa considering he was childhood friends with Cat. Baelish claimed he was verbally accosted and physically threatened. From what Ned could gather from his ranting Sasha had colorfully threatened to remove his bollocks and feed them to him, Connie had told him that he couldn't be trusted due to his naturally villainous face, and Reiner and Bertolt had referred to him as an 'Uncle Chester' and implied he enjoyed the company of prepubescent boys.

Ned had just told the man that they were charged with the protection of Sansa and took that responsibility very seriously, and that it would probably be better for his safety to avoid her in future. Ned himself didn't trust Baelish. The man was way too obsessed with Catelyn. He had even heard rumors since his arrival in the capital that Baelish liked to brag that he took the maidenhood of both the Tully sisters. A fact Ned himself knew to be false.

When he had spoke to everyone that night about the incident with Littlefinger, Reiner and Bertolt had just broke out into laughter. Sansa had looked aghast and tried apologizing for what had happened, but Ned had cut her off. He explained that he didn't trust Baelish either, and that she should avoid him at all costs. He cemented it by telling her what the man said about her mother. Sansa had looked revolted and promised she wouldn't have anything to do with him, and if he tried she would allow Sasha to fulfill her promise.

The jousting had ended in a mess. After he had lost in the joust, Gregor Clegane, had used a sword to decapitate his horse in front of the whole crowd. Then he turned his attention on Ser Loras. He savagely attacked the defenseless young knight. Ned had put his hand on Levi's shoulder to stop him from interfering at the same time Sandor Clegane confronted his brother. After Robert had ended the duel, Ser Loras, had declared the Hound the victor for saving his life. Ned had to hide his disappointment that Robert had allowed Ser Gregor to go free unpunished. To him it just showed how much the Crown was afraid of upsetting Tywin Lannister.

After the tourney Ned was able to focus back on finding out what had happened to Jon Arryn. He had gone to Maester Pycelle to find out what the last books were that the former Hand had borrowed. He had left the Maester's Turret with a giant tome titled 'The Lineages of the Great Houses of Westeros', and Jon Arryn's last words which the maester had told him were “The seed is strong.”

They had been at a stall of what to do, but then Ned had remembered what Ser Barristan had told him on the road to the capital. Ned had been asking the knight if in his last weeks Jon had done anything strange. Ser Barristan had told him that the Lord Hand would frequent a smithy on the
Street of Steel owned by Tobho Mott, but would never say why. Ned, Armin, Jory, and Levi had gone down to the shop and found out for themselves. As soon as he had been introduced to the Master Smith's apprentice he could see the boy was a young Robert. He had the strong Baratheon jaw, dark black hair, and the bright blue eyes that women swooned over.

After they had left he explained to Armin why he was stunned at seeing the boy. He also told him about the little bastard girl in the Vale that he had seen Robert carry around and play with. Ned believed the girl's name had been Mya, and he remembered the little girl having the same hair and eye colors too.

Ned knew there was a connection there somewhere, but he couldn't quite put a finger on it. This had gone on for weeks. He felt he had the pieces he needed, but just kept struggling to put the puzzle together. He had hoped that Armin would be able to crack this like he did the case with Jon, but the poor young man was just as flummoxed as himself.

They had been in the middle of discussing it when Jory along with a steward interrupted them. He told Ned that there was an emergency Small Council meeting and the king was waiting. That had caught him off guard considering since he had arrived in King's Landing the king hadn't blessed the Small Council with his presence once.

Ned should have known better than to have any type optimistic views of Robert attending. As soon as he had walked in the door, Robert, had raged about a whore being pregnant. After asking a few questions, Ned, realized they were talking about Daenerys Targaryen. Robert went on a tirade of how he had warned Ned when they were still in the North. Then he declared he wanted them dead. Unfortunately, it seemed that Ned and Ser Barristan were the only two whom had a heart left. Everyone else voted for this poor girl to die.

Ned had felt the same anger course through him as seventeen years ago when his friend had stepped over the corpses of children to become king. He told them that murdering a young girl on the far side of the world, that wasn't even a threat to them, would make Robert as bad as the Mad King. Robert wouldn't hear any sense, so Ned had decided to resign as Hand. Robert's screams of treason had followed him down the halls as he made his way to the Tower of the Hand.

They had no choice now. They were going to pack up and head back to Winterfell. When he had got back to the Tower of the Hand his day went from bad to worse. Armin had kept trying to crack the case during Ned's meeting, and he had stumbled upon some interesting findings in the lineage tome. He had actually discovered two major discrepancies that needed to be addressed.

The first one Armin explained was because he had thought Jon Arryn's last words had been about his own son Robert. When he had gone to the lineage he saw something that stuck out to him. There was no possible way that Robert Arryn would have the coloring he does. With the fact that Jon Arryn had blonde hair with blue eyes, and Lysa having auburn and blue like Catelyn there should be no way that Robert had dark brown hair with green eyes.

Ned initially argued that sometimes children don't look like their fathers. He had used Robb, Sansa, Bran, and Rickon as examples for the basis of his argument because they all had Cat's coloring. Armin had fired right back that they still looked like one of their parents. Armin had pointed out that no where in the Arryn lineage was their dark hair or green eyes. In the Tully there were occasional green eyes, but their hair was always fair or auburn. Armin also pointed out there was only one man in the capital that possessed both dark brown hair and green eyes that would have been around Lysa frequently, and was said to be a close friend.

Ned had been blown away at the implication that Lysa had been unfaithful to Jon Arryn, mothered a bastard, and then tried to pass the child off as a proper Arryn. Ned didn't understand why that
would cause the Lannisters to murder him though. Armin had said that was the second part he was getting to.

He referred back to how children will generally have the coloring of one of their parents or a mix of both. That fact is what had allowed Cersei Lannister to pass her bastards off as legitimate royal heirs. When Ned had looked at him confused he elaborated, and explained that Jon Arryn's last words were about King Robert not his son Robert. He showed Ned in the tome that no matter which family or what coloring the mother had the children sired always had black hair and blue eyes including Gendry and Mya whom both had blonde haired mothers. The Baratheons coloring in the tome had not changed once in three hundred years until Joffrey.

Ned had collapsed back into his seat at that. Robert had no true born children, and the throne had no true heir. That would have made Stannis the true heir of the Baratheon Line. He had heard that Stannis had been working with Jon Arryn, so that could be why he left for Dragonstone after Jon's death and refused to return.

Ned didn't want to do it, but this was the time. Now that Cersei had lined up the throne for total Lannister control she wasn't going relinquish it without a war. He knew that with the current ruling family the crown should pass to Stannis, but he was a cold strict man that wouldn't be a loved king. Then, with the knowledge of Robert Arryn being a bastard they could wrestle control of the Vale away from Lysa easily. If given the choice between a Dragon raised by wolves, a Lannister Bastard, or a stubborn unmoving Baratheon he hoped the Knights of the Vale would pick his adopted son. That would potentially give them the North, the Riverlands, the Vale, and what ever Crownland and Narrow Sea houses defected when they found out about Jon. If they could bring the Reach in on their side victory would all be but assured.

He had quickly sent for his daughters. When they arrived with Septa Mordane he had explained that the capital was becoming too dangerous and they had to leave. They were told to go pack what was absolutely necessary and leave the rest. They were not to leave the Tower of the Hand or receive any visitors that he did not approve of because they had to be quick and quiet about this. Arya had begged for Ned to ask if Syrio Forel would go with them. When he promised he would send them to go get their stuff together. He stressed one more time to Mordane to only pack the essentials and that dresses could always be replaced. The septa nodded in understanding and made her way to get her charges ready.

Then he sent Jory to the docks to find a captain that wanted to make a lot of gold quickly and easily. He was to return with the captain, Vayon, Syrio Forel, Levi, and the rest of the Scouts. While he had waited he had wrote out letters. One for Lord Manderly, one for Bronze Yohn Royce, and one for Robb. After he was done he sealed and stamped them with the Stark direwolf.

He had been broke from his thoughts by a knock on his door, and when he called out to enter Jory came in with every person that he had requested. The ships captain was middle aged with thinning hair, his skin was bronzed and wrinkled from the over exposure to the sun. He wore a simple salt stained tunic that Ned assumed had one time been black, but was now some strange mix of blended greys. His wool breeches were bleach white and he wore calf length brown boots.

The man stood before his desk and bowed, “Apologies, Milord Hand, wooda dressed betta, but ya man said its a most urgen' matta.”

“It is.” Ned replied. “What is your name, Captain?”

“Elrin, Milord” The man seemed fidgety, but Ned figured that was to be expected. This poor man probably didn't expect his day would involve him being dragged before one of the highest nobility in the kingdoms.
“Well, Elrin, I have needs of a ship capable of leaving in the night. How much did my Captain of Guard tell you?”

“Nah much, Milord, just axed if mi hold was empty an if I wanted to make quite ah bit o gold.”

“Well, the job is to transport passengers with one stop on the way to White Harbor. It pays five hundred gold dragons up front, and five thousand more at White Harbor when they are delivered safely to the Manderlys.”

The captain looked dumbstruck by the offer, “Milord?” then his eyes shifted to that of suspicion as if the deal was suddenly to good to be true.

Ned had to quickly cut that train of thought out of him, “Elrin, this is not a jape. The people you will be transporting are very important to me, so it is small price for me to make sure they are safe. Are you capable of making that happen?”

The conflict in him must have been quickly decided by the possibility of literally earning a fortune with relative ease. “Ye-yes, Milord.” Elrin bowed again, “I’ll ‘ave tha Storm Song ready ta depart by nightfall.”

Eddard nodded in response to the ships captain. “Thank you, Elrin. Please wait at the bottom of the stairs and Alyn will escort you back to your ship and wait with you for your passengers to arrive.”

The ships captain bowed once more before he made his way out the door. Ned waited until the captains steps receded down the hall before speaking again. He turned his attention on his steward, “Vayon, I need you and Jeyne to pack up as much as you can. You will be accompanying my daughters back to Winterfell. Jory you will be going too. I'm putting you two in charge.” He retrieved the letters from his desk holding them out toward Jory who quickly took them, “Those letters are very important Jory. Your stop on the way to White Harbor will be at Rune Stone. Make sure that letter gets directly into Bronze Yohn's hands. No others.” Ned waited a moment to make sure he understood the gravity of it, “The others are for Robb and Lord Manderly, and addressed accordingly.”

Ned then turned his attention to Syrio, “Master Forel, Arya, asked me to see if you would be willing to stay in our employ and accompany the party to Winterfell, so she can continue her training.”

The man nodded his head answering in his thick accent, “Syrio Forel goes where he is needed, Lord Stark, if that place is Winterfell then that is where I shall go.”

“Thank you, Arya will be most pleased. I would advise you to get your things ready and be at the Storm Song by nightfall.” The sword master bowed and departed from the solar.

He turned to the Scouts then, but before he could speak Reiner cut him off chuckling, “I'm guessing you are going to tell us to get packed and we leave by nightfall, My Lord?”

Despite the circumstances Ned found himself chuckling at the the young man, “You guessed right, Reiner.” When the tall blonde boy smiled back, Ned, felt bad for the burden he was about to place on him. “Reiner, I need you to try to keep control of Arya. When she finds out I won't be on the boat she is going to try and get back here.” A scowl took over his face for a moment before schooling his features and giving a resigned bob of the head.

Levi cut in, “My Lord, if you are sending Jory to secure your daughters at least allow me to stay with you.”
“Are you sure, Levi? I have a feeling things are about to get a lot worse around here.”

“If things go south like you think you will definitely need my skills.”

“Very well.” Ned turned his attention back on his steward. “Vayon, get the five hundred dragons to Alyn, and let's get this going. We don't have much time.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

Next Chapter: LEVI I
LEVI I

Chapter Summary

Ned Stark and Levi deal with King's Landing after the household has left.

Chapter Notes

Well, I think you all know what is about to go down in this chapter, so let's just get the show on the road.

Levi could see the whole city from his vantage point. He sat at the table on the balcony attached to his chambers as he had his breakfast. He had procured himself an apple, a few strips of bacon, and a cup of tea. Food had been a shortage since the exodus. They had sent most of the stores with the ship north. Lord Stark thought the better quality food would keep everyone on the ship a little happier with the cramped accommodations. They had to make due for a little bit, Lord Stark, didn't want to draw undue attention on them for suddenly needing to resupply that much of the stock. There would have been no easy sold excuse for that much food disappearing without a feast having occurred.

The extraction had gone better than Levi could have hoped. They had packed all the chests up and sent them with random sets of guards or servants at Levi’s suggestion. One of the first things he had noticed when he got to the capital is how the nobility let the servants go about their business unencumbered. It was almost as if the higher born felt that acknowledging the help was detriment to their very existence. He had sold the ruse by having them randomly exiting the different gates to the castle. The guards were easily dealt with since there was nothing currently happening that would put them on high alert.

Then an hour before nightfall the main party of passengers had just walked out the main gate. They had all been dressed more conservatively to be able to blend into King's Landing. They had been stopped by a guard temporarily when they went to exit. It appeared that since Arya had threatened a pair of Gold Cloaks they had taken more of an interest in learning the Hand's daughters and how to recognize them. Thankfully, little Arya had been quick with her thinking. She had told the guards that she had insisted on seeing the city at night, but her father only agreed if she brought her sister and a good escort of guards. The Gold Cloaks had accepted it easily enough after that, or just knew better than to tangle with the Lord Hand's more ferocious daughter. They had been allowed to pass unmolested, and the group made their way casually to the docks.

The Storm Song had been an interesting ship. Levi had gone down with Alyn to see the ship for himself considering he was trusting it to take Lord Stark's daughters and his subordinates. She was fairly impressive with two masts and a hundred oars. At the fore just below the water line there appeared to be a wedge of metal that protruded out from the hull. He wasn't sure what its was, but maybe it helped the boat cut through the water faster. Levi wasn't too familiar with ships, Hell, coming to the capital had been the first time he had even seen a sea. However, she was smaller than
what Levi thought a trading vessel would be.

When he had asked Elrin as such the man just chuckled. He had explained that he had bought the ship after the Greyjoy Rebellion and that she used to be a war ship for the Iron Islands. Lord Stannis had felt they didn't need the excess ships that had been captured during the war weighing the crown's finances down. He had sold them for a fair price to try and replenish some of the crown's coffers. Elrin said he felt it was better to have less cargo, and the speed to out run pirates rather than lose everything on the open water.

He had stayed at the docks until he watched the *Storm Song* disappear into the dark of night, and its wake was no longer visible on the horizon. He had used his O.D.M. Gear to get back to the Tower of the Hand undetected swinging around the cliffs below the Red Keep and coming up from behind. When he had returned to Lord Stark's solar he found him nursing a tankard of ale. When Levi informed him the ship was away he had just absentmindedly nodded his head never taking his eyes off the fire in the hearth, and Levi had just left the man to his thoughts. In the few years he had known the Northern Lord he'd learned that, Ned, would share his mind when he was ready but never before.

From there the days had gone smoothly for the most part. The King had reinstated Ned as hand, but said he was going hunting to clear his head from their fight. At the same time they had spread word through the Red Keep that a sickness was running through the household. It was able to keep a lot of prying eyes away from the tower or questions as to why the girls hadn't been seen around the castle. He had used that lack of attention to start making his own back up plans. He had hidden spare gas canisters around the keep and in positions throughout the city where they were not likely to be discovered. Attached to the canisters he had left purses of coins he could grab in a pinch. He had also packed a bag in case they had to depart in a hurry. If there was one thing Levi had taken from growing up in the underground it was to always be prepared.

As the days wore on, Levi, had watched Lord Stark becoming more tense. The longer the king was gone on the hunt the more likely he was to return any day. He knew the Hand was stressing about how to tell the king that he had no trueborn children, and how Cersei had committed adultery multiple times. Lord Stark had said he was concerned about Robert's temper and what he might do to Cersei or the children. Lord Stark at one point had even thought the honorable thing to do was to warn Cersei, so she and the children could flee before they could be hurt.

Thankfully, Levi had managed to talk him out of that foolishness. He had asked Lord Stark if there was any sense in being honorable to someone whom had no concept of it considering she tried to pass her children off as Robert's, had a hand in Bran's fall, and his attempted murder. Levi had stressed that it was vital to not show their cards until it was time to play. If she wasn't aware of what they knew she couldn't be prepared or react to it. Lord Stark had eventually begrudgingly relented.

All of Lord Starks worry on how to tell Robert appeared to have been for not. Lord Renly had found them late yesterday afternoon. The man's eyes had been wide and filled with dread as he approached Lord Stark and himself. The black doublet he had been wearing shimmered in the light from the amount of blood that covered him. He stuttered and stumbled trying to explain what happened. The only thing he could seem to say was boar, spear, and blood. Renly had just waved for them to follow, turned, and started heading back to Maegor's Holdfast with them behind him.

Levi had waited outside the king's chambers as Lord Stark entered. He had only been waiting a few minutes when Joffrey and Cersei exited. The bastard was crying to what Levi could tell were genuine tears. So, evidently he didn't know the truth. Levi tch'd at the irony thinking of Jon. One raised as a prince that was actually born a bastard, and the other raised as a bastard that was
actually born a prince. From what he had seen of the 'prince' himself added by what he heard of him around the castle, Levi, had no doubt that Jon could do a better job ruling while asleep on the throne.

Cersei was completely different from her son. She tried to mask her face in sorrow, but Levi wasn't fooled like the others. He could see the gleam in her eye, and he could see her concentration on keeping her lips in a line. The muscles at the corners of her mouth twitched to fight off the smile he knew she wanted to show the world. This was probably her crowning achievement that all her plotting went into.

After they had left he was once again left in the hall with only two of the Kingsguard for company. A few minutes later Lord Renly, Ser Barristan, Pycelle, Varys, and Baelish all exited the chambers. Ser Barristan, Varys, and Littlefinger stood talking in the stairwell a few steps up. Pycelle hovered by the door in case he was needed back inside. Lord Renly stood by himself looking as if he was fighting tears from falling.

At one point Renly had suddenly steeled his expression and strode away resolutely as if on a sudden mission. Baelish had departed not long after. Probably on his way to find some hairless boy to fuck. Varys and Ser Barristan continued to talk until Lord Stark had exited the chambers with a folded and sealed parchment in his hand. He stopped to tell Pycelle to give the king some Milk of the Poppy before he joined the other two.

Levi followed him over to hear the discussion. When asked what had happened, Ser Barristan, had told them of how they had been in the woods and that everything was fine until the king missed his spear thrust on a boar. He mentioned how he thought it was a little suspicious how much the squire kept offering the king wine. It was no secret the fat king liked his wine, but if his bodyguard had noticed it then it had to be something important.

Varys made a comment about how the boy had to be a dutiful squire to make sure his king wasn't parched, and eluded to how he hoped the boy didn't feel any guilt for what happened. He even brought up how the squire was part of the Lannister family. Levi knew he was hinting at something, but he couldn't quite put a finger on it. This was one of those times he definitely missed Armin. That little smart ass would have this figured out what happened before the king had even been back in his bed, and would also be able to understand the elusive and infuriating way that Varys spoke.

As they exited Maegor's Holdfast, a now clean Renly, had pulled Lord Stark to the side to speak. Levi had put a little distance between them, but he was still close enough to hear what was spoken. Renly tried to implore Lord Stark to take control in the night, and that he should be crowned king. When Lord Stark talked of the succession, Renly, had cut him off saying that it didn't matter during the rebellion and that it shouldn't matter now. Lord Stark had lost his temper a bit saying that he wouldn't dishonor Robert's last few hours by creating blood shed in his castle.

Later in the night he had found Lord Stark in his solar again nursing some ale when he went to check if there was any last minute thing that needed attention. Lord Stark had told him to come in and have a drink with him while he was filled in.

Apparently, Baelish had come by earlier and pledged to help take control of the throne since the king had named Lord Stark as regent. Lord Stark had confessed to Levi about his little word play he had used when he wrote the king's will down. He had secretly changed 'until his heir Joffrey reaches majority' to 'until the rightful heir take his throne at his majority'. He had then asked Levi if he felt he was doing the right thing and lamenting how much easier things were in the north and all he ever wanted was for Jon to live a simple safe life.
Levi had taken a moment to respond. When he did he spoke of how he felt the whole situation was inevitable. They were being dragged down this path due to Lannister grabs for power and greed. They had butchered innocent children seventeen years ago, then tried to steal the throne by passing off their baseborn children as legitimate, they had tried to murder a Stark twice, and he didn't have the evidence but was sure the queen was involved in the death of Robert somehow. Then he asked if Lord Stark could consciously allow the realm to be under the control of Joffrey. He had then bid Lord Stark a good night to allow the lord to brood some more in peace.

The bells had started ringing just after daybreak, and they could only signal one thing. That fat sack of shit they called a king had died. He had woke early to prepare just for this. He had oiled up the pulleys on his O.D.M., sharpened all eight of the blades, belted on his harness, and over it he had donned the brigadine he had modified to wear with his gear. He left his regular sword belt with his bag and stashed them on the roof of the tower along with two more gas canisters just in case.

He had known the moment he saw Lord Renly drenched in Fatty's blood that this outcome would happen. It was like history was mockingly repeating itself all over again. Here he was ready to wage another coup against another false monarch to implement another true one. He couldn't help the dark chuckle that escaped him when an amusing thought struck him. If Historia had managed to steal the brooding boy's heart instead of Annie she could have been a queen twice over.

When the tolling of the bells suddenly stopped, Levi, took a deep breath to center himself. He drained the rest of his tea, and got to his feet to prepare. He took his time as he attached his O.D.M. Gear. He gave each component a hard wiggle to make sure they were secured. He attached the handles to a pair of blades, so he could respond quicker. Then, as he had finished connecting his control wires he heard the door open to his chambers.

When he stepped into his chambers from the balcony Lord Stark was there waiting in the threshold. He had a resigned look on his face. No doubt the man dreaded the course they had to undertake, “It's time.” Levi just dipped his chin in acknowledgment and followed the Lord of Winterfell down the stairs.

They crossed the bailey towards the throne room with ten guards at their back. The rest they retained in the capital were left behind to guard the tower. As they entered the keep they were met by Varys and Baelish. As the two men bowed in greeting, Lord Stark, looked around as if searching for someone before asking, “Is Lord Renly not joining us?”

Varys face took on a sad demeanor before speaking in a matching tone, “Sadly, he will not, My Lord. Renly has fled the capital. He was last seen with some fifty retainers, and was heading south in some haste.”

Lord Stark seemed to process that information for a moment before he nodded his head in the direction of the throne room. As they resumed their walk Varys and Littlefinger fell in behind them and the guards with a few gold cloaks brought up the rear.

They arrived at the throne room doors to find the commander of the gold cloaks waiting for them. While they waited for the doors to be open Slynt (Levi believed the man's name was) spoke without turning to face them, “We stand behind you, Lord Stark.”

Lord Stark just nodded in response. The gravity of the situation weighing the man down. They didn't wait long for their entrance to be granted. As they crossed the threshold Levi's eyes were drawn directly to the monstrous chair at the back of the hall. It was a twisted vision of iron and barbs. Joffrey sat in the chair, leaning heavily on the right arm, and he had an extremely smug satisfied look on his face.
While they made their way across the room the herald was proclaiming Joffrey's titles, but Levi distracted himself scanning the room. To the bastard's right sat his mother. She was seated on a low stool, in a crimson dress with gold stitched embellishments, and her hair was piled on her head with a few curled tendrils falling loose. Behind the throne was a spaced out row of seven Lannister troops. To Joffrey's left was the Hound in his grey armor and dog's head helmet.

In front of the throne were four members of the Kingsguard, and the four men who should be the most dangerous in the room. He had sparred against Ser Barristan before, and the older man had fared surprisingly well. If they all upheld what he heard of the Kingsguard the other three should be harder fought given their youth. Ser Barristan stood next to Jaime Lannister between his other two brothers in white. Levi had heard enough talk about the Kingslayer to know he was supposed to be an exceptional swordsman, and only bested by Ser Barristan. The other two appeared to be Ser Preston and Ser Mandon. He had normally seen Ser Arys in the company of Myrcella, and Ser Boros with Tommen. so that just left Ser Meryn unaccounted for at the moment.

Both sides of the throne room were lined in Gold Cloaks armed with spears and swords at their sides. They enforced the law in the city, but they wouldn't be what he considered fully trained. Amateurs in comparison they may be, but in numbers they could be a hassle.

When they came to a stop Baelish and Varys went and stood off to the left of the dais where Pycelle was waiting, and Slynt split off to stand with the Gold Cloaks. Levi stopped a little to the right and a step back from Lord Stark. After the steward finished reciting the titles silence filled the halls.

It was broken a few moments later when Joffrey spoke, “I command for my council to start preparations for my coronation. I wish to be crowned within the fortnight. Today I’ll accept oaths of fealty from my councilors. After I am crowned we will publicly announce my betrothal to Sansa Stark.”

Lord Stark eyed the child king for a moment before he retrieved the folded parchment from his belt, and held it out towards the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard. “Ser Barristan Selmy, I believe no man here can question your honor.” Lord Stark scanned the room as if waiting for someone to contradict his statement.

Ser Barristan’s brows knitted in confusion as he reached for the letter, and he took a minute to examine it. He turned towards the throne holding up the letter, “King Robert's seal, unbroken.” Joffrey leaned forward resting his elbow on his knee as the Kingsguard broke the wax and unfolded the paper. Ser Barristans eyes scanned the paper as he took in the words. “It says Lord Stark is named Protector of the Realm and to rule as regent until the rightful heir come of age.”

The queen stood from her stool and approached the knight, but stopped at the edge of the raised steps leading to the throne. “May I see that, Ser Barristan?” The knight took a step up as he handed the paper to the queen. She stood there and read the parchment in silence. As she finished she looked up her eyes meeting Lord Stark’s. “Is this supposed to be your shield, Lord Stark?... A piece of paper?” Her body shook with the chuckle that ran through her as she tore the paper in two. She tore it in half again and allowed the pieces to float harmlessly to the ground.

“Those were the king's words!” Ser Barristan spoke outraged.

Levi felt the tension rise in his body as she directed her scowl to the old knight. “We have a new king now.” She stared down the knight until he relented and faced forward once more. She brought her feral gaze back to Lord Stark. “Let me give you some advice, Lord Stark. Bend the knee, My Lord. Bend the knee, declare Joffrey the rightful king, and we will allow you to live out your days in that grey waste you call home.”
Lord Stark scoffed in response before responding, “We both know your son isn't the rightful king. He doesn't even have a claim.”

“LIAR!” the bastard screamed.

“You disappoint me, Lord Stark. You condemn yourself with your own mouth.” The queen sneered, “Ser Barristan, seize this man.”

Ser Barristan seemed to hesitate for just a moment before tentatively moving towards Lord Stark. Two Stark guards stepped past Levi to flank their lord, and both their swords quarter drawn. Levi gripped the handles of his gear as he spread his feet crouching slightly preparing for a fight. The hound drew his sword completely. Lord Stark seemed to temporarily douse the fire by holding his hands out blocking his guards. “No one harm Ser Barristan.”

The lord's regard of his safety seemed to freeze the knight where he stood. The whole room sank in to eerie calm as no one moved. Joffrey called out then his voice shrill and cracking, and waving his arm maniacally, “KILL THEM! KILL THEM ALL!”

Levi gripped the handles of his blades tighter as he watched Lord Stark out of the corner of his eye when nobody moved to follow their king's order. The man's jaw was set seemingly unaffected by the boy's blood lust. He looked down as he let out a long sigh resigning himself to what was about to happen. “Commander, take the queen and her children into custody, and secure the Red Keep.”

“MEN OF THE WATCH!” Slynt commanded. The hall echoed armor clanking as the Gold Cloaks all performed a half-face towards the throne and raised their spears into a low ready.

Still nobody made to follow through with the Hand's command. Levi knew this was it. Both sides had given contradictory orders. Violence had become eminent, and it only mattered now who would strike first. Levi's heart rate picked up and adrenaline began coursing through him from the anticipation.

Levi moved his eyes to the queen. The smile on her blank face spoke of her overwhelming confidence. The look told him she felt there was no way this ended without her on top, and somehow she already had the upper hand. Which meant they were going to be betrayed, and they were already in the trap. He watched her as she convincingly scanned her eyes across the room as if just casually taking in everyone. It was then, just a quick moment, when her eyes had dropped to meet Slynt's.

It was as his mouth opened to give a command that Levi sprang into action. He kicked the spear the Gold Cloak tried to bring to bear on him in a harmless direction and drew his swords. His blades swung out cutting through Slynt's jowly neck, and the spearman's simultaneously. Ringlets of mail tinkled as they rained to the ground followed by the splattering of their heads impacting the tiled floor.

Steel scrapped against wood as all the Stark Guards followed his lead and drew their weapons in time to at least defuse the surprise attack. The sounds of steel clashing started ringing threw the hall. Levi kicked the headless corpse into the next soldier taken him off his feet. He ducked and spun as a spear went over his head. The spears reach negated as the man tripped over Slynt's headless corpse closing the distance to Levi. His first blade took both his legs off at the knee as his following bade removed his head from his shoulders.

As he was turning he saw Ser Preston charging Lord Stark's exposed back. Levi fired an anchor between the two that punched into the column past the two and fired his gas at full strength. He parried Ser Preston's blade with his right as his left came around and punched right through the
Kingsguard's breastplate. Levi watched as the Preston's eyes went wide as his mind tried to catch up with what had just happened. The knight's arm fell to his side and his sword clattered to the tile. A coughed racked his body and Levi closed his eyes as blood sputtered across his face. Ser Preston fell to the ground lifeless the moment Levi's blade was free.

Movement to his left caught Levi's attention. He fired a rear anchor pulling himself backwards as a spear head appeared where he was a moment ago. His landed knees bent against the wall, and sprang forward driving both his blades through the coat of plate and chest of another Gold Cloak. The man yelped in surprise as Levi drove them both to the floor. He carried his momentum rolling over his victim. His blades freed as he came to his feet and he his next victim coming to aid his now fallen comrade caught Levi's blade through his chin knocking the man's helmet off in the process.

The clanking of armor had Levi turn to see the Kingslayer charging at him, but Lord Stark appeared between them taking the attack to the Kingsguard. As their duel began Levi took stock of the situation. The Stark Guards were fighting what remained of the Gold Cloaks, Ser Mandon, and the Hound. A couple of the Stark men laid on the ground either dead or dying. Another quickly fell as Clegane slammed the man to the ground and savagely wrenched his sword from the guards chest.

As he prepared to take the fight to Clegane a loud yell of “CUNT!” had him spin to come face to face with a flood of Lannister soldiers. He could never understand the Westerosi fashion of yelling out to your enemies, and letting them know you were coming. The one that had apparently yelled out was coming at him full tilt his sword raised to strike as Red Cloaks poured through the throne room's main doors. Levi stepped to the man's outside as he swung. His left sword removed the Red Cloak's hand at the wrist as his right pierced through the open visor.

The next man came at him with a backhand swing. Levi blocked with his right as his left pierced through the man's armpit exiting out his neck.

He ducked under the next man's swing falling to his back. He kicked the soldier as hard as he could in the knee. The leg folded back with a painful crunch as the man feel forward screaming in agony. He was silenced as Levi held out his left sword and the Red Cloak impaled himself on it.

He threw the body aside and fired an anchor into the ceiling. He shot into a back flip as a sword clanked into the tile where he had been. Levi crashed feet first into his attacker's back. His swords pierced through steel, flesh, and bone to penetrate both the soldier's lungs at the same time.

He shot an anchor through the next mans shoulder. The man's head whipped back as he was yanked forward by the gear's powerful winch. Levi's sword flashed removing his head as his body carried on to crash noisily behind him.

He twirled around the next and grabbed the end of his cloak using his trigger fingers to keep control of the sword. He yanked the soldier back his armor clanking as he hit the floor. He thrust his sword through the man's chest plate and into his heart.

Levi had just decapitated another soldier when he heard Lord Stark call out for him to leave. He tried ignoring the call, and swearing to himself he wouldn't leave Lord Stark behind. These men could keep coming all they want, but they were going to get out of here together. Levi gutted another soldier and impaled another through the heart when Stark called out again, “LEVI! GO NOW!”

That finally got him to look towards where he had heard Lord Stark had called from. Cersei, Joffrey, Ser Jaime, and Ser Barristan were no where to be seen. The Hound's steel grey armor, and
Ser Mandon's golden armor were drenched in blood and gore. Lord Stark was on his knees, blood gushing from a wound on his thigh, and Littlefinger stood over him with a knife to his throat. Between them stood at least another twenty Red Cloaks. The throne room itself was a massacre. All the Stark men laid dead, random bodies parts scattered the floor, and there was so much blood that boots squelched with the slightest of movements. Painful and anguish cries of the dying echoed through the massive throne room.

Levi knelt down keeping his eyes locked on the Lannister troops. He ripped the cloak from a dead Lannister man. He quickly ran the cloth across his face hoping to wipe some of the blood away. The Lannister men kept fidgeting tensed muscles waiting for Levi's next move as he methodically wiped his gloves and blades with the cloak. The crimson fabric darkening from the blood now dyeing it more. He sheathed the blades back into their carrier before switching the handles to a fresh set. He had cut through so much armor and bone he knew he was going to be resharpening them for a week.

Levi lowered into a crouch ready to launch an attack, but when their eyes met, Lord Stark, just repeatedly signaled with his towards the windows. Levi this felt like he dealing with Erwin all over, and once again his leader was gambling with his own life to allow Levi to fight another day. He grit his teeth in anger. That wasn't going to happen again. He was not leaving this shit stinking city without Stark and he would murder every Lannister that got in his way.

“NO LEVI!” Lord Stark yelled again seeming to read Levi's mind and his intentions. “GO!”

Chapter End Notes

I really enjoyed writing this chapter. It was hard to force myself to rein in the chapter in at one point, but that's what happens when Isayama gives you an OP ass character that can wreck on scrubs.

Thanks for reading and I hope you enjoyed it.

Next: Tyrion I
TYRION I

Chapter Summary

Tyrion arrives to the Red Keep to witness the aftermath.

Chapter Notes

I was so happy to see Attack on Titan back and then the battle Sunday night.

I want to thank everyone again for reading this silly story I am throwing together, and for your comments, and kudos. It is really appreciated!

Let's get back to it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was good to be back at the Red Keep, well as good as it can be with his sister around. The castle loomed just ahead on top of Aegon's High Hill, and he was looking forward to sleeping in a true feather bed after his long journey. He had slept in the feather beds of brothels along the way, but they were essentially feather beds in name only. They were still much better than a straw one or the ground under a hedge, but just comfortable enough to take the aches of the road away.

His trip to the Wall after Winterfell had been enlightening. The Lord Commander Jeor Mormont had been a gruff no nonsense type of man, but was overall a gracious host. He never bothered Tyrion even though he was sure he had overstayed his welcome. Tyrion just couldn't seem to drag himself away from the Night's Watch. He never had any intention of joining, but the books and information he could garner from Maester Aemon there had been too invaluable to pass up.

The old maester was the last living Targaryen in Westeros and had seen over a hundred name days. Tyrion couldn't turn down the ability of speaking with someone who lived through their recent history opposed to just reading about it. The maester had lived long enough to see six kings on the throne and unfortunately the demise of his own family's dynasty.

Aemon had been more than happy to speak with Tyrion. He sometimes felt he was being humored though. That Aemon was so desperate for someone to speak with beyond duties to the wall that he was willing to overlook Tyrion being a Lannister. They spent many nights in the old man's solar talking over mugs of that pigs' piss the Night's Watch called ale.

If he wasn't with Aemon he spent most of his other time with a man named Yoren that was the Night's Watch recruiter. He would travel the Seven Kingdoms scrounging the dungeons for criminals willing to take the black. Where most of the Watch's men had been dour, Yoren, was refreshingly jovial, and enjoyed good laughs.

Over cups of ale Yoren had told Tyrion how he had came to the wall. Apparently a man named Willam had murdered his brother and then disappeared from their village. Yoren had never let go of his hate for the man, and when Willam had finally shown his face again he had struck. Yoren
said he buried an axe so deep into his head Wilam had to be buried with the steel still lodged in his skull. Yoren in the mean time had taken a horse and rode to the Wall to take the black and avoid the King's Justice.

He had enjoyed Yoren's company so much that as his time to leave approached he asked the grizzled man to share the road with him. Yoren had tried to dissuade Tyrion by saying that he traveled on the grubbier side. He had just waved the other man's concerns away saying that this time he would be traveling with a Lannister, and he was never turned away from anywhere.

Tyrion had spent his last night at Castle Black doing exactly what he set out to. He pissed off the top of the Wall to the lands beyond. It had been so cold he was sure that he would get frostbite on his bits, but couldn't resist the amusing thought that it was so cold it would freeze his piss before it hit the ground.

Then the next morning they had set out after a moon at the Wall. The first day they didn't make it far. The lack of womanly contact since the brothel in Wintertown had Tyrion ordering everyone to stop for the day at the brothel in Molestown. The whore who had entertained him that night could have only been described as homely. It did the trick for him though, and he was able to alleviate some poison from his system.

Tyrion was in no rush to get anywhere, so it took them nearly three weeks to make it to Winterfell. After the first week of travel to make it past the Last Hearth, Tyrion, was sick of sleeping on the ground already, so he wanted to sleep in every inn they came across.

In the nights that they couldn't find a whore house they would just stay at an inn, Tyrion, had distracted himself with designing a new saddle. He thought it would be a good gift for Brandon Stark to grant a little goodwill between Starks and Lannisters. He had heard at the Wall the boy had woken up when a raven from Winterfell arrived for Benjen Stark. After the boys fall things had been tense in the castle, and Tyrion hoped that a saddle that would help the young lord ride again despite his ailing legs might lift the spirits of the family.

He was wrong. The reception he had received at Winterfell was colder than the Wall on its worst night. From the reactions of Robb Stark it was obvious that they felt his family was involved in Bran's fall. It was further cemented when he got to Wintertown later that night, and heard talk that an assassin had tried to kill the boy in his sleep along with his mother. At least Bran had been a pleasure to talk to and was exceedingly grateful for the saddle design. Jon Snow had even followed Tyrion to the courtyard to apologize for his brother's cold words and tried to encourage him to stay in the castle. He had laughed and told the bastard to not spend his life apologizing for other people or he would never accomplish anything for himself.

He had ended up spending a sennight in Wintertown. Ros was just too beautiful and fun to pull himself from. With her gorgeous big teats and the feats she could perform with her mouth Tyrion had been in the Seven Heavens. He ended up spending the majority of the time there between the redheads legs, but eventually he had to leave. It took the constant nagging of Yoren and his two guardsmen to finally pull Tyrion from Ros' creamy thighs, and resume their trek to the capital. Before he had left though he had given the girl a solid gold lion pendant as thanks, and told her he hoped to enjoy her presence some time in the future.

The rest of his journey had continued in much the same way. Stopping at brothels, inns, keeps, and castles all the way to King's Landing. Tyrion was having too much fun seeing the country and meeting people to just rush back to the capital and have to deal with Cersei. A trip that should have only taken a few sennights, Tyrion, managed to drag out for moons.

He knew something had to have happened when he got to the main gate and found double the
amount of guards that were usually posted there. When they entered the courtyard servants were 
scurrying around clutching buckets and cleaning supplies. As he stopped his horse a gangly stable 
boy rushed out carrying a set of mounting blocks. He placed them on the ground next to Tyrion's 
horse allowing the small lord to dismount with some amount of dignity. The whole trip his guards 
had had to lift him to and from his saddle, and after a while it had started making Tyrion feel a 
child. That could have possibly contributed a little to Tyrion's lack of desire to resume his travels, 
and dawdle more at their stops.

As Tyrion removed his black leather riding gloves and tucked them into his belt three more stable 
boys appeared to retrieve Yoren's and his guards' horses. After they dismounted his two guards 
resumed their positions behind him like twin gold and crimson shadows. He directed his attention 
to the Night's Watch brother as he approached, “Yoren, we'll have you set up in the guest quarters 
and I'll be sure to get you access to the rabble in the dungeons.”

“My thanks, milord.” Yoren responded, “Mayhaps, I'll explore the city tomorrow while I wait. 
Mightbe be able to scrounge up a few street rats looking for shelter and steady food.”

“Wise choice.” Tyrion nodded. “Well, I better go see what my family is up to. Would you care to 
join me for supper tonight? We can finally enjoy some good wine instead of that Riverlands or 
Northen swill.”

“Aye, milord, I'd be honored.” Tyrion quickly flagged down a passing steward to show Yoren to 
some guest quarters, and get him settled in.

“Excellent, I'll send someone to fetch you this evening then.” Tyrion extended his hand to the 
Watchman who graciously took it. “Till later, then.”

“Aye.” Yoren answered with a smile showing his red stained teeth before he bowed and walked 
away.

Tyrion waited until the steward led Yoren into the guest quarters before making his way to the 
main keep. He whistled a tune to himself as he walked enjoying the sensation of being able to 
stretch his legs again. As he was approaching the doors to the keep he happened to glance over 
towards the Tower of the Hand.

Servants were rushing in and out of the tower. Some carried buckets and cleaning supplies in. 
While others were exiting the tower carrying chests to deposit in some unknown destination. 
Tyrion stopped for a moment to watch out of curiosity. He couldn't imagine what Lord Stark 
wanted to do that would require that much cleaning. His first thought would be a feast or gala of 
some type in the Hand's Ballroom, but he shook the thought away. If there was something he was 
sure of it was that Ned Stark would never throw a feast for the sake of having a feast.

He shrugged his shoulders to himself and continued on his way. As he approached the main doors 
a Red Cloak bowed his head as he held the door open. Tyrion cut off his whistling to thank the 
guard before resuming his tune. While he traversed the hall he allowed his eyes to take in the 
murals that adorned the walls.

He had seen them countless times, but Tyrion found the paintings to be beautiful and important 
relics of history. There was Aegon depicted on the back of Balerion the Black Dread flying in a sea 
of blue with fluffy clouds in the background, King Torrhen Stark kneeling before the conqueror 
and offering up his crown, two dragons fighting in the air over the God's Eye, and countless others 
depicting the history of House Targaryen in Westeros.

The last one always made Tyrion snort. It was a painting of Robert clad in antlered war helm 
battling Prince Rhaegar Targaryen at the trident. No doubt that was the compromise that Robert
had made when he was begged not to bring down the other paintings. If he had to display the history of the house he dethroned he was going to show how it happened. Tyrion just shook his head as he approached the massive throne room doors.

Before he could reach them one of his guards quickly passed him and pushed the great oak door open for him. When he entered the hall his tune died on his lips and his mouth gaped open in shock.

The first thing that caught his attention were the dark brown patches of dried blood everywhere. Half of the marbled floor seemed to be coated in it. Towards the throne were four women in roughspun on their knees and brushes in hand scrubbing the floor. Water flowed across the floor from the effort put into the forced scrubs of the women. The water changing from a dark red to pink the farther it spread from the stains. The smell of copper assaulted his senses so thoroughly he could taste it in his mouth. One of his guards gagged apparently suffering the same as him.

Tyrion made his way further into the room careful to not step in the congealed pools. Light twinkled off something close to his boot catching his attention. He crouched to retrieve it and as he turned it over in his palm he realized it was a golden ringlet from a Gold Cloaks chain mail. He let loose a frustrated sigh. Whatever had happened in this room had caused it to descend to the deepest level of the Seven Hells. As he stood his brow furrowed from confusion as his gaze fell upon a set of bloody boot prints on the wall.

He blew out breath of frustration as he let the ringlet fall back to the ground, and it hit the marble with a soft tinkle. He knew he wasn't going to get any answers standing amongst the gore, so decided to make for the Small Council chamber. He continued through the room careful of the stains making his way to the door behind the Iron Throne.

When he came to the Small Council chamber two Kingsguard stood outside. Tyrion immediately noticed Ser Mandon Moore, but the other Kingsguard caught his attention. He had never seen the man before. He had almost the same height of the Hound, black hair with a pointed beard on his chin, and a hook nose. Tyrion decided that the Kingsguard's identity was a mystery for another time as he heard muffled voices coming from the door.

Neither of the guards tried to stop him as he pushed his way into the council chambers. He was immediately greeted by the shrill scream of his sister, “WHAT DO YOU MEAN THEY ARE GONE?!”

Tyrion entered to see Ser Meryn Trant still recoiling from his sister's screeching. He was stood in front of the Small Council table. Cersei stood leaned over on the other side of the table seething from rage. A vein could easily be seen pulsing on her forehead as she turned red from rage. Her anger immediately fell upon him when her eyes shifted to the door that he now stood in. “And what are you doing here you little monster?!”

“Peace, sweet sister, our beloved little brother just got here after, no doubt, what had to be an exhaustive journey.” His older brother Jaime spoke from the seat normally reserved for the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard. “A lot has happened and it is important that he hear it.”

When their eyes met his brother gave him a wink and a slight smile. Tyrion smiled back as he made his way to the side of the room where there were a few decanters of wine and goblets. His sister's eyes watched him in silence as he poured himself a glass of wine. He took a quick sip relishing in his first taste of a good Dornish Sour in many moons. He glanced up to see his sister leering at him, Meryn Trant staring, the other members of the council watching him, and his brother just shook his head with a smile on his face. Cersei finally lost her patience with him, “Are you going to sit?!”
“Sorry, dear sister, just wanted to quench my thirst real quick.” Tyrion smiled at her innocently. He retrieved the decanter from the beverage table before heading over to the council table, and took the empty seat to Jaime's left.

Tyrion looked at the extra small Small Council as he settled into his chair. There was apparently now Jaime as the Lord Commander. His brother looked resplendent in his gilded and white armor. White cape flowing from his shoulders. Tyrion couldn't stop his mind wandering to what may have happened to Ser Barristan Selmy. If the old knight was dead then that did not bode well for Joffrey. This newer breed of Kingsguard was a far cry from the quality of knights that history said populated the Targaryen Kingsguard.

Next on Tyrion's left was Grand Maester Pycelle. He was an annoying old codger that spent as much time wheezing as he did speaking. He was also his father's creature and had been spying for the Lion of the Rock for as long as Tyrion could remember. So, even though Tyrion was now about to learn what transpired there was no doubt that black wings already carried the information to his father.

Then to Cersei's left was Petyr Baelish the Master of Coin. Littlefinger was a wildcard. He acted loyal enough to the crown, but Tyrion couldn't help but think the man was playing his own game, but to what end Tyrion didn't know. He sat there with the usual infuriating smirk on his face that Tyrion would love to smack off. Tyrion wasn't as much of an elitist as his sister, but even he felt that Baelish tried too hard to reach beyond what his lot in life should be.

After Little finger on the opposite end of the table was, Varys, the Master of Whispers. Varys was the scariest person on the council to Tyrion. The man seemed to know every person's secrets at all times. Thanks to his personal army of spies he always affectionately referred to as his 'Little Birds'. Varys at the moment was just watching Tyrion with a blank look upon his face, and even from the other end of the table, Tyrion, could still smell the eunuch’s flowery perfume.

When Tyrion's eyes moved back to Cersei she was just staring daggers at him with anger burning in her emerald eyes. Tyrion held her eye contact over the rim of his goblet as he took another swallow of the tart wine. When she continued to stare he smirked at her before dismissively waving his hand toward Trant as if giving her permission to continue.

Her anger seemed to grow exponentially, but fortunately she turned her attention from him back to Trant, “Well?!”

Trant seemed to sputter for a moment before collecting himself, “It's like I said, Your Grace. While you were handling Lord Stark in the Throne Room I lead the Red and Gold cloaks to put down the resistance at the Tower of the Hand.”

“Yes, and you were also supposed to capture the Stark girls.” Cersei spit in response, “Those two girls would dissuade the North from rising up, and once Sansa was married to Joffrey the North wouldn't be able to rise at all.” Cersei cut off her rant to take a large gulp of wine from her own goblet. Her throat visibly bobbed as she swallowed down the immense amount of wine before she continued at a more controlled tone. “So, pray tell, how is it that a Kingsguard with a small army of troops failed to detain two sick girls?”

“They weren't there, Your Grace.” Trant responded immediately. When his sister just raised a questioning eyebrow at the knight he carried on. “We killed all the Stark men we encountered, and the men started sweeping the tower. We were trying to find the Stark girls when 'He' showed up.”

Tyrion couldn't help the chuckle that escaped his lips interrupting the knight's story. His goblet was halfway to his lips as he looked at the rest of the council to see their reactions to the overly
ominous way that Trant had referred to the mystery man. The faces he was met with shocked Tyrion. Jaime looked dejected, Baelish and Pycelle both had fright written across their faces, Cersei’s jaw was set in anger, and as usual Varys just wore an unreadable mask.

“Tyrion.” His brother whispered to him. When he looked to Jaime his brother just shook his head slightly in a way that told him it wasn't a joking matter.

Trant was looking at him with a scowl before he returned his attention to Cersei and resumed. “We were in the middle of searching the tower when a loud crash and scream came from the Hand's chambers. The door opened and there 'He' stood like a demon straight from the Seven Hells covered in blood.” Trant gulped heavily, “I've never seen what 'He' did next. Some strange rope shot out of his waist, he ran across the wall, jumped towards the men on the stairs, and stated spinning like a child's top. He cut down ten men in seconds. His sword went through armor and men like they were just warm butter.”

Tyrion paled at the fear that was running through Trant. Whoever this 'He' was he had to be an absolute monster. The only other person that Tyrion could think of that inspired that level of fear was Ser Gregor, but it appeared that Trant still wasn't done, “As he engaged more of the men, I knew we didn't have enough to fight him, so I left to get reinforcements.”

“You fled like a craven, you mean?” Cersei sneered at the man.

“No, Your Grace, I returned to the tower with more Red Cloaks, but by then 'He' was gone.” Trant answered right back affronted at the queen regent's claims of his cowardice. “When we searched the tower a lot of the food stores were emptied out, all the coin out of the Hand's chamber was gone, and one of the men said that the girls' beds were dusty and most of their clothes gone. They didn't flee that morning, Your Grace they had to have already been gone.”

“OUT!” Cersei screamed as she leapt to her feet and threw her wine at the Kingsguard. The goblet impacted harmlessly against his breastplate, but the crimson wine splashed against Trant's face and stained his white cloak. The man didn't hesitate to flee the chambers like a whipped page boy.

Cersei stood there seething. Her fists clenched to her side in rage. “They used the sickness as a cover.” She spoke to one in particular. “That night the guards saw them leave out to the city is when they must have left. I want patrols on the roads, and our fastest ships chasing them before they reach the North!”

“I came down the Kingsroad and a large Stark party would have caught my attention.” Tyrion interjected. “They most likely left by boat. It would be faster to reach White Harbor and less dangerous than the road.”

“THEN SEND OUR FASTEST WAR SHIPS!” Cersei screamed at the council.

“Your Grace,” Varys answered with a gentle tone trying to calm the raging lioness in front of him, but the tone also suggested that the spider was about to deliver another blow. “The royal fleet is at Dragonstone under the command of Lord Stannis.”

Cersei shrieked as a pitcher of perfectly good wine smashed against the wall painting the pale red stone a darker shade. “The North will be coming, and we only have Lord Stark to keep them at bay. Jaime, on the morrow I want you to ride out to father, assist him in putting the wolves down, and send Ser Gregor to me. He'll kill that little devil lurking out in the city.” His sister didn't wait for an answer or argument as she left the chamber in a swirl of anger and crimson silks.

The rest of the council followed Cersei after a few minutes. When it was finally just him and his
brother. Jaime leaned forward elbows on the table as he rubbed his temples. Tyrion refilled his goblet as he looked to his brother. “Tell. Me. Everything.”

Jaime launched into the full story of what transpired in the throne room between Lord Stark and Cersei. His brother told him how the bloodbath started, and how this Levi, that was the infamous ‘He’, seemed to go through their troops like they were parchment. How Jaime, Ser Barristan, Cersei, and Joffrey had fled the room for Joff’s protection and locked down Maegor’s until the castle calmed back down. When the tale was done Tyrion thanked the Seven he had invited Yoren for dinner. He was going to need the man's antics to cheer back up after this.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!

Next: ROBB II
Chapter Summary

The North gathers and the truth is revealed

Chapter Notes

I don't know about of you, but Season 8 has me wanting to pull my hair out. It is so frustrating to watch. On the positive side at least the two episodes of AoT so far have been exciting, and can wait to see the rest of the fight for Shiganshina animated.

Well enough about that here is what you actually came for.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Robb stood on the eastern battlements staring towards the Kingsroad while his hand absentmindedly ran through the fur on Grey Wind's head. The direwolf sat beside as they stared aimlessly out between the crenalations. He felt a little bad stealing Jon's favorite brooding spot, but he needed to clear his head and prepare for the night to come. No doubt his brother-cousin was off somewhere brooding over the same thing. The most likely location being the Godswood since Robb had claimed the battlements before him.

Tonight would be the night that he tested his bannermen and everything they believed to be true. He had put it off as long as he could waiting for them all to arrive, so he wouldn't have to repeat himself multiple times. He had been up here since the late afternoon where he stayed as the skies had changed from the reds and oranges of early evening to the dark blues and purples of night.

He could hear his guards shifting from where they had stopped a respectable distance away. He blew out a sigh watching the steam of his breath dissipate into the Northern sky steeling himself.

This had been a plan that Robb started forming as soon as the shock of Jon's heritage had abated. He just didn't expect it to be so soon. He had hoped to have at least a few more years to be able to work out the finer points. The last moon and a half had thrown all that to the wind, and now he was getting ready to leave Winterfell to march for war.

It had started on a day that Robb was not like to forget for the rest of his life. Theon, Jon, and himself had rose earlier than normal to be able to spar. He had lost all three rounds against Jon, but managed to pull two of three over on Theon. After that they had broke there fast together before Jon and Annie took off to the holdfast to check on Lyax. While they were gone Robb had been in his father's solar going over the ledgers to pass the time. Theon had entertained himself by watching the Scouts do their morning training, and practicing with his bow.

When Jon and Annie returned they had all met in the great hall to have luncheon. His mother sat at the head where his father would normally have been beside her. Instead Bran sat beside her in his wheeled chair. Rickon was sat to Bran's right. Followed by Historia and Beth Cassel who had been talking quietly together. Jean had sat next to Beth followed by Robb and Theon. Across from them
had been Jon and Annie. Followed by Eren, Mikasa, and then Hange whom was sat to his mother's left.

They had been having a rather simple lunch of Old Nan's beef pies which had always been a childhood favorite of his. The rest of the day was going to be spent holding court. Robb was sure his afternoon would be filled with livestock and land grievances, and he honestly wasn't looking forward to it. At least he wouldn't be alone in his misery. He was going to drag Theon and Jon along with him. They always tried to argue that they weren't the acting lord, but Robb just argued back that they both needed the experience. Theon was the heir to the Iron Islands, and even if he wouldn't become king Jon would still most likely end up with his own castle. They could learn all they wanted from Maester Luwin in their lessons, but nothing beat real experience. Experience you weren't going to get hidden away in the maester's chambers.

The lunch had been broken up when Maester Luwin came barging into the hall his chain clanking from his haste. As he approached with a raven scroll in hand, Robb, knew it didn't carry good tidings. The maester wouldn't interrupt their meal unless he felt it was dire and it needed immediate attention. When he arrived at the table Luwin handed the scroll over telling him it was word from King's Landing.

Robb turned the scroll over expecting the direwolf seal of his father, but instead he was greeted by a stag and lion facing off sealed in red wax. He cracked the seal and unrolled the letter. It took him a few times reading and rereading the scroll for the words to properly sink in.

When he looked up from the missive he realized that at some point he had stood, and everyone at the table was looking at him. Most were faces of curiosity, but his mother had a worried expression marring her face. He took a moment to steel himself before he spoke clearing his throat to prevent his voice from cracking with emotion.

*Lord Robb Stark,*

*King Robert has died from injuries sustained during a hunting accident. During the transition of power your father committed treason by trying to seize my rightful throne. Your father has been arrested and his entire household was put to the sword. You are hear by ordered to travel to King's Landing and swear fealty to your new king and answer for your father's crimes.*

*Joffrey Baratheon I, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm*

Robb heard gasps from around the table, and when he looked to his mother she seemed to be in a state of shock. It took her a minute before she started fretting about Sansa and Arya and how there was no mention of them in the letter. Hange had grabbed her hand and was trying to keep her calm before she descended into a panic attack.

He had looked up when Jon asked him what he planned to do. Robb had gritted his teeth and raged about how Joffrey had put his father in chains and then demanded to have his arse kissed. Luwin had spoke at that point of how it was a royal decree and that it would be unwise refuse.

Robb had looked around the table again. Everyone had a look that told him they supported the same decision he was already coming to. Mikasa was staring at him with a look of cold fury, and then he realized they had lost just as much as the Starks. Six of the Scouts had gone south with his father, and were likely killed along with the rest of the household.
He had looked back at Luwin, and told him that he wasn't going to refuse the summons. He was going to go King's Landing. However, he wasn't going alone, and to call the banners. When he scanned the table again Mikasa had just nodded her head before she stormed from the hall.

After that Robb had canceled court for the afternoon. The rest of the day Robb, Theon, and Jon had helped Luwin get the messages written and the ravens flew to their destinations.

It had been a sennight later when they received their first response. Everyone had sank themselves into preparing for the war to come. They had ended up spending most of their days in the yard to build up their stamina to last in extended battles. Their sparring had been interrupted when Maester Luwin came rushing across the yard with a scroll.

When Robb received the letter it had been sealed with the merman of House Manderly in blue-green wax. The letter's contents had held tidings that managed to lift the mood of everyone. His sisters, most of the Scouts who had gone south, Vayon, Jeyne, and Jory along with several Stark men had arrived at White Harbor. They were currently being escorted to Winterfell by Wyman Manderly, with a contingent of Manderly men, and Ser Wylis Manderly who would take command when they marched south. The rest of the Manderly troops would form up at White Harbor and march to Moat Cailin under the command of Ser Wendel Manderly. There they would shore up the defenses as they waited for the rest of the Northern army to arrive.

His mother had been ecstatic that the girls were fine and her mood lifted somewhat with one less thing to worry about. The Scouts had also been relieved to know that their comrades were fine. A small cloud still lingered over them with the lack of knowledge on Levi or what may have happened to him. Robb was confident that nothing had happened to the man, but he couldn't help the nagging at the back of his head and the old saying his father used, even the best of warriors could fall in the simplest of skirmishes.

It was a few more weeks before his sisters arrived at Winterfell. Outside the walls had slowly started turning into a tent city as soldiers set up camp. From the battlements you could see the Cerwyn axe, Hornwood moose, and Tallhart spruces. The closest bannermen that were able to gather and mobilize their levies.

He had been watching a bout between Jon and Mikasa the day the Manderly's arrived with his sisters. The young woman has started holding back in bouts, so the spar would become more training than her just dominating whoever she happened to be facing at the moment. Robb had his attention pulled as howls rang out across the castle. Lady and Nymeria bound away from where they had been laying at the side of the yard with Ghost and Grey Wind. They sprinted across the yard so fast it looked as if they were almost flying as they went out the main gate and over the drawbridge. Moments later a guard atop the gatehouse had called out that banners were spotted.

Like they had multiple times already Robb lined up with his mother and his younger brothers to greet their newly arrived bannermen. They had only been lined up for a minute before a dappled palfrey charged into the courtyard with Nymeria in tow, and his youngest sister was dismounting. The stable boy was barely able to catch the reins as Arya sprinted across the space and leaped into his arms.

She had been dressed in a brown leather jerkin over a black tunic, brown riding breeches, black muddy boots, and around her waist she wore a sword belt with a skinny scabbard hanging off her right hip.

After Arya released Robb from her embrace she moved on to their mother. He watched as their mother dropped kisses to the crown of Arya's head. She had then rushed on to Jon as horseshoes began clacking across the drawbridge.
Sansa came riding in with Lady loping by her side, lead by Jory Cassel and several Manderly banner bearers, and flanked by Reiner and Bertholt. She was in a dark green dress that seemed to make her auburn hair shine even brighter. Her white teeth on display from the wide smile that was gracing her features. Connie, Sasha, and Armin followed with Jeyne and Vayon Poole behind them.

Ser Wylis Manderly entered the courtyard escorting a blue-green carriage that Robb knew was ferrying Lord Wyman. He didn't have time to watch the Manderly guards enter the castle as his vision was filled with Sansa rushing into his arms. After she had moved on to his mother, Robb, welcomed the Scouts back to Winterfell.

He had greeted each of them with an embrace, and a pat of the back. When Sasha had come before him he had bent down to kiss her hand which earned him a laugh and a playful hit on his shoulders. She had told him none of that horse shit, and that she was happy to be back in Winterfell.

Next he shook the hand of Jory Cassel and thanked him for making sure his sisters were safe on their journey back. Jory then told him that he had a letter for him from his father, but it was best handled in private. Robb told him they would meet later in the solar to get it from him.

Then he had greeted Lord Wyman and Ser Wylis. Lord Wyman's normal jovial demeanor was much more subdued with the weight of what they were gathering for. Normally the massive Lord of White Harbor was boisterous enough to rival the Greatjon. Wyman had remarked how much he had grown since he had last seen him, and didn't fail to mention that both his grand-daughters were close in age to himself. Robb had pat the older lord on the back skillfully avoiding what Wyman was hinting at. He told him that they were going to have a meeting of the lords once they all arrived, but until then the hospitality of Winterfell was his.

That night they had dinner in the private family dining hall. He had insisted that Theon along with the Scouts attend as well. He wanted them to be included in their talk besides the fact that to Robb they had become somewhat of an extension of his family.

Over dinner Arya and Sansa had excitedly recounted their escape of King's Landing. How Levi had come up with the idea to get their supplies out of the castle, and how they came up with the excuse of them being sick to explain their absence in court. Reiner told them how they had to essentially lock Arya in her berth to stop her from stealing a row boat when she discovered Lord Stark wasn't with them. Then, how they had stopped in Runestone for a day on their way north. How, the Manderly's had taken them in with open arms, and brought them back to Winterfell.

Robb had told them of the attempted assassination of Bran and their mother. Arya had looked at Mikasa with stars in her eyes when Robb explained how the young woman had taken down the cutthroat. Then Bran had taken over telling them of the wildling attack in the Wolfswood, and how Lyax had saved him.

Robb had almost spat his ale out when Sansa told them how Sasha threatened to castrate Petyr Baelish. His mother had looked aghast as they went on their tirade of the man called Littlefinger. His mother had tried to dress them down about how Petyr was a family friend and should have been treated better for being her foster brother. The four scouts had just scoffed and Connie had called the man a cunt under his breath. That had only caused Robb and Theon to laugh out even louder.

After dinner had been cleared by the servants, Robb, had revealed the letter that Jory had delivered from his father. He had read it immediately after receiving it, but felt that everyone in the room should know its contents. He cleared his throat, and when everyone's attention was turned to him he stood to read it out.
The situation in the capital is worse than I could've even imagined. I started investigating in the capital with the focus of finding the truth of what happened with Lord Arryn. I instead uncovered more dangerous truths. It is with a heavy heart that I feel we will have to go to war and oust the Baratheons and Lannisters from the throne.

Through investigating Armin and I came to the conclusion that Robert has no legitimate heirs. Joffrey, Tommen, and Myrcella are Cersei's children only.

Robb had looked up a moment at Armin's face and he nodded in response. Sansa and their mother both gasped the latter covering her mouth from the shock.

They show no signs of Baratheon lineage at all. Armin had shown me in the tome that records the lineage of the great houses that Baratheons have all had black hair and blue eyes since their house was formed by Orys three hundred years ago. No matter the coloring of their mothers.

This was supported by us coming across one of Robert's bastards that is a smith in King's Landing. Like Robert the boy had dark hair and the blue eyes. Then I remembered a little bastard girl named Mya that Robert fathered in the Vale. She too shared their coloring. In both these cases their mothers were fair haired. With this knowledge I wanted to send everyone away before things got worse, so Armin and I were unable to discover who their actual father may be.

Another discovery Armin made thanks to the tome was that Robert wasn't the only court member being cuckolded. Jon Arryn had been as well. Like Roberts children, Robert Arryn, does not possess the proper coloring of his lineage. Robert Arryn is actually the bastard son of Lysa Tully Arryn and Petyr Baelish.

At that point Robb's mother tried to vehemently deny the allegations that that wasn't possible. That their father was mistaken because Petyr was too good a friend to do as such.

Armin had sighed before he crushed his mother's world view. He explained that with the Arryn blonde hair and blue eyes combined with Lysa's auburn hair and blue eyes there should be absolutely no way that little Robert would be born with dark hair and green eyes.

Then Reiner had backed him up with what they had heard around the Red Keep of Littlefinger bragging about bedding and taken the maidenheads of both Tully sisters. His mother had just sat there defeated staring into her wine goblet.

I have fought with myself on what the right course of action should be, and I have come to the conclusion that the time has come for Jon to take his rightful place. Robert has almost beggared the kingdoms and Tywin Lannister allows the crown to borrow more gold, so he can gain more control of the realm.

Robert and I had a fight about Daenerys Targaryen. Robert wanted the young woman killed when he found out that she was pregnant. I had hoped over time Robert's hatred had waned from the rebellion. I had hoped that Jon's siblings were the last of the children he would try to kill, but I was wrong. The man I called brother has been lost to times past and his unwillingness to let it be. He refuses to move forward and though the realm was relatively peaceful it is now near a breaking point of bankruptcy.

Son, I need you to call the banners and explain the truth to them. They have had seventeen years of
lies, but now we need to move forward. The north won't do it alone. The Riverlands should follow you, due to the Tully's blood relations. I sent a letter explaining everything to Lord Yohn Royce at Runestone. He should be able to wrestle control of the Vale away from your aunt and her bastard, and hopefully support you. Lastly, you or Jon should marry Lady Margaery and bring the Reach to your side. The best you could hope from Dorne would be them staying neutral.

I'll try to join you as soon as I can, and take over so this weight isn't entirely on your shoulders.

Your Father.

No, had been Jon's immediate response. He had tried to argue that he didn't want the throne and he wasn't going to take it. They could go fight to get Robb's father and Levi back, but he wasn't going to sit on the throne.

Robb, had shouted Jon down instead of striking him like he wanted to. He told him that nobody cared what he did or didn't want. This was his duty now. Nobody had ever asked Robb if he wanted to be Lord of Winterfell. It was expected of him, and that he had to accept that. He was no longer a bastard that got to run away. Robb was sorry his choices had been taken, but that was life. Robb had reminded him that he owed it to Rhaenys and Aegon to see this done.

They had gone back and forth with the rest of the table remaining quiet. Jon had stubbornly accepted, but he wouldn't do it without one compromise. Robb would have to be the one to woo and marry Margeary Tyrell. He had said if for the rest of his life he had to sit on that monstrosity of a chair someone of his choosing would stand beside him. Robb had agreed out of his sheer tiredness of fighting, and Jon had stormed from the room.

The room had been quiet as a tomb till a few minutes later Sansa had started fidgeting excitedly and staring at Annie. Robb knew that his sister was already planning Annie's wedding dress and bridal cloak in her head. Annie must of picked up on it because she had just responded for Sansa not to get ahead of herself. Sansa had just scoffed and asked who else would Jon have been talking about. A light chuckle had resounded around the table breaking the foul mood that had settled since Jon's departure.

Robb came back to himself when he felt Grey Wind's head turn under his hand. When he followed the direwolf's lead he saw two glowing red eyes peering back at him. Ghost's white fur was painted in orange as he came padding into the firelight with Jon not far behind. He was dressed the nicest Robb had ever seen him. Every stitch no doubt done under the guidance of his sister's skilled fingers. He wore the new cloak Sansa had made him from black wolf fur over a black jerkin with silver trim and red tunic, black breeches accompanied new black boots shone to the point they looked like glass, and around his waist was a sword belt carrying what they had discovered to be Dark Sister and the Valyrian dagger that the cutthroat had tried to use on his mother. The rubies in each of the hilts sparkling in the light.

He could still remember the look on Jon's face when he had presented him the weapons along with his armor. The day after he had gotten Jon to agree to be king he had gone to see Mikken with an important project. Jon had made the mistake of showing Robb the small hidden chamber behind his aunt Lyanna's tomb. Thus, Robb had gotten Mikken to focus on preparing the armor and weapons in secret before the rest of the army showed up and Mikken was forced to concentrate exclusively on getting the armory fit for mobilization.
Robb had mixed Rhaegar’s Southron style plate with the style popular in the North. It consisted of Rhaegar's winged helmet, gorget decorated with the red three-headed dragon, pauldrons, revebraces, couteres, greaves, vambraces all consisting of polished black steel that was worn over a black leather brigandine and red gambeson. The sword itself had just required polishing and for the grip to be re wrapped in new black leather, but Mikken had to make a new scabbard for it.

Jon had just stood there mouth agape as he stared at the armor. He had slowly left Robb's side and crept towards the stand. When he eventually made it his arm had slowly reached out and ran across the gorget. He had just turned and looked at Robb mouth still open wide. Robb was the one to break the silence telling him he thought it was a good way to honor both halves of his family, and being in full plate wouldn't help Jon considering he was used to the flexibility and weight of Northern armor.

His cousin had pulled him into a tight hug thanking him. When they had separated Jon had loosened his sword belt and handed it to Robb before he took the new one off the stand and placed it around his waist. When Jon had drawn the sword he had reverently analyzed the smoky ripples of Valyrian Steel, and Robb had been able to see the exact moment when Jon realized what blade he was actually holding.

“You ready to get this farce started, Stark?” Jon broke in with his brow furrowed.

“This is not a farce, Targaryen. This is your future and the future of the realm.” Robb answered exasperated. “I told you I didn't want to hear anymore of your lip about it. You get to have Annie with you, and I have to woo the Rose of Highgarden in your place. So, I don't want to hear any more whinging from you.”

A smile over took his brother-cousin's face making his eyes crinkle, “All the same, Robb, Let's go.”

Robb nodded his head and they made their way from the battlements with the two massive direwolves leading the way.

The main doors to the great hall were flanked by two guards in Stark livery who both gave a respectful bow as they approached. Robb and Jon both stopped together for a moment to collect themselves. Robb drew in a large breath and exhaled slowly to collect himself before nodding to the guards.

Robb was blasted in the face with heat as they entered the hall. All the lords stood as their entrance was heralded by the two wolves prowling into the room. As they walked down the center of the room feeling all the eyes on them Robb allowed his eyes to wander to the banners hanging from the walls. There was the Bolton flayed man, Whitehill mountain, Hornwood moose, Forrester ironwood and sword, Tallhart spruces, Cerwyn axe, Glover mailed fist, Umber giant, Karstark sunburst, Manderly merman, Mormont bear, and above the dais behind the head table was the Stark direwolf. The houses not currently present would be joining them at Moat Cailin.

As they approached the dais the two middle chairs were left open for Robb and Jon. His mother sat to the right of where Robb would sit followed by Sansa and then Rickon. To the left of Jon's seat was Maester Luwin followed by Arya and Bran. All six direwolves laid in front of the high table heads raised as they looked over the gathering.

When Robb and Jon arrived at their places they pulled their chairs out, but remained standing. “Please, be seated, My Lords.” The hall filled with the scrapping of chairs against flagstone as the lords followed Robb's request.
Robb patiently waited for the clamor to come to a stop before he spoke again, “My Lords, by now you know why I have called you here. Joffrey Baratheon has accused my father of treason, imprisoned him, and cut down the loyal Northmen that were there as his guard. This boy king has demand that I go to King’s Landing to pledge fealty and answer for my father's crimes.” Angry mutters filled the hall and Robb held his arms up to quiet them. “Make no mistake, My Lords, we are going to King's Landing, but it will be to pull that sniveling Lannister spawn off the throne.”

Cheers resounded as tankards clapped against the wooden tables, and once more Robb had to wait till the noise in the hall died down. While he waited he looked down at his father's letter laid on the table before him. When it was quiet once again he unfolded the letter and held it above his head. “Here is a letter my father sent back with Jory Cassel when he escorted my sister's home.” He looked around the hall and every lord's face was upon him with curiosity gleaming in their eyes. He cleared his throat before he read the missive out to the collective of the North leaving the parts about Jon out of it for now.

He had just finished when a lord called out, but Robb couldn't tell from where, “What truth and lies?”

“The lies of the rebellion, My Lord.” Robb answered right back. “Everyone likes to speak about how the rebellion was fought to get my aunt Lyanna back from a perverse prince that abducted and raped her.” Murmurs began traversing the hall, but Robb spoke over them, “How Robert won the crown vanquishing the dragons for his lady love stolen from him, but she had still tragically died.”

“It makes a beautiful song, but we have lived with that lie being thrown around by the south.” Robb paused a moment scanning the faces of the lords once more enjoying the fact that some were even leaning forward curious to see where Robb was taking this. “Everyone conveniently forgets the real reason the rebellion was fought. The North fought that war because the Mad King murdered our grand father and uncle. Your Liege Lord and his heir. Then, he demanded Lord Arryn to send my father's head to King's Landing. My father didn't intend to depose the Targaryen's as a whole. He just wanted justice for his family and to get his sister back. A strong Hand and Princess Elia would have made fine regents until Aegon came of age.”

“We know how history actually played out. Tywin Lannister sat the war out until he knew who was going to come out on top, and then he marched to King's Landing and sacked the city. His troops were allowed to rape and pillage small folk and his dogs raped and murdered Elia Martell, Rhaenys, and Aegon. Did he face justice for his crimes or the crimes of his men? No. He was awarded for the atrocities committed in the capital ten and seven years ago.”

“After what my father, and many of you in this room witnessed, in King's Landing it pushed him to commit, what may or not be, considered treason depending on your point of view.”

As looks of confusion passed on some of the lord's faces Robb pressed on. “Growing up, my father, rarely spoke of his sister. Everything I heard of her came from you, My Lords, or from my own house hold. They all spoke of a wild girl that was half a horse and fierce with a blade. That the wolfsblood ran strong in her. Yet she was kind and compassionate at the same time. My younger sister is constantly compared to her and touted as Lyanna come again.”

“I know for a fact that my sister would die before she let some flowery prince from the south take her. I can already tell you that she would run away to Essos if we even mentioned marriage to someone that would try to take her sword away from her.” Chuckles resounded through the hall, “Now, I ask you my lords how is it that someone can say how fierce my aunt was, and that she was somehow over powered and stolen in the same conversation.”

Robb turned to look at Jon. His steel grey eyes met Robb's Tully blue, and Jon gave him reluctant
nod. “The truth is, My Lords, that my aunt Lyanna wasn't taken. She went with Prince Rhaegar willingly.”

“The details of how they executed their scheme is lost to history. All we know is that Lyanna left with the prince. They wed in the Godswood of Summerhall, and Lyanna hid out at the Tower of Joy in the Red Mountains of Dorne for the duration of the rebellion. When my father found his sister she wasn't dead from fever as he told Robert. She was still alive, but on Death's door. As she lay dying she made my father swear a vow to protect her newly born son. The last living child of Rhaegar Targaryen, and the true heir to the Iron Throne.”

“If that is so, where is this son of Rhaegar now?” Lord Cerwyn called out.

Robb reached out resting his hand on Jon's shoulder, “My father brought his sister's son home to Winterfell. Raised him as his bastard son with what family he had left and to protect him from Robert's wrath. The boy you all knew as Jon Snow, the Bastard of Winterfell, is actually Jon Targaryen, first of his name King of the Andals, Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lord of the Seven kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm.”

“My Lord, you have to see this is a rather convenient claim.” Roose Bolton spoke in the calm whispered tone he was known for. “Is there any proof to back up this claim?”

Robb turned his attention to Maester Luwin who spoke up then, “My Lords, Lord Stark had a hidden chamber built into the crypts below the castle.” The maester bent down retrieving the crate between his feet. He stood placing it on the table and held up the canister on top. “In there he hid these documents that are the records of both Lyanna's marriage and the birth record for the young prince before you now.”

“Documents can be forged, Maester.” Bolton fired off immediately.

“What kind of proof would be sufficient, Lord Bolton?” Jon responded before Robb was able to. “Would living proof be good enough for you?”

“Living proof?” Bolton asked apprehensively.

Robb saw a small smirk take Jon's face as a muffled roar rang through the hall. All the lords and ladies jumped slightly, dust snowed down from the timbers, and the glass in the windows rattled. It was followed by a thump that vibrated the ground under Robb's feet.

“WHAT IN GODS WAS THAT?!” the Greatjon bellowed.

“That, My Lords, was Jon's dragon.” Robb answered with a smug tone.

The massive lord sprang to his feet and he tore across the great hall to the door. When he pulled both of them another unhindered roar rang through the hall. Many of the lords covered their ears from deafening sound as it echoed through the hall. The Greatjon stumbled back and his ass hit the flagstones with a thump as a large frost blue snout poked its way through the doors. Lyax's lips were pulled back exposing her massive black teeth as a hiss escaped her. The rest of the lords leapt from their chairs backing away from the dragon, and crowded towards the dais until the great she-dragon's snout retreated from the room.

The entire hall was as quiet as the crypts below their feet until the Greatjon let out a massive laugh that almost rattled the timbers as much as Lyax did, “A BLOODY DRAGON?!” The huge lord's eyes were blown wide and a huge smile took his face as he got to his feet and raised his great sword into the air, “Old Tywin is gonna get himself a right ole rodgering!!”
The hall filled with the drawing of swords as the blades went up and the lords followed the Greatjon in cheering. Robb allowed the tension to leave his body relieved that it hadn't been as hard of an ordeal as he first thought. Mostly thanks to Lyax's perfectly timed arrival.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!!

We have a new POV next and it is one some of you have been looking forward to.

Next: BARRISTAN I
The old knight knew he shouldn't have still been skulking about King's Landing. He should have gone to Essos to find Rhaegar's exiled sister, Daenerys, but he couldn't go on a wild goose chase, that could take him all over Essos, without first confirming his suspicions. If there was a chance that a son of Prince Rhaegar still lived in Westeros, Ser Barristan, would go to him and serve who should be the rightful king. There was one man left in King's Landing that he could easily get that information from. Unfortunately, Levi was being rather difficult to locate in the capital. With the price on his head for insulting that boy king when he was dismissed from the Kingsguard meant he couldn't risk trying to infiltrate the Black Cells to get the information straight from Lord Stark. Who would have ever thought that Lord Stark would hide such a big secret in plain sight and commit that level of treason.

His breath had been stolen when he first say the young man in the courtyard of Winterfell all those moons ago. Barristan had initial thought his mind was playing tricks on him, and his advanced age was finally starting to catch up to him. When the boy had caught him staring and met his eyes he had seen Rhaegar and Rhaella looking back at him behind Stark grey eyes. He hadn't wanted to alarm the boy, so after that he kept his observations a lot more subdued.

He had watched the boy whenever he could, and at the welcoming feast Barristan felt like he had been stabbed in the heart when he saw him smile. When the honey haired girl approached him in her grey gown the boy's face had lit up, and it reminded him so much of his old charge and friend.

Barristan was still apprehensive in his suspicions till he had seen the lad in the training yard. He had watched him spar against his brother and the Greyjoy ward. The Northern style flowed through his fighting, but where the Stark heir and ward tried to hack more using brute strength the boy had grace and it seemed like every step and swing were part of a dance played to music only he could
After the yard there was no doubt left in Ser Barristan. The boy had to be a Targaryen hiding behind the identity of a bastard. Which meant that he had to be the child of Lyanna Stark, and was being hidden away from Robert's wrath. Being able to hide behind the Stark coloring definitely had to help, and the direwolves that followed the Stark children around would have only added to the ruse.

He had all the pieces and figured the puzzle out himself, but at this point he wanted it confirmed. Ser Barristan had decided on the ride back to King's Landing to see if he could potentially get Lord Stark to open up to him, but the the lord seemed so guarded. Barristan had decided that if that was how the Warden of the North wanted to be he would just befriend the man. That way if the need ever came along he could be counted on to assist Rhaegar's boy.

Everything had gone to hell after Robert died. Ser Barristan had been shocked that Lord Stark tried to wrench the throne away from Cersei so deliberately, but knowing Lord Stark it was for a very good reason. He doubted it was for Rhaegar's boy, but they didn't have time to figure it out before all Seven Hells broke loose. Ser Barristan hadn't known what to do. He didn't want to attack Lord Stark or his men, and he definitely didn't support Cersei after she had ripped up King Robert's last orders. He had taken it upon himself to led Cersei and Joffrey away from the fighting. It was the best way to fulfill his Kingsguard vows with honor, and not bloody his blade.

It had ultimately been for naught when he had been released from his position. They had cited that he was too old to fulfill his vows since King Robert had died under his watch. He was relieved he wouldn't have to serve another terrible king, but furious they were replacing him as Lord Commander with by a man whom had killed the king he had been sworn to protect.

The boy king had taken his insults to heart after he had departed the throne room. Sending Gold Cloaks to try and arrest him, so he could face the King's Justice. Those men had forgotten that even though he had thrown his sword at Joffrey he still possessed his dagger. He had dealt with the two guards pursuing him easily enough.

When he had gotten back to the White Sword Tower he had quickly collected his things. He would have like to shed his Kingsguard armor, but with the lack of time he had there was no other choice but to flee in what he was wearing. He threw some clothes and the coin he had stored away into a bag. Then he attached the scabbard of his personal sword to his belt. It was the sword he had used to slay Maelys the Mounstrous in the Stepstones. It was blue castle forged steel, with a supple black leather grip, and the crossguard was wrought to resemble wheat stalks. Once his things were gathered he had made haste from the tower.

He had taken his horse from the stable and raced out of the Red Keep opening a Red Cloaks throat that had tried to stop him. It had been the first blood his personal sword had tasted in almost forty years. He had tore through the streets of King's Landing and ran down a Gold Cloak as he made his way out the Gate of the Gods. He had gotten on the Kingsroad and rode till his horse was exhausted.

He had rode to Rosby before deciding that it would be better to try and find Levi in King's Landing than showing up unannounced at Winterfell. He stopped in the woods just outside of the village and shed his Kingsguard armor. In the village he had bought a new set of clothing, a few saddle bags to store his armor and possessions in, and some food to hold him over. After that he roughed it in the woods for a few days letting his whiskers grow out and not bathing he made his way back to King's Landing.

His lack of hygiene had paid off exactly as he planned. The Gold Cloaks at the Dragon's Gate
barely looked him over. They just collected their tax of a silver stag and rushed him through wanting away from the old man's stench.

In the city he got a room at a decent inn just off of Fish Monger's Square. He didn't feel like slumming it in Flea Bottom, and a too high class inn came with the risk of being identified by a noble. From there he started asking around for information on Levi.

In better part of two moons time he had come up with nothing on the man. It had become even harder a fortnight ago when the Mountain had arrived in King's Landing. Word spread through the city that the Mountain was hunting for the elusive refugee as well. At this point Ser Barristan had been considering giving up and heading to Essos. What kept him on the hunt had been the reports of Gold Cloaks and Red Cloaks going missing mysteriously. Barristan knew that Levi had to be involved some how. Probably trying to gain access to the Black Cells himself.

The bells tolling at the Great Sept of Baelor suddenly caught his attention. It seemed as if everyone immediately stopped what they were doing and started heading towards the sept. Ser Barristan allowed himself to be swept up in the wave of people heading towards Visenya's Hill.

When the alley opened onto the plaza Ser Barristan took stock of what was before him. Every person that resided on Vesenya's Hill had to have been in attendance. The plaza was stuffed so full with people that everyone was forced to stand shoulder to shoulder. Children pushed there way through the crowd weaving amongst the adults' legs as they tried to get closer to the stairway that led to the sept.

The sun shone blindingly off the gold domes of the seven towers and the white stone that made up the Great Sept's walls. Barristan tried to shade his eyes with his hands, but was still forced to squint from the reflected sunlight. He turned his attention from the sept to the crowd gathered before it.

His eyes quickly roamed from face to face through the crowd. Years of being a Kingsguard allowing him to take faces in quickly. A skill he used to use to search out unseen threats against the king, but now used for searching out a different quarry.

As he scanned he saw old men, young men, boys on the cusp of manhood, women, girls, rich, poor, and then his eyes froze on there own. There at the base of the statue of Baelor the Blessed stood the man he had been looking for. He had a hood pulled up over his head, but some of the man's raven hair blew in the breeze from under it. Barristan most likely would've missed him if he hadn't been standing on the base of the statue. His smaller stature required him to be up higher so he could see over the crowd.

Barristan started making his way through the crowd towards the man he had been seeking. It seemed every few steps he was bumped another direction as he tried mitigating the press of people. Some tried to let him pass, but many had angry mutterings and obscenities for the old knight, and he knew he would have bruises on his sides from the accidental stray elbows that caught him as he traversed the crowd.

Barristan made his way so he approached the shorter man from behind. As he got to the statue he reached up with his hand to touch Levi's shoulder. He paused before making contact remembering the man's reflexes and the fact that he was being hunted by the boy king and Cersei. He decided to go with a different approach. Instead just stepping up next to Levi's shoulder while not looking at him. “Levi.” He spoke his greeting low enough, so the other man would be the only one to hear him.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Levi turn enough to be able to see him from under his hood. “Ser Barristan,” he greeted back just as low, “If you have come to get me for the bastard or Cersei
it won't end well for you.”


The other man just nodded slightly accepting his answer, “Then what can I do for you?”

Barristan took a moment to formulate his response before speaking. “I was planning on traveling to Essos to serve the Targaryen girl in exile, but before I left there were some answers I wanted to find.”

The dark haired man raised an inquisitive eyebrow at him, “What kind of answers?”

Barristan turned his head to meet Levi's eyes, “The kind involving the boy who is supposed to be Lord Stark's bastard, but I suspect actually isn't.”

Right as Levi opened his mouth to respond cheers broke out amongst the crowd. When the two men turned towards the stairs guards were starting to take positions. The shade from the statue allowed Barristan to see without squinting as much, though, the pale stairs remained almost painfully bright. He saw the the knights that used to be his subordinates proceed into position along the landing.

In his view the Kingsguard hadn't been a true brotherhood since Robert became king. Instead of truly worthy knights that had served during the Targaryen dynasty he had been surrounded by sycophantic knights that were basically Cersei's lackeys. The only one that was worth the weight of his armor was Arys Oakheart, but just barely. Even in his old age Barristan knew he could easily handle the remaining members of the Kingsguard. He chuckled to himself remembering what he told them in the throne room before storming out.

Levi looked back over at him probably to see what he found humorous, but Barristan just shook his head as if to say it was nothing. Then, the old knight saw something that made his blood boil. The hound came out on the landing with a white cloak adorning his dark battered armor. Cersei had completely lost her mind allowing a Clegane to sully the White Cloak. It was an insult to everything Barristan knew about the Kingsguard.

Joffrey followed Clegane to a roar of cheers from the crowd. The boy king was dressed in a cloth of gold doublet with black filigree over a crimson tunic. On his head sat a thin golden crown with antlers and the a large citrine stone at the center. He couldn't help but scoff at the sword belt the boy wore around his waist. Barristan knew the boy had never earned that right back while his father was still alive. The boy king waved as he made his way to his position.

Cersie came after Joffrey. She was dressed in a crimson gown with gold trimming. Her dagged sleeves so long they brushed the limestone tiles. Her hair was piled on her head, and her neck was encircled by rubies. She had an uninterested look upon her face like she would rather be anywhere else in the world. She didn't even bother acknowledging the small folk before her.

The queen mother was followed out by the Small Council. Petyr Baelish, Lord Varys, and Grand Maester Pycelle all taken up spots a step below Joffrey and Cersei. It was a few moments later when the great double doors of the sept opened and the High Septon stepped out into the sunlight. He was dressed in long flowing white robes trimmed in gold. On his head sat a giant crystal crown that shot rainbows in all directions with every step the old septon took, and he carried a long crystal topped scepter that was being used more as a walking stick.

A minute later a door opened on a building at the edge of the plaza to Barristan's right. Gold Cloaks began marching out in a pair of columns. Gold helmets and plate of gold shining as they marched
into the sun's rays. As they pressed through the crowd the front two continuously split off every few steps to each side keeping the path open. Spears raised tip to butt acting as a barricade to keep the small folk held back.

Once the path had been carved to the makeshift podium on the stairs three more Gold Cloaks emerged from the building with a prisoner held between the back two followed by a cacophony of jeers and boos from the crowd in the plaza. The lead man had a black cloak trailing from his shoulders signaling that he was the new Lord Commander of the Gold Cloaks. His predecessor, Janos Slynt, had his head removed from the man at Barristan's left, and must have been appointed after his own dismissal. The other two men were in the regular garb of the city watch. The prisoner caught his attention once he could get a better look at him. His hair was as greasy and unkempt as his beard. His head was hung not looking around, but the leather brigadine gave away whom the prisoner was. The north was the only kingdom left that used that style of leather armor. Even with his head down Ser Barristan could see the slight winces the Lord of Winterfell made with each step.

Barristan kept his eyes locked on Lord Stark's procession as he was hauled along the path. When he could see Levi again the man just wore his normal neutral yet determined look on his face. In all the moons that Ser Barristan had known the refugee captain he had never actually seen his face truly show emotion. The only indications of his mood would be movements of his brows while the rest of his face would retain the same stoney expression with his lips in a straight line.

He had even kept the same expression during the fight in the throne room. Ser Barristan didn't stay for the full fight. Some may have called it craven, but Ser Barristan was able to save face by fulfilling his duties as a Kingsguard no matter how unworthy of that honor Joffrey was. Those few moments he had seen of the fight had been more than enough. It had been a great shock to realize that Levi had merely humored him in their times sparring. Levi moved faster than any man had a right to. It took mere seconds of the fight breaking out before Levi had four corpses around him. Even Ser Arthur would never stand a chance against a foe of Levi's caliber. The old knight sent out a silent prayer to the Gods thanking them that they were on the same side now.

When he looked back to the landing of the stairs Lord Stark had made it to the top. The man was wobbly on his feet, but once they were sure he was standing on his own the two Gold Cloaks stepped away. The crowd fell silent as the High Septon stepped forward and raised his scepter. “The life of man is short, but in that time we face many temptations that can lead us to sin.” As he spoke the scepter waived through the air spraying rainbows amongst the gathered crowd. “If we are humble enough to see the error of our ways, accept what we have done, seek redemption, and accept our recompense all can be forgiven in the light of the Seven.” He waved his hand towards Lord Stark, “One such man comes before you today to speak of his sins and to repent.”

Lord Stark stepped forward then. Even from the distance Ser Barristan could tell that the lord was feverish. His skin was pale and his cheeks were gaunt. The right leg of his breeches had a dark black stain that he assumed was dried blood. They probably hadn't given his health the highest priority and whatever wound he had suffered was most likely infected. Just by looking at him Ser Barristan knew that Lord Stark was on borrowed time. He seemed to scan the crowd before him before speaking, “I am Eddard Stark, Lord of Winterfell, and Hand of the King. I come before you to confess my crimes.”

“I committed treason and betrayed the trust of the king and my friend Robert Barath-” He was cut off as a rock flew from the mass of people and glanced across the left side of his forehead. Lord Stark stumbled back but the Hound managed to catch him and guided him back to his feet.

The crowd erupted into boos and jeers as spoiled produce was hurled at the Lord of Winterfell.
Joffrey had a smile on his face as he enjoyed the spectacle before him, and Cersei had a slight smirk adorning her pretty face.

When Lord Stark gathered himself again he looked up right into Ser Barristans eyes. When the lord saw him and Levi standing together it seemed to strengthen his resolve. “I committed treason by hiding the last son of Rhaegar Targaryen in Winterfell.”

The crowd was immediately shocked to silence. “After the murder of Prince Aegon and Princess Rhaenys I hide Prince Rhaegar's last trueborn son from the wrath of Tywin Lannister and Robert Baratheon.” Murmurs started rippling through the audience. Ser Barristan knew that though the people of King's Landing feared the Mad King they were in love with their Silver Prince. “The young man know as Jon Snow, the Bastard of Winterfell, is actually Jon Targaryen, son of Rhaegar and Lyanna Stark, first of his-”

“LIAR!” Joffrey shouted. The apparent shock had worn off the false king's face and had been replace with petulant rage. “I AM THE RIGHTFUL KING! Ser Ilyn kill this traitor!” Ser Barristan couldn't believe his eyes when the boy actually stomped his foot like a child in the midst of a tantrum.

“People of King's Landing do not let the Lions drag you down. Joffrey is base born of the queen's infidelities, and the rightful king is coming with the full might of the Nor-.” Lord Stark's and Barristan's eyes both went wide when a foot and a half of red coated blade sprang from his chest. When it was removed Lord Stark's eyes immediately closed and he collapsed to the ground revealing Ser Ilyn's pox scarred face.

The crowds reaction was immediate. Rocks and rotten produce started raining the platform. The boy king squealed like a suckling pig when a rock impacted the side of his face. At this point Joffrey said the worst possible thing he could at that moment, “Kill them! Kill them all!” he raged as blood poured down the side of his face. The Gold Cloaks brought their spears to the ready and began slaughtering the smallfolk. Screams of pain and rage covered the plaza as the violence grew into an inferno.

When he saw Levi go to move towards the podium he quickly seized the man's arm, “Levi, stop!” The other man just spun to face him without fighting his grip. “There is nothing we can do for Lord Stark. We need to get out of the city and join the king.”

Levi looked like he was debating with himself how to respond before he came to his unspoken conclusion. “Met me at the Silver Queen Inn at sundown.”

Barristan nodded in answer and Levi surprisingly drew a regular longsword and disappeared into the crowd. Barristan followed his new comrade's example drawing his sword while he had the available space. He held it down along his leg to remain inconspicuous as he traversed the riot in full pitch around him.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading

Next: Jon IV ( this chapter just got added to the outline, so it needs to be written still. I'm going to hussle to have it ready for you all next Tues. but it may be a day late. So, apologies in advance)
Jon traversed his way back to his tent from the campfire. A plate in each of his hands as Ghost trailed a few steps behind. He glanced over and sighed as he took in the bridge and massive twin castles that rose above the fog rolling off the Green Fork.

Most of the lords had been adamant about not stopping at the Twins, but they were essential for the plan that Robb had come up with. Right before they had marched south they had received word that Tywin Lannister had invaded the Riverlands from the west. Edmure Tully had tried to repel the invasion, but his forces had been routed near the Golden tooth and gotten himself captured. Tywin had left Riverun under siege and moved the rest of his forces to the east to block their approach south on the Kingsroad.

Even aunt Cat had tried to persuade them to avoid Lord Walder at all costs if possible. Eren had even jumped into the debate saying that if they needed a bridge so bad Annie and himself could just create one for them. However, Robb had argued back that not only did they need to cross, but the Freys' men would be a great boost to their ranks. He had then added angrily that it shouldn't even be a discussion considering the Freys were supposed to be sworn bannermen to the Tullys.

Jon had scoffed at the same time as many of the other lords around the table. Every man there knew how Lord Walder Frey had earned the moniker of 'The Late'. Greatjon had added then that as long as you never expected anything from Walder Frey you'd never be disappointed.

Jon had surprised them all when he had agreed with Robb's idea. Then he had doubled down with how he was altering it. Robb would need to bolster their ranks with the Freys due to the number they were going to lose to Jon's attack. Instead of sending two thousand men down the Kingsroad as a distraction for the Lannister forces near the trident he was now sending six thousand led by himself with Annie. That would leave Robb with six thousand five hundred, the Frey troops, and whomever else they could scrounge from Seaguard and farther south en route to Riverrun.
The lords had argued against the change of plans till Jon had told them that his forces would consist of the Umber, Bolton, Forrester troops, Reiner, and Annie. The lords had somewhat cooled down after, and both the Greatjon and Lord Gregor had been honored, but Jon had seen something flash in Roose Bolton's eyes. He hadn't sensed anything malicious through his connection with Ghost, so he had just let it slide.

They had arrived outside the Twins yesterday, and set up their camp a mile away. He had immediately sent Theon and Sasha to shoot down any ravens that tried to be sent from the castle. Their marksmanship rivalry would make sure that nothing got by them. So far the only bird that had left the Twins had carried a birthday message for one of Lord Walder’s granddaughters.

In the mean time the rest of the camp was just waiting for the Freys to send someone out to treat with them. Aunt Cat had told them to expect the toll for crossing would be high, and then some of the lords had expressed the desire to just storm the castle and be done with it if Lord Walder was going to be unreasonable. Jon had immediately shut that down. They didn't have the troops to commit to such an action, and they needed every man for fighting the Lannisters.

Jon had shocked the lords again when he said that he and Lady Catelyn would be the ones to enter the Twins to negotiate. Robb had opposed that idea vehemently along with the Greatjon. Jon had said that if he was going to be king he wasn't going to hide behind others for his negotiations. Then he added that this was one of the main reasons why aunt Cat had come with them in the first place instead of staying in Winterfell with the younger Starks. Being the daughter of Lord Tully her knowledge and familiarity with the River lords would be invaluable.

When he approached his tent the only thing that gave away his importance was Laurence Snow standing guard by the flaps. Jon had insisted on their tent being no bigger than any of the other lord's, so if men managed to infiltrate their camp he didn't wanted his location given away by some huge pavilion. Lord Hornwood's son pulled the flap open for him when he was a few steps away.

Jon paused in the threshold, “Secure the flap open Laurence, and go break your fast.”

“Are you sure, Your Grace? Lord Harrion should be along soon to relieve me.”

Jon nodded in response, “I've got Ghost here. He'll take care of anyone foolish enough to try anything.”

Laurence gave a respectful bow before departing towards the campfires to secure his own meal. Thankfully, the lords had been smart enough not to question him when he had requested Lord Hornwood's bastard as part of his guard considering how Jon had grown up under the guise of being a bastard himself. Lord Hornwood had expressed his thanks, and Galbart Glover had beamed with pride since he had fostered Laurence since he was a young boy. Jon had stood and watched till his guard disappeared between the tents before retreating into his own.

The morning sunshine provided ample light for Jon to traverse their tent. There really wasn't much to worry about anyway. The front half of the tent just had a table with four chairs around it for them to take their meals. Off to the side was a table adorned with a pitcher of ale, a decanter of wine, and goblets. In the corner were two armor stands. Jon's plate and helmet hung on it as he was currently in just his gambeson, brigadine, and gorget. He would don the rest of his armor before they met with the Freys. The other stand had Annie's brigadine, O.D.M. gear, her regular sword belt, and her lightweight green Survey Corps cloak hanging over it. The tent was split with a privacy screen which behind was their pallet bed with their trunks at its foot.

He gently set the plates on the table before heading behind the screen. Annie was still sound asleep. Since he had known her she never was the earliest of risers. A lot of the times Jon, Robb,
and Theon would have already broke their fast and trained in the yard some time before a lot of the Scouts even made their appearance. Her arm was over the top of the furs resting on her side as the other was stuffed up under her pillow. The cover was pulled up into her armpit exposing her bare shoulder. Jon's eyes raked across the exposed skin blotched with red love bites he had left the night before. He followed the line of her collar bone, and up her slim neck. Her pink lips were slightly parted as she breathed. Her bangs fell over her right eye the tips just far enough away not to fall into her mouth. The rest of her hair went every where around her head in a golden mess.

His wife. That was something he had never dared to imagine a few years back when he was just the Bastard of Winterfell. Even when he didn't have an idea what his future would hold he still had accepted that marriage wouldn't be part of it. Who would've wanted to voluntarily take the name Snow. Not only that, but if he were to have children the only thing worse than being a Snow was being a Snow's Snow. His child's life would've have been much worse than his own had been.

Then Annie and her squad had shown up. He had found something in Annie he never thought he would, understanding. Despite how much his father had intervened and helped, Annie, had still be held at arms length by the rest of them. Reiner and Bertholt had tried, but apparently Annie had done too much to earn the group's forgiveness easily or quickly. Jon had just kept running into her when he was trying to find his own solitude, so eventually they had just stuck together.

Jon had been happy to find someone his own that knew how it felt to be an outsider. Arya always tried to understand considering she had been an somewhat of an outsider herself. Constantly rebelling against her mother wanting her to be a perfect lady. It made their relationship closer than any of his other sibling-cousins. However, to have someone your own age helped matters a lot. He had worried that Arya would get jealous of Annie, but the other girls of the squad had become Arya's idols. They were warrior women that were also lady like when needed. He knew at first aunt Cat had worried about their influence, but they were exactly what his little sister needed. Arya had always thought that it was black and white. She was either a perfect lady or a warrior woman like the Mormonts of Bear Island. Mikasa, Historia, Sasha, and Annie had all shown her it was possible to be both, and Jon couldn't have been more grateful.

Then, after Armin had cracked the secret of his birth and with Lyax hatching Jon and Annie had become inseparable. She had helped him come to terms with everything that had happened, and helped him raise Lyax from the moment she burst out of her shell. She had quickly became his closest friend after Robb and Theon's competitiveness got caught up in Eren and Jean's. The four had become a tight group constantly trying to outdo each other which left Jon more time in Annie's company.

He had initially never intended for it to get where they were now. He was just happy being her friend, but he also saw the way Bertholt looked at her. He didn't want to get between them at all if something were to happen. Then, the longer they spent with each other the more he felt himself grow attached to the young woman.

He couldn't pinpoint the exact moment his feelings for her had changed. He realized at one point that when Bertholt would look at her longingly that he would feel jealously rear its head. Then when Theon would fling his flirty bawdy jokes at her his fists would clench in anger. All he knew was that he wanted her, but he didn't know how to go about expressing himself. Words had never been his strong suit. Robb was always the one that girls seemed to come naturally to. Jon for some reason would become a solemn quirky mess and always ended up giving off an uninterested aura.

Thankfully, Annie had felt the same way he did, so she ended up taking the pressure off him. It had been the night of her name day when he had gifted her a sword. After dinner they had walked in the Godswood together and she ended up kissing him under the weirwood.
She hadn't given the sword a name till after the fight with the wildlings in the Wolfswood. Jon chuckled to himself as he remembered that conversation. They were sitting under the weirwood cleaning their blades when she had told him she named the blade *New Moon*. When he had asked what the name meant she had just looked at him with a small smirk before answering, “I may have given my sword a sentimental name, but that doesn't mean I'm sentimental enough to explain it.” Then she had sheathed the sword kissed him on the forehead and walked off leaving him confused.

He had asked for her hand under the weirwood in the same manner that their true relationship started. He had the air knocked out of him when she had initially said no. When he asked why she had finally broke down and explained something called the Curse of Ymir. Supposedly, when someone had the power of the titans they would die ten and three years later. She had told him that she had just over five years left of her time. Jon had felt the breath stolen from him for a moment as he processed what she had just told him. Jon had tried deflating her argument by asking how she knew it was true. Annie had just looked at him with her mouth opening and closing before finally asking him what he meant. He explained that it would make sense that the people that had pretty much enslaved hers would lie about something like that. The threat of limited time and looming death would help keep them more in line. If the person with that power knew they had all their life to learn and utilize the skills rebellion would almost surely follow. It was a way for the Marlayans to keep their charges in check, but still use them to their full potential.

Annie had stayed silent longer after that, but finally responded that there was still no way to be sure. Jon had just answered back that if it did happen he would still rather have her for five years than not at all. That they should enjoy everyday they have together to the fullest and if the worst was to happen at least there wouldn't be any regrets. She had stood there looking into his eyes for what had felt like an eternity before she gave in and nodded her head in agreement. Jon had immediately scooped her up into his arms before sealing their lips in a heated kiss.

The wedding had happened two days after the lords of the north had declared their support to Jon. The Godswood had been crammed with lords and their heirs. Jon had waited at the foot of the weirwood with Robb who had officiated. Jon had been struck dumb when she had emerged into the torch light escorted by Reiner. Her hair had been pulled up into a braided bun, kohl lined her eyes making the blue-grey pop, and her lips were stained a dark red almost the color of blood. The bodice of the dress hugged her perfectly before the dress fell loosely away at the waist. A collar of white fur sat on her shoulders under her green and white maiden's cloak.

The rest of the night had passed in a blur for him. He had wanted to take in everything, but all his attention had been locked on his new bride. They had ate, danced, and drank the night away before Robb suggested that they sneak off to consummate their nuptials. He said it wasn't a good idea for the lords to be injured right before they marched. When Jon said he definitely didn't want anyone touching his wife, Robb, had just laughed and said he wasn't referring to him.

Since that night Jon could count on one hand the number of nights they hadn't bedded each other. They had both been maids before their wedding, but now they both knew what all the fuss was about.

A mischievous smile broke across his face as he looked down at Ghost. He motioned with his head towards the bed. The wolf looked at him tilting his head before Jon nodded the direction again. The direwolf padded to the side of the bed stopping where Annie's head rested a few inches from the edge. The pony sized wolf bent down before running his tongue along her cheek.

Her response was almost immediate as she swung a lazy arm completely missing the wolf and a mumbled sleepy, “Ghost, go away,” passed her lips.
The wolf looked up at him for more direction and Jon suppressed a chuckle as he just nodded his head again. This time Ghost went on the attack. He quickly started licking her face and nose repeatedly. It only took a few times before Annie's hand shot out and grip Ghost's muzzle. She palmed his face away from her before speaking, “NGGH! Your breath smells like you ate the ass end of a deer!”

The wolf just sat on his haunches and looked up at Jon proudly with his tongue lolling out the side. He wasn't sure if it was for the success of waking Annie or that he did in fact eat the arse end of a deer.

Jon's attention was pulled back to Annie as she flung the covers off her nude body. She climbed out of bed without a hint of modesty, and Jon's eyes were immediately drawn to her rose capped breasts. He couldn't help but stare at her perfect body as she approached him. Then he noticed her face was pulled into scowl, “You put him up to that, Dick.”

Jon couldn't help the laugh that bubbled up. He pulled her into a quick hug that she resisted a little before her head settled under his chin and her arms wrapped lazily around him. He bent his head down to kiss her on the temple that Ghost hadn't slobbered on. “I got us breakfast already. Get dressed and join me.”

Annie huffed as she left his embrace heading towards the wash basin. Jon took a minute to admire her perfect arse as she wet a cloth to wash before he shook himself out of his perversions and retreated to the table.

He sat munching on bacon with Ghost as he listened to Annie rummaging around their tent. When she emerged she slumped into the chair next to him to begin eating. Jon could watch her demeanor physically change as food began to fill her belly. After a few minutes of eating in silence Annie spoke, “So, have we heard anything from the castle?”

Jon finished chewing his bite of bacon before answering, “Not yet, but we are hoping we hear something soon.” His wife just nodded as she took a sip of the watered wine he had set out for her.

“You still planning your foolish idea of going in there with only Lady Catelyn.”

Jon nodded again, “Yes, but Lyax will be close. She'll most likely persuade the talks more than either of us.”

Annie smiled slightly at that before adding, “I still don't like it.”

Jon let out a small huff before speaking, “I know, but I want to test the man at the same time.”

“Pretty ballsy test, basically leaving yourself at his mercy.”

Jon just shrugged his shoulders in response. The conversation was broken at that point by HaraldKarstark sticking his head through the open canvas, “Your Graces, riders have emerged from the Twins.”

Jon looked over at Annie, “Shall we?” His wife nodded back as she shoved the last bite of bread into her mouth. They both threw the remainder of their bacon on the floor where Ghost immediately gobbled it down. Jon retrieved Dark Sister from where he had leaned it against the table. Then chugged down the remainder of his ale as Annie was strapping New Moon around her waist and throwing her cloak over her shoulders. She helped him secure the plate he wore, and they departed the tent to meet with the Frey representatives.
The Twins were completely putrid. Two guards in Frey livery escorted himself and Lady Catelyn threw the dark stone halls of the eastern castle. Torches were lit on the walls almost double the distance they normally were at Winterfell. Giving the hallways an eerie feel to them. On top of the poor reputation of the Freys and the claustrophobic feel of the darkness there was the smell. The whole place reeked of mildew and that something had spoiled on top of that. He wouldn't be surprised if the next corner they took there was a spilled jug of milk that everyone had just walked by leaving the mess to rot. Jon was happy he had left Ghost with Annie at this point. If he was suffering his wolf would have been dying from the stench. He looked at his aunt Catelyn from the corner of his eye observing her for a moment. She kept her face blank, but he could still see her nose scrunch occasionally due to the foul smells of the castle.

They were eventually lead to a pair of double doors that Jon assumed led to the great hall. The doors looked to be made out of oak and both were carved to resemble the two castles that made up the Twins. Jon and his aunt waited without as a guard entered to inform Lord Walder of their arrival.

Jon blew out a long breath as he mentally prepared himself for what he was about to do. A part of him hoped that it could be as reasonable as dealing with the Northern Lords, but he knew he was in the south now. They did things different here. From what Jon had heard on the trek down here the southrons like to use flowery words and courtesy. You had to shift through their statements for what they were truly saying, and for someone raised amongst the blunt and direct nature of the north it could get frustrating quickly.

He was broke from his minor bout of brooding by a hand on his forearm. He looked up into the face of his aunt whom had a small reassuring smile on her face.

That was another thing Jon was trying to get used to lately. Finally having a loving mother figure. His aunt seemed to be going out of her way to repent for how she acted to him when he was younger, and make up for lost time. After the truth had been revealed they had grown an understanding between them that helped them bridge their distance. They had managed to put their past behind them and move forward. It all changed once again after the truth was put before the Northern Lords. She was no longer forced to withhold herself in public. At first a small part of Jon wanted to hold on to some resentment, but to finally experience what Robb and the rest did all their lives completely overwhelmed those feelings.

Jon smiled back in response. She rub his arm in a reassuring manner before her hand dropped back to her side. They stood there for another minute before the guard reappeared holding the door open for them. Jon signaled with his hand for his aunt to enter first, and he fell into step behind her.

The first thing he noticed about the hall was the smell. When Jon didn't think it could get any worse the great room added the scent of body odor on top of the other offensive smells. The humidity of the room added to the discomfort, and felt as if it was sticking to you. He would be lucky if Annie let him touch her for the next sennight.

As he took in the room he saw the cause of the offensive odors permeating the room. Two large galleries sat either side of the lord's chair, and were jam packed of people. Jon's eyebrows reflexively shot up as he took in the Lord Frey's brood. He had always thought growing up that the Starks were a relatively large family, but Walder Frey had put his father to shame.

Like the doors to the hall the 'throne' of the Twins was carved to replicate the twin castles. The
Lord of the Crossing sat slouched in his chair. He was a balding wrinkly old codger with a pinched face that reminded Jon of a ferret. Jon had to repress a chuckle when it finally dawned on him why everyone always referred to the Freys as stoats.

Standing next to Lord Frey was a homely young woman that had to have been within a nameday or two of Jon. Once again Jon had to suppress his reactions when he realized that the lecherous old man was groping the girls backside as he just stared down his long nose at them. Only after the silence had gotten to the point to being uncomfortable did the old man finally speak, “What do you want?”

Jon immediately gritted his teeth, but as he was getting ready to respond his aunt spoke first. “It is an honor to see you again after so many years, My Lord.”

“Heh, an honor you say. Yet, I’m talking to you as your son hides in his army?” The man shot back snidely. Jon clenched his fists, and was once again going to retort. However, his sons beat him to it. Lord Frey and his sons started bickering back and forth like children fighting over a sweet.

In his peripheral he could see his aunt's hand opening and closing as she flexed her fingers. It was a habit she picked up after the attack in Bran's room. It started as an exercise to make sure her fingers wouldn't heal stiff, but had changed to a nervous habit. She obviously was feeling about same as he was with all of this.

Lord Frey finally finished berating his sons and turned his attention back to Lady Catelyn, and waved her forward. When she approached she offered up her hand. The old man leaned forward leaving what sounded like an overly slobbered kiss on her knuckles. His aunt managed to keep a straight face and resisted the urge to wipe her hand off. “So, why have you come before me?”

“We have come to ask you to open your gates and allow us to pass.” Aunt Cat answered.

The old lord raised a brow, “And why should I do that?”

“If you could make it to your battlements you would see we have an army of over twelve thousand men, and we need to liberate Riverrun.” Catelyn answered once again her hand flexing the whole time.

“Heh! Might as well be twelve thousand corpses when Lord Tywin gets done with them.”

Jon had finally had enough at this point and cut off whatever his aunt was about to say, “Gets done with all of us you mean.”

The old lord's attention finally turned to him. “And who would you be, boy? And what are you doing wearing that dragon on your armor?”

“I'm the one leading the army at your gate.” Jon shot back. “My name is Prince Jon Targaryen, son of Rhaegar Targaryen and Lyanna Stark. I allowed my aunt to take the lead to get the measure of you, Lord Frey. Unfortunately, your reputation precedes you.”

The lord sat back from the blatant insult Jon threw at him. When he opened his mouth to respond Jon cut him off. “So, what do you want to allow us to cross?” Jon had no true intention of giving this cowardly lord anything. He was just curious to see how ambitious the man truly was.

The old man didn't disappoint. Jon stood there stunned as the man starting demanding betrothals not only from himself, but Robb and one of the girls as well. He said the dowry could be a keep for his son and which ever Stark girl was picked to marry. Then he demanded for two of his sons to be their squires with knighthoods at the end of the war, and finally for two of his younger grandsons
to be fostered at Winterfell. Jon had held his reactions back, but inside he was fuming with anger. At one point he glanced over at his aunt. Her face was pulled into a blank mask showing her displeasure. He knew the Freys wouldn't recognize it, but Jon had been on the receiving end of that look enough growing up to know the lady was not pleased in the slightest.

Jon waited a few moments after the man had finally stopped speaking to see if he would continue. When he was sure the Lord of the Crossing was done he spoke trying with all his might to keep his voice even, “Those are some steep demands for an oath breaker.”

“Oathbreaker, you say, boy?!” The old lord's face went red.

“Aye,” He answered back, “You are sworn to the Tully's of Riverrun, and this is the second time you haven't held to your sworn oaths to them. You showed up late to the Trident and now you refused to help resist the Lannisters marching into the Riverlands.”

“I'd remind you that if what you say is true those lords were fighting your father, boy.” Frey spit back. Jon's fist clenched once more at being called boy, but Frey didn't notice or didn't care about his disrespect. With his anger searing through him he could feel his connections to Ghost and Lyax flaring. They must have felt his mood and responded with their own agitation. “I've sworn some vows to the Tullys, tis true, but I have also sworn vows to the Iron Throne. Your lot are nothing more than rebels as far as they see it.”

“Considering that the boy they tout as the new king is a bastard born of Cersei's infidelities your vows to those who currently hold the throne are moot.” Jon said from behind clenched teeth, “As for your demands. Thankfully, I am already married and Robb is intended for a bigger alliance. As far as the daughters of Winterfell I decline. I will allow two of your sons to become our squires. As far as the fostering I will allow the two grandsons you pick to perform as pages for two of my bannermen. Then, after the war they will be fostered at said bannerman's castle. They will not be fostered at Winterfell. Your oathbreaking will not be rewarded.”

As Jon spoke he watched the old man's face become an even darker red. His hand was white knuckled where he was gripping the arm rest of his chair, and by the uncomfortable look on her face he must have been gripping his young bride's buttocks rather tightly.

He took a step towards the old lecher as he continued, “Now, let me tell you what you will do. You are going to open your gates and allow our army to pass. You will give me every able fighting man you have. I will leave four hundred men of my choosing to ensure your loyalty, and secure your castle.”

“I will not be a hostage in my own castle, b-!” A loud roar cut off Walder followed by the panicked yells of guards echoing in the castle beyond the hall. The floor shook below Jon as the wall trembled from a massive impact that dislodged several tapestries from the wall causing them to crumple to the floor. Some of Frey's daughters in the galleries whimpered in fear, but Jon felt a smile take his face at his dragon's arrival.

The hall rang with the repeated impact of Lyax's claws as she climbed the outside of the building. Another roar rang out from above them signaling that Lyax had ascended to the apex of the keep. Walder Frey was ashen faced and prayers from the galleries started reaching Jon's ears. He saw a satisfied smirk take Lady Catelyn's face.

Jon looked around at the fear clearly displayed on the faces of all the Freys, “If you do not agree to my terms I will make what happened to Harren and his sons seem like a nursery rhyme compared to the wrath I will deliver to the Twins. Make no mistake, My Lord, your family may have held the Crossing for six centuries, but it would take me all of five minutes to breach your walls and end
that.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!

NEXT: We have a multi POV reaction to news spreading from King's Landing.
VARYS I, STANNIS I, OLENNA I

Chapter Summary

Plans change as Lord Stark's confession ripples across the realm

Chapter Notes

don't really have anything to say before this update, so let's just get to it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

VARYS

The fire that crackled in the hearth and the shuffle of his slippers as he paced were the only sounds that permeated the Lord of Whispers' chambers, but the thoughts swirling inside of his mind would have sounded like a raging thunder storm. This was a major variable he had not anticipated and it had changed almost everything for Varys' plans.

The Spider had to give Lord Eddard his due for keeping something of that magnitude secret for ten and seven years and away from his ears. Who would have ever thought the man known for his impeccable honor would be able to betray the king that he had considered a brother. That was the crux of it, though. Stark's honor allowed him to get away with the occasional lie even one of this level of importance. Who was going to question him? Ned Stark's reputation preceded him across the Realm.

Varys didn't doubt for a moment the validity of what the condemned lord spoke to the crowds. The conviction of which he spoke about the boy had completely changed his demeanor. He had held his head up high and had finally removed the burden from his own shoulders. Joffrey had squealed for hours about how he was the true king and he wanted all of the Starks killed and the North razed.

The inevitable war between the Lannisters and the Starks had come. Varys had tried to simmer the tensions between the two houses, but with Cersei helping Robert's demise she had undone all of his careful work. What should have simmered to an eventual boil had instead become an instant inferno like the wildfire Aerys had been so fond of. She was a fool for thinking that her secret would stay that way. Of course Varys had known for years at this point, but he had kept it to himself to have extra leverage for when the Targaryens returned.

Thanks to Lord Stark that was now even easier. Viserys had allowed his own madness to be his end as he had anticipated. The young Daenerys would have become much more malleable with her brother gone. All he had to worry about after that was how to part her from her Dothraki husband. Varys knew the great houses of Westeros would turn on anyone that brought a Dothraki horde to their shores no matter their name. He just had to hope the wine merchant remembered he was supposed to make sure Khal Drogo was poisoned, but she came to no harm.
Varys also had to figure out what to do with the Northern Targaryen boy. He needed to learn his character and how he might fare as king. Once he had had the measure of him he would assist however he could, and see the dragons back where they belonged. Once he got Daenerys back to the Kingdoms they could potentially wed. He knew that Viserys had filled her head of how she would be his queen before he sold her off to Khal Drogo, so marrying her nephew shouldn’t be a problem for her. The resistance would come from the boy's side. Though the Starks were known for familial marriages it was a lot less frequently than Targaryens.

He would just have to keep the other maidens at bay. He knew the Tyrells would chomp at the bit to get Margaery's claws into the new king. The Martells would most likely dispatch Arianne to the capital to let her try and charm her way into his bed. Ever lord with a maid of marriageable age would spill into the capital to try and tempt their new sire. He would have to counsel the boy to wait for his aunt, so they could present a united front against the Realm.

He was broken from his thoughts as the slight tinkling of metal rapping against stone filled the room. One of his little birds had brought him tidings too urgent to wait till the morrow.

The secret tunnel to his chambers ended at a false panel by the hearth. He twisted the sconce out of place, so he could reach behind it to the secreted away release. The wall fluttered towards him with a slight groan of rusted hinges. He pulled the secret door open more to reveal the child behind. He was a boy of around eight namedays. His head covered in a nest of blonde hair that resembled dirty tangled straw, He had bright hazel eyes, his jaw came down to a pointed chin, and his face was covered in dirt and dust. He was dressed in a faded green tunic with brown trousers that were frayed where they ended at his calves, and on his feet were a pair of well worn sandals.

The little bird held out a scroll which Varys immediately took. As he inspected the roll he absentmindedly reached into the pocket of his robe and dropped a little burlap sack into the waiting palm of the boy. Varys kept multiple of these sacks on his person each day for the encounters with his informants. Each on contained a handful of hard candies and a gold dragon. The moment the sack was inclosed in his fist the boy darted back down the secret passage till he disappeared into the darkness.

Varys made his way to his desk after resealing the passageway. Once he was seated he cracked the unmarked wax seal of the scroll.

The northern lords met tonight in Winterfell. Robb Stark presented his bastard brother proclaiming him as Rhaegar Targaryen's and Lyanna Stark's trueborn son and heir. When questioned they proclaimed to have written documentation of both the marriage and the boy's birth. When the lords were still questioning the boy's validity they were silenced by the arrival of his dragon. I hardly believed my own eyes, but it was a real life dragon. It's roar shook the entire castle. I have no idea where a beast of that size has been hidden, but it will not be a secret for much longer. They plan to march in a manner of days. By the time this reaches you they will be well on their way south.

Varys closed his eyes leaning his head back against the chair. He blew out an angry huff. He had blinded himself to the north for too long. He had been so caught up with the game in the capital and the Targayens in the east that he had neglected the North. He had assumed Lord Stark's undying loyalty would have killed any threats to the Realm there, but his assumptions had come back to bite him. He hated being reactionary, but that is what he would now have to deal with. The board had completely rewritten itself and now there was a dragon to contend with. Thankfully, one the Lannisters were not going to be expecting.
A loud crash had him wake gasping for air and his heart racing out of his chest. Adrenaline coursed through him as he frantically took in his bed chamber to find what had pulled him from his sleep so suddenly. His vision was bleary and his eyes ached from lack of rest, but the blurred image of red quickly caught his attention. She stood frozen in the door way as over the moments Melisandre's form became focused.

Even with his mind addled by sleep the woman was a vision. In place of her normal crimson robes she normally wore she was clad in only a red slip. The V of the neck so low that her ample chest was almost on full display and the darker shade of her nipples almost visible through the thin material. Her red hair flowed loose around her shoulder in waves.

Stannis was immediately disgusted with himself when he felt his body react to her presence. Ever since the Red Woman had been on Dragonstone she has been a temptation for him. She had even offered her body up for his pleasure multiple times, but he had turned her down each time. He was a man of duty and honor. It mattered not how frigid his marriage to Selyse was he would never dishonor her or debase himself to give into pleasures of the flesh like his lecherous brother had.

He shook his head to clear the fog that lust and temptation were trying to create. When he finally took in her face her bright red eyes were wide and frantic. It knocked Stannis aback for a moment. The moons he had known Melisandre she had always been collected and calm no matter the provocation. This was the first time he has seen her display panic and fear, or truly any emotion at all beyond sly lingering smirks.

“My King!” She exclaimed as she broke from the door and crossed the expanse of his chamber coming to his side, “The men have tur-” Melisandre's words were cut off as the blade of a sword appeared from her chest. The Red Woman's blood sprayed across his face as he met her eyes. She maintained eye contact with him as her eyes somehow seemed to widen further. The moment was broken as coughs racked her body and blood sprayed from her mouth across his face, tunic, and bed furs.

When the blade retracted her now limp and lifeless body collapsed gracelessly to the floor revealing two men in his chamber. The closest was adorned in a white surcoat decorated with a red crab of Celtigar. Whereas the other wore the blue green of House Velaryon. He had been so distracted by Melisandre he hadn’t noticed the two men slip inside the room. With the door now open the sounds of screams and steel meeting floated through to his ears.

When Stannis managed to fight through his shock he jumped from his bed to reach out and grasp *Lightbringer*. The sudden movement manged to catch the two men off guard, but not long enough. As Stannis' hand managed to grip the hilt of his longsword pain exploded all across his cheek from the impact of a mailed fist. His head struck the wall and he crumbled to the ground. His head awash in blinding white pain with stars dancing behind his eyelids as he felt his arms being restrained.

Pain clouded his mind as the castle passed by him in a blur. Before he knew it he was dropped like a sack of potatoes in front of the obsidian throne of the great hall. Stannis had rarely ever used this room. He never hosted feasts or other social gatherings that would need to utilize the large space of the hall. All of his meetings with his sworn lords he handled in the Chamber of the Painted Table. The hall was awash in a light glow provided by only a few braziers with the end of the massive
room still shrouded in darkness. He looked upon the throne through his right eye. His left already
swollen shut from the strike he took minutes or hours ago. His mind was still too fuzzy to properly
discern how much time had passed. In the chair of the Lord of Dragonstone sat Monford Velaryon.
He was of an age with Stannis and handsome in the way only the blood of Old Valyria could make
you. His silver gold hair hung loose about his shoulders. The only blemish of his other wise
ethereal appearance was the blood stains that marred the seahorse proudly displayed on his surcoat.

Sniffling to his side caught his attention. There on their knees and bound were Selyse, Shireen, Ser
davos, Dale, Allard, and Mathos. He turned back to Lord Monford when one of his captors spoke,
“We were able to subdue Lord Stannis, and his witch is dead.” The Velaryon lord's eyes were
allight when Melisandre's head unceremoniously splattered against the tiled floor. Her face still held
the shocked expression and her hair was cut from where the sword severed her neck. “We also
retrieved this,” The other man spoke as he handed Lord Monford Lightbringer.

The Lord of Driftmark pulled the blade from the scabbard. Light of orange, red, and yellow danced
along the blade as it illuminated the area around the throne. Flames rippled along the blade
reaching towards the ceiling above them. Lord Monford took in the blade with an uninterested
expression on his face. He studied the blade for a minute before he suddenly wrapped his hand
around it. He held it there for a few moments as if waiting for an answer to a question. When he
had finally come to a conclusion he snorted derisively before lazily throwing the sword to the side
of the dais. The impact against the tiled floor echoed and rang through the hall till the sword
settled. “A flaming sword with no heat.” Monford eyes turned back to him with a look of disgust
planted on his face, “Is that how you fooled all your men, My Lord, with parlor tricks and
illusions?”

“The Lord of Light is the one true god, and Stannis is Azor Ahai reborn!” Selyse screeched.

Monford regarded her with an angry look before turning back to Stannis once more. “You allowed
that red witch to burn the idols of the Seven, you allowed her to burn innocents that spoke out
against her heresy, and you allowed her to desecrate the lands of our king's ancestral home with her
perverted religion.” A shocked look must have taken Stannis’ face without realizing it. Monford's
face changed to a somewhat sympathetic expression which Stannis immediately took for
condescension, “Did you think we wouldn't find out? I have people in King's Landing, My Lord,
they were more than happy to tell me what Lord Stark confessed to.” The lord let a dark chuckle
passed his lips. “Who would have thought our rightful king was in hiding at Winterfell all this
time?”

“I am the rightful king.” Stannis shot back, “Robert took the thrown by right of conquest and with
the children he claimed actually being bastards that makes the throne mine by rights.”

“Right of conquest?” Monford scoffed, “That is the convenient excuse Robert used. It doesn't
make it true. The only truthful reason was because of your family's Targaryen blood. Do you forget
your grandmother so easily, Stannis? Your brother certainly tried to. The fact is the only reason
your family was allowed to keep the throne was your the closest relation to the Targaryen dynasty
than any other family.” Monford's eyebrows pinched as a sneer took his face, “We would have
never bothered tolerating you stags if we knew our crown prince's last son lived.”

Stannis went to grind his teeth before blinding pain shot through the side of his face. “You would
believe a lord's confession when his head hung over the block?”

Monford seemed to take him in as he contemplated his answer. “I will admit it is rather convenient.
However, what seems to be the more likely truth: That Lord Eddard confessed then just to upset
the balance of power if you were the rightful king, or that he had hidden his sister's child away
from a man that condoned the murder of an innocent woman and said child's two siblings.” The lord seemed to contemplate some more before speaking, “I spent a few hours pondering those very questions myself, and the conclusion I came to was that a man such as Eddard Stark would risk everything to protect his kin. Yes, he is a man of honor and duty much like yourself, Lord Stannis, but where you do not bend, Eddard, will for the sake of his blood.”

“If you have pledged yourself to this young pretender, then chop my head off and be done with it.” Stannis snarled.

Monford stared at Stannis quietly before a look came over his face that sent a cold shiver down his spine. “Oh, believe me there is nothing I'd like more. However, by now the dragon is on the march. Once I hear of where he settles for the war to come I will throw you before the Young Dragon, tell him of the sins you have committed on his isle, and leave you to his judgment.”

OLENNA

The sun was high in the sky as a soft breeze blew across the grounds. From her vantage on the north veranda, Olenna, watched as the red leaves of the Three-Sisters waved in the wind. It was the most relaxing thing in her world at this moment. Her fingers clenched tightly around her goblet as her thoughts resumed perusing her idiot son's plans.

She sighed as she raised her goblet to take a sip of her Arbor Gold. She conceded that her son wasn't completely at fault. Her youngest idiot grandson was as much to blame as the Oaf of Highgarden. The worst part is that all of their crackpot plans revolved around her little rose.

Margaery was too good of a daughter to ever say no to the family's ambition. Though, she wished her granddaughter would have consulted her before agreeing to either of their schemes. That came with Loras and Margaery being closer together than their other brothers. Still, Olenna thought that she taught her granddaughter better than that.

She didn't even understand why Margaery would have gone along with the first scheme at all. That fool Loras had convinced Renly to start showing portraits of Margaery to King Robert. The hope was that her granddaughter's very vague resemblances to Lyanna Stark would entice the king to set aside Cersei Lannister and take Margaery as his new queen.

The plan was riddled with holes from the get go. The only real resemblance Margaery had to Lyanna was her darker hair color and even that was off. Margaery's was a much lighter chestnut compared to Lyanna's northern black. Then you had to take into account that even as much of a buffoon as Robert was he would never insult his good father in such a way. Especially considering that said man was essentially funding the Seven Kingdoms at this point. Then for arguments sake lets say he does set Cersei aside. There was still the fact that her sweet little rose would have to let that fat lecherous drunk rut on top of her, but the children would still be after Cersei's three blonde haired spawn.

The only up side was that Margaery would be queen, but that was a short term gain. The moment Robert died all power and influence Margaery's position would gain for their family would be gone. Olenna highly doubted Joffrey would look favorably on the family that had conspired to have his mother set aside. Most likely Joffrey would have Margaery and all her children executed the
very next day.

The failure of that plan had only led to what Olenna would consider an even dumber plan. With Robert's death Loras had convinced Renly that he should declare himself king. Never mind the fact that even if Cersei's children were illegitimate the Lannisters wouldn't just apologize and evacuate the throne. There was also the fact that in the laws of succession Stannis came before Renly in every situation. Olenna didn't look forward to Stannis being king anymore than the lowest born in the Realm, but that was the law. Of course her fat oaf son didn't care. He only saw the prospect of Margeary being queen and his grandson being the first king with Tyrell blood.

Olenna snorted when she thought of how that would even happen. That would require Renly leaving Loras alone for a night and actually bedding Margaery. Olenna swore her grandson and the young Storm Lord must have buggered each other simple.

Nevertheless, here they were. Alerie was running herself ragged trying to get the preparations ready for the wedding in a couple days. Willas had been in charge of greeting guests because Mace couldn't be bothered to tear himself away from Loras and the 'future king's' side.

Olenna had tried to counsel her son that they could have saved time if they just waited for most of the bannermen, did a smaller wedding, and then picked up with the rest on the Roseroad. Of course he had huffed and puffed over how this wasn't just a wedding it was his daughter's wedding whom was the future queen of Westeros, so it had to be worthy.

Mace had even shot down the idea of just having the lords attend and leave their levies camped along the Roseroad to wait for them. So here they had sat for the better part of two moons waiting for their bannermen to arrive. Many of whom would be unhappy having to drag their levies all the way to Highgarden just to turn around and head back the way they came. All this would accomplish would be tiring the men out before they ever got the chance to swing a sword.

Olenna had conceded defeat to her son for now. She had staunchly denied partaking in any of the preparations for the wedding. She felt somewhat bad for not helping her granddaughter with her maiden's cloak, but this was about principle. She wanted them to all know how much she truly detested this folly. She didn't have a clue at how all the pieces would fall, but she was almost positive that this whole thing was going to end teats up. Until then she would try to anticipate and come up with a way to mitigate as many of the repercussions as possible.

The echo of rapidly approaching foot steps told Olenna her reprieve was about to be stomped on. Olenna refused to let go of her peace any faster, so she didn't bother turning at the unwanted guests approach. She would wait for them till the last second before being dragged back into this mess.

When the intruder came to a halt at her side, Olenna, could spy small feet out of the corner of her eye. Realizing it was just a page boy she decided to gift him with her attention. When she looked upon him he was a cute little boy whom would most likely grow into a very comely young man. No doubt in the coming years he would bed plenty of the castle maids. His right hand shot out presenting a rolled parchment. “My Lady, a message from King's Landing.”

When Highgarden's maester had become too old too expediently deliver messages he had started relying on page boys to traverse the castle swiftly. The first thing Olenna had done was start paying the boys a gold dragon to ensure all messages from King's Landing came straight to her opposed to Mace. Her oaf would get red faced in anger every time it happened. So, all in all it was a win win for her. She got the information first and got a show of Mace trying to be intimidating.

Olenna smiled brightly at the boy before taken the offered scroll from his hand. “Thank you, young man. You did well.” The boy's face lit up in a beaming smile that showcased his dimples.
She couldn't help but chuckle at how much danger future maids' small clothes were in with this boy's smile around. She then turned her attention to her faithful shadows. “Right, give the boy a dragon.”

She heard Right fumble around with his coin purse for a few moments followed by the retreating steps of the page boy running off to his next destination in the castle. She waited somewhat impatiently until she could no longer hear the boy's foot falls. When silence reigned once again she snapped the seal on the scroll open.

Her eyes took in the words hastily scrolled by their informants in the capital. When she finished it took her mind a moment to catch up to the words. She felt a small gasp leave her as she quickly reread the missive again. This time slower allowing her mind to properly process the information.

She initially wanted to dismiss it out right. The whole situation was way too absurd to be the truth. She laid the scroll down to retrieve her goblet. As she savored the taste of the wine she allowed herself to stew on it more.

The longer she thought on it the less outlandish it became. Even though Lord Stark had never confirmed it she had just come to the conclusion of Ashara Dayne being the boy's mother. She never mentioned it because it was never truly relevant, and the poor girl's life ended so tragically it was best to let sleeping dogs lie.

As she continued to sip her wine the pieces fell together in her mind a lot more clearly. She closed her eyes for a moment. She felt the overwhelming urge to thank the Crone for this gift. She would save her family from this boondoggle, and once again House Tyrell would continue growing strong. Margaery of course could continue on her maiden's cloak. The young dragon king would need a queen to give him heirs.

She would have to stop this farce of a wedding and gather support for her plan. First would be Randall Tarly. He had always been a dutiful Targaryen supporter and he even delivered Robert Baratheon his only defeat in the rebellion. A victory her foolish son always took credit for. Then, she needed Mathis Rowan. The Rowans were Targaryen loyalists to the core, and combining Tarly and Rowan together they would have two of the best tacticians in the Realm. Lastly, was Lord Leyton Hightower. The Hightowers had the most levies in the Reach, and after the Dance of the Dragons they became exceptionally loyal to the Targaryens to repent for their influence in that bloody war.

When she finally decided on her course of action she drained the rest of her goblet before standing. She turned to address her twin shadows. “Left, I want you to find Lord Renly and my grandson. Get them to Renly's chambers anyway you can without force. Tell them there is a tailor waiting or what have you. Once they are in there I want them guarded. They are not to leave that room till I call for them. Understand?”

Her guard nodded his head and added a quick, “Yes, My Lady.” and marched off his armor filling the air with its rattling.

She turned her attention to his twin brother, “You will escort me to Lord Tyrell's solar. Then, I want you to call upon Lords Tarly, Rowan, and Hightower. Tell them their presence is required urgently.” The guard took up his normal position walking behind her. Her cane clicked at a faster cadence than normal, but now was the time for action. It couldn't be wasted dawdling, and definitely not on her son's foolish ideas.
So, normally I name the chapters by the POV character, but when ever it comes to battle chapters I'm going to go with the name of the battle since most of the time they are going to be multi POV.

NEXT: Whispering Woods
Chapter Notes

Nothing to really update you on. In good news the writing bug hit me, so I'm out front a little bit. Gives me a little more time to review the chapters before putting them out.

Anyway, on to why you are here!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

ROBB III

Robb looked up to the canopy of trees over him. Moonlight broke through spaces in the leaves leaving silvery shafts of light that reminded him freshly forged steel. They had been waiting for so long that the wildlife had gotten used to their presence and the chirping of crickets once again filled the forest. He closed his eyes and allowed the scent of the forest to fill his senses as he thought over what would happen soon.

Robb had been so relieved when he saw his mother and Jon riding from the Twins. Once they were a safe distance away from the castle he released his Frey guests to return to their home. He stood and watched with Annie, the Scouts, and the higher lords as the two groups passed each other and Jon gave them a respectful nod with a rare smile adorning his face.

When they had dismounted and the horses were being led away they had approached Robb's group. Robb went to ask what they had said, but Jon quickly waved him off and pointed towards the council tent.

As they made their way to the Robb couldn't help but notice the sniffing noises some of their group were making. He had noticed a rather odd offensive odor, but he wasn't sure what to make of it. Then he noticed Jon's shoulders tense up a little when Annie let one out next to him. As they piled into the tent he noticed that Jon and his mother were the only two on the far side of the table. Everyone else was giving them a wide berth staying on the other three sides. He was starting to wonder what it was all about till Annie seemed to read his mind and spoke, “Jon, what the fuck is that smell?!”

Some of the lords chuckled and Jon hung his head as he let out a defeated sigh, “It's us.”

Annie snorted, “Did you two decide to roll around the stables before bathing in the Freys' privys?”
That had earned a full gut laugh from the Greatjon and more snickers followed.

Robb decided to spare his brother from any more embarrassment, “So, what did Lord Frey demand for our crossing?”

Jon nodded and the look he shot him was an unspoken thanks for getting them back on track. “Robb and I will each have to take one of his sons or grandsons as squire with the promise of a knighthood at the end of the war.”

Robb's brows rose in surprise at the surprisingly reasonable request, but the look on Jon's face told him that wasn't all. “What else?”

“There will be two more boys that are too young to squire, but will be pages for the time being. After the war they will foster at the castle of the lord they serve in the camps.” Jon scanned the lords around the table, “Any volunteers?”

Robb was surprised that it didn't take long for both Lord Glover and Forrester to take the guardianship of the two. When his eyes turned back to Jon who seemed to have a guilty expression marring his face, “What else, My Prince” The look Jon shot him was wounded. He knew he hated the lack of familiarity, but when in front of the lords Robb had to make sure to stick to propriety to not under cut his cousin's authority.

“Well, Frey wanted betrothals for the one of the girls or the younger boys.”

Robb felt his face go ashen, “Your Grace, tell me you didn't.”

Jon's face took a slighted look as his eyes snapped back up to met his, “My Lord, I had hoped you thought better of me than promise my cousins to those bridge trolls.”

A relieved laugh escaped Robb's lips before he collected himself, “Then what is the guilty expression for?”

He looked around the table again, “Frey trying to pry the betrothals from me set off my last nerves, and I may have implied that if he didn't let us cross and fulfill his vows to your grandfather I'd let Lyax burn the Twins down.”

His mother must have held her tongue long enough for she snapped the next second, “You didn't imply anything, Your Grace. You directly told him and his entire brood what you would do. Eddard raised you better than that.”

Robb decided to jump in and save his brother-cousin, “That's where you are mistaken, Mother, Jon acted exactly how father would have.” He pointed in the direction of the Twins to emphasize his point, “That man tried forcing Jon to buy his oath which he had already given to Grandfather. Father probably would have dragged him out of the castle and taken his head with Ice.” He held his arms out to all the lords around the table. “Look around mother. I called the banners and every lord of the North is here. We don't take oaths lightly and its about time others should learn not to as well.”

Robb's tirade was capped off with the other lords muttering ayes in agreement. When the tent returned to quiet Jon spoke again, “Those of you going with Lord Stark will cross in the morning and the Frey's troops will be joining you. We will be leaving a garrison of our own, so we don't get stabbed in the back. My detachment will move south after the crossing is complete.” With that Jon released their meeting, but as the lords were moving to exit Jon spoke up. “One last thing, My Lords. I didn't promise any betrothals, but if any of you are looking for wives for yourselves or
sons there are plenty in there. There was a few pretty and beautiful ones scattered about. No one
deserves to live crowded in a place like the Twins, and they would probably be forever grateful for
whomever got them out of there. Not a requirement at all. Just something to ponder.” With that the
lords exited.

After the Twins crossing they had made good time down to the Whispering Wood. They had
stopped at Seaguard and Patrek Mallister and another five hundred riders had joined their ranks.

They had ended up leaving a hundred men each from the Umbers, Karstarks, Glovers, Dustins, and
finally some of his own men finished out the garrison under the command of Alyn. Jon and Robb
needed a man at the Twins they could trust, and Alyn had proven time and time again he was
exactly that man.

While Robb had to watch his brother by choice march off with his wife, Reiner, and six thousand
men. His force had added four thousand Frey levies. Boosting his numbers back up to ten thousand
five hundred including the Mallister men.

What he hadn't expected was to run into his great-uncle Brynden “The Blackfish” along with Karl
Vance, Marq Piper, and another thousand riders. He had left his post at the Bloody Gate after the
Vale started infighting about whom should be lord when the discovery of his aunt Lysa's infidelity
and little Robin's illegitimacy came to light. During the mean time his great-uncle and his company
had been harassing the Lannister supply lines along with ambushing their scouts. \\

Robb had been gobsmacked when he met his uncle. He had stood before him in his black fish
scaled armor. Though his hair was grey his eyes were still bright blue showing the energy of a man
half his age. Robb had grown up on stories of his famous uncle. He was renowned across the
Realm from his actions during the campaign on the Step Stones during the War of the Nine-Penny
Kings.

When they met in the council tent they had been in there for hours before they were finally able to
formulate what Robb thought was a great plan. Ser Brynden and Marq Piper would lead a group of
riders to harass the Lannister camps. The hope was that the boredom of the siege would draw
Jaime out from the camp. The Kingslayer's reputation always spoke of him as a man of action over
thought, so he should fall for the ploy rather easily.

They had spent a day to find where they wanted to launch their ambush. The Scouts had- well
scouted. They had found an area in the woods populated by red cedars that surrounded a small
valley area. The cedars were large and sturdy enough for them to effectively use their O.D.M. gear
and it would give their army the advantage of attacking from high ground on all sides.

If the ambush went off without a hitch Ser Brynden and his party would lead their pursuers into the
valley. Maege Mormont would signal the start of the attack as she lead the forces from the east.
The scouts would utilize their gear to initiate the fight and hopefully break up the Lannisters into
smaller groups. Lord Karstark would lead another group from the north, and pass by the
Blackfish's rider's to crash into their enemies. Robb would lead the attack from the west.

When night began to fall the squires finished sharpening swords, armor was donned, and the troops
left camp at sunset. The Scouts had doubled up with other riders considering they wouldn't need
their own horses during the fight. Once they had all arrived in their respective areas. Robb had
clapsed forearms with his great-uncle before the man mounted his horse to head out. He had stood
there watching as Ser Brynden lead out the raiding party under his personal sigil of the black trout,
the silver trout Tully banner, the maiden of piper, and the green dragons and towers of vance
flapping in the wind.
They had been in the staging area for hours already waiting to hear his great uncle returning. The slight sounds of armor rattling began permeating the air. Robb looked around trying to locate the source of the noise. When he felt a hand clasp his forearm the sound suddenly ceased. He glanced over into the silver-grey eyes of Mikasa before looking down and realizing that his arm had been shaking. When he looked back up to her face she raised a questioning brow. He quickly nodded his head in answer, and he felt her hand retreat, and he clenched his fist tightly to stop his arm from shaking again.

“There is no shame in it, Robb.” He heard Theon speak from his left. When he looked over at the young kraken instead of his signature cocky smirk he wore a more subdued smile, “It means you aren't stupid, and you understand that anything can happen.”

“I damn near puked all over myself before the battle of Trost.” Connie piped from down the row they stood in. Robb looked over at the shorter man who was dazed off into space. “Come to think of it the only time I wasn't afraid during the whole battle was when I saved Jean from being eaten. I was so focused on trying to help him I completely forgot to be afraid.”

He looked over and met Robb's eyes, “If it helps look at it that way. Just try to protect the men around you and you'll forget your own fear.”

Robb's head tilted to the side as he took in what Connie had said. He allowed his eyes to roam over the row of young men and women around him. To his left was Theon, Dacey Mormont, Daryn Hornwood, Torrhen Karstark, and Smalljon Umber. Olyvar Frey stood a few feet behind them holding both of their horses. All of whom this would be the first true test of battle. However, it wouldn't be the first time most of them had taken lives. The Umbers and Karstraks frequently clashed with wildling raiders that crossed the wall, and the Mormonts dealt with the Ironborn trying to raid their island. The only real fighting that Robb and Theon had had was the small scuffle in the Wolfswood with the wildlings. To call that a fight though would be an insult. It was a slaughter and nothing less. The wildlings and deserters had been starving and possessed sorry excuses for weapons. The woman that Annie had decapitated only had a fire hardened stick she tried to utilize as a spear.

Lined to his right was Mikasa, Eren, Connie, Sasha, Historia, Armin, Jean, and Bertholt. Robb really looked at them for a moment. None of them seemed to have any nervousness about them like the Northern lordlings. They all wore their green cloaks over leather brigadines that were modified to accommodate their maneuvering gear. Minus the little conversation they were having all the Scouts seemed completely focused and at ease with the approaching storm.

The sound of gas hissing reached him before he heard the snap of an O.D.M anchor impacting the tree above him. Hange came swooping out of the trees landing in a slight run to soften her blow. Once her line retracted to her waist she jogged straight for Robb. “They are approaching, Lord Robb. They are maybe two miles out.”

Robb nodded his head before acknowledging everyone else, “It's time. Everyone get in position!”

As Robb approached Olyvar and their two horses a Winterfell soldier went running past Robb carrying two gas canisters. After he was mounted he watched as Hange quickly changed out her tanks and the soldier retreated with the depleted ones.

Hange nodded her head when she was all set, “I wish you all good fortune.” Robb spoke up
quickly.

“You as well, My Lord.” She answered back, “See you on the other side.” With that she turned away to address the Scouts, “Let's go!”

nine snaps resounded through the quiet woods followed by the cracks of impact. Gas spewed from their equipment as they all shot into the darkness. “Can you even imagine, My Lord?” Robb snapped up to look at Olyvar frey whose eyes still hadn't turned from where the Scouts disappeared into the trees.

Robb chuckled at that, “We've tried to get them to let us try, but they said it took them years of training to master it. We'll just have to settle for horses.” His squire let out a huff beside him in response.

Robb grabbed his helmet from where it hung on the saddle's pommel. It was a closed face helmet with an open visor that didn't impede his vision at all, and on the sides were wolf ears swept back in a threatening manner as if snarling. He pulled it over his head securing the chin strap.

After that the wait seemed to drag forever till the sound of Maege Mormont's horn pierced the air. Robb slipped his shield onto his left forearm and wrenched his sword from its scabbard. Holding the blade in the air he yelled out to his men, “FOR MY FATHER! FOR THE NORTH!”

“FOR THE NORTH!” rent through the air as hundreds of Northmen echoed Robb's call. He turned his head forward and kick the horse flanks. The horse launching them down the hill towards battle with the lions.

JAIME I

Jaime lived for this. Chasing rebellious lords through the Riverlands. He could feel his blood pumping and his heart raced at the prospect of the fight ahead of them. He just had to keep the pursuit up till their quarry's horses tired. Once, that happened he would be able to put an end to the resistance around Riverrun.

He had been in command of the siege of Riverrun for the past few weeks and he was bored to death with it. The position was hung around his neck by his father of course. After he had been sent from King's Landing on his sister's orders he had met up with his father's host.

His father still held hopes of Jaime turning his back on the Kingsguard and taking up the position of heir to Casterly Rock. He had no desire to ever lead in that capacity. He was quite content just to be the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard. There he could watch over and protect his children as they grew. It also didn't hurt that with Robert dead he would be able to have Cersei whenever he wanted.

She was the only reason he had even agreed to part from her to this fight. He had spent the entire night with her before he departed and that image had been stuck in his head each night since. He could still sense the way her nails had raked down his back, and how her breath felt against his ear as she would moan his name in her pleasure. The sooner the north was put down the sooner he
could be back with her and explore her body to his heart's content once more.

Unfortunately, he couldn't just come out and tell his father that. He had to constantly resort to hiding behind the vows of the Kingsguard to protect him from his father's ambitions. His father would scoff every time the vows were brought up. It would irritate Jaime to no end, but he even knew that it was a shallow argument considering the irony involved.

He didn't know why his father was so hung up on Jaime being lord of Casterly Rock considering Tyrion would be a much better alternative. Tyrion was much more clever than Jaime could ever hope to be. On top of that Tyrion enjoyed the intrigue and outsmarting others. He was also much better at sums, and managing money. For someone who grew up as rich as them Tyrion could be rather thrifty as long as whores and drink weren't involved.

Instead Tyrion was back in King's Landing trying to keep the kingdoms together and Jaime was stuck in a siege.

He had wanted to storm the castle just to try and speed things up, but the other lords had cautioned him against it. Granted they vastly outnumbered the soldiers garrisoned in the castle, but they had a castle. The casualties that his army would take for the endeavor would leave them vulnerable when the northmen finally met up with them.

They would have to get passed his father's host first though. The last reports they had heard had Robb Stark's host moving south on the King's Road. So, his days had been filled with boredom. They had secured their position with spiked trenches and watch towers as well as building siege towers. However, the construction had gone faster than he expected, so there wasn't much to do but wait. He would train with his lords and knights, but otherwise he sat around while the men mostly drank.

Then word had reached him that their supply lines were being harried and his scouts were being killed. It wasn't enough to affect his troop numbers too much, but it was quickly damaging morale. He had tried to leave it to the other commanders with him, but they were apparently not able to get the job done. He knew if he wanted it handled it would have to be by his hand. At least it would give him something to do, and break up the monotony if even only for a night.

When word had reached him that his scouts had been attacked by a group of Riverlanders led by the Blackfish he had sprung at the opportunity. He had quickly gathered up a little over a thousand men and rode from camp in pursuit of the legendary knight.

This would be the night his life changed once again. He had always been called the Young Lion by the Westerlands, but since the sacking of King's Landing the rest of the kingdoms had just referred to his as the Kingslayer. It had always nagged at him how he was ridiculed for saving King's Landing, but at the same time he had failed Prince Rhaegar for what happened to Elia and the children.

That would change now. All his life he had been touted as one of the best swordsmen in all of Westeros, but the only true battle he had been in was at Pyke. Bragging about putting down a bunch squids was as glorious as bragging about sacking an orphanage. If he was able to catch or kill these rebels, though, he would be known as the man who brought the Riverlands to heel and put down the Blackfish. So, for the last few hours they had been in pursuit of Ser Brynden and his small party.

The last few miles they had entered a forest which had forced the Blackfish's party to slow some. Over that time Jaime had managed to close the distance. They were now only few hundred yards behind his prey and Jaime could feel his mouth watering in anticipation of the fight that was at his
Jaime was struck stupid for a moment when Ser Brynden's party suddenly sped up. He dug his heels into his mounts side to get more speed out of him, but his prey was slowly opening up space between them again. He snapped the reins to try to get the creature to respond, but there was nothing he could do. They had raced so hard to catch up to the rebels they had exhausted their own horses. Ser Brynden had baited him perfectly. By allowing his raiding party to slow he had tapped into Jaime's impulsiveness. The Young Lion was more concerned with closing the distance and beginning a fight than thinking of what he was actually doing.

He quickly looked around and the beginning of fear began to fill him when he realized that they had ridden right into a small valley. The path they were on was narrow and the trees encroached closely on them. If he was going to be ambushed this would be a perfect location. He looked forward again and could barely see the raiding party he had been pursuing through the darkness. Jaime slowed his horse before pulling on the reins to bring him to a stop. Other riders in his small army continued on a ways before they too stopped to see what held up their commander. As his soldiers came to a stop Jaime tried to pour all his focus on listening. The nickering of horses kept distracting him, but he finally noticed what he was looking for. There was no other sounds in the woods. He knew there wouldn't be any sounds close by, but he couldn't even hear any life farther away. It was eerily quiet in these woods.

The realization washed over him like a crushing wave. They were in a trap. Ser Brynden had been the perfect bait to lure the arrogant Jaime Lannister from his comfy siege camp. Maybe Cersei had been right all this time and he was indeed the stupidest Lannister. He pulled his reins to turn his horse back the way they came as he called out to his men, “RETREAT! GET BACK TO CAMP THIS IS-!!” He was cut off by a war horn echoing through the woods.

Almost as soon as the horn had faded away it was replaced by the screams of his men. He snapped his head back in the direction to only see the flash of silver in moonlight as shadows flew back amongst the trees. His head snapped back when more calls of anguish rang out from his other side, and once again he only caught sight of shadows fleeing with more of his men falling from their mounts.

Then he heard something that sounded familiar to him. It was a pop- hiss sound accompanied by the snap of an impact on wood and followed by the sound of steel held to a grinding wheel. He felt his heart stutter when it dawned on him where he had heard it before, and a handful more of his men fell under their blades. If the north had more soldiers like that one this was not going to end well.

He quickly slipped his arm into the straps of his white shield and drew his sword. His mount was spinning in place as Jaime tried to assess what was happening. He had to try to find the way to get his men out of here and quickly. The skirmish had barely started and by the sounds he could already be down twenty men.

As he was getting ready to yell out for his men to spread out a cry of “FOR THE NORTH!!” rang through the air echoed by thousands of voices. The thundering of hooves came crashing down on Jaime as Northmen came pouring out of the woods like a murderous avalanche.

Jaime's sword took the head off the first man that approached him. It had been a matter of seconds. The man had swung his sword frantically probably hoping to be the man that brought the Kingslayer down. His corpse fell from its mount in a torrent of crimson blood.
Jaime didn't have time to collect himself. He was parrying another sword moments later. He was able to bring his shield up in a quick strike stunning the man. His sword went through his attacker's throat the next instance.

He glanced around quickly at the carnage unfolding everywhere he looked. His force was quickly being overwhelmed, but still more northerners came pouring out of the woods. Screams of dying men, steel clashing, and the neighs of frightened horses racked his ears. As the battle intensified Jaime knew his force was going to get wiped out. Even if Northmen kept falling to the blades of his men they were hopelessly out numbered.

As his eyes continued to traverse the carnage they landed on who should be his target. There in the middle of the press of bodies swinging his sword like the Stranger himself was Robb stark. The helmet designed to resemble a snarling wolf giving away his identity more than the direwolf banners flapping in the air above.

He knew if he could get to the young Stark he could end this. He stopped his impulse when he heard the voice of Tyrion in his head urging him to assess the situation first. Stark was surrounded by protectors. These weren't levies around the boy. They were branded by the Mormont bear, Umber giant, Hornwood moose, and Karstark sunburst. They were castle raised and trained. Jaime could take them easily, but they would slow him down enough for Stark to retaliate.

He knew his best hope now was to fight free and get back to camp. There he had the numbers to fight back against the northern army. “RETREAT! RETREAT!” He yelled out till his his throat was sore trying to be heard over the battle.

A few of his closest men heard him. Pushing through the press to close on him. He kicked his mount's flanks and pulled the reins to direct him back the way they came.

As they pushed through the press Jaime's sword was constantly swinging. He lost count of how many men fell below his blade. His only focus was escaping out of the losing fight. Blades came at him from high and low. The men who had lost their mounts Jaime just allowed his to simple run down. He allowed the terrified cries of the men that died under his horse's hooves to fall on deaf ears. He had no sympathy at that point for their gruesome deaths. He only cared about escaping so he could live to see Cersei again.

When the fighting finally appeared to thin out his gilded sword was dripping red and his left arm ached from catching blows on his shield. He cut down a few more northerners and he was suddenly free. His mount's instinct to survive pushed him to speeds Jaime had never felt before as they raced away from the brawl.

He quickly took stock of the situation seeing that only a handful of his mean had managed to break free with him. Their horses frothing at the mouth as they raced away from death. The only coherent thought he could process at the moment now was making it back to camp.

Fate it seemed was not on Jaime Lannister's side this night. Time seemed to slow as he made eye contact with the man to his left. The soldier was in the middle of nodding his head as a flash of silver went through his neck. The soldier didn't even have time to react as his head lulled off his shoulders. He heard bodies colliding with the ground behind him, but he couldn't pull his eyes from the horse beside him and it's headless rider.

A hissing sound managed to break through his stupor, and he barely had time to react before a crushing impact to his chest plate had him flying backwards. He could only watch helplessly as his horse rode off without him before he impacted the ground knocking the wind from him.
He laid there raggedly gasping as he tried to fill his lungs with air. He forcefully regained his senses pushing the fog of pain away and clamoring to his feet. His shield pulled up to his side and sword held out ready to strike. As his vision refocused he was greeted with the form of a young woman standing before him.

She wore boots that went up over her knees, a leather brigadine, a dark cloak hung from her shoulders clasped by a button over her breast, and around her neck was a dark scarf. In each of her hands she held a sword. The cut of the blades Jaime recognized instantly. They looked more like barber's blades than true swords, but he had seen first had the devastation they could bring.

He froze when he finally took in her face. Her jawline was slightly rounder coming to a softer point at her chin, and her eyes appeared narrower and slightly slanted. However the dark silver-grey of her eyes glinting in the moonlight and the dark raven hair cut to her chin told him exactly whom she was related to.

He felt his throat bob as he swallowed thickly as pure dread shivered up his spine. He had seen Levi kill Ser Preston Greenfield like he was a greenboy, and proceeded to rip through Gold and Red Cloaks like they were sheets of parchment. Jaime's only hope right now was that in her youth the girl wouldn't be as skilled as Levi.

It was a fool's dream and completely fruitless. The next moment she moved at him so fast he barely had time to react. Only years training in his youth with some of the best swordsmen in all of Westeros honing his reflexes managed to save his sorry neck.

Jaime frantically deflected the blows with sword and shield. His swings were wild just trying to keep up with the girl's speed. He felt like he was back in the yard of Casterly Rock after he had been given his first wooden sword at five namedays and just swung it crazily at a training dummy.

He had just blocked a high swing when his side exploded in pain below his chest plate. He staggered from the blow of her shin. Jaime didn't know how or what to do to make it out of this fight alive. The only thing he could come up with in the moment was to wait for her to tire and leave enough of an opening for him to strike.

Jaime had no idea how long he had been in the duel when he managed to notice that her swings were slowing. Granted it wasn't much, but it was enough to reinvigorate him, and he was able to pin down her pattern. Every time she would come in for a flurry of strikes the first left would leave her just a little too open.

He started focusing on the open to make sure it wasn't a fluke. After a few more repetitions he was positive that he could end the fight there. He just had to have her slow just a little more. His entire body ached, his shield arm was to the point of cramping, and his sword arm was so worn that he was sure adrenaline was the only thing keeping his muscles moving. His patience however was eventually paid.

Everything slowed as he saw her opening coming while he deflected her right strike. He left arm raised, and Jaime spun his wrist to push his blade in. He just need a few inches and the blade would slide right through her ribs, enter her heart, and this fight would be won. However, his sword found nothing but air. He barely had time to register that he had once again been baited, and he had fallen right into it before there was a flash of silver. Jaime watched wide eyed as as his sword and hand fell away from his wrist. It took his mind moments to register what happened before an excruciating scream tore from his throat.

A kick took him in the chest so hard his chest plate caved and his breath was once again expelled from his body. Pain racked through him as his eyes glassed with tears. He felt himself pulled up by
the collar of his gorget and he looked into hate filled silver eyes. Her fist cocked back and despite her feminine build it impacted his cheekbone with the force of a brick forcing everything black.

Chapter End Notes

I thought about it, and decided that most of the battle scenes will end up being multi POV to give us views from both sides of the fights.

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: The Green Fork (This one got a little away from me and ended up at 10k words. There is also some sweet titan action)
Chapter Summary

Jon leads his faction of Northmen in battle against Tywin Lannister.

Chapter Notes

So, here it is. A big battle with some good titan action. She kind of got away from me and ended up being just over 10.5k words, but I hope you all like the new POV I added at the end.

Anyway, let's get to what you are here for!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

TYREK I

Tyrek checked the straps of his saddle one more time. It wasn't that he didn't trust his squire to do the job properly, but more that his nerves were completely fried. It was an activity that would keep his hands busy, so his fellow knights and soldiers wouldn't see him shaking like a leaf in the breeze.

He knew he shouldn't be this nervous. This wasn't his first battle. He had rode in his uncle's army when they smashed the Riverlords at the Golden Tooth and began their invasion of the Riverlands. However, during that fight he had been farther back closer to his Uncle and his advisers. The Lannister army had mostly ran over the Riverlanders, so he hadn't really had the full taste of combat. He had heard the clashing of steel and the cries of men. He was sure those sounds would never leave his memory for as long as he lived, but he hadn't been in the thick of the fight.

He had eventually broke down and asked his uncle Kevan why he had to be so far in the back. His uncle had patiently to him that him being a Lannister of the Rock, uncle Tywin, wasn't going to risk his life to a Riverlander getting lucky. His uncle Kevan had said that even though they were under the orders of Edmure Tully, whom was both green and a fool looking for glory, they had still almost matched the numbers of the Westerners' army.

Fortunately, they had been able to break the Riverlanders' cavalry and their foot was routed. They had even captured Edmure Tully and a few other high lords, though, Janos Bracken was able to escape. Said lord had lead the small Tully forces in a skirmish outside the walls of Riverrun. When he realized it was fruitless Lord Bracken had retreated back into Riverurn, flooded the moat, and turned the castle into a fortified island.

There they had learned that the Northern army was gathered and preparing to head south. No doubt
to head for King's Landing to try and free Eddard Stark. Uncle Tywin had been quick in decisions after that. They would leave ten thousand troops to continue the siege under the command of his cousin Ser Jaime whom had joined them after the Golden Tooth. The mountain and his men were dispatched to King's Landing to hunt down a fugitive from the Stark party that was being a thorn in everyone's side. Then, the rest of the army departed Riverrun to cut off the Stark army on the Kingsroad near the Trident.

It was when they reached the Trident that they heard what had happened in King's Landing. Lord Tywin had called all his advisers to his pavilion. He had sat by his uncle Kevan's side as Tywin read what was written on a scroll while everyone waited patiently for the words that were contained on the parchment. When he had finished it was the one time Tyrek could remember Tywin ever looking flustered. Madness, madness and stupidity his uncle had said. The Mountain and his men had been torturing and murdering small folk in the capital to find this Levi character while men of the Gold and Red cloaks were mysteriously vanishing. Joffrey had executed Lord Stark on the steps of the Great Sept of Baelor after the lord stated that his bastard son was actually the last son of Rhaegar Targaryen, legitimate to boot, and claimed that Joffrey was a bastard born of the queen's infidelities. As the lord's body cooled on the sept stairs the small folk rioted murdering as many Gold Cloaks as they could before the little revolt was put down. It even said that Joffrey had been injured as well.

“It sounds too convenient to be true.” Lord Banefort said breaking the silence that had settled after his uncle had finished. Tyrek saw several of the lords nod in agreement while a few responded audibly.

“No,” Lord Tywin didn't look up as he spoke. His attention stayed on the rolled scroll that he was tapping against the table. The repeated clicking of the parchment surprisingly comforting in the tense atmosphere of the command tent.

The tapping stopped as crease lines appeared on Tywin's forehead and his brows pulled together. “It makes too much sense to be a ploy.” His uncle looked up then taking in the lords and his most trusted knights around the table. “Many of you should remember how Lord Stark reacted to the deaths of Elia Martell and the Targaryen children.” The lords old enough to have been involved in the sacking of King's Landing nodded. “Then he disappears to Dorne to find his sister, but returns with her bones and a child that he claims is his bastard. After that the North turns back to its isolated state. Then unlike other lords paramount he never fostered his children.”

The tent remained silent as his uncle took a sip of wine seeming to savor the flavor a moment, “It ultimately matters not. Lannister blood sits the Iron Throne now, and it will stay that way. This Targaryen boy can march with his Stark cousin. They are both green, and the first taste of battle will send them running, but we can't allow him to survive.” The lords sounded their agreement once more as the Lion Lord continued, “If he escapes they will just try to rebel again. We will crush the Northern army here, kill the Targaryen boy, and place a new loyal family in Winterfell.”

The lords raised their goblets with a here-here around the table. After that it went back to the battle strategy. The scouts had reported that the Stark army was around twelve thousand strong. The forces at the Green Fork numbered just over twenty thousand. That gave them a sizable advantage, and allowed Tyrek to be in the cavalry. Granted he was only in the second wave, but he would still be involved in the battle. It would give Tyrek the chance to distinguish himself and be more than just Tygett Lannister's son and Tywin Lannister's nephew.

They had ended up camped there for over a fortnight before they saw the enemy. They had passed the time in running drills, training, and meetings. It had started to become monotonous, but Tyrek refused to let himself lose his edge before he was able to actually test it. Then the enemy had
seemed to appear out of nowhere yesterday.

He had been sent for by his uncle Kevan via a page boy. When Tyrek had met up with his uncles they were surrounded by the bannermen and the whole group had their attention north of the camp. About a mile away was a small group of riders waiting. Tyrek couldn’t make out their banners, but even from the distance he could make out the white flag above all the others in a request for parlay.

His uncle Kevan pulled out a Myrish far eye to observe the group. When he was finished he offered it out, and Tyrek took it with a thanks. With the aid of the far eye he saw the group in better detail. There were ten of them in total.

Out front was a man sat on a black destrier. He was dark haired and wore black armor with a black brigadine over a red gambeson. Next to him on a dappled charger was a woman. Her blonde hair was pulled into a bun, but her bangs waved loosely in the breeze. Most of her body was covered in a dark green cloak but he could see that it covered a brigadine. In a row behind them three men were all dressed in the same Northern style of armor being a mix of steel and leather. The three looked to be experienced warriors. One had grey hair still streaked with hints of auburn, the second had his dark hair cut short all over his head, and the last was one of biggest and hairiest men Tyrek had ever seen.

When he turned his attention to the banners above them he saw a black sword and white tree on a field of black. It took Tyrek a minute to realize it was house Forrester. In his education the maester had always focused on the Lords Paramount and the major houses of the Seven Kingdoms. Though they weren’t considered a major house, Tyrek, was familiar with them for their trading of ironwood. The next banner was house Umber’s giant breaking chains on a field of red. Followed by the red flayed man on a field of pink of the Boltons. The last banner was one that Tyrek never thought he would see proudly displayed ever again. On a field of black was the red three-headed dragon of house Targaryen.

Lord Tywin had refused to send anyone to parlay. He said a lion doesn’t lower himself to speak with rebels. The rebel lords seemed to have plenty of patience, and they had stayed for several hours before they gave up and rode away.

Then this morning squires and pages sprinted through the camp waking everyone long before daybreak. His uncle wanted to take the fight to them before they had a chance to react. He had rose quickly and his squire had helped him don his armor. After they had both rushed from his tent to prepare the horses.

Trumpets broke the air signaling the army to form up. Tyrek blew out a long breath as he donned his lion helmet. He mounted his horse and quickly checked that his scabbard and shield were secured to his saddle. His squire handed up his lance and he positioned it into its brace. He held his squire’s until he was mounted, and handed it back over. The two met their eyes together before the boy gave him a confident nod and they moved off to join the ranks.

When they reached the staging area, Tyrek, fell in with the rest of Lord Sarsfield’s knights. Under normal conditions he would have been under a Lannister commander, but considering Lord Tywin and uncle Kevan would be commanding from the rear he had to make due. It wasn’t but a half an hour later that the call to march was sounded and the army was moving northward.

They had marched at least five miles and the sun was starting to crest over the trees to the east when they came upon the Northmen. However they weren’t in their camp being caught unawares. There across from them on the plain was the northern army formed up and ready for battle. Steel
tipped spears reached for the sky behind a row of pink and red tower shields. He looked across their ranks, but he couldn't see any archer or cavalry support.

Mist rolled across the grass in waves giving the whole scene an ominous feeling. Tyrek felt his nerves reach a fever pitch. The confidence with which they stood there set him on edge. Even seeing the overwhelming numbers they had over the northern army, Tyrek, couldn't help but feel that they were going to make this victory expensive.

A realization suddenly struck him as if a bolt of lightening from the heavens. There weren't twelve thousand troops here. Hells, this couldn't even be four. He quickly turned in his saddle seeing his uncles leaned in together talking. They must have come to the same conclusion as him, and probably a lot sooner.

The only thing Tyrek could think of quickly was that the rest of the Northern army had to be heading to Riverrun. If they weren't warned they would be caught unawares. However, they couldn't just leave now. They had to fight and kill these men quickly, so they can go and reinforce his cousin.

The armies sat staring at each other from across the field until the silence was broken by the call of trumpets. Verbal commands started following and a moment later the infantry started moving forward.

JON V

The trumpets were music to Jon's ears. He watched through the visor of his helmet as Tywin's army marched to their defeat.

He had hoped that the appearance of the dragon banner would throw him off his game a little. He had been greatly rewarded for the murder of his brother and sister. Now, shows up their younger brother and a direct threat to Tywin's legacy. Everything Jon heard about Tywin seemed to be ringing true. There were few things that the old lion cared about, but his pride and family legacy were of the most importance to him.

Jon knew that he would want to end his threat to the throne quickly. So, an early morning attack that would potentially catch his army off guard was not even close to below him. Then he knew that once Tywin saw the amount of troops he had the old man would know he had been fooled. He would have to attack first to finish them as fast as possible to be able to get word to the Kingslayer that the rest of the army was heading to liberate Riverrun.

Jon had added to the confidence of his men by having them force march down the Kingsroad. They had actually been set up here going on five days. He wanted his men to be able to rest up and also set some surprises for Tywin. Lord Forrester's and Umber's outriders had been effective at making sure they weren't spotted by any Lannister scouts.

Their little parlay stunt yesterday had went pretty much the way Jon expected. If Tywin had come out he would have talked, but it was more to let him know they were there and taunt the lion a little with his banner. There was an additional reason for going to the parlay that Jon had planned. When he had finally spotted what he was looking for he had pointed it out to Annie. It was a very unique banner. It was a black manticore on a field of white below a red stripe and three golden disks. They had ended up leaving before speaking to anyone, but it had all played out in the end. Now he stood among his men as the lions came forward.
Jon could feel his blood pumping through his veins and he felt a shiver run up his spine. The lords had tried to say it was foolish of him to be at the front of the infantry, but Jon had argued it into the ground. He said it wasn't fair for the men to fight and die for him if he didn't do the same. Besides he wasn't going to be alone. He was going to have the Greatjon in the infantry with him. Lord Bolton and Forrester were given command of what cavalry they had. The only part of their plan they had any issue with was when to launch the cavalry attack. He had just smirked at them and told them they would definitely know the signal. Besides they probably wouldn't have believed him if he did tell them. That hadn't reassured them too much, but in the end they had just nodded.

The ground had started trembling under Jon's feet from the infantry coming for them. When they were about a hundred feet away he heard the Greatjon call out, “HAR! TIME TO KILL SOME FUCKING LIONS!!” The men cheered out in response as Jon tightened his grip on *Dark Sister*. The Lannister troops broke formation at that time full on charging at the shield wall.

“SPEARS OUT!” Jon yelled. The men behind Jon's row quickly lined them up between the shields. “HOLD THE LINE!!”

Jon leaned forward supporting the man before him as he dug his heels into the ground. Seconds later the two forces crashed together in a cacophony of steel and death. The first ones to die had impaled themselves on the spears as they had rushed the shield wall. The spearmen had quickly retracted their weapons using the shields to pry the corpses off their spear heads.

A man tried reaching over the wall to stab the shield bearer. With a quick slash of Dark Sister his hand and sword fell uselessly to the ground at his feet, and a moment later the spear thrust forward beside him getting the man right through the bowels.

As the spear retracted another troop tried to pull the shield away. Jon held his soldier back by the collar of his gorget, and thrust his sword through the gaps in the shield wall. He heard the scream and felt the resistance as Valyrian Steel punched through metal and flesh. When he pulled the sword back half the blade was now painted crimson.

Jon felt a sudden sensation come over him then. All his fear and anxiety suddenly washed away. He felt completely focused on the fight, but at the back of his mind was a nagging sensation. He couldn't comprehend it exactly. It was an urge to kill and a need to put as much blood on *Dark Sister's* blade as possible, but it didn't override his ability to think. It was something primal and predatory, and it ultimately should have scared him, but Jon only felt invigorated.

Another spear thrust went out followed by more screams of agony. The second row of spear men had joined the fight too. They angled their spears above the shield wall now to strike at anyone foolish enough to peek over.

Jon thrust out with *Dark Sister* once more in between spear strikes. A smile slipped across his face when he was again awarded with a scream of agony. As the body fell against the shield in front of him it opened up a small enough gape for Jon to peer through. He noticed that bodies were beginning to pile up.

If they stayed in this spot too much longer the Lannisters would be able to just climb the piles of corpses and jump over the shield wall. It didn't help that blood was also soaking the ground turning it into a muddy pit and footing would be hard to come by soon.

“READY BACK!!” He called out through the tumult of the battle. Thankfully, he was heard further back as he heard the command echo through the ranks. A horn blew out and the entire Northern army moved as one backwards thirty paces giving them more room to fight again.
The sudden lack of resistance had caused some the Lannisters to fall flat on their faces, and others tripped over them. His men not risking any advantage threw quick spear thrusts catching many of them off guard before reforming the shield wall.

Things progressed much the same as before. The two forces crashed together in a tangle of steel and flesh. It continued on this way repeating. The forces would clash they would be able to get around ten spear strikes and then have to move back again.

It was working perfectly to plan and the Lannisters were taking heavily loses till they finally manged to break through. Jon tried to hold him back but the man in front of him was ripped away along with his shield. As Lannister troops tried pouring in the new hole they found him with a spear to either side. He quickly dispatched the first man that came at him with a slice across the belly below the chest plate. The man's weapons fell from his hands as he tried catching his entrails to shove them back in. A quick slash to the throat ended his futile endeavor.

*Dark Sister* came alive in his hands. He parried, slashed, blocked, and struck with his shield all that came near him. The two spear men were helping funnel the men, so he wasn't forced to try and fight multiple men at once.

In between foes Jon was able to gauge how the fight was going. There were several openings that had formed in the shield wall, and Lannister men were slipping in amongst his troops. He decapitated the next man rushing at him before he sent them into the second part of his plan.

“FALL BACK!” He yelled as loud as he could, “FALL BACK!”

The call echoed through till he heard the horns blow three consecutive quick bursts. The back rows of troops quickly peeled away to regroup for the next phase. Jon kept fighting as more of his men rushed from the formation. He stole glances across the field to Tywin hoping that he had took the bait.

He didn't have to wait long. He felt a smirk come across his face as he heard trumpets sound across the field. The smile was quickly wiped away when he heard a man roar out at him. He barely had time to raise his shield as the impact of a great sword sent him spinning.

He came back around faced with a man the size of the Greatjon. His greathelm covered his face but he wore an earthy brown surcoat with the image of a boar stitched upon it. The man didn't give Jon time to fully regain his bearings before he attacked again. Jon seeing it coming was able to deflect the blow with his shield and quickly lashed out in response. His own blow was caught on his opponent's shield. Though harmless now Jon saw how the Valyrian Steel took a decent chunk out of the wood panels of his enemy's defense.

Jon quickly decided to go on the defensive for a while. He knew a man of that size swinging a great sword and weighed down with full plate should tire a lot sooner than himself. He had to be tricky with his counter attacks though. He wanted to get his shield out of the picture. This man wasn't a fool though. He was well trained and Jon couldn't give his plans away so fast. Slowly he chipped away at the shield with his attacks, but made them look as if they were meant for his opponent's person.

His patience was finally paid off when he saw a crack run along the front of the shield splitting it slightly. The boar man didn't seem to notice. Probably concentrating too hard on trying to claim the glory of killing Rhaegar's son.

The knight threw a powerful blow that staggered Jon a few feet back. When he raised his sword to follow through a horse went racing by them. The rider swung catching the blade with such force it knocked the boar knight to his knees. Jon barely had time to register the mane of blonde hair or the
green cloak as the horse raced off. He just rushed the downed man and swung with all his might. The knight raised his shield to catch the blow, but the wood separated under *Dark Sister*, and the blade continued through his vambrace like it was butter. The knight howled out in pain as his left hand and half of the shield fell to the ground, but Jon wasted no time. He smashed his shield into the man's visor sending him to his back. He ended the Knight's life with a thrust of *Dark Sister* between his gorget and chest plate piercing his throat.

When he looked up he was greeted by a bright ball of light. He threw himself to the ground impaling his sword as far as he could into the mud and held her hilt tightly.

TYREK I

Tyrek was frozen as he took in the carnage across the field. He couldn't understand what was happening. The Lannister army's infantry outnumbered the north men three to one. He knew that the North wouldn't roll over, but the overwhelming numbers should have been enough to crush their lines by now.

He had seen shield walls in plenty of drills, but the tower shields wielded by the Bolton troops made it much more effective. They even had the wherewithal to pull back occasionally to keep the mounding bodies negating the advantage of the shields.

Watching the Lannister troops clash with the Northerners reminded Tyrek of the ocean waves smashing against the base of the Rock. Only instead of the salty smell of white sea foam he nose was greeted by the coppery scent of blood as it sprayed out of the melee of bodies.

He felt his cheeks pull into a smile as he finally saw the first gaps appear in the shield wall. It wouldn't be too much longer till the North broke and the cavalry would be sent in to clean up. As his eyes wove over the crumbling shield wall his vision locked on the Targaryen boy blocking one of the holes with his own body.

He wanted to let a cheer escape him knowing that not only was victory within reach, but the Targaryen would fall soon as well securing Joffrey's reign from the dragons. His joy died in his throat as he observed their adversary. He was fighting like the Stranger himself flanked by two spearmen. They were effectively funneling troops to the dragon boy, so they couldn't fight a breast. At the same time the Targaryen was cutting down everyman unfortunate enough to be in range of his blade.

Still other gaps were opening in the shield wall, and more Lannister men were pouring amongst the Northern troops. A horn blasted across the field in three bursts, and he watched as the Northerners began breaking into a retreat. He looked over to his squire who met him with an equally wide smile. They had done it. They just had to mop here, get back to camp, and warn Ser Jaime about the rest of the Northern Army.

When his gazed turned back to the fight he saw Ser Lyle Crakehall engaged against the Targaryen. Tyrek watched enraptured as the two went back and forth. The dragon having to fight to get past the reach of Strong Boar's greatsword. The boy moved fast though. He was smart enough to know he couldn't go head to head in a contest of strength against the massive boar.

A trumpet blared across the ranks as the first wave cavalry began its charge across the field. He quickly closed the visors on his helmet to prepare for when the trumpets signaled their own charge.
He glanced over at his uncles to see a small satisfied smile on Kevan's face. Lord Tywin's face had his normal blank expression, but Tyrek could recognize the pleased glint in his eye.

He pulled his lance from it's holder and couched it against his side in a relaxed position. It shouldn't be too long till the true rout began and he could charge in with his wave. He felt his anxiety start rising again. He started running his hand through his mount's mane to hopefully calm himself and the horse.

He snapped his head up when he heard laughter ringing through the ranks. Across the field a lone rider weaved their way through the press. Tyrek kept his eyes locked on this one mad Northman wondering what in Seven-Hells they were thinking. Then he saw their destination. Ser Lyle had gotten the Targaryen onto his back foot and was probably getting ready to end him. This rider must have thought they could save their prince.

His eyes went wide when the rider merely went by Ser Lyle, but had struck out with a sword swing strong enough to send Crakehall stumbling and to his knees. Tyrek wanted to see the outcome of the duel, but his eyes stayed focused on the lone rider. As they broke free of the pitch they put their horse into a full canter at the cavalry looming ahead.

The laughter became a roar when they all realized that the rider wasn't just mad, but a mad woman on top of it. Tyrek recognized the blonde hair and green cloak from the girl that was sat by the Targaryen boy when they waited for a parlay that never happened. He didn't know what possessed her to undertake this suicide run, but Tyrek watched it unfold with bated breath. The right and left flanks split off to begin the pincer as the girl continued to run straight down the middle.

His mouth fell agape when the young woman suddenly jumped from her saddle. The laughter seemed to disappear immediately when she flew- she flew across the expanse towards their cavalry line. As the distance closed she began to glow a strange yellow color. Suddenly a bolt of lightening erupted from the cloudless blue sky striking the girl. An explosion rippled out from her in a bright ball of light.

Tyrek had to shield his eyes from the light, but moments later he was rocked by a wind so strong he was almost thrown from his saddle. His horse whickered in fear and rose up on his rear legs. Tyrek had to release his lance, clamp his thighs as tight as possible, and grip the reins with both hands to keep his seat.

When he finally regained control of the horse he pat its neck to calm him. When he was able to glance back up at the field all words left him, and he felt himself go pale as dread filled every ounce of his being. Stood in the middle of a crater that used to be their cavalry was a gigantic woman. She looked as if all the skin had been flayed from her body, but a full head of golden-brown hair blew in the breeze as massive amounts of steam poured off her body. Around her feet was pure absolute carnage. The limbs of both men and horse were scattered about. Those closest to her seemed to have been turned to naught but ash. Others wailed in pain where they were crushed beneath their horses. The infantry had been blown off their feet by the wind of the explosion.

The Northern infantry had then broke the ranks of their shield wall and were slaughtering Lannister men before they could get to their feet or reform ranks. Screams of panic from both man and horse filled the field and where he should have seen the cavalry pincers plowing through the sides of the Northerners he saw horses tripping in trenches that the mist had help conceal. Riders were thrown violently from their saddles. If they weren't broken by the fall a Northman descended on them quickly.

A horn sounded from the Northern lines and northern cavalry came pouring over the rise behind the infantry. When the horn faded away the giant woman's eyes flashed open. Two blue
moonstones shone from her shaded face as she suddenly began moving with a swiftness that defied her size. A few brave knights that had managed to stay a horse through the explosion charged at her. The steel tips of their lances shining brightly in the morning sun as they gained speed toward their target. Seconds before impact her legs below her knee suddenly changed. One moment they were skinless flesh and the next they had crystallized. The sun reflected off her new blue tinted legs like fresh winter's ice.

The lances that didn't shatter but scraped across the surface in a screech that sent goosebumps rising all along his flesh. The woman didn't give them time to react after that. She squatted and swept her leg out as she scooped a rider off his horse in her massive hand. Her foot impacted the rest of the riders in a sickening crunch of bones and armor as the men and horses went flying through the air. She came out of her spin at full height and flung the unfortunate bastard from her hand. His body hit their lines with such force that he went ten rows deep. Tortured moans of the men that survived the impact rolled across the Lannister forces as most seemed frozen in fear of the monstrosity before them.

“TYREK!” His uncle Kevan's voiced called out. When he snapped his head in the direction his uncle was frantically waving him over.

He took note that his squire was also looking towards his uncles. “C'mon Tylar.”

“Ye-yes, Ser,” the boy responded as they both kicked their horses into motion.

When they pulled up by his uncles he could hear his uncle Tywin speaking, “We'll have the second cavalry wave charge to cover our retreat. There is no way we will win with this creature on the field.” He nodded his head toward the giant woman to emphasis what he was speaking of. When they all turned Tyrek saw that the woman's hands were now covered in the same crystal. She kicked a knight and his horse at least a hundred feet into the air before punching another off his mount. The knight didn't even have the time to scream before the solid fist probably broke every bone in his body at once.

Tyrek allowed his eyes to wander from the gigantic woman. His stomach dropped when he took in the the Northern cavalry lined up across the field with the infantry loosely poised behind them. When he ran his eyes over the lines he felt a small bit of hope flare in his chest. He couldn't see the dragon helmet anywhere amongst the ranks.

When his vision returned to the giant on the field she was just standing there staring at the Lannister army. Her head flicking back and forth as if she was looking for something or someone specifically. Lord Tywin's voice broke the uneasy quiet that had descended on the field, “ARCHERS! KILL THAT THING!” The call of nock, draw, loose quickly followed, and hundreds of arrows whistled away from the army. Tyrek could have sworn he saw one of the woman's brows raise as if unimpressed with the rain of death heading her way. He heard uncle Kevan sputter in disbelief when her entire body changed into the same strange crystal before the arrows clattered harmlessly against her.

The archers tried another volley that ended the same as the first. A thousand arrows impacted against harden crystal like pattering rain, and once again falling harmlessly to the ground. All eyes turned skyward when a man suddenly came shooting over the crystallized woman's head. Steam shot from his back propelling him towards their lines green cloak flapping behind him like wings. The entire army seemed entranced by the impossibility of what was happening before them.

Then he started to glow, and Tyrek heard something he thought he never would. The panicked cry
of Tywin Lannister as he called out, “SOUND THE RETREAT! RETR-!” Lightening struck, and as a bright light washed across him everything went black.

AMORY I

Ser Amory Lorch whipped the reins as hard as he could as he continued to kick his horse in the flanks. Panicked breaths left him at the same rate as the horse he rode. The same thought kept repeating in his head over and over of how he had to get away. Foam frothed from the horse's mouth under the strain but he couldn't let up. The vibrations of her pounding at the earth behind him rode up his horses legs and shook him in the saddle.

This wasn't how it was supposed to end for him. He had earned his place amongst Lord Tywin's most trusted in the Rebellion. No matter the battle he should have been relatively safe and just enjoyed slaughtering. Now, though he was running for his life from an evil northern she-demon.

The battle had started so promising. The Northerners shouldn't have been able to stand against the might of the lions, but they had. The shield wall had held out against a decent portion of their infantry and then everything had turned with their feinted retreat.

Those fucking savages had lured in the first wave of cavalry and that evil bitch decimated them along with their traps. Amory had damn near pissed his pants when he saw that demon. He had thankfully been far enough away to not be affected by the explosion, but had watched in horror as she appeared out of the smoke. She was all white and red like those forsaken trees the Northmen worshiped like the heathens they were.

Mumbles and curses had rung through the line as they watched her punch, kick, and throw their men around. Then the north had regrouped. Their numbers had been thinned some, and he was happy to see that the Targaryen was no longer among their ranks. At least he was saved the trouble of dealing with another one.

Then everything had gone to hell. From his angle he could see a lone rider approach the she-devil's back. When he had suddenly flown- FUCKING FLOWN FROM HIS HORSE. Amory had watched mouth agape as he flew over the monster's head. As he started to fall towards the Lannister ranks he began glowing. Lightening struck a moment later, and he had watched frozen in shock as the entire middle of the lines were blown to the Seven-Hells. Men and horses were thrown in each direction as their weapons became deadly projectiles increasing the damage wrought.

When this new creature emerged from a cloud of dust and dirt, Amory, couldn't help the dark hysterical laugh that erupted from him. In that moment he knew they had been cursed by the gods, and they had a sick twisted sense of humor. The monster was broad and rippled with muscles. What skin was visible was the same sick red of blood that was on the female creature. The rest of him was covered in golden armor, and a patch of golden hair adorned his head. This creature was the embodiment of what a Lannister would look like if he was the Warrior. This Lannister god though seemed intent on their destruction.

It swung a massive mailed hand and tens of Lannister soldiers went sailing through the air. Even from the distance Amory could hear the tormented wails of its victims as their bones were crushed instantaneously. Archers tried in vain to bring it down as hundreds of arrows plinked harmlessly against the beast's golden armor.
Then the creature roared the most ungodly sound he had ever heard causing the ground to rumble below him. His horse nickered nervously under him from the beast's call. The sound of trumpets suddenly reached his ears. He felt relief flood through him. This battle hadn't turned into a total debacle then. They had killed the Targaryen and there were still some of the command left alive. They could fall back to Harranhal like Lord Tywin had been smart enough to plan for. Many of the other lords had scoffed at the lion having a plan for retreat against such a meager northern force, but Ser Amory couldn't be more relieved about that now.

The trumpets echoed down the lines calling for the retreat when they were suddenly cut off. A high pitched screeching rent the air that sounded like carpenter nails being dragged across glass. The sound continued to grow in volume. Amory shivered at the unnatural sound as goose flesh rise all over his body. Suddenly, the blue crystal around the demonic woman exploded.

She reminded Amory of a wild creature that had just escaped its prison as her head whipped back and forth rapidly. His heart froze when her eyes turned his direction and locked right on him. Then she stepped towards him.

“SER! GO!” one of his men screamed. He managed to pull his vision from the creature coming their way and looked the man in his face, “Go, Ser, we will hold her off.”

Amory was about to take his man up on the deal when an even better strategy came to mind. “No, we all need to go.” Some of his knights seemed they were about to argue, but he quickly cut off their retorts, “NOW! WE MAKE FOR HARRANHAL!”

Thankfully, they all nodded in silent answer. He pulled the reins to turn his horse and once he was facing the right direction snapped them hard to urge it on.

His idea had worked for the most part. His men had thundered behind him as they rode from the battle. Their deaths at the hands of that giant woman had become inevitable, but following him they would slow her down more than if she was able to just charge through them.

He didn't dare to turn and see how many were left. Their cries and screams along with the thundering of her feet were enough to let him know she was still pursuing him. The sound of something massive coming through the foliage caught his attention as a massive white wolf came bursting out of the underbrush ahead of his party.

He couldn't risk turning and allow the demon woman behind him to close the distance any more. He just pushed his horse harder hoping to be able to outrun both. Amory couldn't believe the size of it. It was easily the size of a horse and its long low strides allowed it to chew up the distance quickly.

His horse barely had time to outrun it, but the man behind him wasn't as fortunate. The man screamed in terror, but quickly fell silent. He still didn't risk turning to see what was behind him, but by the pants he could hear the giant wolf had joined the chase as well.

It ended up being all for not, and Amory knew he was out of time when even at a full canter the shadow of the creature chasing him fell upon him. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the wolf sprinting beside his mount, and all it took was the beast snapping its jaws towards his mount's legs before darting off. The horse tripped trying to keep itself from being bit, and he was thrown into the air.

She snapped him out of the air as if he was nothing, and he found himself held in her massive hand.
He looked up into her eyes. They were a blue-grey like two chips of ice and as he felt his hand grasp the hilt of his dirk a unsettling smirk took her face.

He quickly wrenched the blade free and as it descended the flesh of her thumb became that strange crystal. He watched wide eyed as the blade snapped as if it was simply made out of glass not even leaving a mark. His arm was quickly seized by her other hand, and with barely flexing her fingers he screamed out in pain as his arm was dislocated.

He could do nothing as his arm hung limp at his side, and he was hauled away like a child's toy.

TYREK I

Tyrek shot up, and immediately regretted it. His head was ringing, and his entire body screamed out against him. He quickly looked around to try and get his bearings. Men were running in every direction as orders were being shouted. He saw Tylar laying beside him, and what had happened suddenly came back to him.

A deafeningly loud roar drew his attention, and his eyes fell upon another massive creature. Where the first had been a woman this one was clearly a man. He was covered head to toe in golden armor that shone bright in the morning rays. The fact that there were two of them on the field managed to finally fight through the fog of his mind.

Then the sound of trumpets broke through signaling the retreat. They had to get out of there, and quickly. They had to get back to the camp quickly. His uncle Tywin had been smart enough to plan the fall back to Harranhal, but had been too confident to have their camp broken down. They couldn't leave that for the Northmen.

He reached over grabbed his squire's pauldron to roll him over, “Tylar, we have to get out of he-!' The words died on his tongue as he took in his squire's ruin head. A length of a lance was sticking out the front of his helmet. The way the front of his helmet was caved in it had to have happened in the explosion.

He pushed his dead squire away as he stumbled onto his feet. He swayed for a moment almost losing his balance again. He could see lion banners riding away in the distance. It was a little reassuring to know that his uncles were at least alive and getting away. They must have thought him dead from the explosion, and left him.

The trumpets suddenly ceased as the air was filled with the sound of glass cracking. He didn't have time to worry about that, though, they had called the retreat, and he had to get out of there. He scoured the ground around him till he found a discarded sword. He quickly snatched it up. Then with a glance around he spotted a riderless horse as it was danced frantically in place. Its training requiring it to stay, but its instincts trying to tell it to flee. He snagged the reins running a calming hand down the horse's snout. When he was confidant enough he threw himself in the saddle.

Many of the men were trying to flee, but others were fighting the golden monster at the same time, the female one had taken off after a group of fleeing knights to the west, and now the northern cavalry was storming across the field.

“RETREAT! RETREAT TO THE CAMP!” He bellowed out as loud as he could. Heads spun
towards him. Being dressed in the armor of a higher rank Lannister must had reassured them, and he was quickly surrounded by knights as the foot started running from the battle. He kicked his feet and snapped the reins of his acquired mount, and they thundered from the disaster that had become of the fight.

They had quickly out ran the foot soldiers leaving Tyrek in just the company of the knights that had joined him fleeing. He hadn't realized how far five miles could truly be till they were running for their lives from the Northern army.

He felt relief flood him when he finally spot the crimson tents in the distance. He spurred his horse faster hoping they would have time to break down camp and leave for Harranhal before the Northmen arrived.

Those aspirations died the moment a earsplitting roar rang out across the rolling hills. He glanced in the direction it came from and his blood froze in his veins. His mind was trying to register what he was seeing. They were all supposed to be dead and lost to history. The last one had died over a hundred years ago, and wasn't even the size of a barn cat. His mind knew this to be true, but his eyes were seeing the giant bat like wings of a dragon swooping down upon them a color so blue the flapping was the only thing that broke its camouflage from the sky. Then he saw the dark spot on its back. The Targaryen he had wrongly assumed they had managed to kill rode the creature's back.

He watched in paralyzed fear as the beast sped towards him, its jaws opened, and flames came spewing out. He could only scream in anguish as the fires consumed him.

ANNIE I

She strolled into the Lannister camp with her prize still secured in her right hand. She had felt nothing but joy at the defeated look on his face when his dagger had snapped like a toothpick. The way the pig had squealed when she dislocated his arm had been music to her ears.

When Jon had first told her to apprehend him she had been confused. The Greatjon must have seen her confusion because he had told her that it was Ser Amory Lorch. She couldn't wait to present her gift to her husband, and see the look in his eye when he could avenge his sister. A sister he never got to meet due to Lannister ambitions.

She saw him then. Farther in the camp by the largest tent Lyax came swooping out of the sky with her handsome man on her back. She paused a moment to observe and enjoy the spectacle. Her titan form giving her the height of an unimpeded view. He slid from the blue dragon's back in his black armor. In the moment he looked like something straight from a myth. More god than man, and he was her god to do with as she wished.

She couldn't lie to herself. She had tried to resist what had been brewing between them over the years. It helped that he didn't seem to push the issue. She knew he cared about her beyond just being a friend, but the shackles of being raised a bastard were hard to shake. Her efforts had all
been in vain, though. She had ended up being the one to start something with him. It had taken her a while to accept her old life was gone, and she were never going back to Marlay to see her father. Everything had kind of fallen in place after she had just accepted that truth. This was her world now. There was no Marlayan government to control her life, and no mission forcing her to betray and hurt the people she had reluctantly befriended. Now, there was Jon and the Starks, and the life she could carve out with her squad mates.

That was why she kissed Jon below the weirwood. The sword itself had been the best birthday present she was ever given, and the thought he had put into it had touched her. It was like her in the fact it overall had a simple design making it more utilitarian, but when he had said the moonstone reminded him of her eyes she had swooned. On the inside of course. Outwards she had given him the same shy smiles he would gift her. Under that tree she had decided if this new world was going to be their lives then she was going to be happy for once.

When Jon disappeared into the massive pavilion she resumed her walk. North of the camp she saw where the troops were rounding up whatever Lannister survivors they could capture. Reiner's titan shell was nearby steaming as it dissolved. For a moment she thought of delivering her prize there, but decided against it. Jon would definitely want this little piggy as soon as possible.

As she got closer she could see the Greatjon, Lord Forrester, and Lord Bolton with a few of their men waiting outside the tent Jon had disappeared into speaking to each other. As quiet as she tried to be her footfalls caught their attention and all their eyes turned to her approach.

When she was close enough she lowered herself to her knees. She rested her fists on the ground and bent her head over her knees. When she burst from the nape of her titan the fresh air blowing across her face immediately relaxed her. She closed her eyes for a moment enjoying the cooling wind kissing her skin. She always seemed forgot how warm and muggy it could get in her titan.

“Princess?” Her eyes snapped back open as she looked down on the Greatjon. He stood next to the neck of her titan holding out a meaty hand in invitation to her.

Princess. That was something she never thought she would be. She had tried to resist at first. She didn't want the responsibility of being queen. Especially to a country she knew so little about. Armin had devoured all the knowledge he could, but Annie had been quite content just knowing of the North. That was the place she had assumed Jon and her would stay. Then Robb had thrown the yoke of being king around Jon's neck using duty as the lasso to capture him. Annie would give credit to Lord Stark. He had raised some honorable sons, but they were way too duty bound. They truly rarely did anything selfishly. So, she had tried to worm her way out of it using the Curse of Ymir as a shield. Unfortunately, Jon had busted right through it with sound reasoning that she couldn't trust the words of people that had pretty much enslaved her people, and deep down inside Annie knew the thought of having to see Jon with another woman made her sick.

After she had agreed Jon had looked so relieved. He had told her that he was scared and he didn't know how he was going to do it. She had given him the same advice she had heard Zeke give Reiner when they were departing Marlay, and he had been put in charge of our little group. “When in charge, be in charge.”

“I don't know how, Annie!” He threw his arms up in exasperation, “I've always just been a bastard, and now I have to be a king.”

She had reached up grabbed his chin and turned his face back towards her, “No one knows, Jon, Just fake it.” He had raised an eyebrow at her as she spoke, “Fake it till you believe it. A part of you will always be Jon Snow, but out there in front of the lords you need to be Jon Targaryen.”
He huffed in response, but she pushed on. “Here's the big secret. No one knows what they are doing. Everyone just fakes the confidence till the confidence becomes natural. Jon Snow isn't going anywhere. He is mine just like Annie Leonhart is yours. Out there though we will have to be Jon and Annie Targaryen. The real world is about to bite us and we have to bite back. This won't be Monsters and Maidens or Come into My Castle like the kids play in Wintertown.”

She leaned up on her toes and gave him a gentle kiss to soften the blow of what she was about to say, “Lord Stark raised you to be honorable, but you will not always be able to be. We will encounter some grey areas where the honorable thing may get us killed. Sometimes the right answer isn't the honorable answer.”

That talk had made a massive impact on Jon. The bastard boy she had first met on the moors outside Winterfell was gone whenever other lords were present. He carried himself taller and more confidently, and the effect it had on Annie was less than proper.

She leaned back and winced in discomfort as the muscles attaching her to the titan snapped away from her face. As she swung over the side the Greatjon caught her under the armpits and gently lowered her to the ground. As soon as she was clear of the body it began hissing steam to dissolve. The Greatjon was wide eyed and opened his mouth to speak, but was cut off by her prize suddenly squealing in pain. She rushed around the titans head to get to Lorch. It wouldn't do to have her quarry boiled before her husband got to enjoy it.

Annie seized the wrist of his dislocated arm and with a hard yank pulled him free. The fingers of her titan's right hand snapped away as Ser Amory Lorch impacted the ground like a sack of potatoes. He howled out in pain from both Annie's 'assistance' and hitting the ground on that arm.

She looked up at an Umber soldier standing behind his lord, “Secure him for my husband, and watch him.”

The man was quick to comply with a “Yes, Your Grace.”

As she walked towards the other waiting lords she could feel Umber's eyes on her. “Something on your mind, My Lord?”

“Just bloody amazed, Your Grace, apologies.”

“No need for apologies, My Lord, it takes everyone off guard the first time.” She casually answered back.

“Does it hurt?”

“I have to be wounded to change. At first it did, but it is like anything else really. Once a tolerance is built up it is easier to deal with.”

She looked up to see the giant lord of Last Hearth staring at her mouth agape. She raised an eyebrow at him and he quickly reined his expression back in, “What about your face?” He ran his left hand across his cheek to help demonstrate his point.

“Oh, that?” She mimicked the motion feeling her fingers run across the grooves left in her cheek, “It goes away rather quickly. Give it an hour or two and I'll be right as rain.”

She continued past the other lords as she approached Lyax curled up on the ground. She could hear their steps stop behind her as the dragon's head rose and she chirped. Annie reached out running her hand over Lyax's scaled nose. As much as everyone called Jon Lyax's father Annie was just as much her mother. From the time she had outgrown being a hatchling Jon and her were the only two
she allowed to approach. She looked up into her 'daughter's' glistening silver eye, “How are you my sweet?” A purr rippled up the dragon's throat as she closed her eye contently and leaned into Annie's hand. Annie kept running her hands over Lyax's scales as she turned to the men observing her. “So, where are we with everything?”

“The wounded are being tended to while the battlefield is being cleared up, and we have scout parties out trying to round up any remaining Lannisters in the area, Your Grace” Lord Bolton answered in the quiet tone he always used.

“What about our loses? Do we have an estimate of what this victory cost us?” She scanned her eyes across the lords before her as she waited for their answer.

Lord Forrester was the first to speak, “We most likely wont have a reliable count till the mor-.” Gregor's response was cut off by an anguished wail that came from the Lannister pavilion.

Lyax snapped from her head from Annie's hand and a low growl erupted from her. Annie quickly patted reassuringly, “Stay here girl. I'll see what is happening.” The dragon huffed in answer, but her eyes didn't stray from the massive tent.

Annie took off towards the tent with the lords in tow behind her. She heard the three men draw their swords, but as they approached it didn't sound like a fight. Instead she was greeted by the cracking of wood as Jon continued to scream out in frustration.

Just as they reached the flaps to enter Jon came stumbling out in the grip of Laurence Snow. The poor boy looked like he didn't know what to do, but what shocked her was the tear tracks that ran down her husband's cheeks.

Dark Sister slipped from his hands to clatter on the ground as he tried to stopper sobs with deep breaths. She watched as his eyes went left and right like a trapped animal before she saw them settle on Ser Amory. A look of pure rage took over his face before he wrenched his shoulders free of Laurence's hands.

Annie saw a small scroll of parchment flutter to the ground as Jon stalked towards the restrained knight. She scooped the scroll up as Ser Amory bellowed out in pain. Jon had kicked the knight down and pulled the Valyrian Steel dagger from his belt. He plunged it into the knight over and over again as the metal armor screeched its resistance. Ser Amory's screams quickly turned into hacks, gags, and coughs. Each one sending a misting spray of blood from his mouth.

Annie had stood there frozen having never seen Jon in such a lack of control, but the Greatjon scooped Jon off the fallen knight by his armpits. As he was hauled away her husband screamed repeatedly how he was only at seventeen as he thrashed like a toddler in the throws of a tantrum. When she could no longer hear the anguished cries of Jon she unrolled the parchment.

She could feel her face pale as she took in the words written before her. She didn't know how long she stood there staring at the parchment, but when Lord Forrester broke through with a, “Your Grace?” she realized her hands were shaking. She just silently handed the lord the paper.

She held out her hand in request to Laurence Snow whom had retrieved Dark Sister from the ground. The boy thankfully handed the blade over with out question.

When she stood over Ser Amory she was surprised to see that he was still alive. His eyes were glassy as he stared towards the sky and blood trickled from his mouth as it flapped open and shut like a fish out of water.
Through her life she had always felt some remorse after she had killed. She had cried numerous nights after she had killed Marco. She had felt guilty when she had killed Levi's old squad and the other soldiers in the Forest of Giant Trees. She had even felt a little guilt during the battle they just waged. Most of those soldiers had swords and spears thrust in their hands by the Lannisters without a choice. This time though, as Dark Sister fell she felt nothing.

She turned and handed Dark Sister back to Laurence. The other Lords that hadn't followed her husband all stood motionless just staring at her. “What? Never seen an execution before?” She asked sarcastically.

It was enough to break Lord Forrester out of his stupor as a smile took his face, “We just aren't used to seeing the women of the royal family perform them, Your Grace.”

Annie huffed, “Well, you might as well get used to it.” Annie had no doubt that her presence alone would mix up the court. From what Sasha had told her of King's Landing they were going to throw the entire realm into a spin with how they were.

“Your Grace,” Lord Bolton broke through her thoughts, “What did the message say to send His Grace into such a rage?”

Annie sighed as her eyes lowered to the ground in respect to her husband's adoptive father, “Lord Stark is dead at the orders of Joffrey.”

Lord Whitehill let out several curses and Lord Bolton just stood there expressionless as he was apt to do. The few soldiers around them muttered to themselves. They had just won a great victory yet all the men around her with the expection of Bolton wore looks of defeat. She figured it was in it's own way.

“My Lords, see to your men, take anything of value from this camp, have someone secure Lorch's head, and I'll go check on my husband.” The lord's bowed their heads and departed to follow her commands.

As she started in the direction that Lord Umber had dragged her husband but had barely made a few steps before the call of her name halted her. It was maddening to realize that it was the first time she had been addressed by her name out in the open in months. She quickly turned to see Reiner racing towards her on a brown horse and waving his free arm like a crazy person.

He reined up in front of her pulling the horse to a stop. The horse began crab walking back and forth as Reiner turned to address her. “He's here Annie!” He spoke excitedly, “The guards stopped him and another man at the edge of camp, but he is here!”

“Who?!” Annie asked quickly Reiner's excitement having bleed into her about the new arrival.

“Levi!”

Chapter End Notes

Levi is back and he brought Ser Barry with him!

I hope everyone liked getting a little view from Annie!

Thanks for reading!!!
NEXT: RIVERRUN
RIVERRUN

Chapter Summary

The Northern forces under Robb Stark attempt to life the siege of Riverrun.

Chapter Notes

So here it is. The last battle chapter we have for a little bit. This chapter was actually written back around chapter 5 when the idea crawled in my head and kept blocking me from writing the other chapters. So, I tossed it down and then over time kept editing it to what we have today.

Let's get to it!

BYRRON I

Byrron had never thought his life would potentially end in a siege. He had been born the third son to a farmer, and never really knew where his life would lead. Like the highborn they descended from his father had raised his oldest brother, Cayle, to take over the farm like a heir. They were still considered nobility, but in the most loosest sense. They were an off shoot branch of House Grell being a level of distant cousin. They were still close enough to use the name and sigil, but his father had always had them keep a low profile to not draw unwanted attention. Their farm was fairly large, successful, and strongly supported by the Tullys of Riverrun.

Byrron had never wanted for anything growing up minus what direction to take in his life. He had learned his letters and how to trade from his father. Taking frequent trips to Riverrun to sell their produce or pay their taxes to their liege.

Throughout his young life he had tried to figure out what he would do when he reached manhood. That had changed the day he first held a bow in his hands. He started to learn later than his highborn counterparts at the age of nine, but he had more motivation to improve quicker. Where most highborn practiced on training straw-men dummies, Byrron, had to excel to be able to protect what live stock they did own from predators.

His mother had made him a fur collared cloak from the first wolf he had killed when it tried to attack one of their cows. From that day on he became the defender of their lands. He had warded off plenty of predators since that day of both the animal and human variant.

He had cried in his mother's arms the night he had killed his first man. The brigand had tried to steal some chickens and when confronted attacked his father. Byrron had been returning from patrolling their land. As he approached he saw the man throw his father to the ground. Byrron didn't have time to think at all, and his body had seemed to react on it's own. The arrow took the
brigand through the neck as he was raising his rusted sword to strike his father. The blade fell from
his hand clattering to the ground as he clutched his neck where the arrow was lodged. Byrron had
ran to his father's side to help him up, and they had both looked on speechless as the would be
killer choked and sputtered blood over the grass as he died.

Since that day the potential murderer's sword hung on his belt. His father had fought in the
Rebellion and taught Byrron how to oil and sharpen the blade back to its prime. It felt a little
morbid to carry that blade, but it was a reminder all his life that any hesitation could cause him to
lose someone he loved.

His reputation with the bow and how he defended the family farm spread throughout the local
region, and ended up being the cause of the next major change in his life shortly after his thirteenth
nameday. They had come to Riverrun with their latest harvest and taxes when surprisingly Lord
Hoster had wanted to speak with them directly instead of dealing with the steward like normal.

Lord Hoster had first conducted business like they normally would on their visits. Then, he had
suddenly changed the subject to bring up Byrron's reputation. Lord Tully, knowing that Byrron was
his father's third son, offered to squire him and have a position in his garrison.

Byrron had initially been opposed to the offer. Feeling his responsibility to defend his family and
the farm had to be his first priority. His father had asked Lord Tully for a few moments to speak
quietly, and when they were alone he encouraged Byrron to take the position. His father had told
Byrron that he and his brothers were more than capable of defending the farm in his absence. He
also told him that this was a way for Byrron to have his own future. Byrron ended up accepting the
position after his father's encouraging, returned to the farm with his father to collect his belongings,
and said goodbye to his mother and brothers. His mother had been teary eyed to see him go, but
told him it was a great honor that Lord Tully had asked himself and that she was proud of him.

Life in Riverrun had been much better than he had initially expected. The first surprising factor had
been having a chamber all his own. It wasn't large by any means, but after sharing a room with his
brothers all his life it was nice to have his own space no matter the size.

For years now Riverrun had been his home. His days filled with training and duties on patrolling.
Through that time he had rose to become a knight in the garrison and had his own squad of men.
When he had earned his knighthood it had given him the confidence to pursue, Kaina, a beautiful
maid in the castle. She had a petite build, with gorgeous light brown hair that could have flashes of
dark auburn when the sun hit it right, and bright green-hazel eyes Byrron could get lost in every
time he looked at her.

They had both started working at the castle around the same time. For years they had sent
flirtatious smiles at each other in passing, but he never had the confidence to approach her. So, it
had been the greatest feeling when he finally manned up the courage to ask, and she had accepted
his request to court her. They had both been saving whatever coin they could to buy a home in the
town outside of Riverrun's walls to raise their own family. With Lord Hoster's health failing him
yet again they had decided they were going to wait till after he recovered to get his blessing for
them to be to wed.

Then the war had started and all their plans went right down the privy to be lost in the
Tumblestone. The Riverland's forces tried to fight off the Westerlands' invasion at both the Golden
Tooth and later outside the walls of Riverrun. They had been routed both times, and now Lord
Edmure was a prisoner along with many other lords in the camps surrounding the castle.

The whole time they had been under siege he had been worried about his family with Lord Tywin's
men terrorizing the kingdom. He knew deep down that all his hopes were in vain. Ultimately he
just hoped that their deaths had been quick and painless, but with the lions’ reputation he knew that was not likely. He just wished he could comfort Kaina. She had been an emotional wreck and he wanted to be there to help her, but with the siege he could barely get time to eat and sleep. The best he could do was have her stay in his chambers, so she would feel more secure.

It would be late in the night whenever he was able to get to his chambers, and Kaina would already be curled up in his bed, wrapped in his old wolf cloak, and with dried tear streaks on her face. He would quietly strip to his night clothes, pull her to his chest, and keep her wrapped in his arms as he fell to slumber. She would normally wake him up with a kiss when she was leaving his chambers to head to her duties and the days would repeat.

It had been weeks since the siege started and all the river banks around Riverrun were covered in Westerman banners. North of the Tumblestone was decorated in Lannister lions. To the West of the Red Fork was the red bull of House Prester. Then to the east on the other side of the moat that made Riverrun an island was the Purple unicorn of House Brax. After the battle outside Riverrun Lord Tytos Blackwood had taken charge of the garrison and remaining levies while Lord Hoster was still incapacitated by illness.

The Westermen had been building siege engines capable of crossing the moat or floating across the Tumblestone to try and get over the walls and take the castle. They were being delayed as much as possible by Lord Karl Vance and Ser Marq Piper attacking and raiding the encroaching armies and their supply lines.

Byrron had heard theories flowing through the castle that the army wasn't going to attack Riverrun at all. They were only building the siege towers to keep the occupants of the castle thinking they were. The rumor was that the Kingslayer's army was just there to stop the Riverlands from supporting Robb Stark when he came down the Kingsroad bound for the capital. He had to admit to himself that it did sound logical and would probably be a wise decision to stop them from aiding their lord's kin.

Last night it had been business as usual and some Riverland raiders had started harrying the Lannister Army again. However, this time Ser Jaime Lannister must have felt it required his personal touch. He had watched from the battlements as a thousand soldiers rolled out under their Kingsguard commander, but he didn't see them return before his watch had ended. Then, when he had taken over his position earlier tonight the knight he relieved told him that they still hadn't seen Jaime Lannister return to the camp. He knew he was hoping too much, but Byrron truly wanted the legendary Lannister son to have been bested by Vance or Piper.

The night had been proceeding the same as every other night of the siege. He made his way back and forth on his section of the walls. Making sure his men were alert and not trying to cop any sleep on their watch. Across the Tumblestone he could vaguely hear Lannister soldiers making merry as they relaxed around campfires drinking. His men had watched from the walls as the army seemed to wind down for the night. Lannister men slowly trickling to the tents to find their sleep for the night. Only to wake up in the morning and do the whole process over again till their lord decided to storm the walls. If they decided to storm the walls.

It was around the Hour of the Wolf when the peaceful night was broken by horns blaring to the east. Cheers came up from the east wall not long after, and a few minutes later a runner reached him. The boy told him that the other soldiers could see Direwolf banners breaking through the perimeter of Lord Brax's camp. Byrron felt relief flood his body knowing that Lord Hoster's grandson had finally made it. From his post on the other side of the castle he could hear the clashing of steel along with the frightened cries of both men and horses.
ROBB IV

Their plan to relieve Riverrun had begun, and so far it was going off without a hitch. A few of the Vance men had disguised themselves in the garb of Lannister men pilfered from the battle in the Whispering Wood, and infiltrated the siege lines to opened up the gate Lord Brax had set up. Robb had also sent Grey Wind with them so he could quietly dispatch any wandering guards that would be able to raise the alarm.

They had spent the day after the Whispering Wood taking care of their wounded and planning the assault on the siege camp. Robb had managed to come out of the fight with nary a scratch, but he still knew in the back of his mind there was the potential for his luck to run out.

Everyone had exploded in cheers when they had seen Mikasa enter the camp dragging an unconscious Kinglayer behind her. He was even more surprised to see Ser Jaime's lack of a sword hand. The Scouts had thrown a quick tourniquet on his forearm to stop him from bleeding out, and Robb was quick to get him to a maester. It wouldn't do to have their prized prisoner die of infection before he could be properly utilized. The rest of the Lannister men that had surrendered when they knew they were doomed had been questioned extensively, and Robb had formed his new plan for Riverrun.

Ser Brynden and the other Riverland lords would attack north of the Tumblestone while Robb and the Northern lords would attack Lord Brax's forces from the east. They had waited for the cover of darkness and made their way slowly through the woods that encroached on Riverrun to be able to kill any scouts or outriders the camp had sent out.

The men picked to infiltrate the siege camp had grown up close enough to the Westerlands that their accents would not give them away before the attack could be under way. They had waited far enough in the woods shrouded in the darkness waiting for the signal.

Then he saw the torch waved three times by the gate. He wrenched his sword free of its scabbard, and kicked his horse into moving. There were no declarations this time. They had to keep the element of surprise for as long as possible. The thunder of thousands of hooves on the ground would be signal enough.

He had torn through the now open gate as their infiltrators were quickly dumping the Lannister armor from their bodies. The lords split from behind him as they all took their own teams of men down the rows to cause chaos.

The first man to die on his sword that night made the mistake of rushing from his tent to see what the commotion was. Robb's sword had sung through the air carving the man through his right shoulder. He screamed out as he died removing what little surprise remained.

The camp quickly turned into an angry ant hill. Horns blew waking the men sleeping in their tents. Men were rushing from the tents half dressed, but still wielding what ever weapons were close by. The air quickly filled with the clashing steel and the death throw screams of men. The dark of night was quickly chased away as men behind him were lighting tents on fire. Horses ran wildly that his men had released from their lines making an even bigger mess of the camp.
Robb was swinging his sword with abandon at anyone foolish enough to come near him. They had to push through the camps to make it to the trebuchets and the other siege engines.

His thoughts were cut through when a gasp escaped him, and his side exploded in pain. He turned in his saddle to see a Lannister man just behind him. The spear the man held was painted red at its tip with Robb's blood. Robb cursed himself for losing focus enough for the soldier to sneak up on him. He was just thankful the brigandine and gambeson had impeded the spears full entrance into his guts. The man went to thrust again, but was taken off his feet with a yelp as Grey Wind suddenly collided with him. The man screamed out in agony as the direwolf savaged him ruthlessly and his cries quickly turned to muttered garbles as he died painfully.

Robb grimaced when he test swung his arm, but was racked with pain. He had been rash and out rode his men, and now he had paid the price. He was just lucky that Grey Wind had great timing in returning to his side.

Daryn looked at him in concern when he rode to his side, but Robb waved him off quickly. He looked to the faces that had quickly surrounded him. There was Daryn, Dacey, Theon, Mikasa, Sasha, and Eren. Hange had taken Jean, Bertholt, Historia, and Connie with her along with the Smalljon and the Karstark brothers.

Robb realized that he wouldn't be anymore use in this fight if he couldn't use his weapon, and he needed to get to a maester to have his wound seen to. “Eren, can you get to the north side of the castle? Help my uncle destroy the siege weapon.” Eren nodded before he shot off his horse up into the sky. “Sasha, will you help the archers on the wall on that side as well?” He watched the young woman grab her recurved bow off the side of her saddle before following Eren into the night. “The rest of you keep cleaning up here. Daryn and Grey Wind will escort me back to the camp and the healers.”

“Ayes,” came from all of them, and Robb's group split up. Grey Wind led the way for him and the Hornwood heir as they made their way out of the carnage.

**BYRRON I**

Not long after the battle started on the east of the castle he could hear Lord Blackwood in the courtyard. He was yelling at any able stable boy or servant to get horses saddled up. The courtyard became a flurry of movement as people rushed to get the horses prepped for battle. Then, men started pouring from the keep, barracks, and armory as they readied themselves to enter the fray. It was about another five minutes when Byrron heard the chains lowering the drawbridge, and the raising of the portcullis. As soon as the chains stopped what heavy horse resided in Riverrun flooded out its main gate to sortie into the battle underway.

“Men!” Byrron called out getting the attention of his troops on the wall with him. “Don't get distracted. We may be on the opposite side of the castle from the action, but our duty is to keep an eye on the northern Lannister camp.”

“YES, SER!” His soldier's replied in unison. It was important that they didn't allow the Lannisters to cross in the boats and rafts between the camps to reenforce Brax's men.

As if summoned by his thoughts Byrron could see men moving around the Lannister camp illuminated by their fires. They rushed about donning armor and retrieving weapons as fast as they could. There movements still sluggish from either sleep or drink. They began congregating on the north side of the Tumblestone preparing to launch boats to cross and assist their fellow Westermen.
When soldiers started piling into rowboats he knew it was time to get his men into the fight. “ARCHERS, NOCK!” Byrron called out. His command echoed down the wall as his troops drew their first arrows. Wood clicked against wood as the arrows were laid against bows and the strings nocked up. Byrron reached down to the quiver hanging by his left thigh drawing his own arrow. He took a moment to fiddle the arrow in place making sure that the string was seated well into the arrow.

He could feel the blood start picking up in his veins as his heart rate increased. He knew his arrows could reach well beyond the far bank but in the dead of night it was better to wait for the enemy to close the distance to increase his accuracy. He calmed himself focusing only on the enemy to his front. Slowly the noises of the battle drifted away. “DRAW!” His command was followed by the creaking of wood as the strings were pulled and the bows bent back.

“LOOSE!” The air filled with whistles as their deadly payload flew into the night. Moments later the pained screams of men filled the air as others thudded into boats or harmlessly plopped into the river.

Byrron wanted to keep those boats out of the river as long as possible, so he immediately followed up with another volley, “NOCK!...DRAW!....LOOSE!”

Byrron continued his cadence of death trying to keep the boats ashore, but more Lannister troops kept arriving at the shore. The new men bringing shields to protect the men trying to get the boats cast off. He had finally relinquished control and gave the command to loose at will.

He had just nocked another arrow as a few boats manged to finally cast off the far shore when a loud metallic crack to his right made him jump in surprise. There sticking out of the crenelation a few feet away appeared to be a small steel arrow with what appeared to be a taught rope attached to it. A loud whirring sound reached his ears as he turned to look towards the courtyard where he saw a silhouette flying towards him back lit by the glow of the fires raging outside of Riverrun. As the distance closed at an impossible rate the shape seemed to form into a man. The arrow suddenly retracted from the wall moments before a young man passed through the firelight sailing ten feet above him. He was dark haired, in a Northern style leather brigadine, and had the strangest scabbards attached to his hips that Byrron had ever seen.

Byrron felt his jaw drop like a gaping fish as the young man flew over the walls and out towards the Tumblestone. As he began to descend towards the river a bolt of yellow lightening came crashing out of the cloudless night sky. Byrron reflexively closed his eyes against the bright light, but it was so intense he had to drop his arrow to cover his eyes with his right hand. He was suddenly knocked to his arse as a gust of wind flowed over the battlements accompanied by the surprised cries of his soldiers. The loudest crash Byrron had ever heard followed as something struck the Tumblestone so forcefully that water came splashing over walls.

Byrron soaked to his bones in river water crawled to the machiolation to look down upon the river. He blinked rapidly to clear the stars still dancing in his vision and to rid himself of what could only be a hallucination. After several moments of staring he called out “Cadder, I'm not going mad am I? You see this too?”

“Ye-Yes, Ser!” Cadder stammered fear lacing his voice, “Which of the Seven-Hells did that thing crawl from?!”

Below them in the Tumblestone was what could only be described as pure destruction. Every boat and raft that had launched was annihilated. Lannister men in leather armor struggled to stay a float as the ones in steel had already been drug to a watery grave by the weight. In the middle of the mess the river had become stood what could only be described as a giant. It had a mess of dark hair
on its head, but was otherwise bare and very naked. It was so tall that even as it waded through the deepest parts of the Tumblestone the water only rose to the monster's waist.

Screams filled the air as Lannister troops tried to flee. The beast answered with a roar so loud and chilling that even Byrron felt his blood run cold and had to resist the urge to piss his pants. Byrron and his men could only watch paralyzed as the monster emerged from the river. Some Lannister archers tried slowing it down, but the arrows had no affect what so ever. The monster just walked through the camp kicking over tents, men, horses, or anything else in its way till it approached one of the siege tower the Lannisters had built. It reared it's right fist back and before it threw the punch the skin on its hand to its elbow changed to some form of crystal. It shone a pale blue as the moonlight reflected off it, and was strangely beautiful in a demonic sort of way. When the blow landed the entire tower exploded apart into splinters. Shrapnel flew in every direction. Lannister men screamed out as they were impaled to the ground by wooden missiles.

As the Hell Giant proceeded towards another trebuchet in the camp, Byrron, jumped as another of those strange metal arrows impacted near him followed by the same whirring noise. When this new strange soldier came into the firelight he saw it was a young woman. She had dark almost black hair that was pulled into a high pony tail, and her bangs fell free framing her face. She had golden hazel eyes, and like the young man before she was in a Northern style brigadine over a green high neck tunic, a gorget surrounded her neck, a bow and quiver slung over her shoulder, and she had the same strange scabbards on her hips that up close, Byrron, realized were metal painted green.

She looked down the line at his men as she prepared her bow. A smirk took her face as she spoke, “You boys gonna stare at me all night or are we gonna hunt some lions?”

That seemed to break his soldiers out of whatever spell this strange girl had put them under, and they resumed their assault on the Lannister men. Byrron couldn't help but watch the woman beside him. She was not just a good marksmen. She was exceptional. He watched her lead, fire, and kill a soldier on horseback at a full canter.

The battle continued the same for a while with the occasional explosion of wood as the giant destroyed another siege engine. Until the clashing of steel drew his attention to the far side of the camp where a cavalry charge had seemed to appear out of the treeline. The newly arrived troops crashed in waves upon the Lannister camp cutting down men trying to fight and or flee equally. As the horsemen drew nearer he could start making out the banners of the newly arrived army. He saw the banner of Ser Brynden, the normal silver trout replaced by black, the silver eagle on indigo of House Mallister, the pale maiden on blue of House Piper, and the quartered green dragon and white turret of House Vance.

The low reds and oranges of dawn sunlight started bathing Riverrun as the battle finally winded down. His men were just leaning against the battlements as Sasha sat on a crenalation feet kicking into the air. In silence they watched the Blackfish's men finish clearing out the camp capturing any survivors. The giant, or titan as Sasha had told him they were called, just stood observing everything like some type of demonic sentinel. He had destroyed all the siege engines and then joined the battle itself. A few brave Lannister men thought they could be immortalized in song for slaying a monster, and had tried charging the titan with spears or lances. They only earned what Byrron assumed were very painful deaths for their efforts. Sasha and his men had ultimately ended up just watching the end of the battle after the fighting had moved beyond the range of their
The former Lannister camp had been replaced by a grave yard. Corpses were strewn everywhere, crows had already moved in to try to feast on the choicest morsels of the fallen, the remains of tents still smoked, and the cries of the wounded and dying traveled on the air. Silent Sisters had already begun to roam the carnage like specters in their grey robes and veils while healers tried to help those they could.

“Byrron?” Sasha suddenly spoke with her voice a little higher pitched with a whiny tone. “You don't happen to have any food on you do it?”

Byrron couldn't help the chuckle that escaped him at the sudden strange question. “No...sorry.”

“Pity,” she responded with a resigned tone as she blew out a large breath.

Then, as if summoned by Sasha's will a page boy came sprinting up the stairs a basket in his arms. He dumped the wicker basket into Byrron's arms not even stopping to speak as he squirreled back off towards the kitchens again. Byrron knelt down and placed the basket on the bricks. As he began untying the cloth securing the contents he looked up to Sasha whom had an inquisitive brow raised. When the cloth came undone the smell of fresh baked bread invaded his senses.

He smiled as he held up a still warm roll towards Sasha. She smiled from ear to ear as she jumped back to her feet exclaiming, “THANK THE WALLS!” The comment caught him guard for a moment. He knew all over the world people prayed to many different gods, but never once had he heard of a religion devote to walls.

Byrron watched in a mixture of horror and awe as the young woman tore into the roll like a wolf to a rabbit. The girl had managed to devour the whole roll before he had even managed to hand the rest of them out to his troops. She let out a contented sigh that almost sounded scandalous when she finished brutalizing the snack.

As the rest of the men chewed their bread happily another young woman approached them. She was dressed identically to Sasha, but was splattered with blood from near head to toe. Her hair was chin length raven black, she had strange slightly sloped eyes that were steel grey, and her neck was wrapped in a dark red scarf. She nodded her head in greeting to Sasha whom just smiled back.

“How did Eren do?” Her tone displayed a no nonsense demeanor.

“He destroyed all the siege engines quickly and now is just kind of overseeing the prisoner round up.”

The new woman just nodded in acknowledgment before striding over to the battlements and loudly calling out, “EREN!” Immediately the titan turned its large green eyes to the wall. It lumbered its way through the camp until it was on the shore of the river.

Byrron's eyes went wide when steam burst from the base of the titan's neck and the young man he saw during the night emerged. Another of the strange arrow heads with rope sunk into the wall and the young man flew over the river, leaped over the wall, and fell right into the embrace of the woman's open arms.

“C'mon, we gotta rest up. Robb wants to meet later in the evening.” The young woman spoke after their hug ended. The young man just nodded with an exhausted expression on his face, and the two walked away hand in hand. Watching the young couple leave made him want to go hold Kaina himself, but had to wait till he was properly relieved.
Sasha told him that she would see him around and with a wave quickly took off after the other two. Byrron watched until the strange sigil of two wings that was sewn to her back disappeared down the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all liked my OC. He was an interesting idea I decided to just roll with.

OH! let me know what you all think of how I do the battles from non major character POVs. I feel it adds a new dimension to this fights when these people witness a person suddenly transform into a 45 foot tall titan. It doesn't have the same impact from the people that know it can happen if that makes sense.

NEXT: multi POV reactions to the news of the battles spreading
VARYS II, OLENGNA II, OBERYN I

Chapter Summary

The news of the Northern army's victories spread across the realm.

Chapter Notes

Nothing really important to add to this, so let's just get to it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

VARYS II

Varys always enjoyed the way he seemed to simply glide down the pale pink stone hallways of the Red Keep. His slippered feet allowed him the advantage of stealth, and he could often find himself coming upon conversations he normally wouldn't be privy to. However, secrets weren't his mission today. It truly was a strange feeling to be more focused on pushing information away than gathering it. Well gathering it with the intention of sharing it that is. He was keeping most of the whispers to himself these days, and sowing what misinformation he could. Though, this emergency meeting of the Small Council had caught him completely off guard. He had heard no news from his little birds, so he was quite curious how it got to the Red Keep without his knowing first.

Especially, considering his job had been made even easier lately. The Small Council with the 'king's' blessing had sent Petyr Baelish to the Reach to try and gain the support of the Tyrells. Littlefinger's mission was to culminate with cementing the new alliance with the betrothal of Joffrey to the Lady Margaery. The little shit had raged for hours after that had been announced over how he had every right to pick his own wife and he would only marry Sansa Stark "When she is dragged back to the Red Keep by her hair! Then at our wedding feast I will present her the heads of her brothers and her pretender cousin!" the boy king had snarled. The notion had amused Varys greatly considering that was going to be extremely difficult to accomplish with the Stark girl safe and secure behind the walls of Winterfell. Not to mention the Northern army that stood in their way.

As he turned the corner into the hall of the Small Council chamber he groaned a frustrated sigh. Standing to either side of the door was Ser Osmund Kettleblack and Sandor Clegane which meant both Cersei and Joffrey were in attendance. They were both bad enough on their own, but dealing with them at the same time was mentally taxing to an extreme degree. He would probably need one of his rare goblets of full strength wine when this day was done.

As he closed the distance to the chambers he wondered how Ser Jaime would react to learning that Cersei was bedding the Kettleblack knight to keep his loyalty completely aligned to her. She has been so overconfident of her position that she hasn't even attempted to hide it. Any night Ser Osmund was supposed to be manning her door there would be no one without her chambers, and her cries of passion could be heard through the thick wood of the chamber door. Varys tittered to
himself at the thought of the overly proud knight sputtering blood as a gilded blade disemboweled him. Really it was quite amusing how his new king wouldn’t have to work too hard to secure his throne. The Lions would ultimately destroy themselves internally with the way they treated each other. They were supposed to be a family, but they acted more like enemy factions.

The other guard most likely wouldn't bother to raise a hand to stop the Lannisters from tearing themselves apart either. Sandor Clegane always gave the impression he was wholly loyal, but Varys was sure that only went as far as was convenient. Being a sworn sword for Joffrey had kept him on the other side of the Realm from his brother. The same brother that had deformed his face, and suffered no punishment for it. How much loyalty did the Lannisters think Sandor had for them when they cared more for how well Ser Gregor intimidated and killed than they did seeking justice for their vassals? It didn't help that tensions around the Red Keep had been as volatile as a barrel of wildfire since Ser Gregor had arrived in the capital to hunt down Levi.

A fruitless search if there ever was one considering Varys knew that Levi had left the city in the company of Ser Barristan days within Lord Stark's murder. That didn't stop Ser Gregor's men from torturing, raping, and murdering smallfolk though. As long as Cersei's paranoia made her think the man was still hiding in the shadows of King's Landing they were allowed to continue unimpeded. That had just raised tensions in the city more. Some smallfolk had started copy catting Levi in response. Every time a small folk fell to the Mountain's men another Gold or Red cloak would fall to the smallfolk's blades. The city had turned into a rolling cauldron just waiting to boil over. The so called royals deluded themselves that they were in power, but they had essentially became hostages in the Red Keep. The city was too dangerous for the 'royal family' to dare venture out of the gates of the castle.

When he arrived at the door he could already hear the petulant whine of Joffrey through the door, but the wood prevented him from making out the words. When he entered the boy king's shrill voice was cleared up, “- such a waste of time, Mother! I am the king! I have much better things to do with my time!” Varys rolled his eyes when his back was to the council table. He made his way directly to the side table. If he was going to have to deal with with this all meeting he was at least going to suffer it with wine. Well, watered wine at least. He knew he had to keep his senses about him.

When he turned he was surprised to see Tyrion sitting in place of the Hand of the King. The dwarf pointed at a goblet that was already placed in front of Varys' normal seat. Varys just responded by wordlessly raising his cup in mock salute. The dwarf just shrugged his shoulders before he reached over gripped the other goblet, and downed it in a few gulps. The imp may be the Lannister he trusted the most, but he will never trust a drink he didn't prepare himself. He even picked the decanter of Dronish Sour over Arbor Gold because it was the one with less wine in it. The Lannisters were power hungry and conniving, but even they wouldn't stoop to the level of poisoning themselves.

Pycelle sat in his usual spot. Strangely alert compared to how he normally was during these meetings. His watery blue eyes darting back and forth between Cersei and Joffrey. No doubt deliberating on if he should intervene at all. His wrinkled hands opening and closing from his nerves. Whatever message had arrived had to be of the utmost import to elicit such a reaction from the aged maester.

Cersei sat in place of the ruling monarch. She hadn't spared a glance at Varys' arrival or even turned to acknowledge Joffrey whom was still muttering under his breath. She was too busy leering at Tyrion. No doubt probably feeling that Tyrion was there to steal whatever power she foolishly perceived herself to have.
Joffrey paced back and forth behind her like a caged lion. They were both adorned in the crimson and gold of House Lannister. The boy king wasn't helping his case on the rumors of not being trueborn with how much he always dressed in his mother's house colors. The queen herself was adorned in so many rubies that he was sure you could feed most of Flea Bottom for quite some time with their value.

Robert's and Cersie's inclination to spend gold without a care in the world for the smallfolk was one of the many reasons why Varys had no qualms about betraying them. From what he learned so far of the Targaryen boy from his little birds at least reassured him in that sense. The boy had been raised with the thrifty sense of the North. On top of that the boy was humble from his history of being raised as a bastard. At least the boy wouldn't be throwing tourneys for the simple reason he was able to properly shit in a privy like Robert, or throwing balls to essentially praise himself like Cersei.

The new queen also gave him hope. It was strange to hear the boy had married before they marched, but at least they wouldn't have to worry about scheming lords throwing their daughters at the king. It did come with the down side that he wouldn't be able to gain alliances as easy, but if the boy truly had a dragon like the whispers said it was really a moot point. After Harranhal and the Field of Fire their weren't many whom would stupidly argue with a dragon. From what his little birds had told him the queen was very much like the king in demeanor and they were both fairly quiet and kept to themselves. He heard that had been what had ultimately drawn them to each other.

Whispers had also reached his ears that the new queen could be a nightmare in the training ring. She was able to take down men much larger than herself with both weapons and hands equally. Varys wasn't surprised at all after he learned she had been one of Levi's subordinates. From his sources he had learned that there were twelve of them in all and if they were all as dangerous as Levi they would be able to change the face of the Seven Kingdoms. With a queen and allies like that it was no wonder why his new king hadn't been too concerned with making other alliances. Varys just hoped that his new wife's influence would be enough to keep the king grounded, and not forget where he came from. Being raised a bastard should help keep the king's mind open to the plights of the small folk, and ushering in a new age for Westeros for everyone. Not just the high lords that liked to play their games.

Tyrion clearing his throat brought Varys back to the meeting. The small lord of Casterly Rock was holding up a folded letter in his stunted arm. Once the small man was sure he had everyone's attention he began. “Father sent a rider from Harranhal that arrived during the night.” The mystery of how the information got past his little birds resolved itself immediately for Varys. A rider meant that his little birds couldn't access the letter, and to them he could have looked like any other random Lannister soldier returning to the keep on some mission for the Joffrey or Cersei.

“Why would Father send the letter to you?” Cersei sneered, “You aren't even on the small council.”

Tyrion's mix matched eyes met his sister's before a smirk took his face as he answered, “Well, according to Father, I am now. He wants me to perform as hand in his stead as he fights this war.” Cersei's face went so red with rage it almost matched her gown, her knuckles turned white around the stem of her wine glass, and Varys could hear her cursing under her breath.

Tyrion sat quiet for a few moments observing his sister as if relishing in her anger. Once she had managed to regain control of herself the dwarf hand continued, “That isn't the important part of this letter. I would have hardly called an emergency meeting for that.”
“Well get on with it then!” Joffrey cut through impatiently, “I have more important things to do.”

“And the Realm thanks you for your undying services in torturing small animals, Your Grace.” Tyrion fired right back. Varys watched as Joffrey sputtered for a few seconds before raising his finger to point at his uncle. When the boy opened his mouth to speak Tyrion spoke over him, “Father wrote that he was defeated at the Green Fork-”

“What?!” Cersie and Joffrey both screamed at the same time. The former knocking her glass over, and crimson wine washed across the top of the polished oak table. The Grand Maester sputtered so hard he went into a coughing fit. Varys had to fight a grin from taking his face. His muscles straining to keep his normal blank expression on his face.

“He had to retreat directly to Harranhal and in the process had to abandon their camp. Father is still trying to finalize the numbers of their losses, but he says their casualties were high.” Varys had to resist leaning forward, but inside he was waiting with bated breath when Tyrion paused. He watched the dwarf’s eyebrows raise and Varys could hear the disbelief in his voice as he continued, “The high losses are the result of two giants and apparently a dragon. Survivors of the battle also say they saw the Targaryen boy riding it.”

Pycelle scoffed so hard it sent him into another coughing fit, “Y-Yo-Your Grace, you shouldn't give these words any weight. Dragons have been gone for over a century. These are just the ramblings of broken men.” Varys raised an eyebrow at the old man next to him. Pycelle was always the perfect sycophant to the Lannisters, so of course he would say whatever he thought that Joffrey would want to hear at the moment.

“Our father wouldn't put the crazed theories of his soldiers into a letter unless he was sure.” Tyrion responded before anyone else had a chance. “The good news to be had in this letter is that Ser Harys Swyft should be coming down the Goldroad with an army of ten thousand to help secure King's Landing.”

That news seemed to placate Cersei a bit, but Joffrey apparently felt differently, “That's well and good, Uncle, but what good are soldiers in King's landing when the fighting is out there?” He waved his hands around not quite sure which direction he should be pointing, “And what of my traitor Baratheon uncles? Neither have appeared to swear their fealty to me!”

Everyone at the table seemed to turn to Varys at once. “Unfortunately, Your Grace, Renly Baratheon hasn't been seen since the day he fled the Red Keep. What information I have says he may be a prisoner of the Tyrells. No doubt your uncle may be a bartering chip to sweeten your potential betrothal by turning him over to you.”

Joffrey just scoffed in answer. “And what about my uncle Stannis?”

“I sorry to tell you, Your Grace, but it appears the Lords of the Narrow Sea, Crackclaw, and Massey's Hook all turned traitor. My little birds informed me that the three-headed dragon now flies over Dragonstone. His Grace's Royal Fleet now sails for King's Landing.” Varys paused here just a moment to thoroughly enjoy the next piece of news he was going to deliver, “The dragon banner flies from the masts of every ship in the fleet. They are not coming to aid, but blockade us, My King.”

Their reactions didn't disappoint Tyrion hung his head, Cersei flung her glass across the room to shatter against the wall as wine streaked down the stones, and Joffrey raged, “I want all their heads on the walls! ALL OF THEM!”

Tyrion was the first to speak again, “We need the alliance with the Reach more than ever now.”
Joffrey still hadn't come back down, and decided to turn his ire on the acting hand, “I ALREADY TOLD YOU I WILL NOT MARRY HER!” He took a moment to breath before continue, “Write to Grandfather and command him to take back to the field and bring me this usurper's head!”

Varys had to physically restrain himself from snorting. First from the irony of the Lannister bastard referring to a trueborn Targaryen as a bastard, and then there was the boy king thinking his word carried enough weight to actually move Tywin Lannister at all.

“My Son,” Cersei spoke in a placating tone as she gently gripped the boy's wrist, “the Reach can field sixty thousand troops easily. Your marriage would give us overwhelming military superiority, and the Redwyne fleet would be able to cripple the blockade in the Blackwater.”

Joffrey just yanked his wrist from his mother's grasp and stomped angrily from the room. The door slamming behind him. Cersei quickly turned her attention to the Grand Maester, “Pycelle, send a raven to Highgarden informing them of our orders. They can mobilize their troops while we finalize the betrothal.” A feral grin took her face as something wicked must have crossed her mind. “Tell them Margaery is invited to the Red Keep to get to know her betrothed, and then they can be married once the fighting ends.”

Once again Varys had to resist scoffing. As if the Queen of Thorns would fall for such an obvious trap. There is no way the Tyrells would voluntarily send their Golden Rose to be a hostage to the Lannisters.

The old man nodded and answered with a “Yes, Your Grace.” When he rose from his chair he gave a slight bow that caused the links of his chain to rattle nosily. Varys watched the old man's mummer as he slowly shuffled away with his back stooped.

Cersei didn't stay much longer herself. When it was just Tyrion and himself, Varys, watched as the little man drained his goblet before sighing loudly. “Truly, how fucked are we Varys?”

Varys just tittered in response. The lions had no idea what was truly coming for them.

“That's what I was afraid of.” The little lion launched himself from his chair and Varys just sat watching as the dwarf lord waddled from the room.

OLENNA II

Of all the people that Olenna Tyrell couldn't stand the sight of, Petyr Baelish, had to be ranked at close to if not the top. The smug bastard had been talking their ears off now for a little over a hour about the merits of a union between the royal family and themselves. Her attention had been invested in the vase of golden roses that served as a centerpiece rather than even entertain the shit pouring out of the odious man's mouth. At the same time she had to force herself to constantly put her cup down. Even though her wine was watered getting drunk seemed a lot better alternative than having to listen to this lowly man prattle on.

The man was completely infuriating. He liked to speak in a way that was mocking but hidden behind his smiles. The little twat was always so smug thinking he was the most clever man in the room. She had been tempted several times already to just have Right knock the little weasel's teeth out, so she wouldn't have to tolerate it anymore. Maybe she would have the twins shave that stupid
goatee off his face while they were at. Really, who did this man think he was to talk to them in such a way. He is the grandson of a sellsword, a whoremonger, and just because he was able to wriggle his way into that halfwit Lysa Tully's smallclothes to be made Master of Coin he thinks he is able to speak down to them.

Unfortunately, her oaf of a son had stars in his eyes and was eating up everything the little rat was offering. Olenna wasn't a fool. She knew that they needed to get royal blood into their family. The Tully's were the only other great house that had been in the same boat as them. They had resolved that by marrying Catelyn Tully to Eddard Stark. Thus, the new generation of Starks were all half Tully, and if Edmure followed Ser Brynden's example the Riverlands would pass to one of the Stark boys whom would have to take on the Tully name. It would be a great boon for their family, but the lack of that type of lineage caused the Tyrells no end of grief. Their family being former stewards of the Gardener's lacked the marriages through history that had gifted the royal lines heritages into the other families of the Reach. As long as it remained that way there would be a chance that one of the others would try to usurp them. The Florents were the most likely candidates considering since the Targaryens raised up the Tyrells for surrendering Highgarden the Florents have been the most outspoken in their anger.

Their talks were suddenly interrupted when a knock sounded on the door. When Mace called out for them to enter a young page boy came through the entrance. He looked between Mace and herself for a moment seemingly trying to decide which person to go to. He eventually made the right decision as he darted over and deposited two messages into her waiting palm. Mace guffawed loudly at the indignity of being passed over for his mother, but Oleena quickly shot him a scathing look to silence him.

She turned the first over to see the stag and lion seal imprinted on red of the boy king. She quickly cracked the seal and unrolled the parchment. She read the letter over slowly so the words were absorbed properly and at the same moment gave her time to process a response.

When she was done she looked up to see her son's waiting face. “It says that we are commanded to mobilize to King's Landing, and dispatch the Redwyne fleet to break the blockade on the capital. When we are there we will finalize the betrothal. Margaery will stay in the capital and after the fighting is done they will be married on the first day of the new century.”

“Excellent!” Littlefinger exclaimed clapping his hands together. “It's almost poetic. To truly start a new monarch's dynasty at the turn of the century. Your daughter's wedding would be remembered for all time.” Somehow the whore monger's smirk became even more smug. She couldn't help but wonder what the Lannisters had promised the little weasel for him to run around doing their bidding so fervently like a little lap dog. “Plus it would give Magaery time to be a guest in King's Landing and to get to know her betrothed.”

“A guest you say, Lord Baelish?” Olenna asked, “I believe hostage would be a more apt term.”

“Nonsense.” Baelish waved his hand as if it was so easy to dispel her concerns. “The queen mother is more than accommodating. She would even help Margaery learn all that she needs to know as the future queen.”

“Hmmm.” Olenna responded as she turned over the other scroll no longer paying attention to the dribble leaving Littlefinger's lips. The scroll was sealed in blank yellow wax revealing its origins from one of her informants.

She looked over the words on the parchment and an involuntary gasp left her. “What is it Mother?” Mace asked in a concerned tone.
She looked into her son's eyes with her mouth still agape. Her mind was trying to come to grasp with the words she had just read, but she held herself together enough to know she had to act quickly. She snapped her head to her faithful guards standing on each side of the door. “Left! Right! Seize Lord Baelish and throw him in the deepest cell in the dungeons, and no one is to speak to him at all.” The twins moved before Littlefinger could react as he sat there dazed by the unexpected change of events.

“You can't do this!” The little man squealed as the two guards manhandled him from his seat as though he weighted nothing. “I am the Master of Coin! His grace will hear of this!”

“No he won't.” Olenna deadpanned back, “He won't ever hear from you again.” Before the three men disappeared through the door she called after them, “And make sure to gag him. Lord Baelish's tongue is quite poisonous.”

“Mother!” Her son bellowed as he slapped a meaty hand against the table top, “What is the meaning of this?!”

Olenna sighed in exasperation at her son's attempt of intimidation, “Mace do shut up, and read this.”

Her boy retook his seat as he retrieved the scroll from her hands. She observed his expression change as he read the letter. When he was finished he looked up, “How reliable is this mother?”

“Very.” She responded, “The Targaryen routed Tywin's army and Robb Stark liberated Riverrun. Two embarrassing defeats for Tywin in as many days.”

“It is dangerous to go against the Lannisters and especially Tywin.”

“That is true, My Boy, but the Stark and Targaryen boys apparently aren't as green as Tywin hoped. Mathematically, the Targaryen should have been defeated, but apparently that dragon makes all the difference.” She still couldn't believe the words she had read, but it is the only explanation as to why the North could have won with such lower numbers.

“What do we do, Mother?” Her son asked before he took a drink of his wine.

“We need to have the Caswell and Merryweather men shut off the Roseroad. We will allow no more food to enter the capital from the Reach. The Stormlands are leaderless. We have Renly locked up here, and no one has heard anything from Stannis.” Olenna took a moment to have a drink for herself. “We will take the rest of the men to Riverrun and meet this Targaryen boy for ourselves.” She allowed a smile to take her face, “And if he remains this capable we will have Margaery work her charms on the boy, and your daughter will be a queen.”

OBERYN

Oberyn quickly made his way through the halls of the Water Gardens as his steps echoed off the sandstone walls. He could only wonder what had been so important that his brother had sent men to the Shadow City to collect him. He had rode his sand steed almost to death to get here as fast as possible, get it over with, and then be able to return to his previous activities.
He smiled to himself thinking of the gorgeous Tyroshi whore that had been entertaining Elarria and himself. The girl had nice full teats, and one of the firmest asses Oberyn had ever had the pleasure of enjoying. Her hair had been dyed in the Tyroshi fashion, however, instead of one solid color her hair started purple closer to the roots and changed to blue at the tips. Elarria had squealed in delight when she had stripped the girl to find that her small strip of pubic hair had been dyed to match.

They had been in the midst of their third round of love making when the guards had found him at the brothel and interrupted their fun. Oberyn had groaned out of frustration before quickly dressing and leaving both women with a passionate kiss. He had told them to enjoy each other until he could return. Thus he had rode like the Stranger himself was pursuing him. The mental image of the Tyroshi girl's face buried in Elarria's cunt while he took her was all the motivation he needed to get this meeting adjourned as quickly as possible.

He really wasn't surprised the guards had found him so easily. It seemed since that letter came from King's Landing all Oberyn did was either fight or fuck. If he wasn't getting into tavern brawls he was in a brothel with or without Elarria. Doran had barred him from the training yard after he had mercilessly roughed up a few guards. After that his attention and anger got turned on drunken sailors in bars.

He wasn't truly angry at Lord Stark. Oberyn actually felt a great deal for the man. In that position he would have done the same exact thing if possible. He would have gladly hidden both Rhaenys and Aegon as his bastards in Dorne, and who honestly would have questioned it. It's not like Oberyn had any shortage of children. What would have been two more on top of his other eight. Besides ten would have been such a nice round number.

He wasn't mad at the boy either. Oberyn wouldn't lay the sins of his parents at his feet. The boy had his entire identity ripped away from him the moment he was born, and had been hidden under the name Snow for his own protection. The boy had probably been completely lost and confused when he learned the truth.

Oberyn was always sure to send that anger and finger pointing in the right direction. All the blame laid at the feet of Rhaegar Targaryen, Aerys Targaryen, Robert Baratheon, the Mountain, Amory Lorch, and Tywin Lannister. The first three would forever elude Oberyn's justice. It was impossible to punish those already dead. Robert died lusting after his vices, but Oberyn would forever mourn the fact the fat whore monger didn't die on the end of his spear. As far as the other three, Oberyn, would have to hope that the Targaryen boy wouldn't forget that they were the men that prevented him from seeing his siblings. That the boy would ensure justice that had been denied for seventeen years would finally come to pass.

He had also been angry with Doran. His infuriating brother wanted to jump right back into the game. He had already proposed that they should send troops to support the Targaryen boy and Arianne along with them. It was then that he realized his brother truly did not know his daughter at all. Arianne only ever had eyes for Dorne. Her whole life she had taken it upon herself to prepare for the day she would become the ruling Princess of Dorne. She had raged the day that Doran had confessed his old plans that he had made before that fool Viserys had gotten himself killed. She has never had any desire to be queen of the Seven Kingdoms, but Doran wouldn't give up the foolish quest of having Martell blood on the throne. The very same ambitions as their parents had before them that had cost steeply and his foolish brother wanted to follow the same path once again. He sometimes wondered if his brother ever truly learned any lessons from all his failed plots.

He came out of his swirling thoughts as he entered the hall of the Water Gardens. The grand room was no where near the size of the great hall of Sunspear, but this palace was meant as a retreat for the Martells. The feasts and parties held here were for smaller celebrations of just family and close
friends. The chair that normally sat on the dais was gone and in its place sat Doran in his wheel
chair. The usual orange blanket laid over his brother's legs hiding his affliction from sight. To his
side stood Arianne. She was dressed in a damn near shear yellow gown leaving little to the
imagination. Her modesty was only protected by small orange garments below the gown that
covered her intimate parts, and her feet were adorned in white jeweled sandals. Areo Hotah stood a
few feet behind them. Doran's ever present shadow stood stock still with his great axe that was his
constant companion. His oldest three daughters stood off to the side. All three dressed in Dornish
riding leathers. Tyene's bright blue eyes twinkled when she saw him, and a smile took her face.

What took him by surprise were the five men standing before the dais. The man out front had to be
their leader. He had dark auburn hair with a close cropped beard. He turned to Oberyn when he
approached. The man had bright blue-grey eyes and Oberyn would put the man easily in his early
twenties. He was dressed in black from head to toe. On the breast of his tunic was a white tree with
a black sword on it.

The other four men were dressed in Northern armor and encircled a wooden crate that rested on the
floor between them. A crow bar rested by the crate and the lid had already been loosened to
expedite its contents' presentation. Oberyn couldn't help but feel for these fools. Nobody apparently
seemed to caution them of the heat in Dorne. Even with the side panels of the hall open and the
ocean breeze stirring the light curtains he could see sweat pouring off all five men.

The red headed man dipped his head and uttered a “My Prince.” as Oberyn passed him. He
continued on to the dais stepping up to Doran's side opposite Arianne.

“What do we have hear, Dear Brother?” Oberyn asked. He had an inkling to what it involved.
Northern soldiers meeting with the Prince of Dorne after the last Targaryen in Westeros was
discovered to have been harbored by the Warden of the North in secret. The house that had enough
animosity to join the North with little consideration would obviously be the Martells. These men
had to have been sent by either the Targaryen boy or Robb Stark to garner an alliance for the war.

Doran just grunted in response before offering a folded parchment. Oberyn just stared at the paper
quizzically before Doran shook it in irritation. Oberyn quickly took the letter unfolding it. He was
greeted by beautiful looping script that definitely belonged to the hand of a woman.

_To the Royal Martells of Dorne,_

_I would first like to apologize that you are reading this from my hand as opposed to my husband's._
_However, he is deep in mourning for his uncle whom you have most likely heard by now was his
adoptive father._

Oberyn resisted chuckling at the opening. Doran's plans were already thrown to the winds
considering the Targaryen boy had already found himself a bride.

_We only now discovered the news of Lord Stark's death after our battle with Tywin Lannister. We
dealt the lions a massive defeat, and they have retreated behind the walls of Harranhal. By the
time you receive this message Robb Stark will have liberated Riverrun, and we will be rallying
there to make further plans for the war._
My husband is no fool, and understands how you may feel about his existence. We fully understand if you decide to stay out of this war. Lord Rodrik Forrester and his men were not sent to broker an alliance, but to deliver a prize. Though he never got to meet them Rhaenys and Aegon were Jon's older siblings and he would see justice done. In the crate is the first step, and the rest of whom were responsible will soon follow. So, allow this to start bringing peace and rest for Princess Rhaenys Targaryen.

Princess Annie Targaryen

Oberyn stared dazed at the parchment in his hands. His brother pulled him back when he addressed the Northern lord waiting. “What is this prize the princess sent us, My Lord.”

Rodrik smirked as he stepped back. He seized the lid of the crate and pulled. The wood groaned as it released the last nails holding it together. The lord leaned the lid upon the side of the crate before reaching in with both hands. A large glass jar appeared in his hands, and it contained a head floating in what Oberyn assumed was vinegar to prevent rot.

“Obara.” Doran ordered softly. His oldest daughter nodded and walked towards the lord to retrieve the jar. After she had secured the gift she made her way to the dais. Doran reached out and Obara gently placed the jar into his grasp.

The head inside was of a middle aged man. He had had a piggish face, and from the fat evident in his cheeks he had to have been a portly fellow. His attention was pulled back to the Northern lord when he cleared his throat and spoke “My Princes and Princess.” They had been so engrossed in examining the head Oberyn hadn't notice Rodrik once more dig into the crate again. The man now held in his hands a tattered surcoat.

The surcoat was a bright red. A white shield was sewn into the chest that was adorned with a black manticore under three golden coins. Oberyn's eyes were drawn to the multiple tears in the fabric that were each surrounded by darker red stains. There was no doubt that it was dried blood, but he wanted to be for sure. “What happened to him, My Lord?”

“Amory Lorch had been... captured during the battle.” Oberyn clearly caught the pause in the Lord's words, but didn't interrupt. What ever it was he was sure he would eventually find out what the young lord was hesitant to disclose at this point, “When we were securing the Lannister's camp the prince learned of the death of Lord Stark. He went into a rage and started stabbing Lorch repeatedly with a dagger,” Oberyn allowed a smile to take his face at this point. Obviously the Targaryen boy wanted Amory Lorch to face the same pain as his elder sister, “Lord Umber pulled the prince away, but then the princess took Lorch's head herself.” Oberyn raised his brows in surprise at that point. He could already say he was quite impressed with this young lady that will end up being queen.

“Excellent,” His brother spoke. He finally turned his attention from the head in his lap to look upon Oberyn. “You will take two thousand men and met the Targaryen prince at Riverrun.” He then turned his attention to their Northern guests. “Lord Rodrik, you and your men are welcome here as guests and you may return by ship the way you came or march with Oberyn and our men by land. You will get suitable chambers and clothing. It wouldn't do for you to die from the Dornish sun before you can be reunited with your people.”
“That would be most welcome, My Prince.” The lord responded, “Thank you.”

“We will join with the Targaryens, bring the lions down, and we will get justice for Elia and the children. Then, Tywin Lannister's and Gregor Clegane's skulls shall join Amory Lorch's on our mantle.” A full smile took Doran's face. The first one Oberyn had seen in a long time. “First though, we shall celebrate.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: BARRISTAN II
Chapter Summary

Barristan reflects on one of his new charges, and a trial is held in Riverrun

Chapter Notes

I actually had a lot of fun writing this chapter. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Barristan always liked being in Riverrun. There was something relaxing about these sandstone walls. If he was forced to guess he would say it would be how no matter where you were you could hear the rivers rushing around the castle. During the waking hours the noise would disappear into the background, but at night it could lull you into the sweetest of sleeps. Barristan didn't think he ever slept anywhere half so well as he did in Riverrun.

He had been given the same chambers he always received whenever he had visited with Robert. They attached to the far side of the grand apartment of Riverrun kept solely for the purpose of visiting royals. The lecherous whore monger had loved visiting here. He had always been obsessed with bedding Riverland girls, and disrespecting his queen any chance given. Barristan wouldn't be surprised if he were to find plenty of black haired blue eyed Rivers running amongst the smallfolk. He was thankful that his new charge didn't follow that same path. The young man seemed to only have eyes and desires for his wife and future queen. If the Seven Kingdoms didn't already have an heir on the way one would soon come judging by the sounds that reached Ser Barristan's unfortunate ears during the night.

He turned his eyes to his new charge who sat in the throne of Riverrun. His black hair was pulled back into the bun style favored by the Northmen. If it wasn't for the black and red he wore with the three-headed dragon sewn over his breast he would almost look like Eddard Stark come again. It was probably easy for the others to see it that way, but to Ser Barristan the prince's Valyrian features he shared with his father were glaringly obvious.

Ser Barristan himself was donned in grey plate armor with a white cloak streaming from his shoulders. He had been worried that the prince might reject him for having bent the knee to Robert, but the prince had welcomed him with open arms and praised his reputation. Under Barristan's direction the smiths were in the process of recreating the armor the Kingsguard wore during the first Targaryen dynasty. Robert and Cersei were obsessed with opulence and that had even flowed over to the Kingsguard with the white and gilded armor. Now, they would return to the way it was supposed to be. The Kingsguard would highlight the white cloak again as it should have always been. The only decorations to the armor would be the three-headed dragon displayed on the chest.

He had also been giving his first two knights to command whom currently stood behind him. Well technically they weren't knights yet, but the prince had said they had both fought well during the battle at the Green Fork. Laurence Snow had jumped at the chance to earn a place in the
Kingsguard, and Ser Barristan couldn't blame the boy at all. There wouldn't be much of a future for him in the North. His name would be lost to history amongst most of the other Snows of time. However, in the Kingsguard his feats would be recorded in the White Book for all their successors to read of. He had met Ser Barristan every morning since then to train. He was a good swordsman, but if he devoted himself he could be one of the greats. Lord Glover had done well by the boy when he had been his ward.

The other man was in his early thirties, but he easily rivaled Lord Umber in size. The man was named Wylis and had been a guard for the Starks for almost seven and ten years. Due to his size the younger man utilized a great sword, but on his side it looked as if it was just a regular longsword. When he had had the time to talk to Wylis one-on-one he had learned a great deal. Apparently, the man had been a friend of Lyanna Stark growing up in Winterfell. He had been a stable boy and his grandmother had forbidden him from playing at swords with the Stark children. Afraid he would embarrass their family of servants, or that he would ride off to war and die. However, when Eddard Stark had returned with his sisters bones he had argued with her about how it would be his own way to honor the She-Wolf of Winterfell whom had always encouraged him to push beyond his boundaries. She had eventually relented and Wylis had been able to train with the household guard, and earn his place among them. When the truth had come out about the prince, Wylis, said he had spent a lot of time telling him stories of his mother when she was younger. Then, when they had marched out the gates he had volunteered vehemently to be one of the prince's personal guards. Another action Wylis took to honor the girl who had been his childhood friend.

They didn't wear full white cloaks yet, though. They both wore the same grey plate as Ser Barristan, but Snow's and Wylis' cloaks were trimmed in black. Still they both looked proud everyday they wore them.

An empty chair sat next to the throne which Levi stood to the other side of. His green cloak hung from his shoulders over a brown brigadine and a normal longsword was strapped to his hip. Ser Barristan wasn't too surprised to see the man by the prince. On their travels Levi had opened up to him more, and spoke of what he knew about his family to fill the silence and boredom of endless riding. Levi, was descended from a family of royal guards. Apparently, it is in their blood to act as guardians, and after Lord Stark had fallen his instincts had pull him to the prince. Ser Barristan didn't even care if the man never took the white cloak. He would be a fool to turn down a colleague of Levi's skills.

To Ser Barristan's right stood Lord Robb Stark. The young lord was dressed in a white jerkin over a grey tunic, black trousers and boots, and a long sword strapped around his waist. Next was his mother Lady Catelyn Stark. Her gown was a flowing Tully blue with long dagged sleeves, and her hair was pulled up in a complex system of braids. Barristan didn't know the exact nature of her relationship with Prince Jon, but it had intrigued him quite a bit. He didn't remember the woman even acknowledging the boy at all when he was at Winterfell with Robert. Hells he never saw them in the same room once. However, when they had been walking to the great hall earlier she had fussed over him like any other doting mother making sure he looked his best for court.

On Levi's left was Ser Edmure Tully. The man still looked a little worse for wear from his time as a prisoner in Jaime Lannister's camp, but he had overall been jovial since his nephew rescued him from the lion's clutches. His blue jerkin was decorated with a silver trout over a red tunic. Next to him stood Barristan's old friend Brynden Tully. The Blackfish was dressed head to toe in black. His Tully blue eyes the only color on him now that his auburn hair had given way to grey.

The prince's great white beast laid at his side between them. Ser Barristan had almost shit himself when he saw the direwolves again. He had thought they were huge before, but it seemed in the
moons since his last encounter with them they had some how gotten even larger. The prince's white wolf would easily stand of a height to a courser. His bright ruby eyes seemed to constantly scan the crowd, and Barristan had no doubt that the direwolf would be able to pick up any threat even before he could.

The wolf was thinner these days after the princess had trimmed his fur to make the southern heat a little more bearable. He almost chuckled thinking of when he had rushed in on that process. Barristan had burst through the door after a commotion arose in the royal chambers. He had slammed his way through sword in hand to see the table of the solar overturned, all the chairs thrown in every direction, and a few vases were broken on the ground with flowers scattered around. The prince was in the middle of the room trying to wrestle the wolf down with one hand as he wriggled like an oiled piglet in the other were held barber shears as the prince cursed the animal repeatedly.

As he returned his sword to its scabbard the princess appeared by his side. The first time he had been brought before her she had shocked him, and clearly conveyed that she wasn't a normal lady of the Seven Kingdoms. Not only had she traveled in the prince's war camp, but by the blood that had been spattered upon her she had obviously been involved with the fighting. His first impressions of the girl had been that she was cold and driven, and wasn't the warmest of people. She had proven him wrong over the weeks he had been with them. She actually had a good heart that he had personally seen as she tried helping the prince through his mourning, and the way she spoke to the men in the camp. The men all had a great respect for the princess, and Barristan couldn't help wondering what she had done on the battlefield to earn it. However, at that moment he had seen the former in the Princess' eyes as she yelled, “JONOTHOR DAERON TARGARYEN, STOP THIS INSTANT!”

Ser Barristan had jumped slightly from the volume that had come out of the small bodied princess, but the effect had been immediate. Both the prince and the direwolf froze instantly at the sound of her voice, and both sheepishly looked over at the princess by his side as she crossed her arms over her chest. “Jon, just what in the name of Ymir are you doing.”

“Trying to trim this great beast's fur, so he doesn't die of the heat.” The wolf huffed in response to his master's statement as if he was actually taking offense to the statement.

The princess just raised an eyebrow with an unimpressed look upon her face. “And you couldn't accomplish this task without destroying the solar?”

“It's Ghost's fault! He won't bloody well sit still!” The prince fired back indignantly.

The princess huffed before she held her hand out, “Give me the shears, and piss off to the yard to play with your sword. I'll take care of Ghost.” The prince offered up the shears without argument. He fled the chambers curses flying under his breath and Laurence Snow in his wake.

Ser Barristan had just watched silently as the princess righted the table and a chair. When she sat she clicked her fingers before pointing to the spot between her legs. The direwolf got to its feet and hesitantly made its way to the princess with his tail tucked between its legs. When the wolf was sat before her she reached out and cupped both its cheeks in her hands as she looked into his bright red eyes. “I'm going to cut your fur. It is for your own good, and you will sit and be a good boy for me. If you misbehave you will not be allowed to hunt with your brother tonight. You can just have the butcher's leftovers. Am I understood?” The wolf whimpered back before he tried to tentatively lick her cheek. The princess backed her head away quickly to avoid the beasts tongue furrowing her brows. “None of that! You have been a bad boy. Look at the mess you and Jon made.” The wolf let out another whine, but this one sounded a little more defeated than the last. The princess patted the
wolf's cheeks lovingly, “Now turn around. The faster we are done the faster you can be in the woods with Grey Wind.”

When the wolf had turned around the princess began combing through his fur with her fingers as she looked around the solar. She suddenly pointed her finger across the room before asking, “Ser Barristan, would you fetch that comb over there. Go ahead and pull up a chair, and get a drink. We are going to be here a while.”

He had moved quickly to fulfill the request, and after he handed the princess the comb he had retrieved one of the chairs from the ground before sitting. He normally would insist that he stay standing, but he wasn't getting any younger. Plus, the weeks of travel from the capital had taken their toll, and he still didn't feel fully recovered yet. He groaned with relief as he seated himself with his goblet of watered wine. He silently watched for a few minutes as the princess combed out the knots in the wolfs fur before a thought came back to him. “Your Grace, why did you call the prince, Jon Daeron?”

The princess didn't look up from her work as she answered with a chuckle, “Oh, I gave him a middle name to add to the effect of my yelling.”

“A middle name?”

“Aye. Where I'm from, Ser Barristan, we have three names to help distinguish ourselves more. There are so many people that have the same names you need an extra name. Like my husband's name. There are two different spellings. One with an H and like Jon's without. Then there is the longer version of his name Jonathan. Though, here I've learned that it is Jonothor. Take yourself for example. Your name is Barristan, but where I'm from your friends would most likely call you Barry for short. Kind of how Lord Stark liked Ned instead of Eddard. Then there are names that sound the same, but spelled differently or could be girl's names. Like Jean for example. The way we pronounce it it sounds close to Jon, but if you pronounce the J softer then the name sounds like Gene and is a woman's name. So, we all need the extra name to distinguish ourselves from each other. But, to answer your question Jon always said he looked up to the Young Dragon when he was little, and since his first name is a more Westerosi name I figured to give him a Valyrian one for his middle.” She laughed again before continuing, “Where I'm from whenever someone yelled your full name like that it immediately told you you were in big shit. The longer you can make the name the more emphasis you can put on it. I'm glad it seems to be a universal reaction no matter where you are.”

“How many people were there, Your Grace?”

She stopped combing for a moment as she thought over her answer. “Well, the city I lived in as a child had somewhere near three million I think.”

That figuratively knocked the wind out of him, “Three million” He said to himself under his breath. They fell into a comfortable silence as the princess continued her work trimming the wolf's fur, and Ser Barristan sat in contemplation. He was trying to wrap his head around living in a city with three million people. It was packed enough in King's Landing with five hundred thousand. That many more would just be overwhelming. His nose scrunched up when he thought of what a city like that would smell like.

“What's that face for, Ser?” His head snapped up to see the princess' blue-grey eyes on him and a strange smirk adorning her face.

“I was thinking what the smell of a city of three million would be like. King's Landing is bad enough and it is a fraction of the size, Your Grace.”
The princess actually full on laughed then, and Barristan realized it was the first time he had heard it. She normally only allowed little chuckles to escape her. “Fear not, my good knight, we had a very effective sewage system.”

That seemed to break the damn on the young woman before him, and she began speaking of, Liberio, the city she had spent her childhood in. Barristan sat there in shock as she told him of all the things they had in their lives to make it easier. From the sound of it even the poorest amongst them lived better than the best small folk here. The princess told him that it was enough of a culture shock when she left Liberio to be amongst the people in the Walls that being in Westeros required very little adaptation in comparison. “When the war is won, and my husband is on the throne I'm sure Hange will be foaming at the mouth to get steam power set up here.”

Barristan didn't really know what she meant, but what he was able to discern from context was that during the last few years of his life he would be able see the entire face of Westeros change drastically.

Ser Barristan looked up when the shears clacked against the table. The princess was running her hands through the direwolf's fur to knock away any loose hairs that clung to him. After he had been properly ruffled she spoke in a cooing voice, “See that wasn't so bad, my big baby. Now, give mamma a kiss.” The giant wolf happily obeyed the command running his tongue up her cheek which elicited a giggle from the princess. She patted the wolf on his haunches, “Go play with Grey Wind.” The wolf didn't wait for her to change her mind and bolted from the room looking a lot less fluffy.

Ser Barristan sat and watched as she stood from her chair and dusted the white hairs from her pants. He knew without a doubt that Queen Rhaella would've been proud of the young lady her grandson had married, and he looked forward to the day he could see the young woman before him bouncing the crown prince or a little princess on her knee.

The doors creaked opened at the end of the hall, and the subject of Ser Barristan's thoughts came walking in. The princess' hair had been braided away from her face into a bun that sat on the back of her head. Ser Barristan didn't know what to make of her garb though. She was dressed in one of her grey 'hoodies' as he had learned they were called. From the bottom of the strange tunic flowed a black wool skirt that fell to the caps of her black boots. A split on either side ran up almost to her hips allowing her to have more freedom of movement if it was called for, and as she walked the swishing of fabric allowed the grey breeches she wore below to be seen. Then, around her waist was strapped her longsword *New Moon*.

In her wake followed Sasha. Ser Barristan enjoyed that young lady's company immensely. She was always good for a laugh, and he had never seen a woman who could put away as much food in one sitting. Her dark hair was pulled back in braids, and the sunlight coming through the windows made her golden eyes sparkle like two pieces of topaz. She was garbed in a more traditional Riverlands gown. The light blue of the dress contrasting with her hair perfectly. The girl carried herself demurely behind the princess, but he knew that the young lady had at least four daggers hidden on her person should the need arise.

As the princess continued through the hall men bowed their heads as she passed. When she approached the dais the prince rose, and stepped down to greet her. A warm smile took his face as he took her hand and laying a chaste kiss to her knuckles. He held her hand as he guided her up the stairs but released her at the top. The Princess unbuckled her sword belt resting the scabbard on the side of her chair as Sasha took up a position by Levi. The prince returned to his seat once the princess was seated in her own.
A herald cracked the sand stone floor with the but of a spear bringing all attention to the royals on the dais. The prince sat straight in his chair as he addressed the hall, “We will begin the trial shortly, but before that is there anything that needs to be addressed?”

“My Grace!” Barristan's eyes snapped over to the first table off the dais where most of Levi's Scouts sat. The young man who had his hand raised had dark brown hair that was pulled back into a Northern style bun and bright green eyes.

“Eren, please step forward.” The prince replied.

When Eren stood up the dark haired girl next to him rose as well. Both were dressed in trousers, tunics, and their tan coats all the Scouts wore. Though it was easy to see the different race that was in her blood the dark of her hair and silver of her eyes revealed her relation to Levi. From traveling together Ser Barristan had learned that Mikasa was Levi's cousin in some form or the other, and that they were the only two members of their family left. As they approached the dais mumbles of “Nighthawk,” permeated through the hall, and the young woman ducked her head hiding her blush behind the dark red scarf wrapped around her neck.

Ser Barristan was surprised to see how humble the girl was. If it had been a boy of her age that had been able to defeat Jaime Lannister in one-on-one combat they would be shouting it from the highest ramparts of any castle they entered. Wylis, had told him that the whole army had looked on with shocked expressions when they saw the girl rejoin the army dragging the Kingslayer's unconscious body behind her. Then, she had proceeded to dump him at Robb Stark's feet like it had been the simplest of tasks. Barristan supposed for someone of Levi's blood it would be rather simple.

The couple stopped before the dais and both bowed their heads in deference to the royal couple. Barristan saw the prince's jaw clench. He knew the prince hated having to subject his friends to such, but court demanded the proper respect be shown in front of the bannermen.

“What can I do for you, My Friends?” the prince spoke softly yet his voice was able to carry through the whole room.

“My Grace, as you know Mikasa and I have been betrothed for a while. We had planned on marrying before, but got delayed due to the happenings of the realm. Then, Mikasa wanted to wait until she was reunited with Captain Levi since he is the last of her family. Now, that he has returned to us with your permission, My Grace, I would ask if Lord Edmure would be nice enough to allow us use of the Godswood.”

Hands pounded against tables and cheers rang through the hall. The prince held up his hand to quiet the bannerman back down. A few moments later the tumult had died down enough to continue The prince turned his head to address the acting Lord of Riverrun. “Lord Edmure, do you have any objections?”

“Not at all, My Grace, and I wish the young couple a long and fruitful marriage.” Edmure responded happily a smile taking his face to crinkle his eyes.

More cheers rang out and calls of “NIGHHAWK!” filled the air as the young couple bowed again and turned to make their way back to their places. The prince allowed the noise to continue until the two had retaken their seats.

When he held up his hand this time the hall fell silent immediately. The prince let a sigh escape him before speaking, “Now, for the main reason we are here today. Lord Velaryon step forward.”
Monford Velaryon stepped out from a group of Crownlands Lords. He was dressed in a blue-green tunic with the silver seahorse embroidered on the chest, white wool breeches, and brown boots. His long silver hair flowed loosely and his blue-violet eyes seemed to shine like jewels. The lord had arrived just a few days prior with most of the other bannermen of Dragonstone. Ser Barristan would never forget the look of awe and sheer happiness that had adorned the lord's face when he had first seen Prince Jon.

They had a rider arrive prior that gave them a days notice of the lords arrival and who they brought with them. It was Lady Catelyn that had come up with the idea of greeting the lords outside of Riverrun to display the truth of the prince's heritage.

When the Lords of the Narrow Sea had arrived they had been given a show. Prince Jon and Princess Annie had greeted the lords with Lyax by their side. The rest of the lords along with himself and his Kingsguard trainees were farther back to not encroach on the dragon.

Barristan had been too far away to hear what had been said between them, but the look and smile on Lord Monford's face had said everything the older man was feeling. When he saw the prince nod to a question the Velaryon lord had approached and gripped the prince in a familial hug. Then he had turned and placed a kiss on the princess' knuckles.

Barristan was pulled back to the present when Lord Monford cleared his throat, “Bring in the prisoners.”

The double doors opened and the prisoners were escorted in by Vaelaryon and Celtigar men. Stannis Baratheon was at the front of the line. He looked well overall if not for the yellowish faded bruise on the side of his face. All their clothing were of seemingly good quality. No doubt they had been dressed up for the purpose of trial before the prince. His wife Selyse was next. She was dressed in a grey gown and her hair had been braided, but the woman didn't bother looking up as she shuffled into the room. Barristan recognized Stannis' Onion Knight whom followed after the Lady Baratheon. Then, there was little Shireen Baratheon followed by three boys ranging in their teens.

When they stopped before the dais a Celtigar soldier kicked Stannis in the back of the legs causing them to buckle. The lord's knees hit the ground with crack and a pained winch took his face. The rest followed without prompt all kneeling before the dais and the royal couple. He watched as his prince's gaze wove across the prisoners, but Stannis' eyes were locked on the prince the whole time.

The prince raised his hand pointing at the younger members of the group, “See the children released and taken to the side.” The soldiers moved quickly to see the order through and moments later the four youths were standing by the tables. Shireen stood there rubbing her chaffed wrists her eyes wide as she took in the direwolves lounging on the dais.

The prince's attention turned back to the rest of the captives, “Who is this other man?”

“That would be Ser Davos Seaworth otherwise known as the Onion Knight.” Lord Velaryon answered from where he stood behind the captives.

“What crime is he charged with, My Lord?” The prince asked.

“None himself, Your Grace, we brought him before you merely that he is one of Lord Baratheon's staunchest supporters.” Lord Monford responded. The lord had a contemplative look on his face for a moment as if trying to decide if he wanted to add more. The lord continued when his internal debate had reached its conclusion, “Truth be told, Your Grace, from my time around him Ser
Davos tried to counsel Lord Stannis back onto a more moral path, but Lord Stannis allowed his wife and Red Witch to influence him more.”

“And where is this Red Witch?”

“She was killed during the struggle to take Dragonstone, Your Grace.” The sly smile on Velaryon’s face told Barristan he was prouder of that than he was willing to admit to his prince.

“Very well, then. Release Ser Davos.” The prince commanded before addressing the knight directly, “Ser, please wait with the children till the trial is concluded.”

“Thank you, You Grace.” Ser Davos responded bowing his head before he retreated to where Shireen and the boys were waiting. When he reached them he stood between Shireen and the youngest boy wrapping an arm around each of them pulling them into his side.

Ser Barristan saw a small smile take the prince's face as he observed the display. His face shifted back into an unreadable mask when his attention turned back on Stannis and his wife.

“What charges are leveled against Lord Stannis and Lady Selyse?” The prince asked his voice cold and monotone.

“They are charged with heresy and murder, Your Grace.” Lord Monford answered. “Stannis allowed his red witch to burn the idols of the Seven. When the septon voiced his outrage at the sacrilege of it, Stannis, allowed the witch to burn the man as a sacrifice to her red god. Then, when others spoke out against the religious tyranny Stannis was trying to implement on the island they too were burned as well.”

Muttered curses directed at Stannis and his wife filled the hall as the prince sat there quietly contemplating the claims Lord Velaryon had put before him. He raised his hand to call attention back to himself before he spoke, “How do you answer to these charges, Lord Stannis?”

The Baratheon gazed up at the prince bright blue eyes trying to bore into cold steel. “I demand a trial by combat.” The hall immediately buzzed as lords all began trying to talk over each other.

The prince stood from his chair and the hall quieted, “That is your right. However, I cannot participate. I have no plans on becoming a kinslayer this day, so a champion must be selected to represent myself. Can you fight yourself or do you require a champion?”

“I fight my own battles, boy,” Stannis snarled back. Lords began shouting obscenities and threats at the blatant disrespect of their prince. The Greatjon nearly broke the table he sat at when his fist collided against it. Then, the lords began yelling out that they would volunteer to represent the prince.

His charge just turned to face the dais. His eyes wandered across them all before they settled on Levi. “Captain, I hate to ask.” The prince spoke a frown marring his face.

Levi tsked before answering, “Then, don’t ask, My Prince, I volunteer.” Some of the lords grumbled at the choice, but they were drowned out by the cheers of the Winterfell soldiers. These troops obviously knew what Levi was capable of, and unlike the other lords in attendance these men had been able to witness Levi train for years.

The prince nodded his thanks before turning back to the assembled lords. “Let it be known that Captain Levi Ackerman will represent the crown in this trial by combat. This will determine the guilt or innocence of both Lord Stannis and Lady Selyse.” Barristan could only imagine it would save time just to have both their heads off now, and be done with it. Stannis Baratheon didn’t stand
a chance in Seven-Hells of beating Levi. “Move Lady Selyse to the training ring, and take Lord Stannis to the armory to acquire arms and armor.”

The hall exploded into a flurry of activity as the guards seized Stannis and Selyse dragging them from the hall. Many of the lords following behind were keen on getting the best positions to observe the fight. When the children under Ser Davos’ guidance made to follow the other lords the prince’s voice rang out, “Ser Davos, Lady Shireen, a moment please.” The Onion knight halted his parties movements turning back towards the dais.

The prince leaned over whispering quietly to the princess for a few moments. The princess nodded her head in answer, but a grim expression took her face. She stood from her chair retrieving her sword belt in the process. As she made her way down the dais Sasha, Levi, and after a signal from himself Laurence Snow fell in behind her as she made her way out the hall.

Wylis and himself fell in behind the prince as he made his way over to Ser Davos’ party. “Ser Davos, I'm to understand you have been at Lord Stannis' side since the siege of Storm's End?”

“Yes, Your Grace.” The knight answered bowing his head.

“And would I be right to assume that you and the Lady Shireen are quite familiar with each other?” The prince followed up.

“Ser Davos is a good friend of mine.” The Lady Shireen piped up, “I'm even teaching him to read.”

The prince smiled down at the girl causing the corners of his eyes to pinch. “A worthy endeavor if there ever was one, My Lady.” He then turned his attention back to the knight, “After today the young lady is going to need someone to take charge of her. I trust from your familiarity with each other you would be willing to take over as her guardian.”

“That would go without question, Your Grace.” Ser Davos answered politely, “but the trial hasn't been conducted yet, Your Grace, Lord Stannis may come out in the favor of the gods.”

A sad solemn look over came the prince as his eyes turned back to Shireen, “I apologize in advance, My Lady. I know first hand the pain of losing family having lost my adoptive father quite recently, but the law needs to be answered to.” Shireen nodded her head in understanding. Ser Barristan was impressed with the way the young girl held her composure. “Make no mistake, Ser Davos, Lord Stannis will lose this trial by combat. There is no man in the Seven-Kingdoms that can match Captain Levi.”

Ser Davos then nodded his head in a resigned matter, and the prince continued, “but that doesn't mean you need to see it. I'll have you escorted to rooms more your status, and you can relax before supper. There is no need for a lady as young as Shireen to witness such a spectacle.”

“Thank you, Your Grace.” Davos responded, “I think that may be for the best.”

The prince then knelt before Lady Shireen putting a comforting hand on her shoulder. “I will have guards assigned to your protection till some of your own can come. It is very important that you know you are not a prisoner or hostage, My Lady.” The girl nodded her head hesitantly unsure of the prince's honesty. “Tell me, My Lady, do you know who your great-grandmother was?”

A contemplative look took the young girl's face before her blue eyes suddenly sparkled and she enthusiastically answered, “Rhaella Targaryen!”

“Aye,” the prince spoke, “That makes us cousins, and we are both short on that side of the family, so we have to take care of each other more than ever.” He gave her a reassuring pat before getting
to his feet again. “Run along to your rooms, and I'll get this ugliness dealt with. It is up to you whether you want supper in your chambers or join us down here.”

The girl nodded once again. The prince waved down a steward telling them to find appropriate chambers for Lady Shireen's party. As the servant went to guide the group out Ser Davos bowed his head, “Thank you, Your Grace.”

When they were gone the prince blew out a long sigh before turning towards the dais, “Well shall we Robb, Aunt, Lord Edmure?” They all nodded as they stepped down the dais. The two direwolves stood stretching before following their clawed feet clicking on the stone tiles with each step.

Lady Catelyn ended up directing them to a balcony that over looked the training yard. When they arrived the princess, Laurence, and Sasha were waiting for them. The prince saddled up next to the princess as everyone else found a spot along the railing to observe the fight.

Down in the yard Lord Stannis was already armored in full plate. A helmet sat on his head with the visor raised. He watched as Lord Velaryon approached the Storm Lord with a scabbard in his hand. He was too far away to hear what was said, but many of the Crowland lords burst out in laughter. Stannis scowled as he snatched the scabbard from Monford and attached it to his belt.

Levi then walked in the opposite side of the yard. He looked the complete opposite of Stannis armored in only the brigadine. When both fighters were present the septon took to the middle of the yard. He spoke a few prayers and asked the Seven's blessing on determining the guilt or innocence of Lord Stannis and Lady Selyse.

When the septon moved from the ring Lord Stannis took up an offered plain shield. The lord then unsheathed his sword. The blade seemed to come alive with fire as the steel met the air, and the yard somehow became brighter adding to the afternoon sunshine. Blasts of yellow, orange, and red light streamed everywhere as Stannis gave the sword a few test swings.

Levi just stared at the sword unimpressed before he unfastened his scabbard. He drew the long sword before handing off the scabbard to one of the other Scouts. Ser Barristan saw him speaking to his troops and Eren offered up his long sword hilt first in response. The smaller man spun both swords about himself testing their weight against each other. When he was satisfied he turned back towards Stannis.

Lord Stannis slapped the visor of his helmet down with his shield hand, and crouched down into a defensive position waiting for Levi to make the first strike. It ended up being a mistake Stannis wouldn't live to regret. Levi had moved so fast he had kicked up a cloud of dirt. Barristan's eyes almost couldn't keep up with the Scout Captain as he leaped into the air twisting his body into a spin. There was a crack of wood as Levi's first blade met Stannis' shield, then steel met steel as the flaming sword struck against the captain's second blade, and the screech of armor giving way when Levi's first blade came back around and punched through Stannis between his neck and shoulder. Levi landed on his feet behind the Storm Lord's back one sword in hand after the second was lodged into his victim. Lord Stannis stayed motionless for but a moment before he collapsed to his knees then went faced first into the dirt his armor echoing through the air at his impact.

The entire yard was deathly silent before Lady Selyse's mournful wale broke it. The lady had collapsed to her knees crying heavily as she stared at the motionless body of her lord husband. The septon stepped back out to the center of the yard not even sparing the corpse a look. He raised his arms to his side declaring, “The Seven have made their will known. Lord Stannis Baratheon and
Lady Selyse Baratheon are here by found guilty. May the Gods have mercy on their souls!”

Two men quickly ran to the center of the yard carrying a block between them. At the same time two others hoisted the whimpering Lady Selyse under her armpits and dragged her before the wood stump. The prince let out a defeated sigh before turning and heading to the stairs that led to the yard. Barristan followed his charge dutifully as always.

When they stepped up next the crazed woman she was still sobbing heavily. The prince pulled *Dark Sister* from her scabbard. He rested the tip to the ground both hands resting on top of the pommel. “Lady Selyse, in my name, Crown Prince Jon of the House Targaryen, I do hereby sentence you to death.” The prince waited patiently till his words sunk in and Selyse looked upon him with glassy eyes. “Do you have any final words?”

“You have doomed us all!” She suddenly screeched, “He was the Prince that was Promised and he would lead us from the darkness!”

The prince stared down at her as if contemplating her words before he looked up to the men restraining her and nodded. They pushed her over the block, and held her in place so she couldn't squirm. The prince raised *Dark Sister* above his head and let out a long breath before the Valyrian Steel swung through the air. The rippled blade easily cut through the lady's neck and only stopped when it clunked against the wood of the block. Her head went rolling away as spurts of blood turned the dirt around the block into a ghastly red-brown mud.

When the prince looked up he wore a grim expression that reminded Barristan so much of Rhaegar it was like a punch in the gut. He just followed his prince wordlessly as they left the yard and made their way towards the Godswood.

Chapter End Notes

So, a few things.

First thing first, did you catch what I threw in there? If you did and you are scratching your head. It was wasn't a mistake. It was completely intentional.

Second, I don't know about you, but I really enjoyed the Annie, Barry, Ghost scene. I thought it would be a good way for him to have some one on one time to get to know a person he is expected to give his life for. That whole scene really evolved just from Barristan coming in on Jon trying to hold down Ghost to shear him.

Third, what did you think of the nickname the Northerners hoisted on Mikasa?

Thanks so much for reading!

NEXT: Tyrion II
TYRION II

Chapter Summary

Tyrion tries to deal with King's Landing and a package arrives courtesy of the Northern forces.

Chapter Notes

This chapter knocks us over 100k words! I honestly didn't think that the story would end up being that long when I first started considering how short the chapters used to be. Over time it has grown on its own and here we are. I never imagined that it would go like this or that my motivation would hang on that long, and we are now no where near done with part I.

I want to thank all of you for reading my silly little crossover AU, and the more you all seem to lap it up the more motivated I become. So, let's see where this journey takes us before we get to King's Landing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He sat brooding in the solar of the Hand of the King trying to come up with a way he could worm his family out of this debacle. Hopefully, with their lives and power still intact. Tyrion hadn't been able to sit and think properly since his arrival back in the capital. The lush velvet of the chair enveloped him as he stared out the window. The orange and red hues of morning were beginning to peak over the horizon as the early morning light danced on the rolling surface of Blackwater Bay. He moved the goblet to his lips once more. The tart bite of the Dornish Sour filled his mouth, but did nothing to temper his bitter mood.

This was a mess, a complete and total unmitigated disaster. He was here at the behest of his father trying to rule as Hand of the King to try and salvage the hole his sister and nephew had dug them into, but they only kept exasperating the problems. He tried to utilize the power that his position held, but every decision he made those two idiots would follow up and undo.

He had tried to appease the smallfolk by calling off the search for Levi. In the moons of looking the Mountain had not come up with one minor idea of where the elusive man could be. That didn't stop him and his moron followers from torturing and raping as they willed. They only ever claimed to be putting people to the question, but Tyrion wasn't stupid and he had ears. Those methods of questioning had only incited the citizens of the capital more. They no longer waited till the cover of night to attack anymore. Gold Cloaks and Red Cloaks alike were being accosted by groups of small folk at anytime of the day. The survivors of these attacks said the folk would appear almost out of no where, mob them, and then disappear into the crowds as if nothing had happened.

Tyrion had finally had enough of it, and called the search to an end. The very next day he had heard of more smallfolk being tortured and killed. The overriding order had come from his sister,
and she had been incensed when he confronted her about it. She had screeched how he didn't have
the power to stop it since she was the queen, and she would get what she wanted. She claimed that
she could not sleep peacefully knowing that man was out in the city waiting to strike at her
children. Tyrion was sure that she only meant Joffrey, and he was also sure that Levi no longer
resided in the capital. By this time the man was most likely already joined up with the Northern
forces.

It also didn't help that the smallfolk were starving. There was no food coming up the Kingsroad or
Roseroad, and the Blackwater was blockaded so no food was being imported that way. The little
aid that could make it had come from the Crownlands or traveled the long distance of the Goldroad
from the Westerlands. Tyrion tried utilizing the former as much as possible. Though the throne was
now held through blood, his father, still wasn't a charitable type. Any food that came from the
Westerlands would come with a hefty fee. A fee that the crown's coffers couldn't afford. To top it
off there was very little chance that taxes were going to be coming from the North or the
Riverlands for quite some time, and despite the pillaging that his father's armies were doing through
the Riverlands he highly doubted any of that gold or silver would make it's way to the capital.

He had tried lessening the burden on the smallfolk. He had the kitchens of the Red Keep trying to
pump out bread and soup for the poor. The hope had been that it would endear the people to the
crown again, and it had worked. Albeit for only a small time. Then, along came Joffrey. The fool
felt that he shouldn't have to deal with smaller portions, so the riff raff could eat. The ego maniacal
cunt believed they should be happy he even allowed them to live in his city. He had canceled the
bread and soup made by the kitchens, and then decided to take it a step further. He and some of the
more vindictive guards would wait for the smallfolk to come begging at the time the cooks and
maids would serve them. Instead of food the boy king would serve them up crossbow bolts. The
whole time laughing as men, women, and children would bleed out in the streets below the walls.

The backlash from the people had been immediate. The next morning four Red Cloaks and five
Gold Cloaks had been laid before the walls under the cover of darkness. All their throats had been
slit, and what had unsettled Tyrion the most was all their weapons were missing. Dealing with a
rioting small folk and their improvised weapons was hard enough without giving them access to
castle forged steel on top of it. The only positive to be found in that bucket of shit was that they
weren't proficiently trained. Though, that hadn't appeared to save the lives of their men. They
appeared perfectly adapted to their ambush tactics, and unfortunately it was working extremely
well.

Thankfully, Ser Harys Swyft had arrived his father had promised. He showed up with half of the
original promised numbers becoming five thousand men instead of ten Ser Harys had explained
that a rider had caught them on the Goldroad with orders from Lord Tywin that five thousand of
his men were to aid him in holding Harranhal. Tyrion wouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth for
the additional troops, but hated the fact that now he was now burdened with five thousand more
mouths to feed. Not to mention on top of everything there were now five thousand more targets for
the insurgents running amok in the city.

The disconcerting part of his rebellion in the city was how organized they appeared to be.
Sometimes they would just find the bodies left laying an alley. Others they would have signs on
their bodies that credited the kills to a group that had started calling themselves The Sons of the
Dragon. Lord Stark had stood on the steps before Baelor the Blessed and had given them all the
fuel and motivation they needed. Tyrion had been fairly young when the rebellion occurred, but
years later you could still hear on the streets of the capital how much the small folk had loved
Rhaegar. For them to hear that a son of his still lived and grew up protected had been all they
needed to make their decisions on who they were going to support. He sometimes heard high lords
speak of how the common folk didn't concern themselves with the games the nobility played, but
the current status of the capital would beg to differ.

They were also smart and infuriating enough not to use any type of identifying markings to single themselves out. That meant it could be anyone in the city at anytime that could strike. It also didn't limit them to men either. Tyrion had no doubts what so ever that if they weren't already involved they would soon incorporate whores into their rebellion. There is no easier way to catch a man with his pants down then when they are quite literally down.

Most of the time the Sons attacks had been limited to retaliatory actions. That was until Joffrey or Cersei, he wasn't sure which one was the guilty party yet, had really cocked up. On the day Lord Stark died he had also declared that Joffrey was illegitimate, and thus the Gold Cloaks had been ordered to round up and kill all of Robert's bastards. Unfortunately, for the children Lord Arryn had kept a stringent record of all the former king's illegitimate offspring, and how they were faring. The Gold Cloaks didn't have to work too hard to track them down. In the days that had followed the ledgers discovery ten children were murdered including a babe still at the breast.

The back lash had been swift and violent. Thirty members of the gold cloaks had been slaughtered. Some had even had their cocks shoved into their moves after their deaths. The insurgency had made it even harder to recruit new members for the city watch. Even despite the promise of a warm bed and three meals a day could sway potential recruits. Who honestly wanted to be charged with trying to keep the peace when the citizens wanted to murder you. The ones that were crazy enough to sign up had next to no training.

Then there was the war that was being waged in the Riverlands. Which if Tyrion was being honest the less said about it the better. Despite Joffrey's cocksure attitude, and Cersie's arrogance about how the lions would prevail and bring the savage wolves low, Tyrion, wasn't as sure. They had already suffered three defeats in quick succession. Tyrion knew you should never discount his father as long as he breathed, but every man had the limits to his abilities. On top of all that it wasn't just wolves they were fighting. There was a dragon involved that also had quite a good claim to the throne. No matter how much the two idiots wanted to scoff and dismiss it as the ravings of men trying to make up for their blunders on the battlefield this dragon apparently rode a very literal dragon, and that created a whole host of new issues.

It didn't help that for Joffrey being their king none of the other kingdoms had answered their call. Tyrion hadn't been surprised by the lack of answer from the Iron Islands. Not only were they crushed under the weight of the Seven Kingdoms not even ten years ago, but since then they had held a hostage from them. Tyrion had remembered seeing the Greyjoy boy both times he had stopped by Winterfell. Neither time did the boy seem like a hostage to him. He was actually treated like a part of the family, and that wouldn't end well for them. The Starks holding the boy would prevent the Ironborn from reaving the North, and most likely when he tells his father how he was treated, Balon Greyjoy, would be more likely to join the North than fight for the Iron Throne.

The last he had heard of the Vale they were in the midst of an upheaval. He had hoped that the Knights of the Vale would gladly assist the crown in stopping another Targaryen from coming to power. The Vale had been a key factor in the rebellion that threw down the Targaryens in the first place. It didn't look like it would happen, though. The latest news saying that most of the bannermen had the Eeryie under seige. From what he had heard the uprising was lead by Bronze Yohn Royce. It didn't make sense to Tyrion at all. He had always heard that the Royce's were the epitome of honorable and extremely loyal almost to a fault. There had to be something in that mess he wasn't aware of. Either way at this point in time the Vale wouldn't be joining the fight anytime soon.

There was Dorne, but Tyrion highly doubted they would be involved in this war at all. The
southern most kingdom could basically do what they want right now. His father and Joffrey could complain all they wanted about the Dornish not answering the call, but what were they really going to do about it. The Targaryens had enough trouble getting the Dornish to join the kingdoms to begin with and they had dragons at their disposal. The Martells were only ever brought to the table through marriage. Tyrion felt it was best to not even tire the ravens with the trip. Even if they did answer the call there was a chance their men would just get speared in the back. The deaths of the Princesses Elia and Rhaenys, and Prince Aegon had made life long enemies for the Lannisters. No, the only hope for Dorne is that they would take insult with the Targaryen boy's existence and refuse to help. Even if by some strange chance he was able to win, Tyrion, hoped the Dornish created as much of a headache for him as they had for the throne the last seventeen years.

That left the Reach as their last best hope. The sad part was that hope rested in the hands of Petyr Baelish. The man had spoken confidently of being able to bring back their troops, their ships, and a bride for Joffrey. Though the poor girl would actually be a hostage to keep the Tyrells in line till the war was won. They could also get Mace Tyrell to forgive a good portion of the crown's debt as a dowry. As far as Tyrion was concerned their alliance would be considered a win all around, and maybe the heads of his family would be able to stay attached to his shoulders. So, all things considered with the overwhelming number of troops they would have at that point they would just have to worry about how to take down that dragon.

Tyrion wanted to reassure himself with that but he was rather concerned that they hadn't heard from Littlefinger in so long. He made sure to ask Pycelle everyday during their meetings if he had received a raven yet, but so far nothing. His optimistic side wanted to assume that in the near future they would receive a missive from the man filled with a lot of self congratulations on how he had brought about the greatest alliance in recent history.

He had also been concerned with Varys lately. The Master of Whisper's net of little birds seemed to be shrinking exponentially. When he had asked about it the eunuch had just shrugged his shoulders explaining that war zones were dangerous places. He did have a worried tone when he said he hoped his little birds weren't captured, being tormented, or gods forbid burned by another mad Targaryen. Tyrion didn't know how much he truly trusted the man, but he was all he had at the moment so he had to make due.

He was pulled from his musings as the door to the solar creaked, and his squire's head popped through the opening. The boy's eyes widened a little seeing him sat at the desk, but he didn't appear to be overly surprised. Tyrion was sure his squire was used to catching him sitting by himself in candle light lately. “Mi-Milord, you are up already?” He asked trying and unsuccessfully to put surprise in his voice.

His squire was a good boy, but wouldn't amount to much being under his charge. The boy entered fully into the room already dressed for the day. His dark hair hung loose and her wore a purple doublet slashed with gold. Poderick Payne was skittish at the best of times, but if anyone higher than Tyrion was in his presence the boy turned into a stuttering mess. He was abysmal with a sword at best and being under Tyrion wasn't likely to help him at all in the near future.

Tyrion was smart enough to realize they were together as a form of punishment to both of them. Poderick had arrived to the capital a fortnight after Tyrion. Pod, as he liked to be called, had told Tyrion he had served a different knight, but the man had been hung by Lord Tywin for pilfering a ham from the food carts. Pod hadn't partaken in the stealing, but because he had eaten of the offered food, Lord Tywin, had sent him to squire for his dwarf son to shame him. As for Tyrion he was in a position that warranted him having a squire, but instead of a capable young man he had been saddled with a boy that barely knew which side of the sword was the business end.
It wasn't all bad though. Pod was extremely dedicated. He was always at Tyrion's side before the sun fully rose. He had learned quickly what foods his lord liked to break his fast with, and he always made sure the decanters were filled with his favorite wines. He was extremely reliable on running messages as long as it wasn't a high noble on the receiving end.

Poderick silently approached Tyrion retrieving a decanter on the way. He topped off his goblet wordlessly as maids entered behind him. They made their way to his private chambers lugging buckets of steaming water for his bath. Once the maids had retreated and the solar was silent once more was when Pod decided to speak, “You should be able to break your fast once you have bathed, Milord.”

Tyrion allowed a small smirk to take his face at the dutiful boy before he threw his head back and downed the entire goblet. “You're a good man, Poderick.”

“Will you need any assistance, Milord?”

“No, Poderick, I may not be capable of much, but I can definitely bathe myself.” Tyrion spoke allowing a little mirth to enter his voice. “Why don't you head down to the dining hall, and I'll join you as soon as I'm done.” Pod bowed in response before he departed quickly.

Tyrion waited until the sound of his squire's footstep had faded beyond the door. He hopped down from the chair, and his legs almost gave way under him from how cramped they were. He stalled for a moment as he rubbed his thighs willing life back into his stunted limbs. When the needling sensation finally abated he waddled his way into his bed chamber discarding his sleep wear along the way.

He sunk himself into the steaming water. The heat was just barely tolerable, but it made the muscles in his legs relax almost immediately. He sat for a few minutes letting the calming water envelope him. Ultimately, he would've liked to be able to just relax and stew in the water, but his breakfast would be ready soon and he would have to face the day fully. There are few things in life that can spoil a day as quickly as breaking your fast on food that had been set long enough to cool. He dunked his head to get his hair soaked, and when he reemerged went to work cleaning himself.

Once he had scrubbed himself completely he rose from the water wrapping the drying cloth the maids had left for him in the process. He knew he would look a sight if anyone had seen him. The drying cloth meant for a normal size man looked like some type of soft gown worn by women in Essos wrapped around his shorter frame. After he had dried himself with the cloth he dressed quickly pulling on a black doublet with golden lion clasps and the Hand of the King broach secured to his breast, followed by crimson dyed trousers, and a pair of black boots. Then, tamed his hair as well as he could before departing from his chambers.

When he made it to the dining room Pod had just finished setting his place. He hopped up in his seat and took a swig off the goblet of watered wine. The meal before him was simple, but exactly to Tyrion's tastes. There were a couple soft boiled eggs, with fried bread that had been cut into strips for dipping, and a healthy portion of strips of bacon that had been blackened. There were few things that could wipe the stress away from him, and the few minutes each morning he got to enjoy breaking his fast was his favorite of them all.

Alas, today wouldn't be one of those relaxing days. He had only time to enjoy one of his eggs and a few strips of bacon before the door of the dining hall opened and an apologetic looking steward entered. He stopped before Tyrion's table before going into a respectable bow. “My Lord, apologies for disturbing your meal, but a rider arrived with urgent news from House Byrch.”

Tyrion sighed feeling his mood quickly sour, “Call for the small council and bring the rider to the
Small Council chambers. I'll be along shortly.”

“Very well, My Lord,” the steward bowed once more then vanished from the room as quickly as he appeared.

Tyrion glanced at his plate. The breakfast he had thoroughly enjoyed up to this point had now lost it's appeal. He quickly thrust a couple more strips of bacon into his mouth, drained his goblet, and pushed away from the table. As he strode from the room he called over his shoulder, “Come along, Pod.”

Crossing through the castle had been relatively quiet, and thankfully no one stopped him to speak. Though, at this time of the morning it was mostly servants and squires running around seeing to their masters' orders. The only thing that had stood out at all was a small group of Lannister troops dismounting in the courtyard seeing to their mounts. Tyrion hadn't bothered himself with them considering if they had need of him he was sure they would seek him out soon enough.

He ended up being the first one to arrive at the meeting chamber. He took his spot in the seat reserved for the Hand of the King. In the mean time Pod was prepared him a goblet of wine. "Pod, just bring the decanter with you. I have a feeling this meeting is going to require quite a bit of wine.” His squire nodded dutifully and brought the requested items to the table. As he set them down Tyrion spoke again, “It might be better that you disappear for a while. If this is bad news I don't want my sister or nephew taking their anger out on you.”

“Y-Yes, My Lord.” Pod stammered back before he quickly hurried from the room.

Tyrion sat sipping his wine for just a few minutes before the door to the chamber opened up. Lord Varys came gliding into the room. His hands held before him hidden in the sleeves of his flowing robe. The smell of his flowering perfume followed quickly and permeated the entire room. The Master of Whispers filled a glass with water before taking the seat next to him. As he sat he addressed Tyrion with a simple, “My Lord.” Tyrion just nodded his head in response.

Tyrion didn't bother to engage the eunuch in conversation as they waited for the rest to appear. Honestly, he wasn't in the mood for the man's tittering and riddled answers. After a long night of brooding he just wanted straight answers to his questions. Thankfully, it wasn't too long before Grand Maester Pycelle appeared. The old man walked stoop backed as he coughed and wheezed his way across the room to his position with his chain swaying and clanking the whole time.

His sister entered not much longer. By the look of her she had had another long night. No doubt drinking and fucking her Kingsguard that was supposed to be protecting her. Their were dark bags under her eyes causing her normally bright emerald eyes to seem dull, and she had a goblet gripped tightly in her hand for a bit of “Hair of the Dog” self medication. The rest of her looked pristine though. Her crimson gown had golden floral patterns adorning it, and her hair was set in complex braids sat on top of her head. A sneer took her face when she saw him observing her as she grabbed a jug of Arbor Gold on her way past the refreshment table before seating herself in the chair reserved for the king. “The king not joining us this morning?” He asked a little amusement coating his voice at the joy of not having to deal with his obnoxious nephew.

“It is too early to be bothering his grace with matters such as these.” Cersei answered snidely.

“Of course, of course, we are only trying to lead the Seven Kingdoms through a civil war. No need to impede the king's much needed sleep as everyone fights for his crown except himself.” Tyrion apparently wasn't able to stop himself. He meant to just respond with a sarcastic comment, but the anger had managed to seep into his sleep deprived mind.
An angry look was all he received in response. He kept his eyes locked on her to see if she would eventually add anything. When she remained silent he turned his eyes to the ashen faced steward posted by the door. “Bring the rider in, and we will hear his news.”

The steward bowed before disappearing through the door. He reappeared moments later with a young man in tow. The boy crossed the room stopping a respectable distance from the table. He was an extraordinarily plain looking young man. His hair was a dark brown with matching eyes. A surcoat depicting a shield quarted by black and white gyronny opposite a grey axe on green covered his light armor. The boy bowed as he began speaking, “Your Garce, My Lord Hand.”

“What news do you bring, lad?” Tyrion asked once the messenger had returned to his upright position.

“The Redwyne fleet was seen coming into the Blackwater, My Lord.” The Byrch man spoke, and Tyrion felt a smile take his face. Littlefinger had some how succeeded. They would be able to end the blockade and food would start coming up the Roseroad again. They just might finally be able to placate the citizens and return King's Landing to peace.

The tiny flame of hope that had blossomed in Tyrion was quickly snuffed when the young man continued to speak. “However, instead of engaging the blockade in battle they had raised white banners. Then the Redwyne fleet joined in the blockade raising dragon banners on their masts.”

Tyrion clenched his jaw so tight he feared he may actually fracture his teeth. He was saved the nightmare of fake teeth when his mouth fell agape in shock as Cersei’s goblet flew by the young man’s head leaving a trail of wine in its wake as if it were a golden comet. The metal cup clanged against the wall before bouncing on the floor several times till it finally stilled though the echoes of metal against stone continued ringing through the room. The young man hadn't bothered waiting for a formal dismissal before he bowed and fled the room as quickly as his feet would carry him.

Tyrion could only roll his eyes at his sister's predictable behavior. The servants of the castle had to hate cleaning the Small Council chamber after meetings considering flying wine goblets had recently become a norm. They probably played rock, parchment, scissors to see who would be the poor soul to have to clean up after his sister's tantrums.

He was about to open his mouth and attempt to speak some sense to his sister when the chamber door burst open. Joffrey came swaggering in with the confidence of someone who had actually accomplished something in his life. “Why wasn't I sent for? Matters of war need the King's utmost attention.”

Tyrion rolled his eyes behind his closed lids not wanting to argue with his nephew this early in the day. “What timing, Your Grace, we have good news for you. Looks like you won't be marrying the Tyrell girl after all.” He wondered why he spoke the words as soon as they left his mouth. It seemed when he was tired he really couldn't rein in his mouth in.

“I wasn't going to anyway. I have already told you all I'll only marry the Stark bitch.” Joffrey answered with a smug look of victory on his face.

The look quickly vanished with Tyrion's next words. “You won't be marrying her because the Tyrells have thrown their hat in with the Targaryen.” Tyrion savored the smug look being wipe off his idiotic nephew's face as he began turning red from rage, “The Redwynes were spotted joining the fleet blockading us with dragon banners on their masts.”

He watched as Joffrey turned even darker in anger and right when he opened his mouth to unleash it a knock sounded at the chamber door. Joffrey's anger was quickly shifted to whomever was
beyond the threshold. “WHAT?!” He screeched and Tyrion almost laughed at the way the boy's voice cracked.

The door opened and Tyrion was surprised when his young cousin Martyn's face appeared. Tyrion had assumed his cousin was a prisoner of the Targaryen and Starks considering he had been left under Jaime's command. When he entered fully, he, realized that Martyn by his riding leathers had been leading the party he had seen in the courtyard not long ago. Overall, he looked fairly well considering he had most likely been a prisoner until recently. His cousin was followed by two more Lannister soldiers hauling a elongated box between them. Martyn approached the table as the other two stayed at the back of the room.

As his cousin bowed before the table the subtle hint of sickly sweet rot reached his nose. He noticed from the expressions around the table that everyone else seemed to have picked up on it as well. He took a pull of wine to wash the taste of it out of his mouth before addressing Martyn.

“I heard you were taken prisoner, but you look well enough. How did you escape?”

His young cousin's face twisted through several emotions before a neutral expression took hold. “I didn't escape. I was released with several men as escort.”

Tyrion couldn't keep the shock from his face. Why in the Seven would they release a Lannister without ransom, especially a Lannister of the Rock. “And why pray tell would the Targaryen pretender release you?” Cersei spoke beating Tyrion to the punch.

“I was released in good faith to deliver a message and a package.” Martyn responded as he reached into his tunic and produced a folded up parchment. He glanced around the table to see who would accept it and when no one made an effort Tyrion held his hand out to accept.

Once the paper was in his hand he turned it over seeing the three-headed dragon pressed into red wax sealing it closed. He gently pulled the seal open to not risk ripping the paper. He quickly glanced around the table seeing all eyes on him he cleared his throat before reading allowed. “To the False Bastard King and his Whore Queen Regent,” He paused to look at the two the letter addressed to see matching looks of rage on their faces.

He looked back to the parchment and continued. “I have sent your Lannister cousin back to you in good faith to deliver you a message. I was reluctant to release such a valued hostage, but with your lack of honor I wasn't going to risk a messenger's life. No doubt you would have anyone else killed when you finish accepting your gift.”

“Besides what your men are presenting you I will also gift you your lives. Surrender, leave the Red Keep, and live the rest of your lives in the peaceful exile of Essos. I swear you will not be hunted as my kin have been. If you refuse I will litter the southern kingdoms in Lannister dead, and I will leave your family in the same condition as mine was.” It didn't take long for Tyrion to figure out what was implied. If they wanted to fight the Targaryen for the throne and he won he was going to leave only three Lannisters living. He highly doubted that Joffrey or Cersei would be lucky enough to be counted in those three. He could only hope the kindness he had shown Bran Stark might be able to keep his head on his shoulders.

He shook his head quickly before resuming. “Your gift is proof of my resolve. I pray that you are smarter than your foolish Golden Lion. He should have been much wiser in choosing his opponents. Choose wisely, Bastard. Jon Targaryen.”

He could hear the curses and “bastard traitor” that Joffrey kept repeating under his breath, but ignored it to address his cousin. “What is this gift, Martyn?”
His cousin's face went ashen in response, but he addressed the soldiers at the back nodding his head towards the table. The two men hefted the chest between them and approached the table. As the distance closed the scent of rot became stronger, and dread began filling Tyrion.

The two men laid the chest before Tyrion before retreating to their previous position. He looked up to his cousin's face again, but Martyn’s eyes were locked on the chest. With shaky hands he undid the two latches and threw the top open. The smell hit him full force, and through sheer will alone he was able to fight off retching. Tears filled his eyes when he took in the crates contents. Laid on a velvet cloth was a hand severed at the wrist and blackened with rot. The fingers were still clenched tightly around the hilt of a sword. The blade still coated in dark dried blood, but the pommel told Tyrion everything he needed to know. Looking back at him was the golden lion pommel of Jaime's sword.

“THOSE SAVAGES MAIMED HIM!!” Cersei screeched as tears cascaded down her face. At that moment Tyrion actually felt the same as her. Jaime had always been the one to show Tyrion any type of love, and he knew how much his brother prided himself on his sword play. Jaime would never be the same again. Even if he did survive this war this event has most likely broken him.

“THEY ARE ALL GOING TO PAY! ALL THOSE TRAITORS' HEADS ARE GOING TO BE MINE!” Joffrey raged out. “WHEN THE STARK BITCH GETS HERE THEY WILL UNDERSTAND NOT TO MESS WITH ME!”

The statement immediately caught Tyrion's attention. When he turned to look at his nephew, Tyrion, could see the anger still flaring in his eyes, but there was an unnerving smile adorning his face. The idiot had obviously planned something without his knowledge, and Tyrion couldn't help but feel it would be another mess that would fall on his shoulders to try and salvage.

They were one and a half kingdoms against three and a half plus a dragon. How did Joffrey think they were going to win?

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: CATELYN II
CATELYN II

Chapter Summary

Cat intuition leads to an important discovery, and roses bloom in Riverrun

Chapter Notes

So, this is going to be completely off topic of my story, but yesterday I watched all three Madoka Magica movies. If you haven't seen them I highly recommend it. Just be prepared for a bit of a feels trained combined with 'what the fuck is going on?' and a dash of nightmare fuel.

OH! and I just ordered a new laptop today. Snagged it on Prime day, so can't wait to get my hands on it.

Anyway, on with the show.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Catelyn knew her day was about to get a lot harder than it already had been, and the headache blooming behind her eyes wasn't going to help matters at all. She was on a short temper and even the clicking sound of her heels on the stone floor was grating her nerves.

She had loved her husband with all her heart. Even after the betrayal of bringing Jon home and making her believe he had broken his vows to her. They had mended their relationship over time and it had eventually blossomed into a true and loving marriage. Together they had created five beautiful children that she has cherished.

Yes, she had truly loved her late husband, but his overly large heart had completely taxed her patience...a lot. It seemed every time she had let that man out of her sight she gained another life to be responsible for. When he had left her freshly wedded and bedded neither knowing that her sweet Robb was blooming in her belly he had returned a year later with Jon in his arms. Then, Robert Baratheon had dragged him away to fight the Greyjoys. Arya at the time was still on the teat and unbeknownst to them little Bran had already taken root inside of her. He returned from that war with Theon Greyjoy. A sullen and temperamental boy that had everything he'd known pulled away from him and thrown into the unforgiving North. If that hadn't be enough it turned out that Ned couldn't even be trusted to go dispense justice without bringing strays home. That time he returned with not only six direwolve pups, but twelve more strangers. In that short span of a moon Catelyn Tully-Stark had gone from the mother of five, step-mother of one, and ward of one to essentially become the mother to seventeen.

They were a nightmare to corral, and now she had to do it herself. The maids and stewards were all elbow deep preparing chambers, and a meal worthy for this evening. If she didn't retrieve them herself the boys would most likely continue beating each other with their training swords, and show up looking like the Seven-Hells had just spit them out. So, instead of being by her father's sickbed or mourning her husband like she ought to be able to she was tracking down wayward teens to get
ready for probably their most important guests.

She had been sitting with her father when she got word. Her lord father had been getting worse by the day, and Maester Vyman said it wouldn't be too much longer till he left them. He would drift in and out of consciousness, and Catelyn wanted to be by his side for when he was awake. That wasn't as reassuring as she had hoped it would be. Her poor father would ramble incoherently when awake as if in a waking fever dream. He referred to her as his 'Dearest Minisa' confusing her for her mother whom had been dead for years. She had passed in the birthing bed trying to give them one more sibling, and unfortunately the babe had passed in the process too. She had sometimes wondered what life would have been like with her mother and youngest brother still around. She would have been able to actually enjoy her childhood instead of essentially becoming the Lady of Riverrun at the age of eight. In his delirium her father would beg her mother to seek Lysa's forgiveness for how he had treated her, and that he was so sorry. Cat had no idea what he had been rambling about, but she held his hand trying to reassure him that all was forgiven.

Thankfully, when Edmure had found her he had been asleep. She had been sitting there working on needlework when she had heard her brother clear his throat. When she had looked up a young man was in his company. The boy was dressed head to toe in yellows and greens. He performed a near perfect bow, and informed her that the Tyrell party could be expected to arrive a little before sunset.

The lost look on Edmure's face told her that she was going to be the one to take charge of the situation. She had quickly dispatched the stewards and maids to their duties, and with a resigned sigh had set out to round up her charges and make sure they were presentable. She immediately sent Edmure to the barber to get cleaned up.

When she had arrived at the intersection to head out of the keep or towards the royal chambers she decided on the latter. Annie would need the most work. Tonight she had to look the epitome of royalty. Destination decided she made her way towards Jon and Annie's chambers with Alyn in tow.

As she approached the royal chambers she saw Laurence Snow posted without letting her know at least one of them were present within. She could make out muffled yelling as the distance to the doors closed. The potential Kingsguard stood with an amused smirk on his face. The potential knight didn't impede her at all as she reached for the door handle. Alyn took up position on the opposite side of Snow as Cat pushed the door in and entered the solar. “Good luck, My Lady, the princess is in a right mood today.” the Kingsguard warned her.

When she entered the solar she could make out Annie's voice a little clearer though it was still muffled by the door to the bed chambers and as she approached the bed chamber was greeted with, “FUCK, FUCK, FUCK, FUCK!”

When she was younger Catelyn would have been mortified by such language, but after spending the last half of her life in the North being exposed to their lords she had become immune to such reactions. Still she needed to find out what was bother the princess, and get her ready for their impending guests. She quickly raised her fist and knocked on the door.

A frustrated Annie immediately called back, “FOR THE LOVE YMI, KAINA, JUST ENTER!”

Cat pushed open the door and entered the bed chamber dreading what she was about to encounter. Out of all the younger Scouts whom all came with their own challenges Annie had been the toughest of them to open up. She had been raised by a distant father whom just wanted to mold her into a fighter and non existent mother. Thus the girl had closed herself off from people. After Jon had managed to crack her exterior she had warmed up more. Once Cat was able to see the more
loving side of the cold girl she had been able to work with that more. They had managed to form a tentative sort of motherly bond. Though, Jon had forgiven her and tried to move on from their past she could tell Annie still harbored some resentment for how she used to treat Jon. For that alone an enraged Annie was about the last person Cat wanted to be dealing with.

She wasn't expecting the sight that greeted her though. Ghost was sprawled out enjoying the fact that he had the entire bed to himself for the moment. Near the direwolf laid out for wear was one of Annie's waist length skirts with the side splits, a tank top as they called it, and one of the girl's many hoodies. The girl in question stood a little ways from the bed with her back turned. Her hair still damp from a bath. She was dressed in only her small clothes and was struggling to connect a strap behind her back. The princess' body was exceptional fit, but still soft in a feminine way. The other Scout ladies all seemed to have that style body with the exception of Mikasa. Catelyn had helped her get dressed for her wedding and that young Lady's body was pure muscle. She had never seen another woman that looked as hard as the Ackerman girl. Cat doubted the girl had an ounce of fat on her body.

She was broken from her observance as another string of curses began to fall from the girl before her. “It's not Kaina, Annie.” The blonde's head snapped towards her, and Cat was shocked to see tear streaks marring her face. Cat could count on her hands the amount of times she had seen genuine emotions on the girl's face, and never once had they been tears. The sight caused her maternal instincts to kick in and override her apprehension as she rushed to her side, “Oh, Sweetling, what's the matter?”

“WHAT'S WRONG, IS MY TITS SEEMED TO HAVE GROWN OVERNIGHT, AND THIS BLODDY BRA WON'T FIT NOW!” More frustrated tears fell from her eyes as she threw the offending garment towards her trunk. The wind whipping through the open windows caught it blowing it towards the bed where it landed on the direwolf's head. Ghost sat up immediately making the cups that were meant to support a woman's breasts cover his eyes as if they were some queer version of horse blinders. Cat had to resist the chuckle the image caused to rise in her as Annie continued to rage. “MY MOODS ARE ALL OVER THE PLACE, I'M CONSTANTLY TIRED, AND I CAN'T SEEM TO STOP PISSING!”

Cat's eyes widen when she knew from experience exactly what was bothering the young princess. “You're coming with me, Annie, we need to see Maester Vyman immediately.” The poor girl had a confused look on her face, but thankfully was not in the mood to argue. Cat quickly fetched Annie's dressing gown from where it had been discarded over the back of a chair in front of the vanity. She held it open and the girl stepped into it a sleeve at a time. Catelyn quickly tied the belt to keep the garment closed, and Annie slipped her feet into some slippers. Then, Cat took a damp wash cloth and wiped the tear streaks away from her face. When she was done she cupped the girls cheeks to look into her eyes smiling. “It will be alright, Sweetheart. I just want the maester to confirm a suspicion of mine, okay?” Her lips quirked slightly when the younger girl nodded.

She entered the hallway with her arm looped through Annie's, but stopped to address the two guards. “Alyn, I need you to find Levi as fast as possible, and send him to me at Maester Vyman's chambers. Ser Laurence will accompany us.” Both guards nodded in understanding of their respective orders. Alyn disappeared from their company as the clanking of the future Kingsguard's armor followed them down the halls.

It only took them a few minutes to traverse the castle to the maester's turret. Thankfully, Vyman was where she needed him to be, and opened only a moment after the first knock. “Princess, Lady Catelyn, what can I do for you both?” he asked as he held the door open inviting them in.

She ushered the princess over the threshold waiting for the door to close before she spoke. “I need
you to examine Princess Annie.” She continued into the chamber until they reached the examination bed. “Sweetling, lay down here while I speak to the maester. Annie gave her a confused look, but followed her direction holding her robe closed as she laid down on the bed getting comfortable. Catelyn gave her shoulder a reassuring squeeze before returning her attention back to the maester whom was still waiting by the door.

When she returned to the maester’s side she bent down to whisper what Annie had complained about. When she saw the maester's eyes widen she knew he had come to the same theory as her.

As they went to move to Annie’s side a knock at the door drew them to a quick pause. Laurence Snow’s voice quickly followed through the oak barrier, “Lady Stark, Captian Levi is waiting without as requested.”

“Be right there.” She called back before turning back to Vyman, “Go ahead and start, maester, I need to make sure the castle is prepared.”

The old man nodded. “As you say, My Lady, the princess is in good hands with me.”

She quickly pulled the door open exiting the room as the maester was pulling up a stool to sit next to the exam bed. When she stepped out Laurence stood straight on one side, and Alyn returned from his task stood on the other. Levi bowed when her eyes landed on the man. His appearance reveled that he had just come from the training yard. His tunic and trousers were filthy with mud and dirt and sweat ran down his face in waves. “Alyn, said you needed to see me immediately, My Lady?”

“Yes, Captain.” Catelyn answered with a smile. If there was one person in the whole castle that could accomplish what she needed right now Levi could. “I have to stay here with Princess Annie, but if you could round up the rest of the children it would be much appreciated. The Tyrells will be here before sundown. These people aren't the Narrow Sea Lords. They represent so much more, were staunch Targaryen loyalists, and could become one of our strongest allies, so I need everyone to look their best.” Levi nodded his head in understanding. “I want proper gowns, corsets, and braids for the ladies. I don't want to see a single skirt, tshirt, hoodie, or what ever other crazy garments they have. For the boys I want them all in their finest doublets like what they wore for the weddings. Clean shaven or beards trimmed, and baths all around. There is no time to waste we only have a few hours before they will arrive.”

“I will get it done.” He answered immediately before a concerned look over took his face, “If I may ask real quick, My Lady, what is ailing Annie? Is it anything to be concerned with?”

A smile took her face at his concern. She knew of all the Scouts he had the most strained relationship with Annie, but his concern still moved her a little. “It is nothing to be concerned with at this time, Captain. Call it motherly instinct and woman's intuition I wanted confirmed.”

He arched a questioning eyebrow at her, but it quickly relaxed, “Very well, My Lady. I will see to getting them prepared.”

He bowed and quickly made his way down the hall till Cat's voice halted him, “I'm deadly serious about this, Captain, if one of them wants to test me they will be cleaning every privy in this castle. That includes a certain lord and prince.” Levi shot back a small smile before disappearing around a corner.

When she returned to the maester's chambers Vyman was in the process of rubbing his hands together to warm them up. Annie laid on the bed. The belt of her robe undone and the lower half pulled open enough to expose her abdomen, but still allowing her to keep her modesty. Catelyn
watched from over the maester's shoulder as he pushed against all the sides of the girl's stomach. It continued on for a few minutes until the master came to his conclusion. “Well, it looks like congratulations are in order, Your Grace. In about six and a half moons the realm will be gifted a new prince or princess.” He smiled up at Annie, and Catelyn couldn't help the one that stretched upon her face. That was until she sought out Annie's blue-grey eyes and saw nothing but fear written in them.

A few hours later Catelyn was happy to see that her instructions had been followed to the letter. Jon looked the dashing image of royalty. His youthful beard had been trimmed so it was just scruff that added to making him appear more mature, and his short curls were slicked back instead of being in that knot. He was dressed in black form head to toe. A crimson shoulder cape hung over his right side falling to his waist exposing the silver three-headed dragon embroidered on the breast of his doublet placed their by Cat's own hand. The smile that seemed plastered to his face clued her in that Annie had told him the news they had learned earlier, and helped distract the boy from how uncomfortable his garments were no doubt making him.

Annie stood next to him with her right arm looped through his left. She looked breathtaking in her gown. It was all black with an exposed corset the skirts snuggled her thighs till it flared out at her knees. Matching silk and lace formed a choker that connected to the corset by a thick band. A silver broach in the image of the three-headed dragon clasped a black fur cape shawl that covered her shoulders. Her arms were covered in black fingerless sleeves that came up to her biceps matching the height of the corset. Her dark attire was the perfect contrast to her porcelain skin, bright blue-grey eyes, and her blonde hair that was pulled into a set of complex braids. If they didn't know any better at the moment the girl could pass as having some Valyrian ancestors. A small serene smile pulled on her full lips. A far cry from the emotional wreck that Catelyn had encountered earlier in the day.

After they had seen the maester, Catelyn, had called for tea and some honey cakes to be brought to the royal chambers. Cat had taken the time to address the princess' fears, and what would be happening in the next few months. Out of all the things Annie could have been afraid of, Cat, had been surprised that it was being pulled from the fighting. Annie felt she was letting everyone down that one of their biggest advantages wouldn't be utilized. Maester Vyman had explained at length that she had to avoid any undue stress, and titan shifting would definitely fall under that category. Cat had held the girl's hand when she explained that this was just as important as the fighting. The baby would help secure the Realm and the lord's faith in them if they already had an heir to continue the succession. Cat kept to herself that this baby was also a way for her to fully atone for her actions to Jon as a youth. She would treat the baby as one of her own blood grandchildren. After all It's what Ned would have wanted.

Robb Stood between her and Jon looking just as handsome. His auburn curls had been tamed and his face was shaved smooth. He wore a grey doublet with the direwolf embroidered in black on his chest, black trousers, and black boots. While she was dressed in a black gown to show her mourning for her lord husband.

Edmure stood on Annie's opposite side. Dressed in his finest Tully livery. Thankfully he too had been smart enough not to question Cat's orders for getting ready. His face was freshly shaven and his auburn hair had been cleanly washed. He was followed by her uncle Brynden. He had a silver trout embroidered on his jerkin that appeared to be swimming in a sea of black.

Ser Barristan stood behind their row and was flanked by Laurence and Wylis. All three sets of their armor were polished to a shine. Ser Davos' boys had been gracious enough to assist with the
cramped time frame. The three snowy cloaks flowed from their shoulders though the latter two still had their black borders.

Behind the Kingsguard stood the Scouts in a row. All the boys were in matching dark green doublets with the Wings of Freedom embroidered on their breasts. They all wore black trousers and boots. The girls were dressed in gowns of reds and blues. They hadn't packed their nicer gowns from Winterfell only bringing their casual wear, so the maids had pilfered her and Lysa's dresses from when they were young. Sasha was the only one that didn't require any altering. Her build was almost exactly to how Catelyn had been at that age. All their hair had been braided beautifully with the exception being Mikasa. Her hair too short to facilitate the normal southron hairstyles, but it still looked nice pulled up and held with combs. Lastly, Cat was thankful that for one night the young woman wasn't wearing the scarf she always refused to part with. The only other time Cat had seen her without it had been when she had wed Eren in the Godswood last week.

The Northern lords and the Riverland lords were intermixed in lines behind them. Then off to the side stood Ser Davos, Lady Shireen, and the Narrow Sea Lords. Grey Wind and Ghost were off in the woods hunting, and shouldn't be expected back till the morning. Cat smiled to herself. Despite how they had to rush around and even with Annie having to see the maester they had managed to pull everything off perfectly.

Catelyn's eyes snapped forward when the sound of horseshoes clacking against the wood of the drawbridge began echoing through the courtyard. Several knights rode in decked out in green and yellow enameled armor and bearing the banners of house Tyrell. Her attention was drawn to two knights that rode side by side. They were both donned in some of the finest armor that gold could buy. The only difference between the two being the golden roses painted on their breastplates signaling their identities. The one on the right was decorated with two being Ser Garlan Tyrell, and the other with three being Ser Loras Tyrell.

The Tyrell boys and their knights were followed through the gate by a massive wheel house. It's size would have impeded its entrance through Winterfell's gates, but here in the south where such extravagances were taking into consideration it easily glided through. It was pulled by twelve massive draft horses. Massive beautiful creatures that were white with grey spots. Their tail hair and manes had been trimmed and braided into short knobs to not impede the carriage's function. The carriage itself was a behemoth of green paneling and gilded metal covered in rose motifs. Catelyn had thought the carriage house Cersei brought to Winterfell had been impressive, but the Tyrell's one put it to shame.

When the carriage came to a stop a stable boy hurried over and placed a set of mounting stairs below the door. A steward in Tyrell livery approached after and opened the door the the occupants to make their exit. The first one out had to have been Mace Tyrell. He was a portly man with chestnut hair that was streaked with grey. His face was adorned with a pointed mustache and goatee. His green doublet was embroidered with a golden robe and a cloth of gold sash wrapped over his right shoulder.

When he was to the bottom of the stairs he held his hand out in offering before a distinctly feminine one gripped it followed by a very handsome woman. Her hair was more grey than the blonde she knew the Hightowers possessed. Her green gown hugged a figure the other ladies her age would probably kill for considering she had birthed four children. When she had descended the stairs she stepped to the side to allow her lord husband to assist the next occupant out.

However, when Lord Tyrell reached out his hand this time a polished green cane batted it away. An elderly lady stooped with age exited the carriage. She made her way down the stairs unassisted with the exception of her cane. She wore a wimple that was a blueish green that matched her
flowing skirts with a gold bodice. It was obvious to Catelyn that this was the famous Queen of Thorns herself.

Ser Garlan approached the carriage next to assist a slender maiden exiting the carriage. Her face broke into a huge smile as she graciously accepted her brother's hand. Her chestnut hair flowed loosely down to the middle of her back. Her blue-green gown clung to her curves before falling loose from her waist. Her shoulders and arms were bare and it split down the middle to her belly button exposing an extreme amount of her cleavage.

Catelyn heard Annie snort followed by “Subtle” spoken under her breath. Jon chuckled lightly before politely shushing the princess. When she looked over Jon was looking down trying to collect himself from Annie's barb, but she noticed that Robb's face was locked completely on the Tyrell girl like he was already planning the bedding activities of their wedding night.

When she looked back at their newly arrived guests as they approached, and Catelyn could tell the moment that the Tyrell's schemes died. It was written on all their faces differently. They had all taken one look at Jon with how Annie was stood next to him and dressed they had put the pieces together. Lord Tyrell looked utterly dejected. Lady Tyrell didn't seem bothered at all. She still held the same pleasant smile since she had exited the carriage. Lady Olenna had a frown pulling the corners of her mouth down, but Catelyn could see in her eyes that new plans were already forming. Margeary had already changed targets, and was looking right back at Robb with a smirk that pulled only one side of her mouth. It was both alluring and dangerous at the same time. Ser Loras for some reason wore a stormy look of anger on his face.

When the two lines were but a few feet apart the Tyrells bowed or curtsied. Lord Tyrell began “Your Gra-” but was cut off when a shrill scream broke through the air. Everyone turned to look at a young woman that had just exited the carriage. From how she was dressed in the Tyrell green and golds she was most likely one of Margeary's ladies in waiting. She was frozen still with a look of pure terror on her face as she looked up to the top of the keep. From her frozen shock everyone turned to look in the same direction as the girl to see what had frightened her.

Caitlyn knew what she would see before she turned skyward. She closed her eyes and let out an exasperated sigh. She had forgotten about the damned dragon. When she opened her eyes towards the top of the keep there peeking over the edge was Lyax's massive head as she clung to the bricks with the claws on her wings. Members of the Tyrell party let out mutters and curses as everyone tried to wrench their eyes away from the dragon as she sniffed the air taking in the scents of all the newcomers.

Catelyn had to admit to herself she truly was a magnificent creature. That is of course once you got past the terror of the destruction Lyax could bring if the fancy struck. She didn't deny that it was a different experience for them compared to their new allies. Catelyn had the pleasure of seeing the girl grow from the size of a cat to the monstrosity she was now. She remembered being able to throw her burnt pieces of bacon as she stumbled around the floor of the great hall. Back then she had loved everyone and all their attention. Till one day she decided she only the love that came from Jon and Annie. That change of heart hadn't stopped her from saving her precious Bran from wildlings. An action Catelyn was eternally grateful to the dragon for.

The spell on the courtyard was broken though when Annie's voice rang through in perfect Valyrian, “Lyax, sagon iā ȳz riña se jikagon arghugon.” (Lyax, be a good girl and go hunt.) All the Tyrells heads snapped to Annie then, and even Catelyn was taken off guard for a moment. It had completely slipped her mind that Annie had taken up learning Valyrian when Jon did to help train the dragon. Lyax huffed a plume of smoke in response to whatever Annie had said. Then the dragon spread her wings and with two great flaps was off the roof of the keep flying towards the
woods.

Everyone turned their heads following the dragons flight until Jon cleared his throat calling attention to himself, “So, where were we?”

After the introductions had been done the Tyrells were shown to their chambers to be able to freshen up. Two hours later everyone was gathered once more in the great hall for a feast. Jon sat in the place of honor in between Lord and Lady Tyrell. Annie was on Lord Tyrell's other side with Garlan at her other. He was followed by her uncle Brynden and then Olenna Tyrell. By the look on the older woman's face she was thoroughly enjoying her uncle's uncouth company. Catelyn was seated beside Lady Tyrell with Margeary to her other followed by Robb. Since they had been seated the two had their heads leaned together whispering back and forth.

Catelyn couldn't be happier at the scene. The Rose of Highgarden was a well bred girl, and she was the best possible match for Robb in the entire realm. Thankfully, so far the two had seemed to take to each other like ducks to water. If they were able to seal the two with a marriage alliance their forces would overwhelm the Lannisters completely. Then there were the grain deals that could be brokered to help support the North during their winters.

The entire feast had consisted of friendly conversation as the courses were brought out. Jon had respectfully asked that all the 'business' talks were held off till the morrow. He wanted tonight as a chance for everyone to get to know each other, and enjoy their company. Through the evening Cat had kept an eye on Annie. It was important that expecting mothers eat better to facilitate the growth of the babe, but it came with the symptom of many foods not being appealing. She had watched what foods the girl picked at or actually ate that way she could plan meals the princess and the baby would agree with. She had already told Kaina to make sure that ginger biscuits were available for Annie in the mornings.

When the tables were being cleared from the center to make room for dancing Lady Olenna got to her feet drawing the attention of everyone at the head table. “Your Grace, we have brought two lords we thought you would like to meet. One can wait till the morrow, since that is when you want to do talks,” Jon nodded his head in thanks as the Queen of Thorns continued, “However, the other I thought you'd want to see as soon as possible.” Jon's brows raised in curiosity, but he nodded his head for Olenna to go ahead and present this person. Cat wouldn't lie and felt just as intrigued to see whom this person was to be of such importance.

Olenna signaled two Tyrell men farther back in the hall whom quickly disappeared out the door. The actions had now caught the attention of everyone in the hall, and they all sat in silence awaiting who would be brought in. A few minutes later the double doors opened and four Tyrell guards entered hauling a man between them. His doublet and trousers were ripped and completely filthy, but Cat could tell at one time they had to be quality garments. His head hung low to prevent her from identifying the man gifting her only the vision of his dark greasy hair.

The man was dumped before the dais like a sack with a sickening slap. Then the smell hit Cat. She heard a small gasp down the table and Annie had the back of her hand pressed to her nose to most likely keep herself from retching. Cat felt for the girl. If this man smelled bad to her she knew from experience how bad it had to be for Annie.

Catelyn felt the air get blown out of her when the man looked up and she was greeted by the face of the boy she had grown up with. His beard was scraggly and unkempt, and she hadn't seen him look this bad since he had foolishly challenged Brandon to that duel for her hand. “YOU!” The growl that had come out of Levi surprised Cat considering how quiet the man generally was, and
everyone turned to him where he stood behind the head table beside Ser Barristan. He quickly approached the table standing between Jon and Mace Tyrell, and pointed an angry finger at the prisoner, “Petyr Baelish told Lord Stark he would support us in securing the throne from Cersei’s fake king, but he betrayed us using the Gold Cloaks.” Cat could sense more rage enter the man’s voice though it didn't raise at all, “He held a knife to Lord Stark's throat himself. Lord Stark ordered me to flee and try to save the rest of the guards, but I'll never forget the smirk that fuck had on his face.”

Cat's eyes snapped back to Petyr. She could feel tears forming in the corner of her eyes, her fists clenched, and her throat tightened with the overwhelming emotions. This man that she had grown up with and loved as a brother had betrayed her, and assisted in the murder of her husband. Her eyes snapped to Margeary when she felt a hand on her wrist. The young woman had a sympathetic look on her face as she rubbed Cat's arm reassuringly. Robb was peeking around Margeary with a look of pure rage on his face. She knew her son hadn't yet had the chance to properly mourn his father. Since they had received the news there had been no time for him considering he was too busy being the new Lord Stark and planning a war.

Gasps filled the hall as Jon leapt onto the table and jumped off the other side. He marched right up to Petyr kicking him in the chest. Littlefinger let out a pained 'oof' as he was thrown to his back. Jon wrenched Dark Sister from her scabbard and raised the blade both hands on the hilt preparing to shove the blade straight into her foster brother's heart. The entire hall was as quiet as a crypt as if everyone was holding their breaths waiting for the impending death of the man before them. Jon's motions halted when “Your Grace!” was called out from Olenna. Dark Sister hung precariously in the air as he turned his attention to the matriarch of the Tyrells. “Littlefinger knows many secrets, My Prince. I would advise you that he should be put to the question before you end his miserable life.”

Time froze as Jon seemed to ponder over Lady Olenna's suggestion. Petyr's eyes were wide and locked on the blade of Valyrian Steel as if the stranger himself was looking down on him. A few tense filled moments later the prince came to his decision. He nodded his head returning his sword to its sheath. He then turned his attention to the table where the Scouts sat. “Squad Leader Hange, would you be willing to find out what he knows?”

Cat was thankful that Hange managed to rein in her excitement that was clearly displayed in her eyes as she answered with a respectful, “Yes, Your Grace.”

She watched a relieved look over take Petyr's face from where he laid on the ground. The man obviously thought a woman wouldn't have the constitution to extract all his deepest secrets. However, it was short lived as Jon looked to another table housing some of the Northern lords. “Lord Bolton, would you be willing to aid, Lady Hange.”

The Lord of the Dreadfort bowed his head slightly where he sat answering with an, “Of course, Your Grace.”

Baelish's face turned a sickly pale as his eyes frantically sought any potential ally. He may have never set foot in the North himself, but the reputation of the Bolton's preceded them all across the Seven Kingdoms. The thought of being put at the mercy of a lord that had a flayed man on his banner would crack the resolve of even the strongest men. He must have thought he found one when his eyes landed on her. His voice was croaky and high pitched as he pleaded “CAT!” over and over. She had tried to give him the benefit of the doubt when her Ned had written to Robb back in Winterfell, but hearing that this man had helped destroy her husband caused any affection she once held for that small boy she made mud pies with die in her heart.
She sat like a statue as she watched the small man being dragged towards the dungeons continue to call her name. She refused to react at all in front of the bannermen. The moment the double doors closed she stood. She glanced at Jon and with a sympathetic frown on his face he nodded towards the door behind the dais.

She had barely made it twenty feet in the hallway before the emotions overwhelmed her and she broke into sobs. She stood there as tears rocked her body when she felt herself pulled in by strong arms. She didn't look up, but she could see enough to recognize Robb's grey doublet. He just held her silently rubbing her back.

She loved her son so much in the moment for being there for her, but she couldn't help wishing it was her Ned in his place.

Chapter End Notes

I had fun writing this chapter especially with how Cat is seemingly at the end of her rope dealing with so many teens at once, haha

Thanks for reading!!

NEXT: SANSA I
SANSA I

Chapter Summary

A Northern maiden is kidnapped, and the direwolves rush to the rescue.

Chapter Notes

So, this chapter actually has three different povs in it, but considering it is mostly Sansa's chapter it gets her name. I will be doing this more often from here on out. They will just be little add ons that add to the chapter, but don't necessarily require their own chapters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

LOCKE I

Locke smiled as he pulled himself over the ramparts of Winterfell's outer wall proving that Ramsay had been right after all. He kept an eye out for the Winterfell guards as the rest of the men climbed up behind him. They had thankfully picked the right tower to ascend. Just ten feet away a bridge ran between the two walls, and beyond that the Godswood.

A pat on his shoulder told him the rest of their party had completed the climb. They moved quickly through the shadow of the tower as it masked their movements. This mission required the utmost level of stealth if they were going to secure their prize for Ramsay. He still didn't know why the boy king wanted this girl so bad. He knew it made sense to take a hostage from the Starks to try and still their hand, but why this specific one? For a reward Ramsay had been promised to be legitimized and become the Heir to the North when the Starks and this Targaryen boy were defeated. While Locke himself had been promised a keep and so much gold that he had decided some questions really didn't need answering.

Ramsay had been the one to come up with the plan, though, he didn't come along to see it implemented. He had learned most of the inner workings of the castle by sneaking in disguised as any other small folk going about their business. From the moment the army had marched south Ramsay had been scheming how to best take the castle. They knew the guards were thinner on the walls near the Godswood. They preferred patrolling the wall that separated the woods from the inner castle. Then, every night just before nightfall the Starks' beasts would leave the castle to go hunt in the Wolfswood. They had to slip into the great keep, find the ginger girl's room, and sneak back out before they were detected. The group would split in two at the courtyard. The others would saddle horses for their retreat since they wouldn't be able to scale the wall and keep a hold of the girl. Locke would then lead the rest into the keep to grab the girl. If all went according to plan they should only have to kill three men. The guard on the Godswood gate, the one guarding the family wing, and finally the guard on the Hunter's gate.

When they reached the inner wall over the Godswood they threw down ropes, and quickly
descended. They stalked through the woods silently as possible considering with every step fallen leaves crunched under their feet. As they passed the open center Locke took a moment to take in the heart tree. He shot a quick prayer under his breath that their mission would be successful, and that after the war he would have a fine northern lady to give him sons. He chuckled under his breath at the irony of wanting a good northern bride as he was in the process of trying to steal one like he was some kind of Wildling.

When they made it to the gate separating the Godswood from the castle they found a guard stood with his back to the gate. The man was leaning heavily on his spear as if he was asleep standing up. Locke quietly unsheathed his knife as he approached. In a flash of movement he reached between the bars. His left hand clamped over the guard's mouth as his other ran the knife's blade over the guard's throat. Steam poured from the cut as the man's blood met the cool air. Locke held him firmly to the gate until his thrashing ceased and his body became limp. Two of his men held the body upright by the armpits, so when the gate was opened the corpse wouldn't crash to the ground. Once it was open two others grabbed the lifeless guard, and quickly hid his body behind some brambles just off the path.

The yard was relatively easy to cross. They had moved shadow to shadow utilizing the guest house, smith, and stable as cover. Four men stayed behind to saddle the mounts as Locke and his smaller group made their way to the main keep. At the door he signaled for the men to line up opposite him. The first man readied his dagger, and with a nod he yanked the door open. The soldier rushed through the door and covered the guard's mouth to stifle his scream as the dagger was buried in his heart. The others helped lower the body to the ground as Locke proceeded up the stair well.

It ended up being the chamber closest to the lord's. When he had poked his head around the door the moonlight streaming through the windows shone on the girls auburn locks. She was a very pretty girl that in just few short years would turn into a beauty few could rival. She was laid on her back with her arms straight at her side as if she was on a funeral bier with her hair fanning out around her. He furrowed his brow a little and a little chill ran through him when he remembered that all four of the Stark children had been sleeping in the exact same way. He quickly shook the feeling away turning to one of men whispering, “Hurry up and secure her. Let's get out of here.”

SANSA I

The 'Wolf Dreams' as Robb had called them were always her favorite ones. She did love her dreams of princes and knights fighting for her favor, but there was just something refreshing about running around in the skin of Lady. The next day her mind would feel exhausted, but her body always felt completely rejuvenated. Plus, she never felt as free during the day time as she did feeling her paws throw up leaves and needles in her wake as she chased down prey with her siblings.

She always knew the days they had ran together as a full pack connected to their wolves. Arya wouldn't be as confrontational, Bran would smile more, and Rickon was a little more manageable. It always aided the days when Bran and her would have to sit through hours of hearing petitions. She had tried to get Arya to take her place, but she had said she would rather help fix the servants clothes than sit through the complaints. Sansa could still remember the sadistic smile that had
taken her face when she immediately sent Arya to help Old Nan. That night at dinner Arya had prevented her from helping her as she usually did, and she had stared at her the entire time while she nursed fingers sore from hours of sewing.

They still hadn't fully mastered entering the direwolves at will, but she practiced every chance she got. Many times while she sat with Bran observing Arya's and Rickon's training under Syrio Forel the two of them would practice their warging. She would close her eyes, try to clear her mind, and focus on Lady's presence in her mind. She had gotten better over time with her attempts. She hadn't been able to fully enter Lady during the day, but even still conscious in her own body she could smell all the scents of Winterfell so much more. Her tongue would have the coppery taste of blood from the meat scraps the butcher would toss to Lady and her siblings. Her skin would be covered in goosebumps from the sensation of the wind rippling through Lady's coat. It was both eerie and relaxing at the same time.

She came to a suddenly halt. A small spray of dirt flew before her as she came to an abrupt stop. She had been so lost in her thoughts she had lost sight of her siblings through the brush of the woods. A sense of longing filled her heart that moment as she thought of her siblings that were much farther away. Her grey and quiet brother were so far away fighting the humans that had threatened their pack. She could still feel them in her heart, so it was a consolation that they still lived and were unharmed.

She ruffled her fur out shaking the entire length of her body. Her yellow eyes turned skyward to the beautiful full moon above her. The silvery rays of light bathing everything around her in an ethereal glow. She closed her eyes before howling out to her siblings. Moments later three howls answered her call.

Her body reacted on its own as she flew into a full sprint to catch up to her pack. She effortlessly smashed through bushes and weaved her way around trees. She may have been the smallest of the pack overall, but only her grey brother could best her in speed. Her four strong legs ate up the distance till she broke into a small clearing. Her three siblings stood in a line staring into the woods. She pulled up next to her golden eyed sister, and she snapped her jaws angrily at having to wait for her to catch up. The wild sister was always the most impatient of the pack. Always wanting to hunt or fight. She was never one to actually survey their prey. She wanted to just rush into a herd and grab what she could opposed to trying to pick off the easier ones. Instead of snapping back she just affectionately bumped her head against her wild sister. When she didn't get a response she did it again. This time her sister huffed before returning the gesture. The silence was broken when sweet brother let a small growl erupt from his throat. When she looked over her brother's body was stiff as he peered into the woods. She followed his line of sight and then she saw it. There amongst the bushes she could make out a small rack of antlers moving through the woods.

They moved quickly like they had many times before. It had taken them a few hunts to adapt to losing grey and quiet brother from their party, but they eventually had made due. It hurt even more not having the dragon. She never got to be as close to the creature as her quiet brother, but that made sense considering they both possessed the same bonded. The dragon had made hunting so much easier. The prey would run from the wolves, but they never sensed that the killing blow would come from above. Those nights they would be able to catch several stags, or they would go after larger game for everyone to be able to eat.

Their new tactics had taken a while to get used to and few nights had been unsuccessful as they adapted. It was simple enough now though. Sweet brother and wild sister would chase the prey while black brother would come from the side to steer the animal to her. She would use her speed to flank their prey and deliver the killing blow.
Her heart felt like it was going to beat out of her chest as she wove between trees and trampled ferns in her path. She could hear her pack to her right snarling and barking to drive the stag on. She kept a pace with them waiting for black brother to steer their prey towards her. The chase seemed to go on for endless minutes before her brother's wailing howl went through the woods. At his call she could feel her mouth begin to fill with saliva anticipating the coppery taste of her prey's blood and the sweetness of the fresh meat.

Leaves rustled and twigs snapped as they approached her. She saw the stag come bounding out of the undergrowth. Her pack was hot on it's tail. Black brother had moved closer snapping his jaws to keep the animal's attention on him. She adjusted her course, so that she would intercept them along the way. As the distance closed her body filled with excitement for the kill to come. She could sense the fear coming off the stag in waves inciting her further.

She was so close now she could almost already feel the tender flesh gripped in her powerful jaws. She was just a few feet away when she jumped for the kill, and everything went black.

Her eyes shot open as pain raced through her body originating from her shoulder. Her arms were being wrenched behind her back and she could feel rope being wound around to bind her wrists. The pain wrenched a scream from her but she only heard a muffled sound as she realized cloth was balled up in her mouth as a gag.

A face suddenly appeared in her vision. He wasn't an ugly man, but Sansa wouldn't say he was comely either. He had a gaunt look that made his cheek bones become prominent. His beard and mustache were trimmed fairly well. It was his eyes that frightened her though. They were a stormy grey and his brows were pulled into a scowl. He looked at her as if he was examining her existence and weighing her worth. His lips were pulled into a sneer before they parted and he spoke in an angry gravelly tone, “Listen here, Little Lady, you are the only one we were sent here for. If you so much as make a noise or try to bring attention to us I will kill your brothers and sister.” To empathize his point he held a dagger up to her face. He ran the tip lighting along her cheek as his eyes shifted back and forth between hers, “Do you understand?”

Between the look in his eyes and the implied threat tears began filling her eyes, and before long she could only see a blurred image of the vicious man before her. She nodded her head all the same though. “Good girl.” was all he said back and as soon as the dagger disappeared a cloth bag was suddenly thrown over her head.

In the encroaching darkness panic over took her. A constant flow of tears ran down her face, and she was trying to stifle her own sobs. She didn't know how much weight the man's threat truly carried, but she was unwilling to risk her siblings' lives to find out. Her whole body trembled and her skin was clammy from the cold sweat she had broken out in. Her mind was working against her at the moment running through the all the different scenarios that they could want her for. Each of them worse than the previous.

She suddenly felt weightless as she was hefted up out of her bed, and she lost her breath for a moment when a shoulder suddenly jammed into her stomach. From the speed of her captor's footfalls her added weight didn't slow the man down at all. Every step knocked the wind out of her a little as she was jostled around. Before long they were winding down the stairwell and then she felt the wind brushing the cloth that covered her face as they exited the great keep.

Gravel crunched under their feet as they hastily crossed the yard. She was jostled around some
more before she suddenly felt a saddle pommel press into her thigh, and the distinctive smell of horse filled her nose. A strong arm wrapped around her pulling bodily into his chest, and she could vaguely hear a man hissing orders angrily before they were suddenly moving.

The rider had sent their horse into a full canter, and it was only a minute later when she heard the horse's hooves echo against wood before it was the dulled impact of grass. Sansa knew immediately they had exited the Hunter's gate considering it was the only one that didn't have a path leading to it.

After they had exited the castle she felt and heard the man release a long tension filled sigh, but his arms immediately tightened around her when a long mournful howl rent the air.

The direwolves were coming. They must have sensed her sudden disappearance and that she was no longer in Lady. Her direwolf could save her though, but it wouldn't do for her to be panicked. She had to get control of herself. She shifted her thoughts to the other ladies she had spent the last few years growing up with.

She had tried to push them away at first thinking they were just wild warrior women like the type Arya looked up to. Then she had seen them out of their warrior garb. They wore skirts and though they were of strange cuts she had never seen before their garments were still very feminine. She had got to know them better when they had started joining Sansa, Jeyne, and Beth in the feminine arts when they had down time. Sansa had gladly helped them learn their stitches, and when Arya had seen that she had started joining too. It was also because of those ladies that if she wasn't in the yard Arya had started to wear dresses around the castle without arguing. The ladies of the Scouts had taught Sansa one important lesson and that was that you could be both. You could be a strong warrior woman, but at the same time soft as silk when fighting wasn't needed.

Her thoughts turned to what they would do in her position. She had to rule out Mikasa, Annie, and Hange immediately. The raven haired girl would have taken these men apart even as they were trying to subdue her. Annie would have snapped them with very little effort. The castle would have been alerted from the screams of the men as their bones were painfully broken. Hange, she didn't have much time around the older women to really gauge her reaction. If she wasn't in the training yard she was either assisting her mother or with Maester Luwin learning as much as she could.

Sasha was more like Arya than herself. The dark haired girl was loud and could be grating, but she would have never been captured. When she was her 'handmaiden' in King's Landing she always had daggers hidden up her sleeves, on her thighs, or any number of other places. Sansa had observed her in the training yard and she was as fierce as any of the boys when it came to fighting.

That left her with Historia as an example. She was the most like Sansa of the girls that were part of the Scouts. She was very lady like, and she had even been queen back in their home, and had even been kidnapped before. She needed to be like Historia collect herself and stay composed. If she lost track of her senses who knew what could happen.

Then her thoughts took a sudden turn to Reiner. Her sweet handsome Reiner. He was everything she had ever dreamed of as a future husband. He was tall and broad, with his golden blonde hair, and his blue eyes that sent her swooning every time they landed on her. She had heard the stories of what he had done when he was younger, but that had been his youthfulness being warped by others making him carry out their evil intentions. She had seen the guilt in his eyes whenever his thoughts turned to his past. All she wanted to do was wipe the worried wrinkles from his forehead and kiss his pain away.

Her feelings for him had gone from a childish crush to full on devotion from their time in King's Landing. They had spent so much time together in the capital when he was protecting her, and he never let any of the people there intimidate him. He wasn't even afraid of Sandor Clegane! That
man had frightened Sansa from first sight with his ugly dented armor and his burned face that left
his mouth in a permanent sneer. Reiner had just eyed him back, though. He carried himself with so
much confidence, but he wasn't arrogant about it like she saw so many knights in King's Landing
do. She wasn't sure if he even knew or returned her affection, but he would know soon when their
gas resupply arrived at Riverrun. With the ladies in Winterfell she had sewn new jackets for the
scouts and had put a little 'favor' into his.

She wondered what he would do when he heard what had happened to her. Would he rampage
across Westeros in his titan form till her found her? Like in her stories would he come find her in
whatever tower she was locked in, and tear that castle apart brick by brick? She suddenly got a
sinking feeling in her stomach over whether or not that would be true. She remembered the girls
that made up the Scouts. They were all strong yet feminine women. They wouldn't wait for some
knight to come save them. They would try to save themselves. Is that the type of woman Reiner
would want? A woman that in trouble could save herself, and not some hapless maiden that had to
be saved? How would he react when he heard what happened in Winterfell? Would he be
disappointed he had to come save her? If she saved herself somehow would a proud smile take over
his face instead?

How to save herself was the problem, though. She was held in some barbarian's grasp and tied up
more than a roast ready for the ovens. Then, once again a long howl went through the night air.
The direwolves! LADY! Almost immediately her tears stopped, and she tried to rein in her erratic
breathing. It took her a few minutes to get her heart rate back under control and squash her fear. If
she could reconnect with her direwolf she could lead the pack to herself, and they would be able to
make short work of these men.

She focused her attention on the back of her mind where her connection with Lady resided. She
tried pushing against it, but she was greeted with an overwhelming sense of anger and rage. Her
direwolf pushed back forcing the connection away. Sansa tried to soothe her but the connection
suddenly snapped shut blocking her completely. She didn't understand why Lady would block her
out when she knew Sansa needed her.

Sansa tried to grit her teeth, but only ended up biting down on the cloth gagging her. She willed as
much strength as she could and pushed against the connection with her direwolf again. A long
howl ripping through the night air was her only reply. Sansa took a deep calming breath pulling air
through her nose. She exhaled slowly once again summoning as much strength as she could and
pushed with all her might at the connection. She was shocked when she suddenly felt something
different. She reflexively pulled back a little suddenly frightened of this new connection's presence.
What was it, and what was it doing in her mind? She didn't have much time to think on it though
when as soon as she had backed up the connection started dwindling. She couldn't risk losing it
with Lady being difficult, so she resumed pressure and latched onto this strange new link.

She found herself in the forest, and the first thing she realized was she was now so much more. She
felt massive. Her mind was suddenly assaulted by the smells. If felt like she could smell
everything. Even more than she could when she was in Lady. She could smell the moss, pine
needles, the mildew on the rotten leaves. She could even pick up different distinct animal smells
squirrels near by in trees out of her reach, rabbits burrowed deep in their holes, deer farther away
that she would have to chase if she wanted a meal, and horses that were charging through her
woods. HORSES! She turned her huge body in a circle her nose in the air trying to latch onto the
scent. When she was able to lock onto it was followed by another...wolves. No, not wolves,
direwolves she told herself.

She threw herself into motion relishing this new feeling. She seemed slower than Lady, but still
way faster than she expected her new body to be capable of. Her enormous paws chewed the
distance up quickly as she pursued her quarry. Through the distance she could hear the heavy breathing and occasional fearful wicker from the horses as howls called out from the wolves chasing them.

She altered her course a little realizing from the scents that she was coming from their side. She would be able to use the same tactic to catch them off guard that she did with the rest of the pack. This had the added bonus that her prey were more worried about the pack of wolves in their pursuit, and weren't even aware of her presence.

She looked to her side and was finally able to make them out. There were eight horses with riders on all. Seven rode in a circle protecting the one in the middle that appeared to have two riders. It was her body being held tight against the rider's chest so she couldn't fall or escape. A low rumbling growl echoed through her chest as she moved in for the attack.

She caught the men completely off guard as she busted through a bush. The lead horse reared up but the mount and its rider had no time to react. She stood on her rear legs and swung out with her front. Two enormous paws came into her vision tipped with long black razor sharp claws. Her left paw raked across the throat of the horse, and her right did the same to the rider whom had leaned forward to keep his saddle. She barely felt any resistance as flesh was rendered from bone and bright crimson liquid flowed freely from both their bodies.

The men barely had time to react to her presence before snarls and screams filled the air as the direwolves attacked from their rear. She remained on her back legs roaring in the face of the remaining riders, and in the moonlight she could see the fear plastered on their pale faces. The one closest to her drew his steel claw, but she didn't wait for his strike. She fell back to her four legs and swiped out with a paw taking the horses front legs out from under it. The horse screamed out in pain as did the rider when his mount landed on him crushing his legs with a jarring crunch. He attempted to swing his claw at her, but as his arm went back a grey head latched onto it. The man screamed out again as the direwolf wrenched her head back taking the appendage with her.

As she scanned the stretch of forest that had now become a blood bath she saw that four of the eight riders were already dead. Three of the remaining men had drawn out their metal claws while the last was trying to wield a crossbow while still holding onto her body. That all changed when Shaggy suddenly strafed the horses front legs snapping at them. The horse reared wildly and she watched frozen in her current body as the rider that held her and her unconscious form fell from the mount's back.

She gasped out in pain as stars flashed behind her eyes, and her head pounded like it was struck by a smith's hammer. When she was finally able to open her eyes she was shrouded in darkness, and when she flexed her limbs they were restrained and ended in fingers she could move individually. It took her another moment to realize she was back in her own body. Then the sounds of the struggle finally broke through the fog in her head. She could hear the tormented cries of horses as they died and the last few men that had taken her yelling out to each other about grabbing her and trying to escape.

From the volume of their growls and snarls the direwolves had to have surrounded her prone form after the fall. Their calls were followed up by a grumbling roar, and Sansa could feel the ground shake slightly from the impact of the massive body she had formerly inhabited. She clenched her eyes closed when the screams began again. Even though she couldn't see what was happening they were the worst cries she had ever heard. It sent goose flesh across her body, and she began involuntarily shaking as the unseen deaths occurred around her.
When the last of her captors gargling had died out silence reigned in the forest once again. A moment later she felt her body getting pulled slightly in four different ways. When she heard the snuffling and throaty growls of frustration she realized all four of the wolves were trying to bite through the ropes. After a bit of struggle they had broken through and she felt the furs being pawed away from her. She let out a surprised yelp when a cold nose touched her arm which elicited a whine from what sounded like Nymeria. Not being able to respond through the gag at all she just rolled over on her tummy. She opened and closed her fingers trying to draw the direwolves' attention to the rope binding her hands. It took longer than she had hoped for them to realize what she was doing, but soon enough she felt a muzzle force itself between her hands. She could feel the wolf's jaws snapping and pulling on it. She winced a few times when her wrist or hand was snagged by a tooth, but not too much later she felt the rope slacking slight and her hands were free.

She felt the direwolf step away as her arms swung up to pull the hood from her face. The gag quickly followed and she pulled the cloth from her mouth. The first full breath she took felt like coming to the surface after trying to hold her breath in the hot springs. The fresh crisp Northern air filled her lungs, but the scent of blood soured it in her mouth and sent her into a bout of coughing.

When the fit passed she opened her eyes and her body froze in terror. It wasn't the blood, limbs, or horse carcases scattered about, but stood before her was a massive bear. It was covered in red-brown fur and the image wasn't aided by the massive amount of blood matting the fur on its legs and muzzle. She met its eyes which were so brown they looked like depth less pools of molassas. The younger version of herself would have been beyond frightened of the beast before her, but the longer they stared at each other the more comfortable she seemed to become.

Her legs had fallen asleep from the saddle she had been held in, but she fought though the pins and needles to shakily get to her feet. She could feel the cold air of the night kissing her skin, but it was barely affecting The sensation being chased away by her curiosity for her new companion. That's what this was right? She kept her eyes open but focused on the back of her mind where this new presence lingered next to Lady's. When she rubbed against it it flared brightly in the same way Lady's would. She took a hesitant step towards the bear keeping an eye for any reaction from her. She just stood there staring right back, so Sansa took another. She kept her approach slow, but when she was only ten feet away Shaggydog and Nymeria jumped between the two snapping and snarling at the bear. The bear answered in kind, but her growl was much deeper rumbling from her chest like a roll of thunder.

“SHAGGY, NYMERIA BACK!” She commanded quickly knowing that if she delayed things would get ugly quickly. When Nymeria turned her head barking something as if she was actually Arya talking back Sansa softened her voice, “You don't need to fear her. She helped us, and she won't hurt me.”

The two direwolves looked to each other a moment before that both turned back to her. Feeling they bent to her wishes she stepped between them. She rubbed her hands along their back comfortingly before scratching both of them behind the ears reassuringly. She turned her attention back to the bear whom had quieted back down. The she-bear was once again only concerned with watching Sansa. She took another step past the wolves. She could still feel the cautious presence of them behind her, but she continued forward.

When she was just a few steps away the she-bear ruffled her fur. Her massive body shook from head to butt as ripples of fur danced before her eyes. Once done the bear dropped to her haunches looking much more relaxed, but still attentive to Sansa's movements. Though, sat she was still at least a head taller than Sansa, but her relaxed demeanor reminded her more of the stuffed toys she would get as a child.
The distance finally closed fully and Sansa tentatively reached out a hand. The moment her palm caressed the cheek of the massive animal she felt their connection explode behind her eyes, and Sansa's heart swelled with a feeling of acceptance and love.

BRAN II

Bran's eyes shot open and he gasped for air at the sudden change of bodies. The process was always a little disorienting, but he quickly shook the fuzziness of his wolf dream away. His sister needed him and she needed him collected and coherent. He knew she was safe, but Bran would have never expected an event like this to take place in the safety of Winterfell. He berated himself a moment for allowing the castle to become complacent. They felt safe behind the walls with the fighting taking place in the Riverlands, but this was a very costly wake up call. His sister had been kidnapped from the castle, and if it hadn't been for the direwolves and a massive bear she would have been lost to the winds. Gods, that bear was massive! He was trying to figure out where it came from, but he wouldn't complain with its assistance.

Then he remembered seeing his sister petting the beast. Had she connected with it in a panic? Would it come back with her? He had woken back in his own body after she started petting it. The shock of what was happening pulling him from sleep.

He shook his head out vigorously. These were questions he could answered when Sansa was safely back in Winterfell. He pushed the furs off his legs swinging them over the edge of his bed. He leaned his weight on the table next to him. Using the soft glow of the fire remaining stubbornly in his hearth to guide him. As he had gained more control of his legs his room had been rearranged so he could support himself all the way around it. He sometimes felt like a toddler when they first learned to walk. He remembered watching Rickon when he first started stumbling around on his tiny legs using any piece of furniture possible to assist his way across their father's solar.

Bran swung open the door of his dresser quickly grabbing a set of trousers and a tunic tossing them on his bed. He made his way back sitting on the mattress as he quickly stripped his sleep wear off replacing it with his hastily grabbed garments. Once dressed he made his way to his writing desk where his cloak, boots, and cane waited for him. He slipped the clean pair of wool socks on his feet before slipping his boots on. He pulled his cloak on next securing it with his direwolf clasp.

He retrieved his cane that leaned against the desk. As much as Bran still resented the fact he had to use one it didn't diminish its beauty. It was carved from a branch of weirwood that had fallen from the tree. The head was some of Mikken's work formed into a direwolf bust of silver with two pieces of citrine as the eyes. Bran had known that it was supposed to represent Summer, but he had asked Mikken why he put so much work for a cane that ultimately would be temporary. The old smith had told him that once the cane was no longer needed the wolf head would become the pommel of the first edged sword he made for the little lord.

He brushed his thoughts away getting to his feet to hobble out of his chamber. He paused in the hallway wondering if he should wake Arya and Rickon, but after a minute of debate he decided it might be better if they stayed in their wolves for now. At least there they could help Sansa if needed. He made his way slowly to the floor below the family wing.

He pounded his hand on the door when he reached Ser Rodrik's chambers. It took a few moments before the door cracked and Bran looked up to see the bushy cheeked face of his castellan peering out at him. A look of confusion over took the knight's face before he asked, “What can I do for you, My Lord?”
Bran summoned up the lordliest voice he could manage, “Rouse the castle, Ser, Sansa was taken in the night.”

It took a moment for the words to sink in, but then he watched the knight's eyes go wide before he began cursing under his breath. “Let me get dressed quickly, My Lord.” Bran nodded his assent and the door closed as Ser Rodrik went to make himself presentable.

He moved away from the door knowing that when Rodrik reappeared he would come bursting out of the chambers. He didn't have to wait too long as the knight reappeared strapping his sword around his waist as he did so. At the same time, Arya and Rickon met them. His sister had Needle strapped around her waist. He realized she had gone to his chambers to retrieve him when she offered him his gloves that he had forgotten in his haste.

Bran had watched Ser Rodrik's face go red with rage when they had come across the body of their guard at the entrance to the keep. He had burst out the door yelling orders for any that could hear to sound the bells and rouse the castle immediately. Bran hadn't stopped to watch the activity. He had made his way directly to the Hunter's gate with his siblings in tow.

He had stood there leaning on his cane staring out upon the moors as the tolling woke the castle. He ignored the bustle as Winterfell went into a frenzy more concerned with gaining the first sight of his eldest sister. He could feel the connection with Summer getting stronger by the second, so he knew they were on their way. Arya stood to his left, arms crossed over her chest as Rickon stood to his right. His two rowdiest siblings were surprisingly quiet at the moment. No doubt focusing on their connections with their wolves as well.

Bran jumped slightly when Ser Rodrik suddenly spoke behind him, “My Lord, the men found the guard to the Godswood hidden behind some bushes with his throat slit as well as ropes that were used to scale down from the wall. The stable boy on duty was also found dead, and eight horses are missing.”

Bran let out a sigh. The weight of the innocents that died tonight already bringing him down. The old knight put a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “Come back inside you lot. I have riders getting ready to go out and find your sister. They couldn't have gotten too far yet, and when we catch these brigands we'll give them Northern justice.”

Bran looked up over his shoulder smiling to the knight, “That won't be necessary, Ser Rodrik. Sansa is on her way back already, and the men that took her are dead.”

“How do you know that, My Lord?” Ser Rodrik asked his voice laced with skepticism.

“The direwolves, good ser.” Old Nan suddenly spoke in a foreboding tone making everyone jump slightly from her unexpected presence. “The powers of the old Kings of Winter have awoken in the children.” Bran looked over at the woman whom had helped raise him along with his mother, but she turned her attention north, “We can only hope that is all that has awoken, or we are in for the cruelest of winters.”

Bran felt a shiver run up his spine and he saw Arya shudder as they took in the ominous words from the old woman. He turned his attention back to Ser Rodrik whom was looking at Old Nan with a pale face. “Ser, we will wait here for our sister to arrive. Make sure the guards on the wall do not loose any arrows at her when her party arrives.”

Ser Rodrik's brows furrowed at Bran's vague description of what would be accompanying Sansa, or
why the guards might shoot upon them. He stared for a few more seconds before nodding his head, and departing to pass on his lord's orders.

Bran turned his attention back to the woods beyond the moors waiting for his sister to arrive with her new companion.

Chapter End Notes

I have always had the feeling that Sansa got short changed on her warging due to lady's early death in the original canon. There have been other fics I have read where she still ends up with an animal familiar, but I thought it would be fun to take that to the next level. So, I thought 'What if Sansa became the Varamyr of the Stark family?' I haven't decided if she will add more to her companion list but for now she has lady and a Grizzly which she will name Autumn. Oh, Sansa and her names.

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: JAIME II
Jaime cringed when the screams began again. They had been at it for hours by this point, and he honestly didn't know how much more Littlefinger could tolerate. As the screams descended into pitiful sobs Jaime's fists reflexively clenched. Well, would have if he still had two. He finally understood what phantom pains were, and how annoying they could actually be. In his mind he could swear he still felt the pressure of his fingers closing in on themselves. He opened his eyes as the cries died out and looked at the stump of his wrist where his sword hand used to be.

He blew out a frustrated sigh. This was the first time Jaime would honestly admit that he was happy to be a prisoner. He didn't know what he was without that hand. He had spent his entire life honing his skills with a sword, but never once utilized his left. That was his shield arm, and nothing more. Maybe in hindsight he should have tried to be able to change sword hands or learn to use two blades like Ser Arthur had.

He also didn't want to see the disappointment on his father's face. He had trusted Jaime to pacify Riverrun, and he had impulsively chased bandits instead. That was the problem with being a man of action. His men had died for his foolhardiness, and now he had to rely on his father rescuing him. There wasn't a chance in the Seven Hells that the Starks would allow him to be ransomed. The other captives weren't anywhere near as valuable. Plus, as long as he was in their grasp his father would have to be a lot more cautious because they knew as long as Jaime was breathing his father would want him back.

He was supposed to be the golden child. Never mind the fact that his father had the perfect heir in Tyrion. He didn't understand why his father hated him so much for their mother dying in child bed and him being a dwarf. They were things that Tyrion didn't have any choice or control over. Women died in child bed all the time, and he didn't know anyone that would ask to be a dwarf if being full height was an option.
His father would be upset about him losing a hand, and probably swear vengeance against the girl that took it. He would have to talk his father out of that course though considering it would only lead to folly. Then again there may not be an after after this. His guards had been more than happy to taunt him over how the Northerners had defeated his father with a fraction of the troops. Though they were tight lipped with how it had happened. At first he had thought they were lying to try and break his spirit, but the amount of revelry he heard through the castle fixed that for him. No one losing a war could or would celebrate that much.

The longer he had been in captivity the more he realized he may never see Cersei again. He’ll never get to hold her, kiss her, or hear the way she sighed his name in the throws of passion. He’ll never get to see his children again. He didn't really feel anything in regards to Joffrey, but his sweet Tommen and Myrcella meant the world to him. What would happen to them at the end of all this?

The worst was really not having any idea what was happening out side of his cage. All it did was allow his imagination and worst fears to run rampant through his mind. There were so many things that could be happening. The only thing he absolutely knew for sure was that Cersei and the children were currently in King's Landing. If they were making a move for the capital they would have most likely dragged him along for the ride.

His thoughts were suddenly interrupted by another scream renting the air of the dungeons. He really couldn't envy Baelish in the slightest at this point. He had been awake the night they had dragged Littlefinger through and tossed him in his cell. Then every morning since Lord Bolton and a lady that Jaime heard referred to as Hange would visit him for a few hours. The screams would be periodic, but always blood curdling. Compared to him Jaime was living the high life.

The morning after his duel with that strange dark haired girl he had woken up in a tent by himself and chained to a cot. His stump had been sewn and bandaged, and his head had been swimming with the effects of Milk of the Poppy. He had been in and out of consciousness for a few days. One morning he had woke up and found himself in his current cell. He had a cot with some furs. Granted they were a bit musty and old, but they kept him warm during the night. He had a bucket to relieve himself in, and thankfully it was emptied every day. They gave him two warm meals a day, and a bath every few. All in all not the worst of conditions but a prisoner was still a prisoner, and as long as their families were fighting there would be a blade hanging over his neck.

He heard the metal door of the cell Baelish was kept in open. The hinges groaned loudly the entire way, and let out an equally loud screech as it closed again. He could her Lady Hange's feminine voice high, sweet, and...excited? She seemed to be prattling on non stop as her voice became louder the closer they got to Jaime's cell. When he finally saw them in front of his bars Lord Bolton had his head facing down. He was nodding his head absently along with what Lady Hange was saying while wiping his hands on a rag.

When his eyes landed on the women he couldn't help the angry look that crossed his face. He couldn't stomach the type of person that enjoyed torturing someone that much. Unfortunately for him she happened to look his way as she was passing. Her hazel eyes looked upon him from behind those strange glasses. She suddenly slammed into the bars sending them rattling, and causing him to jump a little. There was a crazed glint in her eyes as she pressed her face between the bars. “What's that look for, Ser Jaime?... Feeling left out?” Her eyes went wide behind her glasses giving her face and empty and very unsettling expression. Then she let out a series of eerie giggles at made him clench his teeth and goose flesh to rise all over him. “You and I will be spending plenty of time together soon if your father doesn't wise up.”

Jaime gulped heavily feeling his throat bob. He had been threatened many times in his life, and not once had it truly terrified him half so much as the thought of spending one-on-one time with this
woman. The empty look in her eyes along with the smile that adorned her face at the moment could easily rival the times he had seen the Mad King cackling as he burned people in the throne room. Thankfully at that moment Lord Bolton decided to speak in his cold monotone voice, “Come, Lady Hange. Now, is not the time for Ser Jaime. We have to deliver our report.”

A pout took the woman's face then. Apparently disappointed with being denied a new play thing. The drastic change to the woman's expressions just unnerved Jaime more. It was like she could change emotions on a whim almost as though the previous one never existed. Her face once again changed, however, this time it was a jovial expression as she pushed herself away from the bars of his cell. She waved at him using only her fingers as they rippled in a flirtatious manner before she winked at him as a smile took her face, “Till later then, Ser Jaime.”

He kept his eyes locked on the woman until she was out of sight. A shudder racked his whole body as a long sigh escaped his lips. He didn't realize he had been holding his breath through his interaction with the strange woman. He couldn't help wondering where in the Seven Hells the Starks had managed to find these people. His listened as their footfalls echoed through the hall of the dungeon. The door leading out creaked loudly as it opened.

He had thought the door opened for the lord and lady to exit, but then Lord Bolton addressed the last person alive that he wanted to speak to. The Leech Lord's quiet voice echoed through the hall with a “Your Grace.”

“Lord Bolton, Lady Hange.” He heard the northern accent of the boy he had taunted when he had been in Winterfell. He still remembered when he approached the boy at the smithy. The boy had been observing the smith oil a long skinny sword, and Jaime thought he was funny taunting the boy about not being able to handle a real sword. He had been surprised the boy hadn't risen to the jab. Jaime had a way of getting under pretty much everyone's skin. Bastards tended to be even easier targets than their trueborn counterparts, but the boy had surprised him then. He had just retrieved that little sword from the smith and departed with a, “Ser Jaime.” That had surprised him as well. He had been the only person besides Lord Stark to acknowledge him as such his whole time in the North. The rest of the time he had been there it had been Kingslayer this and Kingslayer that. Even Robert had thrown the insulting name around more than ever. Being up North away from the rest of the Lannister lackeys that infested King's Landing must have emboldened the whore monger.

His interaction with the Bastard of Winterfell and how he had acted made a lot more sense once the letter from King's Landing had arrived. It had become evident that the boy was aware of the truth back then and must have been under orders from Lord Stark to not bring attention on himself. He had hardly believed it when he read the parchment. It all seemed a little too convenient for the Starks. The more he thought of it, though, the more it became possible. He could remember the boy and he looked nothing like a Targaryen. Then again he hadn't really paid much attention to him either. Lord Stark's blow by wasn't anyone for Jaime to concern himself with.

“Was Lord Baelish more forth coming today?” the boy asked bringing Jaime out of his musings.

“He was a lot more talkative today, Your Grace.” Lady Hange answered. He couldn't see her, but he swore he could hear the demented smile that no doubt adorned her face at the moment.

“We were actually on our way to bring the report to you, Your Grace.” The Leech Lord added.

“Lady Hange, will you wait for me in my solar and we will go over it together in a bit?” the lady must have nodded her answer because he didn't wait for a response before speaking again. “Thank you for your assistance with this, Lord Bolton. I'm sure you have duties to take care of, but I'll see you at the feast this evening.”
“You're more than welcome, Your Grace, always a pleasure to be of service. Till tonight, then.” Bolton replied his voice keeping the same cold cadence. He heard the entrance to the dungeons creek open loudly again, and a moment later it closed with the clanking of steel.

Jaime heard the boy blow out a long breath before making his way down the hall. The sounds of his boots against growing in volume as he closed the distance to Jaime's cell. Jaime looked the boy up and down when he came into view. He had inky black curls, cold grey eyes, and he was dressed in black from head to toe. Exactly the way he remembered him from his time in Winterfell. In one hand he held a jug with two cups in the other.

Beside him stood a man so tall that Jaime was sure he could almost rival the Mountain. He was adorned in armor that Jaime hadn't seen in almost ten and eight years. It was polished grey plate with the three-headed dragon emblazoned on the chest. From his shoulders flowed a white cloak, but with a trim of black bordering the edges. The boy must have seen what he was looking at, and what caused his brows to furrow. “Wylis isn't a knight yet, or fully sworn to the Kingsguard. Felt it would be more appropriate for the time being. It doesn't stop him from fulfilling his duties though.” His eyes turned back to the boy and he finally noticed what was embroidered on the chest of his jerkin. There in silver thread was the three-headed dragon.

He watched the boy point towards something Jaime can't see, and as the giant guard went to retrieve it he took advantage of the time to get his first real good look at him. With his dark hair pulled back he could get a better look at his face rather than back in Winterfell when his curls were constantly obscuring his features with how he would always walk around with his head bowed. Jaime held in his gasp when he finally saw what he was looking for. It really had been the best of deceptions that Eddard Stark had pulled off. To anyone else the boy would look like his adoptive father without question the dark hair, grey eyes, and longer face making him look all Stark, but those cheek bones, plumper lips, and the subtle way his brows seemed to always be somewhat furrowed along with the corners of his lips pulled into a subtle frown screamed the features of his prince lost at the Trident.

The giant guard returned hefty a chair in his arms that he set in front of Jaime's cell. The legs scraping against the stone as it came to rest. The guard took up a position behind the chair as the prince's son sat. Jaime watched silently as the boy poured a dark amber liquid into one of the cups before he set it on the cross bars of Jaime's cell. He refused to move at this point. He didn't know what was happening right now and it sent an unsettling feeling through him. The boy didn't say anything as he filled the other cup from the same jug.

When he saw that Jaime hadn't moved yet he nodded his head at the cup that still rested on the bars before he took a swig from his own cup. Jaime moved cautiously after he watched the boy drink. He didn't want to think they had gone through all this just to poison him, but you never knew. He wouldn't lie that it was reassuring to see the boy drink from thee same jug as him. As he retrieved the cup he saw a smirk take the boy's face as if he had known exactly what Jaime had waited for. The boy looked back into the cup for a moment before he finally broke the silence, “You know you southerners are really good at making wine, but your ales leave a lot to be desired.” A contemplative expression took his face for a moment before speaking again, “This shit is little more than hops flavored river water.” The guard behind him snorted, and when a smile took the boy's face as he turned to the guard Jaime's heart almost stopped. Smiles had been rare from his prince, so everyone of them had burned their way into Jaime's memory. The boy before him had the same exact one. The ways his lips pulled, his eyes crinkled, and for just that moment how all the weight lifted from him. “Is that an argument, Wylis?” The guard shook his head in response not saying anything.

Jaime took the opportunity of the lack of attention to steal a sip of his cup. The boy hadn't been
wrong. This ale really was shit, but at the moment he didn't care. He hadn't realized how thirsty he had been. The amber liquid slid down his dry throat like the first rains chasing away a Dornish drought. The cup didn't have a chance to leave his lips as he started gulping the liquid down. When he finally looked up from the cup the boy was just looking at him with a brow raised holding the jug up in an offering manner. Jaime just nodded resting the cup back on the bars. The boy wordlessly refilled his cup before resting the jug back on the ground. Jaime retrieved his cup taking another slow gulp this time before looking at the boy before him. They both sat there in silence staring at each other. He realized the boy was waiting for him to start. His mouth flapped open a few times before he decided he might want to go the respectful route instead of his normal snark, “What can I do for you?”

“I wanted to ask you a few questions, Ser Jaime?”

“What makes you think that I would give you honest answers?” Jaime didn't mean for his answer to sound as snide as it did. He had meant for it to sound genuine, but years of carrying around a haughty attitude seemed to take influence his tone more than he would have liked.

The boy sighed as he looked down into his cup. The boy seemed to be lost in thought of how to proceed when he suddenly started speaking, “I spent the first fifteen years of my life being raised as a bastard. Never realizing that the mother I so craved was already dead and buried under my feet, and that she had been there the whole time.” Jaime wondered where this talk was going, but for once decided to keep his mouth shut and listen. “I always envied those whom I thought were my siblings. I had to watch from the shadows as they relished in the love of their mother. A woman who never once called me by my name. I was always addressed as Bastard or Boy. Not Jon. It was never Jon. She would even speak about me as if I wasn't in the room even though I would be seated just a few chairs from her.” The boy sighed again before taking pull from his cup, but his eyes remained downcast lost in memories. “Since the truth came out she has gone out of her way to bridge that divide between us. Of course, I was apprehensive at first considering she still had to treat me the same when we weren't in the privacy of the family wing of Winterfell.” He finally looked up meeting Jaime's eyes, “If there was one person that was trueborn that could possibly relate to me I had thought it was you.”

Jaime raised a brow in a questioning manner causing a sad smile to take the boy's face. “You see, Ser Jaime, I heard a lot about you when I was growing up. Especially how great with the sword you are, and how you were arguably one of the best fighters in the Seven Kingdoms only bested by Ser Barristan. However, I never heard your name spoken. It was always Kingslayer you were addressed as. That had given hope to a bastard boy like myself. The fact that even though my name of Snow would always be spoken of in derision my skills could at least end up being respected.”

“Then I saw you in Winterfell. You rode into the courtyard like a cocky prick, and then I had the misfortune of speaking with you and I realized you were just an arrogant ass.” He stopped for a moment taking another drink. His eyes raised meeting Jaime's as a smirk took his face. “One of the advantages of being a bastard is that people don't question who you associate with. Nobody cares because you are in some strange unique position. Aye, I was a lord's son so I wasn't lowborn, but being baseborn I wasn't highborn either. If I wasn't in the lessons for us I was free to do with my time what I would, and I enjoyed that freedom to the fullest. I would speak to many of the servants around the castle, and one of my favorites was Hullen the horse master.”

“He always told me the best way to motivate an ass was either a carrot or a stick.” Before he continued though the boy leaned down retrieving the jug by his feet to refill his cup. When he was done he held it up in offer. Jaime looked down and realized he had absentmindedly drank his while the boy had been talking. He held it out between the bars and the boy topped it back off for him. He watched the boy take another drink before he spoke again. “So, that is what I'm offering a
“Make no mistake when this war is finished your family is going to be brought low. They have committed too many crimes against the Realm to be left in any position of power. Also, your father will not survive it. He took too much from me to be allowed to live. I haven't decided what to do with your whore of a sister.” Jaime froze the cup sitting motionless at his lips as he looked at the boy over the rim. “Don't look at me like that. She cuckolded Robert and passed off her bastards as trueborn Baratheons. My informants have told that in the past few moons she has been seen letting your cousin Lancel Lannister into her chambers at all hours of the night. When it isn't him she is bedding one of the Kingsguard. A Ser Osmund Kettleblack I believe it was. Hells, for all I know she is probably fucking that fool they keep at court as well. What was his name again? Reiner told me one time.” He looked at Jaime waving his hand back and forth. “Don't tell me. I know this.” Before he suddenly clicked his fingers. “Moonboy! That was it!” The boy scoffed, “What a ridiculous name... Moonboy.”

Jaime didn't realize he had started gulping down the ale as the boy spoke. What he said couldn't be true could it? Cersei loved him. She always told him they would eventually find a way to be together, and with their son as king no one would be able to question them again. She had just needed him to leave her this one last time to destroy their enemies, and then they could live in peace. He wanted to yell at the boy and call him a liar, but he couldn't speak. The words the boy spoke were enough to drive a blade into his heart. He couldn't figure out why he would even doubt his sister by the words of his enemy before him. Then as he looked up at the boy again he realized his head was swimming a little. It had been a long time since he had any alcohol, and it was already getting to him clouding his thoughts.

He watched as the boy shrugged to himself as he took another swig off his cup, “To be honest I guess I don't really have much of a carrot for you. It is more stick and a stick. Though one is less severe than the other.” Their eyes met then steel grey looking into emerald green. “If you want to fuck with me, Ser Jaime, when I am done I will leave your family in the same condition mine was. You won't die though. You will be at the Wall clad in black so you can stew in your thoughts and loses of how the mighty lions of Casterly Rock were brought down to just four members. I won't even leave them Lannisters. You will be the last member of them. The rest will be made into Hills. Leaving only the Lannisters of Lannisport, and they will be brought down to be stewards if not even lower.”

Jaime didn't know if if the boy's words had truly angered him or the alcohol had manged to override his sense, but before he could stop himself he lashed out at the boy, “Those are some big words, Bastard. You haven't defeated my father yet. A couple small victories will not put Tywin Lannister down. It'd behoove you not to forget that.”

The boy didn't respond for a minute. He just stared back at Jaime before finally speaking, “The great Tywin Lannister. How great is he really though? He has his creepy little song you are all so fond of throwing around. Nothing strikes fear like murdering scores of innocent women and children because your pride was wounded. You Lannisters like to tout that that was some great victory, but how much of a threat were the Reynes and Tarbecks truly. Two houses versus the rest of the Westerlands. Is that what made you all so prideful, or was it when your family cowered in Casterly Rock till the rebellion was almost over. What was it again your father contributed to the war? That's right they sacked a city full of civilians and had his men butcher a women, her daughter, and a babe still on the breast. The last true war your father actually fought in was on the Step Stones.”

“PFFT, you call yourselves lions, but Tywin Lannister, your sister, and yourself are nothing more than preening peacocks that are about to get their feathers pulled.” The boy stood up from his chair
with the jug of ale in his hand. He set it on the cross bars looking at Jaime one last time. “Think on it, Kingslayer. Think of what future you want for the family that remains to you when I am done, and I hope for your sake when I return you are in a much more sociable mood.”

The boy didn't wait for a response before he walked off with his giant guard following.

OLENNA III

She sat savoring the sharp tang of the cheese she had just taken a dainty bite of as she observed the happenings in the courtyard below the verandah she was perched on. She had ordered a small lunch of crackers, cheeses, sweet meats, and assorted fruits meant to be shared with her family. The bounty of the Reach had followed the Tyrells to Riverrun like it always should, and to the Seven Hells if she wasn't going to enjoy. She had been trying to wait patiently for her family to join her. Thankfully she had seen the royals enter the yard and watching them had alleviated her of the boredom of waiting for her family. Thus she had started nibbling away as she watched the yard.

The drawbridge lowered and the portcullis rose as riders entered the castle. The foremost carrying banners bearing the red sun and yellow spear on orange of House Martell. Olenna felt her brows raise in surprise at seeing the Martells here at all. She would have figured that they would be the last house to ever support Rhaegar's son with Lyanna, but this had certainly turned out to be a time for surprises.

A few more riders entered the yard before her eyes caught the dark hair of Oberyn Martell, and even despite the distance she could make out the cocky grin that was constantly plastered on his face. Next to him rode a young man with dark auburn hair. As they dismounted she could make out the white silhouette of a tree on his breast. He had to have been one of Mira's brothers that she loved to talk about almost constantly. She was a sweet girl and had been a joy to have fostered at Highgarden, and she had been beside herself when she had seen her father after their arrival at Riverrun.

She shook her thoughts away as she watched the two men approach the prince. The Forrester boy went first bowing before shaking the prince's hand and placing a chaste kissing on the knuckles of the princess' hand. He stepped back then holding out a hand as he presented the Prince of Dorne. Her cup had froze on its way to her lips refusing to miss a second of what could happen with these two meeting. She didn't know if she should be let down or relieved when they both reached out and clasped forearms like warriors were want to do. Instead of separating they stood there holding each other as Prince Oberyn spoke. Prince Jon was nodding his head but from her angle she couldn't see if he was speaking back. She cursed herself for planning her family meal at a time like this, and not being able to hear what was being said. She was shocked though when Oberyn suddenly pulled the younger man into a hug patting him on the back. When he pulled away he held the young man by the shoulders smiling at him like a proud paternal figure.

Oberyn patted the prince one more time on the shoulder before he moved on to the princess. She offered up her hand, and the prince took it laying a kiss across her knuckles. When he let her hand go they stood there speaking for a minute before she nodded and Oberyn embraced her like he had with the prince.

Prince Oberyn then called forward a woman that had traveled with him. Anyone in the south knew
it had to be Ellaria Sand the prince's paramour. She didn't know if it was a test to see how the prince would react to showing courtesy to bastard, but if it was it was a fairly poor test. The boy had believed he was a bastard for most of his life, so he would never shame one himself. The prince kissed the woman's hand after she had curtseyed before him. They spoke for a minute before Ellaria moved on to the princess. The woman curtseyed again, but Olenna turned away at that point.

The scene had quickly grown boring. She didn't want it to come to blows, but some heated words would have at least would have provided some much needed entertainment. She took another sip of her Arbor Gold and laid a slice of cheese along a cracker. As she swallowed her bite and let out a huff when she heard her family finally arriving in her chambers.

Her oaf of a son was the first onto the verandah. He bent down giving her an affectionate kiss on the cheek before he took his seat beside her. Alerie followed behind greeting her with a smile before sitting on the other side of Mace. Loras came next kissing her cheek like his father before he sat next to her good daughter. Garlan followed looking dashing in a green doublet with his signature two roses on his chest. Garlan was the true warrior of her grandchildren. Granted Loras was stellar with steel in his hand as well, but Loras had molded himself more for the showmanship needed for tourneys. Margaery came in last taking the empty chair next to her and greeting her with an affectionate, “Grandmother.” Her personal twin guards stayed stationed by the doors to make sure they weren't disturbed or eavesdropped on.

She looked over her granddaughter for a moment. She was such a beautiful young girl, and the Seven blessed her with intelligence. She had taught Margaery everything she knew about politics and playing the game. Her granddaughter had ate it up, and ended up exceeding her expectations. She was happy to see that Margaery was taking their set back in stride. She kept a smile on her face despite the fact they had lost a chance for her to wear a crown. They had both come up with the best solution to make out of it though, “Sweetling, do you agree with everything, so we can announce it tonight at the feast?”

“Of course, Grandmother, he is a handsome young man, so it isn't too big of a sacrifice.” Margaery answered back with her signature smirk adorning her face.

“What announcement? “Her son managed to squeeze out through a mouthful of crackers.

“Margaery's betrothal to Robb Stark of course.”

Her son full on sputtered chunks of cracker rained down on the green and gold table cloth as Mace sat there wide mouthed a moment before speaking. “No.” He began shaking his head back and forth. “No, Mother, no. Margaery is meant to be queen not the simple lady of Winterfell.”

She huffed exasperatedly as she looked upon her son. If it wasn't for the serious manner of their discussion she would crack up laughing at his posturing. “If you haven't noticed, Son, the prince is already wedded and bedded.”

“The princess isn't pregnant yet. He could set her aside.” He answered back indignantly as he crossed his arms over his chest.

Margaery surprised her by scoffing then. “The prince would never set Annie aside. Have you even paid attention to the two interacting, Father?” Olenna watched Marg take a sip of wine as she eyed her father. “This isn't some political marriage that they made. Those two love each other, and not to mention the prince was raised by Eddard Stark. He will fall on his own sword before he dishonors his wife.”
“On top of that, Robb Stark, was raised as his brother. It wouldn’t be too hard to secure a betrothal between one of their daughter's and the prince's son.” Olenna added. “We would just have to wait one more generation. Not a big sacrifice.”

“No.” Her idiotic son answered immediately, “I promised my daughter she would be queen and she will be. We can just leave and take Renly with us. We can field that largest army in Westeros by ourselves. Add in the Stormlands and we could crown him and put them on the throne that way.”

Olenna sighed again this time adding an eye roll for good measure. “Let me tell you how bad of an idea that is. This army is being led by two young men whom moons ago were considered green as grass. In that time Robb Stark has embarrassed the Westerland army twice in quick succession while Prince Jon handed Tywin an enormous defeat. Number wise alone the old lion should have been able to crush the prince's forces. The Lannisters had them outnumbered over three to one, and it doesn’t take a maester to realize that the Northern force should have been routed completely.”

Olenna took a drink of her wine to allow the words to soak into her son's thick head before she continued. “You are also forgetting four major factors. One, everything we have we owe to House Targaryen. If we leave and subsequently lose we will lose everything. We are already on thin ice considering you feasted your way through the rebellion as the Targaryens fell.”

Her son opened his mouth at that point to retort, but she staunchly cut him off, “Shut up, Mace. You sat in your tent feasting with all our men when a quarter of them would have made all the difference on the Trident. You would do well not to forget that. Prince Jon could easily strip us of our title of warden and give it to another house.”

“Second, is that strange group of soldiers that seem to always be near the Starks. Gods, even their women fight, and exceptionally well I might add. The princess is counted amongst their ranks, and that black haired girl defeated Jaime Lannister in single combat cutting his hand of in the process. Everyone praises Garlan here for his ability to wield two swords, but that entire group can.”

“That isn't all, Grandmother,” Garlan suddenly spoke up, “they are freakishly fast on top of that. I came upon the black haired girl, Mikasa I believe her name is, training with their captain. He's the short one with black hair. If I remember right his name is Levi. Anyways, they were doing something called a speed test. They weren't trying to strike each other, but practicing blocking speed by just meeting their blades together. Like it was a deadly game of Patty Cake involving four swords. They started at a seemingly regular speed, but before I knew it the blades were moving so fast that they were just silver blurs.”

Olenna nodded her thanks for Garlan adding to her point before continuing, “Third, there are these giants that I heard about from my informants. Yet, I haven't seen them around the camp anywhere. The men, however, can't seem to shut up about them. They are a massive variable in all of this, and I only play in absolutes. Until I know what these giants are or what they can do we will be playing it safe.”

“The fourth factor, and probably the most important one is that.” She spoke as she pointed above their table. All eyes looked up to see the scaled head of the prince's dragon peering down at them. She really was a gorgeous creature with her soft blue color and the opalescent white of her horns. “By herself she negates almost all troop numbers thrown the prince's way. There may be books on how to fight against dragons, but nobody left alive with the practical knowledge. Even back then Dorne was the only kingdom able to take a dragon down, and that was a one in a million shot. The only people that were able to kill dragons in combat regularly were other Targaryens on their own dragons.”

“So, we will let the Starks know it is time to announce Margaery and Robb's betrothal, Loras will
offer himself up for a position on the Kingsguard, and that will be the end of it.”

“Yes, mother.” Her son answered as he looked down like a chastised child.

JAIME II

The screech of metal hinges pulled Jaime from his stupor, and he regretted it immediately. His head pounded like the mines under the Rock, and he could feel a slickness on his face where he had no doubt drooled over himself. He ran a hand threw his scraggly beard feeling where the wet hair was matted down.

“Ser Jaime.”

Jaime swung his head towards the strange voice squinting as the torch light blinded him. He held up his hand to block the light before he realized there wasn't a hand there to aid him anymore. He huffed angrily before switching hands. Only to realize his left still clutched a wooden cup in it.

That's when everything started coming back to him. The Targaryen boy had come down to speak to him bringing ale along. Their conversation hadn't really gone well, and when the boy left the ale remained. He had already been lightheaded when the boy departed, but after his threats along with the realization that Jaime could do nothing about it he had turned to the drink. He quickly scanned his bed to see the empty clay jug resting on its side by his pillow.

“Ser Jaime.” The voice called again. When he looked again his eyes had finally focused enough to see the man properly. Stood in the open gate of his cell was an average looking man with light brown hair and green eyes dressed in the northern style armor of the Starks. Behind him in the hall were at least four other men.

He was confused for a moment as to why they had opened his cell. He had been a 'guest' of the Targaryen boy and the Starks for Gods know how long, and they had never come into his cell to torment him. His goalers would throw taunts and insults his way, but they had never stooped to actually beating him. Yet the man continued to just stand in the door staring at him. Jaime had finally had enough of them taking each other in, “What do you want?”

“Your brother, Lord Tyrion, sent us to get you out of here.” Jaime's first instinct screamed that it was a trick. That as soon as he was out in the courtyard he would be set upon by Northern soldiers, beaten for their amusement, and then thrown back into his cell. Then, his mind managed to process the man's words and how they sounded. It wasn't a Northern accent the man was speaking with it was a Westerlander's.

“My brother sent you?”

“That he did, Milord,” The man answered back as he held out his hand to retrieve a sack from one of his companions. He threw the bag onto the bed next to him. “Hurry and put these on.”

Jaime turned the bag upside down pouring out its contents. There were brown trousers, a new tunic, a pair of black boots, black gambeson, and a leather brigandine with gorget. He wasted no time in tearing his old tattered clothes off, and slipping into the new ones. He let out a sigh when he reached to tie the laces of the breeches. He closed his eyes as he forced himself to swallow his pride before turning to the man in the doorway, “Can you help me with the ties?” He waved his stump at the man emphasizing his dilemma.
Thankfully, the man didn't comment he just nodded and stepped in to help. He didn't stop at the ties either. He helped Jaime into the gambeson and brigandine buckling it all for him. He felt like a child again having the grooms or maids at the Rock dressing him.

After he was dressed the man strapped a sword belt around his waist. A scabbard followed being attached to his right side. Jaime couldn't bring himself to admit that the sword would be completely wasted in his possession. However, the weight of steel around his waist once more was reassuring on its own. A pair of gloves followed. The right glove had been stuffed with cloth to give the appearance of a hand still being there, and it was strapped around his wrist. The final touch being a steel half helm being lowered over his golden hair.

Once all his preparations were completed the man stepped back giving him a once over. A contented expression overtook his face before he nodded, “Stay in the middle of the group, Ser”

With his head still spinning over the last few minutes he just nodded in response. His saviors formed up around him with the man that had opened his cell in the lead as they marched out of the dungeons.

As far as rescues from dungeons went Jaime felt this one could be ranked up there with Ser Barristan's rescue of Aerys from Duskendale. These men that Tyrion had assigned had handled the whole situation smoothly. The only death he had seen so far was the corpse of the goaler at the entrance to the dungeon. The whole walk through the castle they were pretty much ignored minus a few respectful nods from other troops in passing. The Northern armor had come priceless in that aspect. Jaime was curious to find out where they had procured it from considering if they had killed other men for the armor they would have already been noticed missing and the alarms would have gone up.

These were questions for other times though. As they continued their way towards the courtyard and stables of Riverrun the castle had an overall jovial feel to it. Men were sat around sharing tankards of ale or glasses of wine. Even through the walls of the castle he could hear the festivities that must have been taking place in the great hall.

When they made it to the stables there were five more men waiting with enough horses saddled for everyone. Jaimes thoughts once again turned to the men around him. There were only ten of them. Ten men to break into Riverrun and liberate the North's most valuable hostage right under their noses. He couldn't help wondering once again where Tyrion managed to find such men.

They were able to mount up and ride out the gate with next to no questions. The one time they were asked the man Jaime assumed to be the leader of the group, and the one who had woken him up managed to speak with the guard in a very convincing Northern accent. He told them that they were under orders of Lord Stark as outriders to make sure that Lord Tywin couldn't sneak up on them. The sentinel just waved them by with no further questions.

As they rode through the camp that sat outside of Riverrun he realized the most likely reason for the celebrations. There in the sea of tents reaching to the sky were the many banners of the Reach houses. He could see the Tyrell rose, Tarly huntsman, Fossaway apples (both red and green), Oakheart oak clusters, and others that Jaime had never bothered learning. If the houses of the Reach had joined up with the Targaryen and Starks that would put their numbers to an almost insurmountable size. They set the horses to a full canter once they were out of the camp. Trying to put as much distance between them before Jaime's absence was noted.

He hoped that word had already reached his brother or father about this new alliance that way they could adapt to the new situation. Tyrion was extremely intelligent. If his father would just give his brother a chance to help the two of them combined could still easily scheme out a way to win the
Thoughts of his family had him think of his sister next, and with it came thoughts of what the Targaryen boy had told him. The alcohol was still numbing him, but what the prince had said managed to worm its way in again. That she was fucking Lancel, Osmund Kettleblack, and Moonboy for all he knew. He didn't want to believe the boy, and he knew he shouldn't. Cersei only ever talked about the day that they would be able to be together without looking over their shoulders. She would never debase herself with their craven cousin. The boy couldn't hold a stick to him. Also, why would she mess with one of the Kingsguard when the best one of them was so enthusiastic to love her. Moonboy wasn't even a possibility. The boy just wanted to try and drive rifts into their family, and he wouldn't allow that to happen.

That brought to his mind that the boy had said informants had got that information to him. Which meant there was someone in the Red Keep handing their secrets and plans over to the Targaryen. The first thing he would do when he got back would be hunting that person down. It had to be someone close to the family, so most likely a steward, groom, or maid. The spider was also a possibility or it could be any one of the other sycophants that infested the Red Keep. He shook his head in frustration over how there were too many two faced people residing in the capital. Once this war was done he would encourage Joffrey to do away with most of the Small Council and fill it with lords whose loyalty was more easily assured.

A resounding crack of thunder suddenly broke him from his thoughts. It was muffled from distance, but was still strong enough for him to feel it through his mount's legs. He looked up to the sky to see it completely cloudless and the full moon shining brightly. He felt confusion over taken for a moment about what could have caused it, but shook it away when a more important thought occurred to him. He yelled out to the man that was leading the group of his rescuers, “Why are we still on the Riverroad?”

The man looked back at him over his shoulder before yelling out to be heard over the wind and horse hooves, “Just using it to gain as much distance as quick as possible. We'll switch to the smaller roads after daybreak.”

Jaime wanted to argue back that as long as they were on the Riverroad they would be easy to find. The other man had a point all his own though. The Riverroad was a lot more maintained than the smaller roads, and the horses could easily trip in the dark. Better to risk the roads for now, and save their mounts. Besides with Riverrun wrapped up in celebrations he doubted anyone would notice till they did the guard shift in the morning.

On and on they rode in silence. The only sound their party made was the clopping of the horses' hooves and their labored breathing as they chewed up the road. That was when he he heard it though. From behind them was something approaching. He could hear the muffled impacts and could feel a slight trembling in the ground like an entire cavalry pursuit was chasing them. He didn't know how they could have discovered he was gone so fast. No one should have gone down to the dungeons at that time till a thought finally struck him. Panic filled him as he yelled out to the leader once again, “Was there a tray of food in my cell?”

“What?!” the man yelled back, “What does it matter?”

Just then Jaime realized how much it mattered. In his sleep and alcohol addled mind he hadn't thought of it, but on nights of feasts they served him his supper later in the dungeon.

“They already know I'm gone!”
“What?! How?!”

“They always served my supper later on feast nights!” Jaime answered back, “Someone would check sooner then. We have to speed up!”

“He's right!” Another man yelled, “It sounds like someone is coming up behind us.” It was reassuring to Jaime that at least one of the other men had heard that too.

The leader nodded in response before whipping his reins and kicking his mount harder to pick speed back up. Jaime looked around at the men then, and they all now wore worried expressions on their faces.

They were now racing down the Riverroad, but the sound of the charge behind them seemed to get louder and louder. Then a loud roar broke through the night. It sounded like the lions that they used to keep below the Rock, but hundreds of times louder. “FASTER!” came the sudden panicked cry of one of the men behind them.

Curiosity got the best of him and when he turned around to see what caused the sudden cry he immediately regretted it. Giant glowing green eyes shone out of the darkness, and the moonlight illuminated what looked like a giant naked man running at them on all fours. Fear sank into his belly as he watched the creature closing the distance with impossible speed. “FASTER! WE HAVE TO GO FASTER!” He yelled out fear clearly lacing his voice.

He was sure the horse's flanks had to be bloody from his kicks, but he couldn't show any mercy for the poor animal. They were all pushing their horses to the limits, but the monster kept closing distance. When he didn't think their situation couldn't get anymore hopeless a different roar sounded out and the moonlight was blocked as they were thrown into darkness. As quickly as it was gone the moonlight returned along with a storm of fire coming out of the sky across the road. The horses all tried to come to a halt as their hooves slid on the dirt road and reared up at the same time to try and avoid the fire. Jaime tried to squeeze the horse with his thighs, but with only one hand he soon found himself losing his saddle.

The wind flew from his lungs as he impacted the ground. He fought through his wheezing breaths to regain his footing. As he got his bearings he saw that most of the party had lost their mounts and were getting back up. The horses were no where in sight already having fled into the woods. The last two men had managed to keep their saddles being far enough back to react.

They spun their horses around drawing steel at the same time. They yelled out a war cry before setting off a charge towards the monster that had been chasing them. The creature reared up staying crouched on its haunches as a massive hand lashed out. Horses and riders went flying through the air before they collided with the trees. Both men fell to the ground unmoving.

Jaime's eyes snapped to the creature when he saw it move out of the corner as it reached up to its neck. When the arms lowered again he could see a person standing in each of its hands arm with swords already drawn. The rest of his party drew their steel in response, but Jaime's hand remained still on his pommel.

The two dismounted the creature's hands walking towards them where they stopped at the edge of the light cast by the fire. Jaime felt his mouth go dry and a knot formed in his stomach as he took the two in. He recognized both of them immediately Levi whom had bathed the throne room of the Red Keep in blood, and the other was the girl he had fought in the Whispering Wood losing his hand in the process.
The two stood silent as the creature stood to its full height behind them. Jaime's eyes trailed behind as his mind tried to take in the sight before him. The giants he had read about in the old tales had topped out at four and ten feet. The one before him had to at least be triple that. The glowing of its eyes and the rows of exposed teeth adding to the unsettling image the creature presented.

A roar rent the air that moment and next to the giant creature landed another one that Jaime had been taught all his life was extinct. He couldn't quite make out its color, but the firelight glinting off of horns and teeth was his more pressing concern at the moment. He saw a shadow shifting on it's back and it quickly dawned on him that there was a person riding it. They seemed to dismount from the massive beast's back effortlessly, but Jaime couldn't pull his eyes from the dragon as it took back to the sky once its rider was a safe distance away.

His eyes returned to the rider as the dragon left his line of sight. He berated himself for not guessing their identity earlier when the Targaryen boy stepped into the firelight in between the other two. Jaime realized his suspicions had been right when he fully took in their appearance. All three were dressed in finery with the exception of sword belts being around their waists. They didn't waste the time changing before they began their pursuit of him. That was when he noticed the sword in the prince's hand. It was a smokey grey that seemed to devour the firelight instead of reflecting it, and there was only one metal that did that.

“Ser Jaime, I hope you enjoyed your ride, but we have come to escort you back to your cell.” The Targaryen spoke to him as if the escape was Jame just being allowed time to take in the fresh air. Then his head turned to the group of men that had broke him out. “However, your companions killed one of the Tullys' men, so their lives are now forfeit.”

“Like hell it is, bastard!” One of the men snarled before he rushed at the Targaryen boy. Unfortunately, his soon to be former rescuer hadn't been briefed on whom he might encounter. The man rushed directly at the Targaryen raising his sword over his shoulder getting ready to deliver a two-handed strike. Levi and the girl moved so fast his eyes barely registered their movement. With a loud clang the girl easily blocked the strike one handed as levi switched his blade to a reverse grip before plunging it through the man's side between the fastenings of the brigadine. Levi pulled his blade out as Jaime's former companion collapsed face first into the dirt road.

“KILL THEM!” The leader of his group yelled out as he lead the charge against the three. The rest of his rescuers following as they all yelled out war cries simultaneously.

Through the noise he heard the Targaryen boy yell something, but he couldn't make it out. His eyes went wide as he watched the three drop to the ground, and a giant hand swung down smacking all seven of the remaining rescue party away. Their bones breaking with sickening cracks under the power of the strike. They all impacted the ground like rag dolls tens of feet away.

He watched frozen as the Targaryen, Levi, and the girl got back to their feet dusting themselves off in the process. When he seemed to be satisfied the boy's eyes turned back to him. “If you wish to keep your remaining hand it would be wise to let go of that blade, and drop your sword belt. I'd hate to have to send anymore of you to your family.”

Jaime hadn't even realized he was still gripping the hilt of the sword. He hung his head letting out a defeated sigh as he struggled to undo the belt one handed. After a minute of frustration the scabbard and belt hit the ground with a clunk.

Chapter End Notes
Thanks for reading!!

NEXT: JON VI
The next phase of the war is planned out.

Alright, I'm going to start this off with answering the most frequently asked questions in the comments recently. Don't worry there are no spoilers involved in the answers. Daenerys will be getting her first chapter in the next 5-6 depending on if I have anymore of those crazy chapters like Jaime's one just pop into my head. When she gets to Westeros there will not be a fight between her and Jon. We will be getting more sweet sweet titan action in the next 4-5 chapters. The answers to how so are contained in this chapter.

There all done.

Let's do this!

The great hall of Riverrun was silent as Jon waited for the lords to join him. The room that had seemed to hold endless feasts for the past moon and a half had been remade to facilitate a war council. With so many lords in the castle the war room couldn't fit them all, and Jon had no desire to spend all day repeating himself in smaller meetings. A large meeting also gave him the advantage of fielding all the questions at once instead of dealing with the frustration of answering the same ones repeatedly.

His eyes were locked on a set of scrolls before him. They had been slipped into his pocket by one of the Spider's Little Birds, and were filled with the goings on of the capital since his adoptive father's execution. Jon hadn't even seen the boy coming when they ran into each other. He had been walking through Riverrun lost in thought. When he had rounded a corner and knocked the boy right off his feet. Before he or Wylis could even react the boy had regained his feet and rushed off again.

Jon hadn't given it much thought at first. Assuming the boy was just rushing around the castle on his errands. It wasn't till later that he had discovered the rolls of parchment bound in blank black wax. He had been thoroughly impressed with how fast the boy had been able to slip the papers into his pocket unnoticed.

He had been apprehensive about the letters contents at first. He wasn't sure how much he could trust the words of a man whom had willing supported the Usurper for so long. He had decided the best course of action had been to seek outside advice, and Lord Velaryon had quickly squashed his suspicions telling him how Varys had been staunchly loyal to the Targaryens in the past. It also helped when he elaborated and reminded Jon that everyone had technically bent the knee to Robert and that he shouldn't hold that against him. What truly convinced Jon to trust Lord Varys' words
had been when Lord Velaryon explained that Levi wouldn't have made it out of the capital with Ser Barristan if he didn't want them to. The Spider's web was so encompassing that in King's Landing he most likely knew exactly what inn they stayed at and even what meals they preferred.

Jon's eyes left the scroll when he heard the creaking of a door opening. He turned his head towards the sound at the back of the dais to see his wife entering. Annie was always beautiful to him, and his breath would leave him every time he saw her dressed in gowns for arrivals or feasts, but this was always his favorite way to see her. It was the way she dressed ever since he first met her those years ago outside Winterfell. Her hair was in her normal bun with her bangs loose, her knee high boots, breeches, and a white hoodie. Her O.D.M. harness was buckled over her, New Moon strapped around her waist, and over it all was her new jacket.

Just days ago a group of Stark men arrived bringing wagons to resupply the Scouts with gas canisters. Amongst the supplies had been a crate that Sansa had sent for them, and contained new jackets that Sansa and the ladies of Winterfell had made for them all. Instead of the tan color of their originals the new ones were black as night. The Wings of Freedom embroidered on the breast, sleeves and back like the originals.

The only differences had been on Reiner's and Annie's. Reiner's face had turned crimson when Connie had noticed the alteration first asking loudly why a direwolf would be embroidered on the inside of his jacket. When Connie spun the garment around much to Reiner's further embarrassment and Robb's ire on the inside breast of the jacket was the aforementioned direwolf embroidered in copper thread, so when worn the sigil would sit right over his heart. Jon himself wasn't too surprised with his sister-cousin's choice of potential suitor considering Reiner embodied everything that she had dreamed of as a little girl in a husband. At this point he only truly lacked the title of being a lord.

Annie's jacket had been changed in a completely different manner. From a distance you wouldn't be able to tell much of a difference. However, on closer examination you could tell how Sansa had changed the sigils that adorned the garment. The Wings of Freedom had been altered to resemble dragon wings and the blue one had been stitched in a lighter blue color that reminded Jon of Lyax's scales. Sansa had found a truly clever way to use the Scouts symbol, but also incorporate how Annie was now a Targaryen.

Ghost entered the hall next to her. Jon would have felt abandoned by his companion with how much time he spent glued to Annie's side if it wasn't for the fact he knew the direwolf was just trying to protect the newest member of their family. The direwolf had taken it upon himself to be Annie's protector the day after they had first heard the baby's heartbeat. Jon had fallen asleep in one of the chairs before the hearth as Annie had sat in the other with Ghost's head in her lap. It took him a moment to realize he had slipped into one of his wolf dreams. He had sat there feeling his wife's hands gently comb through the fur on Ghost's head when he noticed a very subtle thumping noise. His other ear had raised trying to locate the source of it only to realize it was coming from Annie herself. After which he snuggled his head deeper into her lap. When he leaned his right ear against her abdomen he could hear the distinctive thumping of Annie's heart, but there was a second one slightly off rhythm and a little quieter.

Laurence followed in her wake before splitting off to stand by Ser Barristan and Wylis who were positioned in front of the dais behind him. Jon knew the Kingsguard's constant presence annoyed Annie, but since Ser Barristan learned of the baby one of the three were her constant shadow. She had tried to argue that Sasha was enough or Ghost when she wasn't available, but the old knight was hearing none of it. So, there they had stood glaring at each other. Annie with her arms crossed and brows scrunched into a scowl, and Ser Barristan with a determined look on his face in the same manner that Lord Stark used to use to try and rein in Arya. Jon had ended up leaving the room
before he laughed and brought his wife's anger down on himself. He found out later that she had begrudgingly accepted, but he couldn't bring himself to ask the specifics of that conversation.

As she approached a small smile took her face when he reached out a hand to her. She took his hand as she leaned into his arm her head resting against his shoulder. He laid a kiss on the crown of her head and the smell of her lavender hair oil filled his nose. “How are you this morning, Love?”

“Fine.” She answered with a sigh. “Where were you this morning? You were gone by the time I woke, and you didn't show up to breakfast like you were supposed to.”

He looked down into her blue-grey eyes and one of her brows rose to hasten him into answering. “I didn't want to wake you with how tired you've been lately, and then I lost track of time trying to plan our next moves. How was it though?”

“The food was good. Thankfully, aunt Cat has already figured out what I can keep down.”

Jon chuckled at that, “I suppose it helps that she has gone through this five times herself.”

Annie hummed in response her attention turning to the table before them. On the table was a large map of the southern six kingdoms. Wood carvings depicting the sigils of various families were spread sporadically around. “So, did you come up with anything good?”

“I think so. However, I don't think some of the lords are going to agree?” He answered as Annie picked up a carving of a lion from over Lannisport.

Her attention didn't turn from the object as her fingers ran over the details whittled into it. “And why is that?”

“I think we should wait on King's Landing.”

Annie opened her mouth to ask a follow up question, but cut herself off when the double doors to the great hall opened. Robb and aunt Cat were the first ones through followed by Theon and the Scouts. Robb, Cat, Levi, and Hange took seats to Annie's right as the rest of the group stood behind them. After the first group the rest of the lords slowly trickled in. The higher lords sitting as the lower lords, heirs, and trusted knights stood behind them. Lord Edmure, Ser Brynden, Lord Mace, and Lord Tarly all sitting to his left.

When everyone had found their seats and the servants had finished distributing refreshments for everyone Jon spoke, “My Lords, thank you for joining me this morning. I feel we have lingered here at Riverrun long enough. Therefore, I thought long and hard on what our next course of action should be.”

He paused for a moment as he looked around the table. All the lords' eyes were firmly fixed on him, and it was still a little unnerving. He still wasn't fully used to his new position being in charge and having these lords jump at his command especially considering moons ago a lot of them would have just sneered at him. Annie's words of how he needed to conduct himself with false confidence until he was able to build his own came back to him letting him push forward. He held up the parchments the Little Bird had slipped in his pocket for all the lords to see, “I received word of the happenings in the capital.”

This sent a few of the Riverland lords to muttering, but the Northern and Reach lords kept their silence. “Apparently an insurgence group has rose in the capital calling themselves the Sons of the Dragon, and they are causing no end of headaches for the Lannisters and their bastard boy king.”

A few lords let cheerful comments escape them before lord Bracken managed to have his voice
heard, “What are the smallfolk up in arms about, Your Grace?”

Jon locked eyes with the lord for a moment before they fell to the papers in his hands. He shuffled through them seeking the information that had been asked for. When he found the proper paper he scanned its contents quickly before reading it out. “Joffrey and Cersei have allowed the Mountain and his men to ride rough shoulder over the people of the capital searching for Levi. He was allowed to rape, torture, and murder to his whims. Add on top the limited amount of food that is making its way into King's Landing which the Lannisters keep the lion's share for themselves and the troops, the people, have began fighting and killing any Red or Gold Cloaks they can get their hands on.”

Jon saw eyebrows raise in shock and surprise at the revealed information. “The insurgency in the capital has essentially turned the false king and his supporters into prisoners of the Red Keep. They can't risk being out with the people if a riot was to break out especially considering every soldier killed is more castle forged steel in the smallfolks' hands. It was with this information that I felt we should focus on other targets beside King's Landing.”

“It wasn't an easy decision to come to. I don't want to leave the people of King's Landing at the mercy of people that truly have no concept of the word.” The lords began murmuring again, but Jon held up a hand to silence them back down. “I thought long and hard about what to do, and I think you all will agree that this is the best plan to hurt the Lannisters the most.”

“What are the things the Lannisters love the most?” Jon asked rhetorically before answering his own question. “They love power, their pride, and their gold. We are going to take all three from them, but not in that order.” He leaned over the table as he began moving the wooden pieces across the map. “First we will take their pride when we take Casterly Rock. While there we will take their gold. The Lannisters have allowed the crown to get borderline bankrupt under their rule, so they will pay that back with interest.”

Jon looked up to see questioning expressions on some of the lords faces about how his plans were going to come to fruition, but thankfully they held their silence allowing Jon to lay his plans out in full. “Eight and ten years ago my grandfather plunged this country into to civil war when he murdered my other grandfather and uncle in a farce of trial by combat. Then he demanded the heads of my uncle Eddard and Robert Baratheon fully sowing the seeds of rebellion.”

He looked around the table again. “What did all of you in this room do?” The faces of the lords changed to different levels of curiosity wondering where he was going with this. “Some of you rose in rebellion against the crown while the others supported the crown. The point I'm getting to is that you did something. You picked a side, you stood firm, and you fought.”

“What did Tywin do though?” Jon asked as he glanced around the table meeting their eyes. “He hid at Casterly Rock till he felt he knew which way the war was going. Then as most of you recovered from the Battle of the Trident he marched his army to King's Landing. The Lannisters contribution to the war was to pillage, rape, and murder the smallfolk of King's Landing along with my stepmother and siblings. Then, he had the audacity to propose his daughter as queen using his gold as the bait.”

“In the mean time I was raised in Winterfell under the guise of a bastard as the last of my paternal kin have spent their lives fleeing from assassins' blades.” Jon leaned over the table then his fists pressing into the top, “So, after we have cut the Lannisters off from the resources of the Westerlands we will march east and oust them from the capital and the power they underhandedly stole. The Lannisters love their little song, but I will show that proud lord just how low he can truly bow.”
“How do you plan to take Casterly Rock, Your Grace?” One of the Reach lords asked before continuing, “The only time in history that the Rock was taken is the tale of Lann the Clever.”

Jon allowed a smile to take his face as he looked back at the lord, “We have a few people that are quite capable of breaching walls, My Lord. I’m sure you saw one of them when he was gracious enough to return the Kingslayer to his captivity.” Several of the Northern lords laughed at Jon’s response. “Make no mistake, My Lords, we will not be putting the Rock under siege. We don’t have time for that. We will be taking it, and it won’t take nearly as long as you think.”

He could see the doubt written on the lord’s face, but the man didn’t push him for more of an answer. Jon took his silence as an opportunity to continue. “We have a lot to do to accomplish our goals, so I have thought of the best way to utilize our strength to our advantage. Lord Velaryon and Lord Darry?”

“Your Grace?” Both men responded immediately.

“I would like the both of you to take some ships and head to Essos to find my kin. Your families have always been staunch supporters of mine. The Velaryons are family through multiple generations, and Lord Darry’s kin Ser William was my aunt’s protector when she was whisked from Dragonstone as an infant. Your presence should hopefully alleviate her worries that it is a trick.” The men nodded their heads accepting this assignment easily. “Take as many men as you feel necessary. My late uncle forced her to marry a Dothraki horse lord, so be careful. Let her know what is happening here, but if it turns out she is happy with her husband don’t force her to return.”

The men nodded again at the instructions before Jon turned his attention to Prince Oberyn. He had been relieved at how accepting the Dornish Prince had been with him. After their initial greeting in the courtyard Oberyn had insisted Jon and Annie call him uncle in private. He had said that Elia was a very accepting type of woman, and would have boxed his ears if he had treated Jon as anything other than family. That helped alleviate the worry from what he was about to ask the Red Viper. “Prince Oberyn, if you would allow it could one of your daughters accompany the lords on their quest. Having a representative of Dorne and a woman may add some credibility to their words.”

The prince contemplated the request for a moment before nodding his head, “I think Tyene would be the best for this task, Your Grace.” A smile took the Viper’s face, “She has always wanted to see more of the world like myself, so she will be quite enthusiastic with this assignment.” The prince fell into a contemplative look as Jon watched something process on his face before he spoke again. “Actually, Your Grace, if you wouldn’t be opposed I would send all three of my daughters. For both Tyene’s protection and the Princess Daenerys.”

Jon thought it over before giving the Prince of Dorne an affirmative nod. When Oberyn returned the gesture he turned his attention to the acting Tully Lord. “Lord Edmure,” The red head’s eyes snapped up from the map meeting his own, “I would have you lead the Riverland lords from here. Your men know these lands better than us, and I’m sure once word reaches Tywin he will try to come after us.” Jon pointed towards where Harranhal sat on the map with several lion busts resting on it. “I want you to keep Tywin pinned down in Harranhal. When we swing back east we will take the Riverland keeps back one by one till we canoust the Lannisters completely from the Riverlands.”

Lord Edmure nodded his head in understanding “We can do that, Your Grace.”

Jon then turned his attention to Mace Tyrell, “Lord Tyrell, I would have you write to Lord Rowan. Have him lead his troops up the Westerlands while we move from the east into the lands. If all goes accordingly we should meet at Casterly Rock in roughly a moon.” Jon moved the markers
around the map reflecting his words. “It will be a quick and tiring endeavor, but we must move fast to catch them off guard as much as possible.”

The catch was everything going off without too many hitches. He would have the Northern and Reach forces move like a wave spread out across the Westerlands. They would take what they could, and bring it back to Riverrun. “Lord Mace, I would have you stay here in Riverrun with my wife and my aunt, Lady Stark.”

“Your Grace?” Mace responded in a confused tone.

Jon had planned his words out to perfectly take the sting away from his orders. The Tyrells were prideful, but Mace was a tactical buffoon. The only victory the Reach forces had managed in the Rebellion had been led by Lord Tarly, but Lord Tyrell seemed to have constantly soaked up the praise and credit for his bannerman's victory. Jon had to pat himself on the back when he came up with a good way to get him from the field, and where he would benefit their campaign more, “Lord Tyrell, you are the lord of the second wealthiest family in the realm. You are also experienced in dealing with the logistics needed to run the kingdom responsible for feeding most of the Realm. You have been in wars before and know how important those skills are. Well, our army is going to be split all over the map, and I need someone of your abilities to keep track of it all. I'm putting you in charge of making sure our men receive all they need to perform this campaign and then also catalog the bounties we will take from the Westerlands. There is no one I would trust more to have the skills necessary to undertake this mountainous task.”

Jon watched as the warring emotions left the lord's face and his chest suddenly puffed up like he was some strange blue-green bird before responding with an overly enthusiastic “Of course, Your Grace, I will be honored to.” His eyes drifted over the lord's shoulder to see Lord Tarly's face, and the small subtle smirk that took it told him the lord caught on to what he was actually doing.

Jon smiled in response to Mace before turning his face to the lord of Horn Hill, “Lord Tarly, you and Ser Garlan will be in command of the Reach forces present with us.” Tarly and Garlan both nodded accepting their roles.

Jon turned his attention back to the table as a whole again, “Word has reached us from some of Lord Edmure's scouts that Stafford Lannister is amassing a new host at Oxcross. We will march in a few days time after Lord Stark's wedding to engage this new force before delving deeper into the Westerlands. It's time we take the fight to the Lannisters in their own territory!”

ROOSE I

The lord of the Dreadfort sat at his desk in the Northern war camp. Of course he had been offered a chamber in the castle, but he had staunchly turned it down. He had hid behind the excuse that it was good for a high lord to remain amongst the men. The presence helping to keep the men more in line. The real reason though was it made correspondence easier without prying eyes. Exactly like the missive he had received just minutes prior. The scroll in his hand tapped repetitively against the oak desk after the parchment to rolled back on itself allowing him time to ponder its contents.
He had to give it to Lord Tywin the man really wanted to win, and his pride had to have been severely hurt after the Green Fork. This new plot was just plan ridiculous though. Wanting him to let more disguised Lannister men into the camp, so they could kill the prince and Robb Stark during his wedding feast. He sighed as he took a drink of water from his horn.

A part of Roose had always respected Tywin Lannister. The man lead with an iron fist, and kept the Westerlands in line through a heavy amount of fear. After the Reynes and Tarbecks no one in the west dared question the Lannisters, and under Tywin's leadership the Lannisters had become one of if not the most powerful houses in the Realm.

From the beginning of the war he had slowly been losing that respect for the man. From the get go Tywin had planned back handed plots one after the other. It appeared the man wanted to do anything other than face his enemies in open combat.

Tywin had first contacted him almost immediately after Lord Stark had been arrested. He must have seen the writing on the wall that war would soon follow, and wanted to get out in front of it. If it came to war Tywin wanted him to take the Starks out from the inside to end it as soon as possible. He was promised that afterward the Boltons would be raised to the position of Wardens of the North by order of their boy king.

Roose had jumped at the chance then. Generation after generation had bowed to the Starks after the Red Kings had been thoroughly defeated. All that time they had played the roll of dedicated bannermen, but in the shadows had been plotting for when they could finally get their revenge.

However, through their time of plotting House Bolton had dwindled while the Starks had thrived. He had thought that the post Rebellion time would have been when to strike. The Starks had been whittled down to two members in the main line. Eddard and Benjen Stark were all that remained, and then the younger had gone and sworn his life to the watch. Then he watched as child after child was given to Lord Stark by his Southron wife. He even had a bastard to back up the trueborn children.

In the mean time house Bolton was brought to near extinction. Only himself and his baseborn son he’d raped into to a woman were left. He did at one point have a trueborn son from his former wife. Unfortunately, she had died in child bed delivering his heir, and then his son had died after returning from warding in the Vale. He along with Barbrey Dustin had suspicions that Ramsay was directly responsible. However, he didn't have hard evidence, and with the loss of his heir he needed someone that could pass on the family.

This war had finally given them the best chance to strike, and with Lord Tywin's support the Bolton's would finally retake everything stolen from them. However, the one attempt he had made was met with failure, and after the Green Fork he had quickly began reconsidering his options.

He had tried to take the head off the snake by poisoning the prince and princess' flagon of wine at their wedding feast. It would be the easiest way to kill them considering if he wasn't with the dragon that white direwolf was by his side constantly. He had tried watching the couple at the head table as much as possible without being suspicious. Then, Robb Stark had inadvertently helped him by calling for a toast to the new couple. He had watch with anticipation as the princess' goblet raised to her lips. He felt a small surge of elation when she sipped it, and he watched her slender throat bob as she took in the deadly toxin.

His plan fell apart the next second when her hand suddenly shot out covering the top of the prince's cup keeping him from drinking. She leaned in whispering to him when a confused look had taken his face. He had watched the prince smile at his new bride before kissing her on the cheek. The girl had flushed slightly before signaling for a maid that came rushing over. The princess gave the maid
both of their cups of wine, and they were quickly replaced with a fresh goblet for the princess and a horn of ale for the prince. He had kept his eyes glued to the princess and when she thought no one was looking she turned her head exhaling a small cloud of steam. He had watched the rest of the night in confusion as the young woman showed not a single symptom of the poison. She hungrily ate, pulled her reluctant husband to share a few dances, and enthusiastically left to consummate her marriage before a bedding ceremony could be called.

He had been in the process of coming up with a new plan on how to strike again, but all his plans had come to a halt after the Battle of the Green Fork. Watching the princess and Reiner transform into what they called their titan forms and decimating the Lannister forces had been a sight to behold, and one he would never forget. Then he had seen the prince ride his dragon like the Targaryens of old as he burned through the opposing army. That was when Roose realized that the entire board had shifted and he needed to be on the right side of its outcome.

He had then decided the best way for his house to survive was to fully support the rising new regime. Now that everything was out in the open there was no way in the Seven Hells that the Lannisters would survive the end of the war. The Northern forces had the Riverlands and the Reach as allies along with four titans and a dragon.

There was also a ruthlessness in the prince that Roose never saw in Eddard or the current Lord Stark. Whatever Littlefinger had said to the prince as his last words had brought a darkness out. He had never expected to see an execution dedicated to the Old Gods in his life considering it hadn't happened since the Starks bowed to the dragons three hundred years ago. From the shocked faces present he didn't think anyone else had expected it either, but whatever Baelish had uttered had sent the Targaryen into a rage. He had kicked the block out from under the weasel's head before dragging him by the neck and throwing him before the weirwood. Then he had had ran his Valyrian Steel dagger across the whore monger's throat, and everyone watched fascinated as the crimson blood splashed across the bone white wood before being soaked up as if the tree was a sponge. The prince had then ordered that Baelish's corpse would get no honors in burial. His corpse had been unceremoniously dumped in the woods for the creatures to feast upon.

That was a man that Roose Bolton could follow. Not some cunt that hid behind his gold and words having others do his dirty work for him. The more he had thought of it the more he realized that the prince and princess were people he could truly respect. Lord Tywin had already lost he just hadn't accepted it yet, and was still trying to get an upper hand anyway possible if the raven that arrived yesterday was anything to go by. A group of men had managed to infiltrate the walls of Winterfell and tried making off with the oldest girl. The entire attempt had reeked of Ramsay. He needed to find out who had put him up to it, what they had offered him, and put a stop to it before he fucked everything up. The bastard's impulses could put them in danger, and this failed kidnapping proved that extensively.

There was also the failed attempt to free the Kingslayer. Maybe if they were communicating in the Lannister camp they could have slipped people in and killed the Northern leadership and absconded with the Kingslayer at the same time. The commotion would have distracted the castle away from the dungeons enough for them to make a getaway. However, now it would be near impossible. They wouldn't fall for the same trick twice.

He blew out another sigh realizing what it was he had to do, and steeling himself he called out for his guard to fetch Steelshanks. It was surprisingly only a few minutes later when a “My Lord?” came from the entrance of his tent.

He looked up at the face of the man whom had been his right hand for almost five and ten years. “Steelshanks, I have an important mission for you.” The man bowed his head slightly letting him
know he accepted whatever task his lord laid at his feet. “I want you to take two hundred men and head back to the Dreadfort, and dispose of Ramsay Snow.” When a look of confusion over took his face he elaborated, “I have suspected for a while he played a role in the death of Domeric, but had to tolerate him considering he was the only son I had left. However, he has since outlived his usefulness by putting us in a precarious position. Make him disappear and take up as castellan till I return.”

The man nodded and departed his tent with out a single question. That is why Roose liked and trusted the man. There were never any questions. He just executed and did it efficiently.

He turned from the tent flap bringing his attention back to the scroll that was still held in his hand. Without any hesitance he thrust the parchment into the flame of the candle on his desk. As the missive burned up he weighed his next moves.

A group of his men would meet Lord Tywin's party, but instead of Riverrun they will find themselves in a shallow grave. He will have to find a new wife and put as many babes into her as possible. He would regrow the Boltons and as much as he hated the idea he may have to bring his house back to glory through the Andal way. Marriages, blood ties, and loyalty.

JON VI

The clicking of his boots and the slight clanking of the Kingsgurds’ armor behind echoed through the halls as he made his way through the castle. He clenched his fist tighter the leather of his gloves creaking in protest as his thoughts turned back to the execution of Littlefinger the day before. Of all the things he had expected the worm to say for his last what had actually been uttered had cut Jon to his core. The weasel had managed to murmur low enough that only Jon and from the gasp he had released behind him Ser Barristan were the only ones to hear them.

That bastard and Lysa Tully had ultimately been responsible for the Rebellion. If they had actually passed on the message his mother had left the entire war would have been thwarted. He would have grown up with his proper siblings in the Red Keep. He would have had his mother and father's love. Elia Martell would have lived. He would have learned to fight from the greatest warriors alive. His uncle and grandfather would be alive. His aunt Cat would have married Brandon like she was meant to, and his uncle Ned would have been able to follow his heart to Ashara Dayne, if the rumors of that were true. So much stolen from him all because a petty lord wanted to reach too high, and a jealous sister coveted what her sister had.

He didn't know what had came over him, but he definitely remembered the aftermath. Baelish's lifeless corpse laying amongst the weirwood roots as his blood soaked into the wood and mud, and the dragon bone dagger Robb had given him clutched in his hand. Then there was the faces of those present when he looked up. Annie had worn a mask of indifference with the Scouts all matching her expression. Lady Catelyn, the Riverland lords, and the Reach lords all looked aghast. No doubt the image of an old northern sacrificial execution too much for their Southron sensibilities. Robb, Theon, Prince Oberyn and the Northern lords all seemed to have proud expressions adorning their faces. The exception being Lord Bolton whom had a glimmering look in his eye and a small smile on his face that set Jon's nerves on edge.

After he had ordered Baelish's body dumped in the woods the party had broke up. He had stayed in
the Godswood by himself. He had dipped the dagger in the stream that ran through the castle, and had sat on the shore polishing the blade as Ser Barristan stood sentry with Dark Sister still in his hands. The old knight's thoughts had to have been just as tormented as his own considering they didn't share a single word the whole time they remained in the woods.

When he had finally returned to their chambers Annie had been waiting for him. The concern she couldn't show in a court event written plainly on her face. She didn't say anything as she just wrapped him in her arms. They had fallen to bed and his wife had allowed him to distract himself in her body. Annie knew him well enough to understand that he would tell her what bothered him when he was ready. She was gracious enough to just provide him a distraction which would allow him to sleep.

He had felt refreshed the next morning waking up tangled with his wife. Then his thoughts had drifted back to Baelish's words souring his mood again. He had managed to slip out of the bed without disturbing Annie to get ready for the day. He had also given Ser Barristan the day off from his duties, so he could process his own thoughts. He didn't know how Oberyn would react when he told the Dornish Prince what had been said. The man was renown for having a fiery temper.

He was broken from his thoughts as his destination came in sight. The chamber door he sought surrounded by three bodies. A Northern soldier in leather and steel, a Reach soldier in Tyrell livery, and the last was the giant lady knight, Brienne of Tarth. The lady had shown up at Riverrun a few days prior dressed in mail and plate declaring that she had arrived to serve the Baratheons. After she had renewed her fealty before Lady Shireen she had requested to join Renly's guard detail to make sure he wasn't being mistreated.

She was the first to acknowledge him as he approached with his escort. He nodded in response before looking over his shoulder to the kingsguard. "Ser Wylis, post out here, and Ser Loras will escort me in." The trainee turned full fledged knight and Kingsguard wordlessly stepped up next to Lady Brienne. Jon had Ser Barristan knight both Wylis and Laurence at the same time he accepted they vows to the Kingsguard. In one feast Jon had gained a new 'sister-by-law' and three full fledged Kingsguard knights.

He turned his attention to the chamber door. He wrapped his knuckles against the wood a few times before entering without waiting for a response. Ser Loras followed him over the threshold to find Lord Renly sat at the table still breaking his fast. Lord Renly was in overall good condition. His hair and beard were trimmed respectably, and he was dressed in a black jerkin over a yellow-gold tunic, black trousers, and black boots. The lord's brows creased in an irritated fashion as he took in his visitor, but his eyes lightened when he saw Loras over Jon's shoulder.

Being the one in command of the room Jon didn't wait for an invitation before sitting down in the seat across from the Storm lord. He grabbed the pot in the middle of the table and poured himself a cup of tea before finally addressing him, "Lord Renly."

"Your Grace." he responded back begrudgingly with a sour expression upon his face.

"You know, My Lord, I spent many a night since you have been here trying to decide what I would do with you. After many different rejected ideas I believe I finally came up with a suitable solution."

Jon watched the man's throat bob as he swallowed, "And what did you decide?"

"You will be going to the Wall-" Lord Renly and Ser Loras both began speaking at once cutting him off. He held his hand up to try and placate the Storm lord, but raised his voice to cut over them, "LET ME FINISH!"
Both men snapped their jaws shut, but he could feel Loras' stare burning into the back of his head. “Like I was saying you will be going to the Wall, but you will not be taking the black.”

Renly looked at him as if he had grown a second head for a moment before asking, “What am I going to be doing there?”

Jon took a sip of tea before answering, “First, you will be swearing your fealty to me in court. You will travel to the Wall as my representative to observe the Night's Watch and find out what support they need until the war here finishes.”

“You need to understand, My Lord, you planned to try and usurp a throne you had no claim to. Even if I had never been discovered you still fell in line behind Stannis. So, what you did was committing treason of the highest level.” Jon was actually surprised to see an embarrassed expression come across the lord's face.

“However, I don't want to shed needless blood and at the point in time no death had come from your plans, so I'm willing to let it slide. There is also the fact that we are kin, and there are too few of us left as is. A fact both your older brothers seemed to force themselves to forget.” Renly was nodding along with him at this point, but he knew the man wasn't going to like the parts of his plan that followed.

“When you are called back you will return to King's Landing and resume your roll and incomes as Master of Laws. However, you will no longer be Lord of Stormsend. That right has passed to the Lady Shireen as the Wardeness of the Stormlands considering she is the only member of your family free of crimes.”

“Your Grace, I'm the last male of the Baratheon line!” Renly spoke up aghast.

“Not quite,” Jon smirked back, “I'm to understand that there are quite a few Baratheon boys running around the Realm. Your brother wasn't stingy with his seed if I'm to understand.”

Renly at this point looked both shocked and appalled, “You'd allow a bastard to take the Stormlands?”

Jon felt his blood begin to simmer at that, “Care how you speak, My Lord, and remember how I was raised.”

Shame quickly took the man's face again before he quickly spoke, “Apologies, Your Grace.”

Jon nodded in response allowing the unintended insult to slip by. “From what I understand, Cersei, has had most of Robert's bastards in the capital killed, but if we can find some of the other suitable males we will present them to the Lady Shireen. Having her wed a cousin and take the Baratheon name may placate the lords enough to not challenge her rule.”

Renly was once again nodding along with him as he continued. “I won't force her hand on this. She is still young, and if she happens to find a suitor more to her liking willing to take the Baratheon name then all the better for her.”

“Anyways, this will allow you to come to the capital, focus on your position rather than worrying about the Stormlands or furthering your family, and Ser Loras will be there since he is now a member of my Kingsguard.”

He could see both men turn a little red at his last part. He had also wondered if the rumors about the two were true, and their reactions spoke more than words ever would. Jon knew it was a risk not punishing Renly worse, but he felt a happy Master of Laws and Kingsguard were better than
plotting ones.

“So, that's it, Your Grace, I go represent you at the Wall till the war is done, and then return to King's Landing and take up my former position?”

Jon nodded in answer before he remembered another point to ad, “Oh, and your party will be taking Jaime Lannister to the Wall.” Renly's eyes went wide at that, “He, however, will be taking the black.” When Jon had told Jaime to pick between a stick and a stick he maybe should have told him both options ended with him at the Wall, but it must have slipped his mind before.

Oops.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

****I HAVE HAD A CRAZY FEW WEEKS THAT ATE UP MY WRITING TIME, SO THE STORY WAS ABLE TO CATCH UP. I'M STILL TRYING TO WORK ON THE NEXT CHAPTER. THERE MAY OR MAY NOT BE A UPDATE NEXT WEEK. I JUST DIDN'T WANT YOU TO GET CAUGHT OFF GUARD IF I DON'T UPDATE NEXT TUES. THANKS FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING.***

NEXT: BRAN III
Bran's warging dreams deliver him some important information, and other parties decide to join the war.

Chapter Notes

So, I had this chapter pretty much finished last week, but couldn't bring myself to publish it. My limited time to write lately and slight writer's block had left the chapter with a lot to be desired, so I decided to hold off and put a little more meat into it.

I would have published last night like I normally do, but I was fighting a fever and if I tried reading at all everything turned into a blur.

We are getting closer to some more action packed chapters. I just have to move some more pieces around first, and then we will be there.

The chilled night air brushed through his fur or wool, he wasn't quite sure which, as he stood steadfast on the walls of the cliff. He had been shocked to find himself in the body of a mountain goat, but the experience was exhilarating all the same. Being more accustomed to the body and movements of Summer, Bran, allowed the goat to be more in control. It felt just like his past times of clamoring up the walls of Winterfell as they pounced from one hold to the other. The goats nimble hooves allowing them plenty of grip to stop themselves from plummeting to their deaths hundreds of feet below.

The goat's destination came apparent when they finally stopped on an outcrop that allowed a little more movement. The goat immediately started grazing on the hardy bush that was growing out of the rock. Bran allowed the goat time to enjoy its snack and relax a little from their steady climb.

Bran's thoughts drifted to these strange times he inhabited other animals. He had come to be quite accustomed to sharing Summer's body with him, but these nights were still strange to him. He had no idea what brought these dreams on. The ability to share with other animals wasn't as much of a shock compared to the why.

Sansa had already shown that they had the potential to have multiple companions. Autumn had already made herself a constant presence in the Godswood or wandering to and from the Wolfs Wood. The people of Winterfell still gave the massive bear plenty of space whenever she lumbered around the castle despite seeing how gentle the creature was with his sister.

That first night Autumn had come to Winterfell would forever be burned into his memory. The eldest Stark daughter returned to the castle looking like a goddess of the North. She had rode the Flint bear's back surrounded by a pack of direwolves. Her pale skin and auburn hair reminiscent of the weirwoods as it had blown in the breeze. She had told him later after her arrival that Autumn
had been the first time she had successfully warged while conscious.

These other dreams Bran had though weren't the bonding type. The few times he had had them he had seen through the eyes of animals all over the world. After the second time he knew what he was seeing had to be important. He just couldn't put his finger on how they were.

Movement in the corner of their vision caught their attention pulling Bran from his musings. The goat's head swung around to look down into the ravine they were high above. There in a long line he could see bright spots of light making there way through the mountains. As the breeze picked up again the goats senses picked up a scent that Bran was all too familiar with, direwolves.

Bran forced the animal to leave their outcrop and descend the cliff face so he could get a better look. Descending was a much simpler task for the animal as they appeared to be in more of a controlled fall than anything that required much effort. He took them as far as he could before the goat's instincts to avoid the predator became too much for even him to over power.

They stood on another small outcrop of stone as Bran watched the torches slowly appear out from behind the trees. He felt the goats cloven hooves patter when their eyes locked on the direwolf at the front of the party. Bran knew immediately he was looking at Grey Wind when even in the dark he could make out his yellow eyes that locked on to them. The goat wanted to flee from the predator's gaze, but Bran knew they were too far away for the direwolf to ever be a threat. By the time Grey Wind covered the distance they could halfway back up the cliff. Grey Wind seemed to come to the same conclusion when he tore his eyes off them and continued up the trail they were on.

As the goat seemed to relax he turned their attention to the riders that were following the great wolf. At the front were men riding in the Northern style of armor Bran had grown up with all his life. They would normally have the direwolf banners flapping above their heads announcing their lord's presence, but there wasn't a banner in sight. Bran supposed it made sense if they were moving through the woods on a small path in the middle of the night they probably didn't want to be detected easily.

A giant of a man in grey steel followed with a white cloak billowing from his shoulders. It only took Bran a moment to realize that it was Wylis. The gentle Winterfell guard that always had a smile for him, and had even helped with Bran's recovery. If he was off duty at the time he would always help with his physical therapy before the army had marched south. Seeing the white cloak sent a wave of conflicting emotions through Bran. On one hand he was proud of the man. He had always been loyal through and through to his family, and Bran truly enjoyed the massive man's company. He definitely deserved the recognition that such an important position would bring him. On the other hand, Bran knew that position would mean he would only ever be in Winterfell again if Jon decided to visit the North, and by the record of his predecessors that was rare if at all. He could only hope that the longing to visit the place he was raised would pull Jon home for visits, and thus Wylis would come along as well.

Behind Wylis came whom Bran had been hoping to see. His eldest brother and cousin. They both looked regal riding side by side atop their mounts. His brother's auburn hair glowing in the moonlight as Jon's raven black seemed to absorb the light entirely giving it a dark blue hue. They were both donned in their armor Robb's grey steel with Jon's black looking like heroes from the songs he would beg from Old Nan. They both wore steeled expressions on their faces no doubt pondering whatever up coming battles were destined for them. Bran was just happy to see that they seemed well enough, and we was sure that his other siblings would be happy to hear it when they broke their fast in the morning.
His attention then turned to the two riders behind Robb and Jon. It took Bran a moment to recall one of them, but soon realized it was Laurence Snow. Lord Glover's ward had quickly volunteered as a guard for Jon when the request was put out in the great hall of Winterfell. If the white cloak flapping from his shoulders was anything to go by he too had been accepted into Jon's forming Kingsguard.

The other man Bran had never seen in his life. He looked as if he was of an age with Robb and Jon, or at least near enough it was negligible. His hair appeared to be a light brown, but it was hard to tell as moonlight danced in his curls while they swayed in the breeze. His white cloak was fastened to his shoulders by two gold clasps wrought in the shape of roses. The man let out a quite laugh at something Laurence said, and the smile that remained on his face lit it up revealing a small set of dimples. Bran couldn't put his finger on whom the young knight might be, but if he had been granted a white cloak by Jon he was sure the knight's skills had to be up to stuff.

Bran stayed there observing the procession of soldiers long after his brother and cousin had moved on. The goat was itching to get on with its grazing, but Bran couldn't tear their sight from the impressive army passing before them.

That all changed when the moonlight suddenly cut out. The goat's head swung up towards the sky. In place of what should have been the moon shining silver in its full state was a shadow falling at them in a rapid pace. Eyes locked onto rows of obsidian black teeth silhouetted by the glowing embers of fire. Bran barely had time to sever his connection to the goat before it was engulfed in flame to be devoured by his cousin's dragon.

When his eyes opened again he was engulfed in warmth. He gazed around the room he found himself in trying to discern his new location. His eyes scanned across a book shelf loaded with tomes and scrolls organized neatly. There was a hearth with a fire crackling in its grate. Above the mantle a tapestry depicting a red salmon on a field of white hung from the wall. As he continued scanning his new environment his vision was suddenly filled with a pair of thighs that Bran was currently resting on, and beyond them was a desk littered with raven scrolls.

Beyond the desk sat two men. The first man had light brown hair with blue eyes. He was dressed in a brown doublet with black trousers. On his breast was a dark iron broach shaped into the form of a farmer with a plow. The other man had flowing silver hair and bright violet eyes, and was easily one of the most handsome men that Bran had ever seen. He wore a sea green doublet with silver trimming. Both men held goblets in their hand as they looked at whom ever was looming over Bran.

His observations were broken as a massive hand came down gently on his head. His eyes closed reflexively as the hand began slowly rubbing over his head. A purr rumbled through his chest and his front paws began kneading against the leather of the man's trousers when two fingers began massaging the base of his ears. Bran was over come with euphoria as he reveled in the ministrations. A few moments later the hand ran from his head along his back to the base of his tail. Before repeating the whole process again. Between the warmth of the fire and the lap he was laid on Bran could feel the pull of sleep tempting the animal he was inhabiting, but the rumble of the man's voice vibrating through him caught his attention.

“So, the prince wants you to find his family and finally bring them back from Essos?”

The silver haired man whom had just taken a sip from his goblet nodded in response before responding, “Yes, however, it is just the Princess Daenerys we are going for. We had received word that a couple moons ago Prine Viserys got himself killed at the hands of her husband.”
The man in the brown doublet spoke next, “His Grace, felt that Lord Velaryon, the Sand Snakes, and myself would be the best received by the princess. She has run her whole life from the knives sent by Robert Baratheon, so the prince felt families she knew were loyal without question were the best option.”

The man behind Bran hummed in answer as his hand continued the repetitive stroking. “So, when are you departing for Essos?”

Lord Velaryon was the first to answer again, “We are going to sail on the morning tide, but we'll stop at Dragonstone to pick up the rest of the fleet that will be accompanying us.”

“What are your plans for returning?” The man that Bran sat on asked, “If you don't mind me asking.” He added as an after thought.

“Well, the prince just tasked us with finding her first and give her the option of returning.” The Darry man took a quick drink from his goblet breaking up his words. “His Grace, said that if she was happy with her Dothraki husband, and didn't wish to return to not push the issue and let her be.”

Lord Velaryon added his voice again, “I had thought that if she returns with us we will bring her to Dragonstone to wait for the rest of the kingdoms to get stabilized.”

“Seems like a wise choice.” Bran's lapman spoke, “No sense in risking both Targaryens. Then if things go bad for the prince we have the princess to rally around.”

Both of the lords sat across from them snorted into their goblets simultaneously. “I don't think there are any worries on that front, Lord Mooton.” The Darry lord replied with a slight smirk taking his face.

“How do you figure?” The man that Bran sat on whom had finally been revealed to be the Lord of Maidenpool responded, “War is always unpredictable, and it could turn back in the Old Lion's favor just as easily.”

“Under normal circumstances I would agree with you, “Lord Velaryon answered, “but these times are everything other than normal.”

“What makes you two so confident in our young prince?”

“What do you know of the battles that have been fought so far?” Lord Darry answered with a question of his own.

Quiet reigned for a moment before the Mooton lord responded, “I have heard rumors, but nothing that could be other wise substantiated.” Bran felt Mooton's hand leave his back to retrieve his own goblet. The man took a drink before continuing. “I've heard talk of giants fighting with the young prince, and that he rode a dragon in the Battle of the Green Fork. It all sounds a little too much if you ask me.”

“Well, it is all true.” Lord Velaryon responded, “I wasn't there for the battle, but from what I saw at Riverrun I can only come to the conclusion that all the rumors of the Green Fork have to be the Gods' honest truth.”

“So, the North truly has giants fighting with them, and a dragon?” Bran could hear the disbelief lining Lord Mooton's voice as he spoke.

“Aye,” Lord Darry answered. “The prince's dragon likes to roost on the roof of Riverrun. She isn't
near the size of Balerion yet, but you should see her Lord Mooton.” Bran noticed how his voiced became wistful as he spoke of his cousin's dragon. “Her scales are the color of a summer sky, and her white horns shimmer into the colors of the rainbow when the sunlight strikes them. She is truly a sight to behold.”

“By the Mother.” He heard Mooton gasp in response. “And the prince truly rides her?”

“That he does,” This time it was Lord Velaryon responding. “When the prince has time he takes her out for rides as if she was any random filly in the stables.”

“What about these talks of giants then?” Mooton returned his goblet to the desk and resumed his ministrations of running his hand along Bran's back.

“They aren't the giants of our tales,” Lord Velaryon answered, “They call themselves titans, and they are massive.”

“Have you seen them too?”

Both men nodded in response before Lord Darry answered leaning forward in his chair. “The Starks and the prince are tight lipped about how they became connected to them, but the titans look like normal people most of the time. If you can believe it they transform into those monsters. I saw it the night the Starks and Tyrells announced Lord Robb's and Lady Margeary's intentions to marry.” Darry took a sip off his goblet. “The Lannisters had men infiltrate the castle trying to liberate the Kingslayer. They were successful for the most part till the prince and three of those strange soldiers pursued them. When they returned the prince was on the back of his dragon, and two of the other soldiers were riding the shoulders of one of these titans that had the Kingslayer grasped in it's hand. It looked like a man, but at least forty five feet tall.”

“I'm of the understanding that there are four of them,” Lord Velaryon added, “They are a part of a squad of soldiers that refer to themselves as the Scout Regiment or Survey Corps depending how they are feeling. Nobody outside of the Starks truly knows where they came from, but they are all formidable in their own ways. Even their women are fighters. One of them a seventeen year old girl named Mikasa was the one to initially capture the Kingslayer. Defeated him in one-on-one combat in the Whispering Wood, and one of their leaders named Levi was the one that had wreaked havoc in the Red Keep moons ago.”

Lord Velaryon broke off his speech to take another drink before carrying on, “Anyway, so they are a squad of highly trained soldiers with these titans amongst them. Eren is the one that pursued the Kingslayer. The next one is a young man named Reiner. From what we've been told when he transforms into his titan he looks like a knight covered with golden armor. Then there is Bertolt. Bertolt is a quiet boy, and can normally be found in Reiner's company. I've heard mention of his titan being referred to as the Colossal. However, no one outside of Winterfell has seen it yet. They say it is at least three times the size of the others.”

“And the last one?” Lord Mooton asked as he retrieved his goblet once again.

“The last one is none other than our future queen.” Lord Darry responded causing Mooton to sputter into his goblet.

“What?!” Mooton responded when he had stopped choking on his wine. Both men chuckled at their fellow Lord's response.

“Aye.” Lord Velaryon responded taking another calm drink. “From what I heard she is the worst of them when her temper lets loose. From my experience with her she is very calm and collected, but I
heard when the battle was done she was the one to execute Ser Amory Lorch for his part in the death of the Targaryens in the Red Keep during the Sack.”

“She even sent his pickled head to Sunspear as a peace offering to the Martells,” Lord Darry added. “That's how the Sand Snakes ended up being part of our party.”

Bran felt Mooton hrmph the vibrations moving though his body, “Direwolves, dragons, titans, and Targaryens rising up to take what was stolen from them. Interesting times indeed.”

Both the other lords raised their cups in response to the lord's statement. After which they faded into casual conversation again. Talks of trade ships from Essos and other things Bran couldn't find it in himself to care about. Between the warmth of the lord's solar and the comforting affections of Lord Mooton, Bran, felt the eyes of the cat he was inhabiting becoming heavy once again. It wasn't too much longer till he didn't have the power to fight off the animals desire to sleep, and darkness quickly encroached on him.

It was only a moment later when eyes opened and he was temporarily blinded by sunlight. He turned his head to the left and right trying to gain his bearings and where he could possibly be now. He was in a courtyard of some type and from the way he was racked to a tree he surmised he had to be inhabiting a horse.

The walls around him were bone white as the sun was beating down on him. Thankfully, he was able to hide in the shadow of the tree before him. He sidestepped himself into the shade provided by the abundant amount of leaves hiding him from the harsh rays of the sun. The tree in front of him had large round fruit growing on them, and were the strangest he had ever seen. They were an orangish-yellow color and roughly the size of his fist.

His attention turned to the sound of approaching foot steps and Bran was at a loss when possibly the most beautiful young woman he had ever seen entered his vision. Even with her hair shorn close to her scalp she was breathtaking. She had bright lilac eyes that shone like amethyst in the sun light, and her lips were pulled into a serene smile. She was dressed in a leather vest that left her shoulders, arms, and stomach bare. Hanging from her waist was a leather skirt reminding him of the ones the Scouts wore to protect their trousers from their O.D.M gear, and like them this young woman too hand breeches on below it. She had raw hide colored boots that came up to her calves. In her hand was one of the strange fruits that was growing before him and he watched as she deftly cut it in half with the knife she had in her hands.

When she arrived at his side she discarded the pit of the fruit from the blade of her knife before she wiped it on her skirt and returned it to its sheath. She ran a soothing hand down his neck whispering sweetly in a guttural language Bran couldn't understand. She held up one half of the fruit to his muzzle and his lips took it gingerly from her palm.

Bran was taken aback for a moment as the sweet taste of peaches exploded across his tongue. He had never actually seen the fruit whole in his life. The only time they ever got peaches at Winterfell they had already been sliced and preserved to prevent them from spoiling on their long trek to the castle. Then they were mainly reserved for the making of some of the sweetest pies Bran had ever tasted that were only made for feasts or requested for a nameday celebration.

The young woman continued to rub his snout affectionately as she fed him the other half which Bran happily gobbled up. As the horse's teeth methodically chewed the succulent flesh of the fruit
the girl continued her musings to him. He wished he could place the language. It was extremely harsh sounding and even with her melodic voice the young woman wasn't able to take the edge off of the way the words sounded.

“Khaleesi.” Another voice called out. Both Bran and the woman before him turned to see another young lady approaching. This one had honey blonde hair and bright blue eyes. She was dressed similar to the first girl that had approached him, and in her arms was a basket woven out of thick blades of grass. As the girl closed the distance Bran saw she wore an apologetic look on her face as she spoke in perfect Common, “I’m sorry to bother you, but he won't calm at all, Khaleesi.”

The first woman cooed into the basket before reaching her hands in. Bran was not ready for what he'd see next when her arms retracted with a small black dragon in her clutches. Bran was breathless as he watched the small woman before him switch languages and spoke to the tiny dragon in a language that rolled off her tongue a lot easier and was soothing for the ears. It took him a few words before he realized that she was speaking High Valyrian. The words sounding familiar from when he would listen to Jon and Annie getting their lessons from Maester Luwin as he worked on arithmetic.

It took just another moment for Bran to realize whom stood before him. The short hair on her head looked white but could easily be the fabled silver-gold, combined with the color of her eyes, and the fact that she had a dragon in her arms meant she had to be Jon's aunt Daenerys. She reached up allowing the small black dragon to perch on her shoulder before she resumed stroking Bran's snout.

It was less than a minute later when another voice called out to her this time belonging to a man. He stopped at Daenerys' side allowing Bran to get a good look at him. He was much older than her. Probably closer to an age of his parents. His hair was a dark blonde to the point of bordering on brown and his cheeks were covered in unkempt scruff. His eyes were a blue grey like a stormy sky. His yellow tunic was sun faded and stained in salt from sweat. What surprised Bran the most about the man was the Northern burr in his accent.

“Rakharo has returned, Khaleesi.” The man spoke quickly with a energetic smile on his face.

A similar one took Daenerys' face, “Did he find anything?”

“Aye,” The man answered back quickly, “He said just two days ride from here are the walls of Qarth. He managed to speak with people there and the Council of Thirteen will be waiting to receive you when we arrive.”

Qarth, Bran didn't know where that was exactly. His lessons on geography up till now still mostly focused on Westeros and the closer free cities, but he knew that knowledge would be valuable to Lord Velaryon and his expedition. He didn't wait for any thing else as he closed the horse's eyes and focused his mind on returning to his body.

His eyes snapped open to the vision of the familiar smoke blackened timbers that ran along the ceiling of his room. He sat a minute watching the yellow light of the fire smoldering in his hearth dance along their edges. When he had fully centered himself back into his own body he threw the furs off himself. He wiggled his way to the edge before throwing his feet over. The cold stone floor of his bedchambers met his flesh causing him to hiss out in mild shock. He toed around in the dark till his feet came in contact with the fur lining of one of his slippers.
After he had manged to slip coverings onto his feet he shakily got to his feet. He had made so much more head way in his recovery, but he still had to rely on assistance whenever he first woke up and his body was being stubborn. Using the furniture he guided himself towards the hearth. His feet scuffed along the floor not trusting himself to take full steps.

When he made it to the hearth he retrieved a fat beeswax candle from the mantle. He held the wick against a log that still had minor flames coming off it. When the string lit up he placed it in a holder before setting it aside. He tuned his attention back on the hearth adding a couple more logs and stirring it back to life. As new flames sprouted to life warmth seemed to immediately flood his chambers. Satisfied that he would be comfortable he retrieved the candle and using the stone wall for support got back to his feet.

He made his way to his desk setting the candle on the corner before pulling out its chair. When he was seated he pulled out a fresh piece of parchment, dipped his quill, and started scrawling out his message for Lord Velaryon. Bran carefully crafted the missive as the scratching of the quill and the popping cracks of the hearth filled the air. When he was finished he sat and reread the message. He wanted to come across as lordly as possible even though his intended audience would know the words came from a boy.

As the ink dried he was trying to decide if he should attempt to catch the lord at Maidenpool or send it to Dragonstone to wait for his arrival. Then he remembered that the lords had said they were departing on the morning tide. It wasn't a long trip from Maidenpool to Dragonstone, so he would have to get the message off as soon as possible to make sure it was there in time. He was preparing to pepper sand over the letter to soak up the excess ink when a pattering at his window caught his attention. When he turned his heart almost jumped out of his throat at the pair of large milky white eyes peering at him through the glass. His pulse slowed slightly when he heard the creature give a loud hoot and he realized it was just an owl. Deciding he was in no danger from the bird he turned his attention back to the letter before him when the owl started tapping on his window again.

When he looked at the bird again it gave another hoot, but this one sounded as if it was ringed with a sense of impatience. Bran let out an annoyed huff realizing the bird wouldn't leave until he made it. He pulled himself to his feet again using the furniture to support himself as he made his way to the window. As he got closer he could made out details on the owl. It was multiple shades of brown highlighted by the light of his hearth. Its head was adorned in what appeared to be two horns formed by feathers. Its large yellow scaled feet were easily half the size of his hand and each toe was crowned in long, curved black talons. That was when he noticed there was a roll of parchment tied around its right leg.

He had never heard of owls being used as messenger birds. His whole life that task had been carried out exclusively by ravens. At this point curiosity had taken over any fear or annoyance he had with the bird. His hand was steady as he reached out and unlocked the window. As he pulled the wood framed glass panels open the owl just sat their watching his movements. When there was no obstacle between them the bird simply lifted its right leg in offering. Bran tried to quickly untie the message, but his fingers fumbled a few times. The owl showed no sense of irritation or any other reaction for that matter. It just stood still as if it was carved from stone like the statues of his ancestors in the crypts. When he had finally managed to get the knots undone and retrieved the parchment the bird waited just long enough for his hands to retreat before it took flight back into the dark sky.

He watched as the owl's form completely disappeared in the distance. The black of night swallowing it up and he could no longer hear the its wings cutting through the air. He resealed his window before making his way back to the desk. Once reseated he cracked the moss green wax
seal on the scroll, and let his eyes flow over the words. It took a minute for the words to sink in before he was quickly rereading it to make sure he had it right.

He grabbed his weirwood cane from the side of the desk and quickly hobbled his way to his chamber door. The hinges protested loudly at the force he yanked it open. Peering his head out he could make out the guard on duty patrolling the family wing. The man had stopped mid step when Bran's door had flown open.

“Garrat, I need my sisters, Ser Rodrik, and Maester Luwin in the solar as soon as possible. I have important news they need to hear.”

Bran barely waited for the “Yes, milord,” before his door was swinging closed again with a loud clunk. His mind was going a mile a minute as he got dressed. He thankfully had enough of a grip on his mind to grab the letter for Maester Luwin to send before bolting out of his door. The same thought repeating over his head. Figure out how to counteract the Ironborn invasion.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: TYRION III
Tyrion jolted awake when his chamber door suddenly burst open. He hated his body's reaction when the full effects of his previous night racked through his body. It felt like a blacksmith was hammering on an anvil behind his eyes, his stomach churned like the Blackwater in a storm, and it felt like his mouth had been stuffed with cotton. What little saliva he could produce only created a sickening sludge in his mouth. He sat there in his misery until his eyes were able to focus so he could see the swarm of servants flooding into his bed chambers. Most of them ignored the confused dwarf lord perched on the bed as they went about their various tasks.

His alcohol riddled brain tried to piece together what was happening around him. He scanned the activity making sure to move slowly to avoid becoming dizzy. His vision landed on a steward standing at the foot of his bed. The man seemed to have a sympathetic and understanding look on his face. Over his left fore arm was a set of clothing Tyrion recognized as his. He sat there staring at the steward as the man stared right back before the man finally spoke breaking their standoff, “Forgive the rude wake up, My Lord, but the Lord Hand requests your presence in the Small Council Chamber.”

That seemed to only add to Tyrion's confusion. Last he had checked he was the Hand. The steward saw his confusion when Tyrion's brows furrowed and elaborated on his previous statement. “Your Lord Father arrived in the capital during the night. He has now assumed his position of Hand of the King, My Lord.”

Shit. That was the last thing he needed at the moment, and his headache seemed to almost double at that moment. However, he felt it was better to not dawdle and draw his father's ire upon him. As he scooted to the edge of the bed he noticed a glass of water with half a quarter thimble of Milk of the Poppy next to it on the night stand. He sent a silent prayer to the heavens for Drunk Tyrion. That man was definitely a life saver thinking ahead. Tyrion turned the medicine over into the water watching as the clear liquid quickly became a cloudy white. He seized the glass, tipped his head back, and quickly downed the concoction as quickly as possible to not taste it.
The moment the glass retouched the table he was seized by a couple of maids. They wrenched his sleep shirt from his body not bothered in the slightest that he was nude underneath. One held out a pair of small clothes for him to step into as if he was a toddler again. He didn't have the time or energy at the moment to argue over the indignity of it all. He was pulled this way and that as he was dressed in black trousers with a black tunic, and a red jerkin thrown over it. He was hoisted into a chair and as one maid was slipping socks and boots onto his feet another was in the process of running a comb through his hair. She wasn't the gentlest in her efforts as he felt his head snapped back several times when she encountered knots. He let an annoyed huff out which only earned him a smack on the head from said comb. He decided it was best at that point to remain silent. He just gritted his teeth and allowed the maid to go about her business. After a painful few minutes he felt her pat his shoulders as she spoke in a proud tone, “There ya are, Milord, all presentable now.”

“My thanks, My Lady.” He responded sarcastically as he hopped from the chair.

As he made his way down the stairs he could feel the Milk of the Poppy already going to work. With every step his head felt clearer. If only the drug was as effective on his stomach which still churned like a rolling cauldron. As his headache faded he remembered more and more of his night before which led to the killer hangover he awoke with and the apparent lack of Pod at his side.

Yesterday had been a more than active day for the Sons of the Dragon. He had been called to the Gate of the Dragon shortly after breaking his fast to see what had transpired there. When he had arrived he was directed to the corpse of a Gold Cloak soldier. The poor sod had been stabbed at least twenty five time. Most of the improvised knives still sticking in his body. By his head on the wall was a crudely drawn three-headed dragon drawn in the man's own blood. Like the rest of the murders the guard had been relieved of both of his weapons.

That had only been the start of one of the bloodiest days of the insurrection. Of course Cersei in her wisdom had unleashed Clegane on the masses, and this time the Sons of the Dragon didn't wait for nightfall to retaliate. When word had spread that the Mountain and his cronies were taking people both Red and Gold cloaks began to die. It didn't matter if they were alone or in squads. If the soldiers found themselves in a crowd they rarely left said crowd alive. The Sons had become adept at stabbing the men in the sides between their plate armor quickly and being able to fade back in the crowd. As the men fell another would quickly follow taking their arms before their squad mates even knew what happened.

By the end of the day Clegane and his men had tortured and killed at least twenty five smallfolk. The Sons had retaliated at a estimate of around sixty. Tyrion had been exasperated by the numbers. It didn't matter which part of the city it was the Sons would be able to strike at their men. On top of that none of the other smallfolk would even see it, or if they did they weren't saying anything. He didn't know what to do to end the bloodshed. If there was a direct leader he would be able to negotiate a way to end the death. However, he knew that no man would ever claim that position with the fact his idiot nephew and idiot sister would execute the man before he could say a word, and they would still be in the same exact predicament.

He was at a complete loss on what to do, and the fact that he was going stir crazy wasn't helping at all. He had been trapped in this castle for moons, and there didn't appear to be an end in sight. On top of that he hadn't been able to enjoy the company of a whore in that same amount time. He had decided that the best course of action was to get completely drunk with Pod and vent all his frustrations to his squire's ears. The boy, like always, had remained quiet just drinking unless Tyrion pulled the words from him. He didn't even remember how late the two stayed up. Evidently it was before his father arrived because that level of commotion would have definitely reached him.
Speaking of his father, Tyrion looked up realizing he had reached the Small Council chambers. The door was flanked by two Red Cloaks he didn't recognize. Well, in truth it would have been hard to tell anyway considering their visors were closed. One of the men didn't even bother knocking before he opened the door for Tyrion, and both men bowed their heads respectfully as he passed them and crossed over the threshold.

He paused after breaching the room. His father had been here mere hours and had already changed the room. Where the table normally sat the width of the room with spots for the king and hand in the middle it had now been turned length wise. His father sat at the head of the table staring daggers at him. The morning sunlight catching the gold flecks of his green eyes making him look even more like the lion they took for their sigil. The fact that his father was still dressed in riding leathers told him the man still hadn't slept at all. He had just come riding into the capital and began taking over.

His father leered for another moment before pointing wordlessly to an empty chair next to Lord Varys. The Master of Whispers sat dressed in a plum colored robe with the same blank face that gave nothing away with his hands tucked into his sleeves resting against his belly. The eunuch looked like he had already been awake for hours as his eyes flitted about the room. When Tyrion was seated he looked across the table to see Pycelle sitting there struggling to stay awake. His chin hidden under the snow white beard repeatedly bobbed as his eyes struggled to remain open.

Tyrion's thumbs twirled where he had his hands clasped in his lap debating if he should request some wine from the steward standing off to the side. He ultimately chose to squash the desire. Between the look of his father's face, and the way his stomach was rolling wine was probably the last thing he should be concerned with.

The old maester was scared awake when the door to the council chamber suddenly flew open the iron framed wood banging loudly against the pale red stone wall. His sister entered then. Her emerald eyes lit in rage as she was followed by a storm of red and gold silks draping from her body. “HOW DARE YOU ASSUME TO SUMMON ME YOU LITTLE-!” The words died in her throat as she spotted their father sitting at the head of the table. The two sat staring back and forth. Like what happened with Tyrion, his father, just silently pointed his finger at the empty chair to his right between himself and Lord Varys. As she made her way around the table Cersei’s eyes met his. She make a look asking what was happening. Tyrion hoped the expression he shot back told her that he was just as lost as her.

Tyrion watched as his sister took her seat. Her hands smoothing down the fabric of her dress as she sat. She looked over her shoulder at the steward standing off to the side before she snapped her fingers at him. “Wine.” She ordered in that normal haughty tone of hers.

The steward didn't even have a chance to move before his father spoke for the first time with only one word. “No.”

The tension seemed to mount by the second before Cersei slipped a defeated sighed. She waived her hand dismissively to signal off the steward even though the man still stood motionless by the wall.

There was a knock at the council door before it opened with out invitation. The same steward that Tyrion had woke to standing over him walk in the room. The man didn't hesitate a moment before walking the length of the table and holding his hand out to his father. Lord Tywin quickly took what was offered. The steward bowed his head and departed without a single word exchanged between the two. Tyrion was curious what the man had brought his father, but the question was quickly answered when he saw him fix the Hand of the King badge to his chest.
Tyrion felt a sinking weight in his stomach seeing the badge on his father. He had now officially lost what little power he did have. He was now vulnerable to his sister's and nephew's machinations when the fancy struck them. Then, another thought struck him. They were packing up his room when he woke. He had been too deep in the throws of his hangover to realize it then. Now he would have to try and figure out what dank corner of the keep his father had shoved him into.

Tyrion just rolled his eyes when the council chambers slammed open again and Pycelle jumped once more. His kingly nephew came charging into the room dressed in crimson and black. The idiot Kingsguard, Ser Meryn Trant, in tow. The boy's eyes locked right on Tyrion as he ate up the distance to the table. “HOW DARE YOU SUMMON ME, IMP! I AM THE KING!” Spittle and rage came pouring out of Joffrey as he shook an accusing finger.

The boy shut up immediately when Lord Tywin loudly cleared his throat, and all the eyes in the room turned to him. The boy king thankfully had enough humility to look sheepish. Like with himself and Cersei, his father, just pointed a silent finger to the empty chair to his left. The look of argument crossed Joffrey's face for all of a second before the boy made a wiser decision and silently made his way to the chair. Once the boy king was seated he father's eyes scanned the room before turning his attention to Ser Meryn. “Meryn, find out what is taking Clegane so long.”

Thankfully, Meryn was smarter than the idiot he served and quickly made his way out of the council chamber. The room fell into silence as the Kingsguard's steps faded in the distance. His father started looking over the parchments in front of him. Joffrey looked like a cask of wildfire ready to ignite, but the boy entertained himself by pulling on a loose string at his cuff. Cersei was feigning interest in the nails of her left hand. Pycelle once again looked like he was fighting off sleep. Lastly, Lord Varys sat with a serene smile on his face and just stared forward.

The eunuch still bothered Tyrion the most. He has spent a lifetime weaving a web of informants that covered two continents. The last two and twenty years in the Red Keep. Tyrion couldn't say he truly trusted the man. There was no way with his network the man didn't know who was leading the Sons of the Dragon in the capital. When ever he had asked the man or former man had replied the same. “His Little Birds were doing everything they could to find where the Sons were grouping, but alas they were being very secretive about everything.” Tyrion really didn't buy it fully, but in a way it did make sense. Varys' reputation did precede him, and it is no secret the lord favors small children as his local spies.

Tyrion had been tempted to bring his concerns up to Cersei and Joffrey, but he had thought better of it in the end. Tyrion cared for many things his family being near the top, but his self-preservation ranked even above them. They wouldn't think twice about sacrificing Tyrion for their own ends. If everything in the city went tits up he would need a man like Varys in his corner to help him escape the chaos with his neck intact.

He was pulled from his thoughts by a knock on the door. When his father called for them to enter instead of Ser Meryn or the Mountain a Lannister guard entered. The man made his way to the end of the table his crimson cloak flowing out behind him. The man stopped bowing deeply at the waist before he returned to his full height and met his father's eyes. “I'm sorry to interrupt, My Lord Hand, but a crate arrived at the gates with a letter addressed to the Small Council.”

“Did you check the contents for safety?” His father responded.

“We did, My Lord. The crate was filled with ten heads, so I felt I didn't need to bring that before you.” The man reached into his waist pulling out a rolled parchment. Tyrion sat close enough that he could see the three-headed dragon pressed into the red wax that sealed the letter. “I did bring the letter for the council though.”
His father nodded his head in Tyrion's direction and the guard held the letter out to him. Tyrion quickly took the parchment from the man. The guard went to attention, bowed once more, and dismissed himself. Tyrion didn't watch the man leave being more interested in the letter he held. The sickly sweet scent of rot clung to the paper. His stomach sank as he recalled what the guard had said. There were ten heads in the crate meaning Jaime's rescue had failed. When Tyrion was finally able to tear his eyes off the parchment he looked up to see all eyes at the table were turned on him.

Realizing they were waiting for him to read the letter out loud he carefully slipped his finger into the scroll cracking the wax free. He unrolled the paper and cleared his throat before beginning.

“To the Small Council and their false bastard boy king. I have graciously returned your men to you. I will give you credit for the attempt to free Ser Jaime. It was a valiant effort, but alas Ser Jaime still resides in our dungeons. It also pleases me to let you know that your plot to kidnap the Lady Sansa failed. She is still quite safe in Winterfell.” Tyrion paused a moment when he heard Joffrey mutter a curse under his breath. “The men that Lord Tywin sent to murder us during my cousin's wedding also rot in shallow graves. They unfortunately had a run in with Lord Bolton's men before they could sneak into Riverrun.”

“I have to say I am disappointed in the Lannisters. Your family's reputation precedes it concerning military might, but you have resorted to nothing but craven tactics. I am getting tired of sending you back body parts, so these will be the last. This will also be the last missive I send you for we will be seeing each other soon enough. It would behoove you to surrender when you see my banners approach. If you force me to fight for the capital and the smallfolk are hurt in the process there will be no mercy for any off you. 'Signed' Prince Jon Targaryen.”

Tyrion allowed the parchment to roll up on itself as he looked around the table. Pycelle looked at a loss for words. Joffrey had his hands clenched into tight fists on the table as his face was pulled into a sneer. His father's jaw was clenched so tightly Tyrion wouldn't have been surprised to start hearing it crack under the pressure. Cersei's face was flushed red with rage. Lastly, Varys once again wore an unreadable expression on his face.

“HOW DARE THAT PRETENDER CALL ME A BAS-!” Joffrey suddenly broke out in rage, but was cut off by Lord Tywin's measured tone. “What did he mean he is tired of sending us body parts?”

The table fell quiet. Everyone realizing then that Tywin hadn't been informed of Jaime's crippling, and at the moment it seemed no one wanted to be the one to break the news to him. As the silence stretched on and no one seemed to be speaking up Tyrion finally took it upon himself. He swallowed thickly before he spoke the words that he knew would break through his father's cold demeanor to get some reaction from him. “The Targaryen sent us Jaime's hand and sword a while back.”

His father's eyes drew into slits, and though he didn't think it possible his jaw tightened even more. “Explain.” Tyrion was somewhat disappointed. He expected Tywin to go into a rage that his precious heir had been marred. He probably shouldn't have expected anything other than cold focus from his father.

Thankfully at that moment Varys decided to speak up saving him from his father's gaze. “From what my little birds were able to gather, Ser Jaime, lost his hand during the fighting in the Whispering Woods. He was defeated in one-on-one combat by a girl the age of seven and ten.”

Cersei scoffed loudly to that, but Varys continued. “She isn't any normal young woman, My Lord. Apparently, she is one of those strange soldiers that have attached themselves to the Targaryen and
With the mention of those soldiers Tyrion's thoughts went to the man named Levi. Visions of the throne room bathed in blood as serving women on their knees tried mopping up viscous liquid as others were scrubbing the stains away. If his father had any thought's of getting revenge on the girl, Tyrion, was sure that endeavor would only lead to his sire's demise.

“They shall pay for their insults.” Joffrey tried to sound menacing, but he only came across petulantly. Tyrion had to hold back a scoff at the image of Joffrey trying to go into battle against anyone. The half man was sure he was a more competent warrior than Joffrey even with his stunted stature. His lord father must have had the same thoughts with how he merely just raised one eyebrow in response.

When Joffrey was about to add more to his delusions a knock at the door silenced him. Again his father called for the person to enter. The door cracked open to reveal Ser Meryn Trant in his white and gold armor with the Mountain in tow. The taller man had to duck his head an absurd amount to fit through the opening. Ser Meryn moved to stand at the wall at the back of the chamber while Ser Gregor made his way to the end of the table and began pulling out the chair to sit. He was stopped by his father's command of “Stand.” The one word delivered in a commanding tone that brokered no argument and the giant stopped immediately.

“Ser Gregor.” His father began in the same tone. “Please enlighten me as to why I had to sneak myself into the Red Keep dressed as a commoner.”

“There is a rebel group operating in the city, My Lord.” The massive knight replied. His voice so deep Tyrion could feel it rumble in his chest.

“And how did that come about?” His father asked with an accusing tone.

“I don't know, My Lord.” The Mountain responded confusion marring his voice.

“So, you don't think that maybe raping, torturing, and murdering the small folk has anything to do with it?” His father snapped back. “Are you simple?”

“I was just following my orders, My Lord.” The Mountains brows had furrowed at the insult from his liege. “I was trying to find the criminal Levi and then put down the rebels.”

His father turned his attention then to the council as a whole. “And none of you thought that murdering the smallfolk indiscriminately might exasperate the problem?”

Tyrion spoke up then, “Father, I tried to use my position as Hand to stop the insurrection. I had ordered Clegane to stop harassing the people, and I had the kitchens making soup and bread to try and stymy the starvation. Cersei overrode me with Ser Gregor and Joffrey did the same with the cooks. Then when the small folk showed up our gallant king filled the smallfolk with crossbow bolts.”

“Those are all lies, Father.” Cersei sneered defensively before her tone turned haughty. “That little monster will try to deflect his failings onto anyone else he can.”

His father just stared at Cersei a moment. The expression on his reflecting his disbelief before he turned his attention back to the Mountain. “Ser Gregor, did Lord Tyrion tell you to stop your actions against the smallfolk?” The giant's eyes drifted back and forth between his father and sister. The indecisiveness written plainly on his face. His father seemed to have enough of the man's conflicting loyalties snapping at him. “I am your liege lord, Ser Gregor, you will answer me and
you will speak the truth. Now!"

Ser Gregor swallowed visually before nodding his head as he responded, “He did, My Lord.”

Cersei's jaw tightened as her eyes were filled with venom towards the massive man. “So, tell me what possessed you to listen to a woman that has no tactical sense in her head over the acting hand?” Cersei's head snapped towards their father with an indignant look on her face from the insult. Tywin didn't even acknowledge the daggers his sister leered at him. His vision completely locked on Ser Gregor.

“She is the queen, My Lord.” Ser Gregor answered back.

“She is the queen regent, nothing more.” His father snapped back. “You should have listened to the Hand. Instead we have an insurrection happening in the city and our men are dying in droves.” Then, his father turned his attention to Joffrey. “And you. What possessed you to stop the food services and then shoot the people that showed up for said aid.”

“I am the king, and those worms are mine to do as I wish with.” Joffrey snapped back. “And you will not speak to me in such a tone, Grandfather. You have done nothing, but fail in the field running away from a green boy.”

Tyrion saw something then he had never witnessed in his entire life. His father's left hand snapped out backhanding Joffrey. The boy king fell backwards the wood of the chair cracking loudly on the stone floor as Joffrey yelped like a small girl. His father was out of his chair the next moment. He yanked the poor excuse of a king from the floor slamming his back against the stone wall. His father's hand clasped tightly around the boy's throat. From his seat he could see a trickle of blood on Joff's cheek from where Tywin's lion ring had cut the skin.

Ser Meryn moved from his spot on the wall. His sword hilt gripped tightly as he began pulling his blade free. The Kingsguard immediately froze when a massive hand gripped him by his neck from behind. His father kept staring into Joffrey's face two pairs of green eyes locked onto each other, but he addressed the white knight. “Ser Meryn, you may want to rethink your actions. You move one muscle and Ser Gregor will snap your neck.”

Ser Meryn seemed to consider his options before his hand released the hilt. The sword audibly slid back into the scabbard. Ser Gregor, however, kept a hold of the man.

“You and your mother have fucked everything up since your father died.” His father spit into Joffrey's face drops of spittle showering the boy king's face which scrunched up under the assault. “From this moment on you are king in name only. You will not make one decision that I do not approve of first. You will not torment or hurt one person. If I hear of anything differently you will rue the day you were born. You are lucky I don't just ship your ass off to the Wall now.”

That last part seemed to snap Joffrey out of his fear, and to his credit he had the balls to yell back. “YOU CAN'T DO THAT! I AM TH-” He was cut off when Tywin's fist collided with his stomach. The fight immediately left Joffrey as his screams were replaced by the wheezing of trying to catch his breath.

His father released Joffrey whom fell to the ground in a heap his chest still heaving to pull in air. Tywin's green eyes snapped to Cersei then. “The same goes for you! Now, both of you get out of my sight, and if either of you leave your chambers for any reason you will both regret it.”

His sister sprang to her feet then. Tyrion could see the argument forming on her face before she decided differently when she took in their father's cold demeanor. Her silk dress swirled as she
moved around the table. She aided Joffrey to his feet. The boy still somewhat hunched over from the punch. As they made their way to the door Ser Gregor released Ser Meryn whom quickly fell in behind the two royals. His father stood there for a moment after the door had closed his chest heaving in anger.

Tyrion could visually watch as his father was able to reign in his emotions. He returned to his seat and met the eyes of the three remaining people at the table. “Madness! I'm surrounded by madness and stupidity!” Tywin took another moment to compose himself before speaking again, “Lord Varys, what word do we have on Lord Baelish?”

“The last we had heard from Lord Baelish he had been traveling to Highgarden to negotiate an alliance with the Tyrells which would have included a betrothal between King Joffrey and the Lady Margaery.”

His father nodded along. “Well, we both know how that ended.”

“Unfortunately we do, My Lord.” Varys answered back in a humbled tone. “We haven't heard word from Baelish at all during that process.”

“That could be good or bad.” His father spoke. “The good is that the Targaryen boy executed Baelish. The bad is that he could have turned his cloak and has told them everything he knows.” His father stopped then retreating to his thoughts temporarily before he spoke again. “Tyrion, you will take up the position of Master of Coin until we learn what the fate of Littlefinger is.”

Tyrion paled at his new position. Tyrion may have bragged about his knowledge the way Jaime did his sword skills, but numbers had never been his strength. He was very skilled at spending gold, but never much for managing it. On top of that he knew the state of the crown's finances. The royal coffers were up to their neck in debt, and he didn't want the responsibility to try and tackle that mess. However, he was smart enough to know that it wasn't a request put before him, so he just nodded his head and replied, “Yes, father.”

“Now, make no mistake we are losing this war so far. This council's half baked plans have all failed miserably and in the process raised our enemies security thus thwarting my plans. Tyrion, if you hadn't sent that party for Jaime my men could have killed both the Targaryen and Stark boy cutting the head off our enemies.” Then his father blew out a tired sigh. “I'm going to do everything I can to turn this around, but we need to make plans in case our cause is lost.”

His father kept his voice neutral, but Tyrion was able to pick up something he had never sensed in his father before. Fear.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for Reading!!

NEXT: ROBB III
ROB III

Chapter Summary

The campaign into the Westerlands is underway, and their plans for Casterly Rock get finalized. News arrives about the North.

Chapter Notes

And we are back! I apologize about not giving an update last week, but I was so distracted it completely slipped my mind.

I want to thank everyone that commented on the "status" chapter. It did help motivate me in pushing through a few blocks knowing you all are foaming at the mouth for this as much as me.

Anyway, with out further delay...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

RAMSAY I

A map of the North painted on sheepskin was spread across the oak table before him. His ice-grey eyes surveyed all that could potentially be his as long as the deal with the boy king panned out. Between his father working with Tywin Lannister in the south and himself handling things up north they should be able to quickly bring the Starks low. He had ran into a major setback on that front, though. The attempt to take the Stark girl had to have failed. He still hadn't heard from Locke at all, but the amount of time that had passed along with no ravens from Winterfell urging the bannermen to assist in searching for the girl meant she was still safe in within its walls. Which in turn meant that the men he had sent along with Locke were most likely dead.

He would have to come up with an entirely new plan to get the girl Joffrey so desired. Ramsay didn't understand why the king had such an obsession with this one girl. She was beautiful to be sure, but there was nothing else that he had seen that truly made the girl stand out. Ramsay blew out an irritated sigh. It really didn't matter what the reason was in the end. Joffrey offered him to be legitimized and to take all he wanted when the Starks fell, but the red haired Stark girl was the price.

The same method wouldn't work again. They would have surely upped the amount of guards that patrolled the walls after the failed attempt. He could possibly sneak in like a farmer trying to sell his wares, make his way into the keep, grab her, hide her in the cart, and get out of there before they knew what happened. He could hide in the crypts and come out at night to grab the girl, but how would he get out of the castle with his prize. The gates would definitely have more guards on them now, and there is no way he could do it by himself if before ten men couldn't get the job done.
It was a frustrating puzzle to try to solve, but he had to do it. At this point they were in too deep, so they had no choice but to succeed. If they got found out his father and himself would both be executed, and the Targaryen bastard would have his dragon burn down the Dreadfort.

No, failure wasn't an option. He would figure out a way to get the oldest Stark girl to Joffrey. Then after his father made sure the Targaryen and Robb Stark were dead in the south they could move on to Winterfell. He would have to kill the two other Stark boys but he would keep the younger Stark girl for himself. Once she flowered he'd marry her, and the Starks would truly belong to the Boltons. If any bannermen got out of line Ramsay would just flay their heirs and rape their daughters before them until they submitted.

Maybe he would even bring the right of the First Night back into use. It was good enough for himself to be brought into the world when his father flexed his right's on Ramsay's mother. Plus, it would be invigorating to see the looks on his lord's faces as he stole away the maiden brides in front of their new husbands. Yes, the north will belong to the Boltons as it should have always been.

Ramsay was broke from his thoughts as the sound of footfalls echoed up the hallway. For a moment he assumed it was just Maester Wolkan coming to deliver him whatever message had just arrived to the castle. His eyebrows rose in surprise when instead of seeing the maester in his grey robes and clinking chain the door opened revealing the serious stern face of Steelshanks Walton.

This was the last thing that he needed that the moment. Steelshanks had always been leery of Ramsay from the moment he stepped into the Dreadfort. He was sure his father's right hand suspected that he was to blame for Domeric's death. He would be right of course, but his half-brother had been too weak to be considered a true Bolton. On top of that Ramsay had taken care with his poison selection making it look as if his half-brother died of a foul stomach.

He had been steeped in too much of the Vale's chivalry and Southron naïve honor. Domeric had trusted too much too fast. It didn't matter if he was his brother. If Domeric had been a true Bolton he would have never accepted wine from a man he just met. That was a lesson he had to pay for with his life. He wasn't fit to be the future of their house, but Ramsay was and so now he is.

That act had left Ramsay with no shortage of his own potential enemies though. Barbery Dustin being the most powerful of them. That woman had hated him from the moment she laid her cold northern eyes on him. He had just smiled back at her letting her know she was right about everything, but without the power to do anything about it. There was no evidence to accuse him, so what could she really do.

He knew his father also suspected him in his trueborn heir's death. The act had bound his father's hands, though, he couldn't do anything against Ramsay considering he was all he had left to pass the Bolton name on.

That left the man standing before him. Ice-grey stared into blue-grey as they regarded each other. Ramsay wasn't so distracted to not notice the four other men that had followed Steelshanks into the room. The other men didn't seem to move in a threatening manner. They just positioned themselves around the table as if their only purpose was to attend a meeting. Ramsay finally felt the need to break the silent standoff. “What are you doing here, Steelshanks? Aren't you supposed to be in the south fighting the lions?”

“You father sent me back to assist you.” Steelshanks spoke casually as he stepped up to the table opposite him. “He felt he failed in your education of being able to lead. Your tactics so far have been that of a butcher with a cleaver when leading requires the patience of a maester with a scalpel.”
“What's that supposed to mean?” Ramsay sneered in response. “I'm trying to fulfill the goals of my family and raise the Boltons to where they belong.”

“What's that supposed to mean?” Steelshanks snapped back. “You don't have a family, Bastard. You're just a Snow. One that unfortunately has forgotten his place.”

Ramsay's temper flared at the word he so loathed hearing. These people seem to not realize he had a name. Instead it was always that fucking word they spewed out in it's place as if that was all he is. Not the true heir of the Boltons that can carry them to a glorious future, but just a bastard not worth an ounce of respect. On top of that who was Steelshanks to question him? The man was nothing more than his father's faithful lap dog. “The only one that has forgotten his place is you, Walton. You are nothing but my father's servant. I'm his son, and the future of House Bolton. If you ever call me bastard again I'll flay every inch of your skin and feed you to my hounds.”

Steelshanks nodded his head as if in understanding, but Ramsay should have known better. Before he had a chance to react the two closest men to him had seized his arms. Utilizing the element of surprise the man to his right swept his feet from under him. Ramsay's jaw painfully collided with the hard wood of the table in a loud crack. Stars danced behind his eyelids and his mouth filled with the taste of copper from where he had bit his tongue.

With his head in a daze they dragged him back from the table, and slammed him into the stone floor. Pain lanced through him as his arms were wrenched behind him as they quickly bound his hands and ankles together. When they were satisfied they yanked him back to his knees. He grimaced in pain from the unnatural position they had situated him in. When his eyes were finally able to regain their focus Steelshanks loomed above him having moved around the table while they restrained him.

The moment Ramsay was able to swallow the blood in his mouth he shouted out for the guards to help him. Steelshanks just raised an amused eyebrow as a smile took his face. “Like I said before, Bastard, you have forgotten your place. Nobody in this castle is loyal to you. These are your father's people. They were Domeric's people. They were never and will never be your people. You are nothing but a sadistic bastard.”

“Your father never saw you as an heir. Even now he is planning on taking another wife and getting true heirs on her. You were just a rabid dog to do his bidding while he needed it, and like a rabid dog it is now time you were put down.”

Steelshanks let out a tired sigh, “Did you truly think that there would be no consequence to you sending people into Winterfell and attempting to kidnap the Stark girl? Oh, they made it farther than one might think, but alas you failed. You were just lucky the Starks weren't able to track it back to the Dreadfort. Your father however knew it was you immediately. Your foolish plan put your father in danger, and proved you are not worthy of even being a bastard of Bolton blood.”

A dagger suddenly appeared in Steelshanks hand. The sunlight from the window gleaming off the castle forged steel. Ramsay felt his eyes go wide as the implication finally sunk in. He was about to die in this room, and his life ultimately meant nothing. He was born the bastard son of a miller woman and he would no doubt be regarded as just a miller's son in death. The name Ramsay Snow would never mean anything to history. He was just the blow by of a high lord and that's all he had ever truly been.

He felt the bite of the steel as it punched through leather, cotton, and flesh. His vision quickly became fuzzy as his life's blood poured from the wound, and it was only moments later that darkness encroached on him.
Stood in front of the large looking glass Robb surveyed the new scars that littered his body. Not a year ago his skin had been clean and smooth everywhere he could see. Now, angry red puckered skin marred its surface. Some were still a dark angry red barely having time to fully heal before he was in another battle and aggravating them once more.

A year ago he had been nothing but a summer child that dreamed of the honor and prestige to be earned on the field of battle. After his father's arrest those dreams of youth had been chased away by the realities of war. Now, his nights were haunted by the faces of the men whose lives he had ended in battle. His body ached from where some of those same men had worked through his defense to leave permanent reminders of his short comings upon his body.

The worst of the fights had been at Oxcross. Steffon Lannister had raised another host of levies and was in the process of getting them ready to mobilize. Another twenty thousand soldiers to march into the Riverlands and attempt to cage them in between themselves and Tywin's troops from Harranhal.

They had taken the initiative and attacked the camp in the dead of night. Reiner and Eren charged through the perimeter defenses in their titan forms. The watch towers smashed apart into kindling and the camp quickly descended into chaos as the men tried to react to the surprise attack. Robb had earned two scars that fight to join the spear wound from Riverrun. Steffon Lannister had put up a strong fight for his age while refusing to yield. The man had gotten a few good strikes in before Robb's youthful energy had allowed him to finally land a killing blow.

He winced as he raised his left arm. The angry mark running along his ribs where Steffon's sword had bit through Robb's leather and mail was dark red where a small bit of blood still seeped out between the stitches. Thankfully, unlike his cousin his face currently remained scar free.

Jon was now decorated with a scar that ran from his forehead through his left eyebrow onto his cheek. A man had managed to get almost too close to him. The tip of his blade had scraped across Jon's face almost taking the eye, but Jon's reflexes had saved him at the last moment. Backing him far enough away to avoid a fatal stroke. The man had tried to follow up his initial failure only to be met with Ser Wylis' great sword almost splitting him in two. The frustrating part was the scar somehow made his brother-cousin seem even more handsome. However, it was reassuring to know that Annie would probably box his ears for letting an enemy get that close to killing him.

Jon had also completely surprised him during the battle. Robb hadn't been prepared for the abilities Jon had put on display. Growing up they had always been on par with each other skill wise. Their bouts in the training yard were always a toss up on who would come out on top. After many of their rounds, Robb, would catch sight of the guards and other men around the castle exchanging pennies or coppers having to ante up after their chosen fighter lost. Now, Jon was a far superior warrior to himself. The only thing he could think of that could put such space between their skill levels was that when Jon went to take care of Lyax at the holdfast he had to have been getting extra sparring bouts in with Levi, Annie, and Mikasa. Minus that one close call Jon had worked his way through the battlefield like a storm. Dark Sister had been a blur in his hands as he dispatched Lannister soldiers and knights with ease while he was flanked by Ser Wylis and Ser Loras.
The battle itself didn't last all that long. Between the titans and the element of surprise the camp fell quickly. Under Jon's orders every soldier that yielded was spared and taken as prisoner, but most of the leadership had died swords in hand refusing to be bartering chips or their pride refused to let them surrender. However, in the heat of the fight it felt like time had stopped and the battle just seemed to stretch on and on.

The other 'battles' if you could call them that were much easier in comparison. First on their path into the Westerlands had been the Golden Tooth. The Lords had been eager to break the walls of that castle to get to the plunder hidden inside. It would have been an easy task to accomplish with the titans' help, but Jon had spoke out against it. He wanted to maintain the element of surprise on Stafford Lannister and his army at Oxcross. They had come up with plan after plan to try and circumvent the castle, but the mountainous terrain had severely limited their options. Thankfully, Greywind had ended up discovering a goat path that provided safe passage around the Golden Tooth. In the cover of night the army had moved around the castle and marched for the heart of Lannister controlled land.

After Oxcross Jon had left Lord Bolton in charge of a large detachment of troops to hold the area as they doubled back and took the castles they had originally bypassed.

Ashemark had became their next target. The castle was impressive to behold and defensively formidable. It sat on top of a large hill or small mountain with three sides cliff faced leaving only one slope to approach the front gates. A town grew like toadstools starting at the bottom of the hill rising all the way up to the base of its walls.

They had tried the honorable approach first. Jon had sent a messenger under a white flag to offer Lord Marbrand the chance to strike his banners and surrender peacefully. Robb had to almost physically restrain Jon from mounting Lyax and burning the castle to the ground when their man returned less than an hour later with an arrow through his collarbone. Robb had always been told by his mother how honorable the South was and how they stuck to the laws of warfare, but the sight of their messenger injured while under a white flag struck all thoughts of the chivalrous south from his mind.

Throughout the night they had sent men to urge the smallfolk to stay in their homes the next day so they wouldn't get caught up in the fighting. Then, as the sun rose their troops moved into fighting formations to take the castle. Reiner stood before the entire army at the base of the hill before the battle began he turned to Jon, “Give me to the count of thirty then follow.”

Jon had nodded in response before Reiner ran a dagger against his palm. The blood had barely splattered the ground before a bolt of yellow lightning came from the heavens striking him. No matter how many times Robb had seen it before watching his friend transform into his monstrous titan form always left him gaping like a fish. He had just sat mounted on his horse enraptured as bones formed from thin air carrying Reiner into the air. Muscle and skin quickly followed as the titan reached his height of almost fifty feet. The last part of his change was golden armor forming all over his body.

When the transformation completed Reiner looked back at them. A pair of glowing yellow eyes stared out of the smooth golden face plate. The behemoth gave a nod in acknowledgment before turning to the castle before them. The ground shook below them as Reiner took off at a sprint towards their objective. As the distance to the titan grew he turned his head to look at Jon. His cousin's gaze was fixed on the back of their friend and Robb could see his jaw ticking as he counted to himself.

When Jon had finished his count down he reached across his body ripping _Dark Sister_ from her
saddle scabbard. His cousin held the blade aloft before screaming out the command of charge. His free hand slammed the visor of his winged helmet closed as his heels dug into his mount, and his future king took off towards the castle they would soon be theirs. As they raced up the thoroughfare of the town Robb yanked his sword free and slipped his left arm into his shield's straps.

A booming crash pulled his attention up to Ashemark. Where he should of seen the gates closed and barred blocking their way was now only a cloud of dust. He could make out the panicked cries of the troops inside as they closed the distance to the gate house. The dust had barely cleared when Robb raced through the opening Reiner had created hot on Jon's heels.

It had turned out the Marbrands only had around two hundred men in the garrison to hold their castle. After their cavalry poured in behind Reiner the fight had ended swiftly. Lyax had dropped from the sky burning the archers on the wall to protect her bonded and his men.

They had ended up only staying in Ashemark for a week. Just long enough to get the main gates replaced and a new portcullis being fashioned. They left a garrison of two hundred on top of the Marbrand soldiers that had survived to hold it before they had moved onto the Crag.

The Crag had been the easiest of the fights so far if it could truly be called a fight. The garrison had been much smaller than at Ashemark. The walls around the castle were only thirty feet tall making entrance to the castle that much easier. They had spent an entire afternoon planning the assualt for it all to be for not. The plan had been for Eren to get over the walls and open the gate from the inside in his titan form, and like Ashemark the men would pour into the Crag and take the fight to the garrison. When the morning arrived and the assault began the men guarding the castle had surrendered the moment that Eren had launched himself up onto the wall.

Robb couldn't really blame them for throwing their swords down immediately. Reiner was intimidating in his own way, but Eren's titan form was an entire different creature. With his eyes glowing green in rage, and the rows of staggered exposed teeth made the titan look like something straight from the Seven-Hells. On top of that the thing could move so fast for something its size. As he had raced towards the walls the archers had tried to pepper Eren with arrows only for most of them to miss due to the titan's agility. Robb knew that the projectiles would do very little to harm the giant and had to assume the maneuvers Eren undertook were more for intimidation than actual self-preservation.

A loud squeal had Robb violently yanked from his thoughts as he spun around to come face to face with Lady Jeyne Westerling. The eldest daughter of Gawen Westerling was a pretty little thing with chestnut hair and matching colored doe eyes. She was only a year or two Robb's junior, but was still slight of build. Side by side she was nothing compared to the new wife he had to leave behind at Riverrun. Even though the fact that he was newly married didn't seem to stop the Westerling girl from seemingly to appear where ever Robb was during the past week they had been in the castle.

She stood there mouth agape in a golden yellow dress with light brown sleeves as she stared at Robb's shirtless chest. In her hands she held a tray carrying a plate of food that Robb assumed was for him to break his fast on. They stood there staring at each for what seemed like an eternity as Jeyne's cheeks slowly became a much darker shade of red before another woman's voice broke both of them out of their stupor, "OI! What do you think you are doing?!"

Jeyne jumped in surprise before spinning around to be eye to eye with Sasha. Her dark hair was pulled into a high pony tail and her golden eyes were gleaming in mischief. "I-I-I was just bringing Lord Stark his breakfast?" Jeyne managed to finally stutter out.

Sasha just raised an unimpressed brow as if she already knew what the girl's true intentions were.
She hhmph'd in response “Don't you have maids and servants around this castle to do that. I'm sure her ladyship has more important tasks she could be doing.” Robb caught the condescending tone that Sasha was using and by her expression it seemed Jeyne did as well.

The smaller girl stood as straight as she possibly could before answering back in challenge, “I am a lady of house Westerling and you will take care with how you speak to me.”

“You'll be a trollop with a black eye if you don't leave.” As her anger rose Robb could hear Sasha's less refined accent peeking out.

Jeyne apparently didn't want to risk finding out if the other girl was bluffing or not as she quickly side stepped Sasha to head out the door. The girl froze stiff as Sasha quickly called out, “Wait!” When Jeyne slowly turned around she flinched slightly as Sasha's hand shot out snagging the roll of black bread and slices of bacon of the plate. After which Sasha waived her hand holding the pilfered goods dismissively, “Now you can leave you little hussie.”

As Jeyne's footsteps quickly receded down the hall Robb watched as Sasha stuffed a strip of bacon into her mouth. Her eyes shut in satisfaction as she savored the food. When her eyes opened again Robb sighed before speaking, “You shouldn't have spoken to her like that, ya know.”

Sasha's brows furrowed, “Fuck her!” She spat out, “Do you have any idea what she is doing?”

Robb shrugged his shoulders wincing a little from the pain in his ribs. He had no idea what Sasha was hinting at. The girl just seemed like a good hostess trying to stay in favor with the occupiers of her castle.

“By the Walls, Robb, you can't be that dense can you?” She responded exasperatedly, “That girl has followed you around like a bitch in heat from the moment you stepped into this castle.” The whole time she spoke her hand wave the stolen roll around, “I don't know if it is her simply wanting you to rut her, or something more devious. Either way is beside the point. The fact of the matter is that girl seems to be determined to get in your bed and if that happens it could spell a lot of trouble for us.” She finished her statement by tearing the end of the roll off with her teeth staring at him determinedly as she chewed.

While Sasha was occupied with the bread Robb thought over what she said and he had to admit she was right. He hadn't really paid it much attention, but the Jeyne did try to find any excuse to be near him. She was also right about the dangers involved if something were to happen. His marriage had created a very powerful alliance bringing seventy thousand soldiers to their cause. If anything were to happen that would upset the Tyrells they could potentially lose them to the enemy.

Sasha pulled him back again after she swallowed her chunk of bread, “Put on a gods damn shirt and lets go. Jon, wants to see us all. Apparently some ravens arrived in the night that he needs to speak to us about.” She didn't wait for him to respond before turning on her heel and leaving the chamber.

When he entered the hall just a few minutes later all the other lords already present were conversing amongst themselves waiting for the rest to show up. He made his way towards the head of the large table where Jon sat. He had a pensive look on his face as he sat staring off into space. A raven scroll held in his hand repetitively tapping against the oak surface. He was dressed in his black brigadine, but instead of his normal crimson a grey gambeson was worn underneath it. Dark Sister was sheathed leaning on the arm of the chair, and a plate of food sat in front of him untouched.
Robb’s eyes then turned to his brother-cousin's side where Theon sat. The other man whom Robb chose as a brother seemed completely lost as to why he was currently there. Theon always attended their meetings, but he normally lurked in the background just paying attention to whatever information concerned him.

When he looked up at Robb’s approach he shot him a look as if asking if he knew what was going on. Robb could only hunch his shoulders in response. A defeated look took over his friend's face before he turned away to survey the other men in the room.

Robb pulled out the chair to Jon's right. He greeted his cousin as he sat, but only received a nod in response as Jon just continued tapping the scroll on the table. He had barely settled into the chair before a plate was slid in front of him by a serving girl. On it sat the several slices of bacon, some small wedges of cheese, a sliced apple, and a roll of black bread. Robb's stomach rumbled as his nose filled with the savory scent of the bacon.

He wasted no more time tucking into his meal. Ripping the heel off the roll and laying a wedge of cheese on it before popping it in his mouth. As he chewed he allowed his eyes to wander the hall. His squire Olyvar was off to the side head leaned in listened to whatever Connie was telling him. Levi and Hange were sat to his left at the table having tea together. Lord Forrester and Lord Tarly stood at the far end of the room and appeared to be in a heated debate. No doubt arguing over what would be the best course for the next step of their campaign. Mikasa, Eren, Reiner, Bertholt, and Sasha stood off in the corner. Sasha's arms flailed about in the air as whatever she talked about sent the rest of the group into hysterics.

His vision had just moved on to Lord Glover speaking with Ser Garlan Tyrell when Jon cleared his throat loud enough to silence half the room. The other half quickly followed as people around the room quickly began taking seats around the table. Jon waited until everyone had settled and the shuffling of bodies and scrapes of chairs came to an end before standing up. The rolled parchment clenched in his palm as he leaned over his fists that were pressed into the table top.

“My Lords,” Jon began. His voice wasn't too much louder than his normal conversation tone, but like the man that had raised them both it seemed to travel easily to the four corners of the hall. “Thank you for meeting me at this time. I know we normally don't meet this early in the day, and you may have had matters that required your attention. However, we received news of the utmost importance from Riverrun in the night.”

At the admission it seemed every lord at the table leaned forward. Everyone's undivided attention locked completely on his brother-cousin. “First, I would like to start with the good news.” Jon began again, “The campaign in the southern parts of the Westerlands is going as well as ours.”

“Lord Umber, Karstark, and Lady Mormont along with their troops have taken Hornvale and Deep Den. Lord Tyrell wrote that Lady Dacey and Alysane arrived at Riverrun a few days ago driving a herd of over five hundred head of cattle. Lord Umber and Karstark have been busy preparing the spoils from the two castles to be transported back to Riverrun.” hands began thumping against the table as cheers rose amongst the lords cutting Jon off for a moment.

A small smile took Jon's face as he patiently waited for the revelry to die down. It was a minute later when it finally quieted down enough for him to continue. “Our comrades from the Reach haven't been idle either. Lord Rowan and Fossoway split their combined forces and successfully took Cornfield and Crakehall. Clegane hall is the only keep that stands in their way. They should converge on Lannisport as we reach Casterly Rock as initially planned.” Once again cheers erupted around the table. Robb's cup of tea rattling noisily from the pounding on the table.

This time instead of smiling a frown marred his cousin’s face as he waited for the tumult to die
down. When silence reigned once again his brother-cousin stood to his full height. His fist clenching the raven scroll opened as he pensively stared at it before speaking again, “Unfortunately, our good tidings were accompanied by bad.”

The change in their future king's tone caught the attention of everyone in the room, and the room shifted to deadly silence that reminded Robb of the crypts that sat below his family keep. Jon's head rose and his eyes traveled across all the faces at the table before he spoke, “While we have been busy fighting the treachery of the lions, the kracken, decided it was time to stir, and has launched an invasion of the North.”

The reaction was immediate as the lords of the North sprang to their feet and outraged curses filled the air. Immediate calls for Theon's head could be heard echoing through the hall. A loud crack permeated the room as Jon slammed Dark Sister's still shrouded form against the table so hard even Robb jumped a little in his seat. “My lords retake your seats.” A cold tone had taken Jon's voice that sent a shiver up Robb's spine. Everyone always spoke of how much Jon's temperament reminded them of the man that had raised him, but rare that they may be it was moments like this when you could glimpse the dragon that was hidden below the surface. Thankfully, the lords had either sensed the same thing as him or it may have been the reminder of Dark Sister's presence, but the lords quickly followed the order.

Once the Northern lords retook their seats Jon resumed speaking, “The Ironborn were spotted sailing into Blazewater estuary by a crannogman loyal to the Reeds. Lord Reed quickly informed Winterfell, and mobilized what men he could gather. Thanks to the Crannogmen along with the garrison we left, the Ironborn, were unable to take Moat Cailin. However, due to their surprise attack both Torrhen's Square and Deepwood Motte have fallen to the krackens.”

Jon quickly held up a hand halting Lord Glover from exploding from his seat once more. The lord's face went red with rage, and Robb wasn't sure if it was from the actions of the Ironborn or Jon stopping him from venting. Galbert's mouth opened to speak, but it snapped shut when Jon spoke first, “Fear not, Lord Glover. As we speak Ser Rodrick is sending out missives to the Mountain Clans for their aid. We didn't wait for them before we marched, so they maintain their full strength to bring to bear on the squids. As for Torrhen's Square Steelshanks Walton is leading troops from the Dreadfort to meet with men from Winterfell to retake it.”

Robb watched as Jon's hand landed on Theon's shoulder, and his foster brother tensed under the contact. “As far as Theon is concerned I will not be taking his head.”

Murmurs began circulating the table before Lord Tarly's deep serious voice cut across it. “That is the fate of hostages whose liege don't keep the peace, Your Grace.”

Jon's eyes turned to the balding man, “I understand that, My Lord, and under normal circumstances I would agree.” A sigh escaped Jon as he took a moment to collect his thoughts. “I have been up since the letters arrived pondering my actions. I did not come to this decision lightly, Lord Tarly, if you would hear me out.” The lord of Horn Hill appeared to contemplate Jon's request before nodding his head.

“As many of you know Lord Eddard Stark hid me in the North under the guise of being his bastard.” Heads nodded around the table as Jon spoke, “He raised me as one of his own for my entire life, and when Theon arrived he did the same. Theon was at Winterfell as a hostage or a prisoner. Either way you look at it you are right. However, Lord Stark treated Theon as a ward or adoptive son. He was raised as one of us and joined Robb and I in all our lessons. Lord Stark wanted to make sure that when Theon took his rightful place he was ready to fulfill his role.”

Jon paused for a moment as his eyes scanned the lords before him. “How many other lords would
do that? In many other keeps he would have been treated lower than a bastard.”

A slight smirk took Jon's face, “It is no secret in the North that Theon and I's relationship was tense,” subtle chuckles broke through the Northern lords then. No doubt some of them had seen the way Theon and Jon regarded each other during their visits to Winterfell, “but that doesn't change the fact that Theon is a brother to me in all but blood.”

“I would be quick to remind everyone in this room that Theon has bleed for the North and our cause as much as everyone else. He fought wildlings with us to save young Bran, in the Whispering Wood, at Riverrun, and every battle during our current campaign. He may have been born in the Iron Islands, but Theon is much a son of the North as both Robb and I.”

“That is why Theon will not pay for his father's treachery.” Robb watched as Jon squeezed Theon's shoulder. His foster brother's eyes turned up meeting Jon's, “I'm sorry in advance Theon, but your father has forfeited his life in what will be another failed rebellion and in trying to throw your life away as if it meant nothing.”

A conflicted look struck Theon's face, and Robb couldn't blame him. He couldn't imagine being stuck in such a position. On one hand a boy's father is his father, but what happens when that father essentially throws your life away for his own ambitions. Robb watched silently as different emotions warred across Theon's face before a serene blank look took hold. He once again met Jon's eyes before giving him a nod. Jon squeeze his shoulder once more time before dropping his hand.

Jon turned back to the gathering before his attention turned to the section of the table where the Scouts sat. “Reiner?”

“Your Grace?” the man responded immediately his blue eyes locked onto Jon.

“You and I are going to make a visit to Pyke with Lyax.” Reiner didn't even hesitate before he nodded in agreement. However, the lords around the table exploded in argument. Calls of how it was too dangerous and to wait till after Casterly Rock was taken filled the air.

Jon stood there with his hand raised until quiet reigned once again. “I understand your arguments, My Lords, but we need to wrap this war up as quick as possible. The plans for Casterly Rock have not change. Lord Stark and Lord Tarly will have joint command in my absence. Reiner and I will join you as soon as possible.”

The rest of the meeting went by smoothly as the plans were finalized with the slight alteration of Jon, Reiner, and Lyax's absence. When everyone seemed to be satisfied that the battle could still be won the meeting was dismissed.

As the scrapping of chairs filled the air and the lords began making their way to the doors Jon calling his name froze him in his steps.

“Your grace?” Robb answered as he turned back to address his cousin.

“This came with the other letters.” Jon spoke as he held out his hand a small smile pulling at his lips. In his grasp was a another rolled parchment.

Robb nodded as he retrieved the missive from his brother-cousin's hand. He rolled the scroll over till his eyes came in contact with the seal. A blob of green wax greeted him with the image of a direwolf surrounded by roses pressed into it. A smile stretched across his face as his thoughts turned to the hazel eyed beauty he had to leave behind in Riverrun.
Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: ANNIE II
ANNIE II

Chapter Summary

Annie deals with the administrative side of the war in Riverrun.

Chapter Notes

Hey, sorry I know I'm a little late getting you this on Wednesday, but I wanted to give it one last look over before posting it.

Oh, and I'm sorry I didn't get to any of your comments last week, but they don't go unnoticed and they are all appreciated!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Annie let a tired breath escape her as she peered out the window of the solar. The sunlight danced across the turbulent surface of the Tumblestone in little bursts that reminded her of sparkling diamonds. Her fingers absentmindedly rapped repeatedly against the surface of the wooden table she sat at. The clicking of her nails unintentionally relaxing her with the repetitiveness of the sound.

Part of her couldn't believe that this had been the sight of a battle only months ago. Everything seemed so peaceful now that the army had moved onto the Westerlands to continued her husband's war against the Lannisters. The ground that had once been marred by the Lannisters' siege camps and then their own camps after were now covered in fresh sprouted blades of grass. It was a truly beautiful country when it wasn't a battle ground.

“Funny isn't it?” A gruff yet tender voice spoke from behind her. She felt her body tense from the surprise and her fingers froze stiff ceasing her tapping.

She turned her towards the door where the voice had originated from. In the open doorway of the solar stood Ser Brynden and Ser Barristan looking the complete opposites of each other. Ser Barristan in his gleaming silver Targaryen Kingsguard armor while Ser Brynden was like a walking shadow in his black scaled armor. He even had the Tully sigil on his chest done in black abandoning the normal red and blue to fully embrace his nickname of the Blackfish. Both of them were suppressing the grins on their faces, but the mirth from her reaction was clearly displayed in their sparkling blue eyes.

She didn't respond to the Blackfish's question. Instead she just chose to raise a questioning brow causing the knight to elaborate, “How peaceful the view out the window is. Hundreds of miles away our future king wages war against the lions, but here it is as if nothing of importance is happening. It is completely peaceful and serene.”

Annie managed to keep her face blank as she regarded the man, but she still asked the question that
was silently plaguing her inside. “How did you know that was what I was thinking, Good Ser?”

The old knight chuckled before answering. The sound that ripped from the man’s throat was both warm and inviting, and able to send a small smile pulling at the corners of her mouth. “You are no doubt missing your husband, and there is a war going. Yet your mind would be hard pressed to believe that with absolutely nothing happening outside the window. Little Cat used to do the same thing whenever Hoster left the castle for extended periods of time, and then again when Ned was off fighting in the Rebellion.”

Annie let a full smile take her face as she took in Ser Brynden’s words. The soft way that he spoke of Catelyn brought up her own emotions and they were dangerously close to dancing across the surface. The issue being with the Tullys and the Starks. They brought so much more out of her that she had thought was long buried. All these people had slowly created a whole new set of emotions for Annie to deal with that she at first hadn’t know what to do with. Granted over time as much as she had tried to resist she had grown closer and reluctantly bonded with her comrades of the 104th, but her time in Westeros had added much more on her.

She had gained a husband whom she had fallen in love with. She had a mother figure she had sorely missed growing up in the form of the doting Aunt Cat. Ser Brynden was like a sage old uncle that was overly loving, but just as quick to steer you back on the right path. Ser Barristan always seemed to have a look of pride in his eyes whenever they landed on her or Jon. There was Robb whom had taken up the role of over protective brother. Sansa and Arya her now younger sisters, and not to forget the newest member of the family in the form of Margeary.

“We are sorry to disturb your needle time, Your Grace, but Lord Tyrell asked if you might be able to join him in Lord Edmure’s solar to go over the latest numbers.” Ser Barristan spoke breaking her train of thought.

“Don’t believe you interrupted anything, Ser Barristan,” Margaery added from across the table where her embroidering loop was still clasped in her hands. “Her grace, had clearly given up on her work for the moment.” That signature smirk that Annie was sure only Marge could pull off spread across her lips as her attention turned to the abandoned crocheting that rested in her lap.

That was one of the things that had separated Annie from the other girls in their squad when they arrived. Sansa had been ecstatic when the other girls had wanted to learn how to embroider as a means to fill their empty time. Mikasa had aided the red-haired Stark girl in her endeavor relying on the lessons she had learned from her mother before human traffickers had killed her. Historia whom also currently sat at the table with her and Margaery had taken to it like a duck to water. Annie herself it seemed had finally come across an activity she had trouble mastering. She had ended up giving up on needlework, but had ended up discovering knitting in its place. Old Nan whom had helped raise the last four generations of Starks had taught her herself. Annie had learned how peaceful the activity could be listening to the clicking of the needles as yarn slowly spun a creation before her eyes.

Her current project being another blanket for her child, but as she looked at it she wondered how many blankets one child could possibly need.

She pulled herself back to the now as she moved the forming blanket from her lap and set it in the basket beside her chair. Getting to her feet she groaned out a sigh as her back popped in several places from sitting so long in the wooden chair. Her hands reflexively smoothed over the bump now present in her stomach and flaring her dress back out. Their child changing her body had come with both good and bad. Now that the potential heir of the Seven Kingdoms showed their growth in her she no longer had to wear any of those stifling fucking corsets. However, that came with the
downside of no longer fitting into her regular clothes. Thankfully, aunt Cat had pulled out all her old dresses from when she had been pregnant with Robb. She had been asked if she wanted new maternity dresses made, but Annie had sent the seamstresses away. With a war going on the resources and coin for dresses would be of better service else where. Tully blue and red and Stark grey and white would more than serve their purpose. If she needed to show her new house colors at all a few of her dragon decorations along with a Tully red would more than suffice.

She turned her attention to Margaery then, “Want to come along and see your father?” Margeary nodded in response setting her embroidering into her own basket as Annie set her sights on Historia. “Want to join us as well? I'm sure Armin will be there.” As if confirming her previous suspicions the blonde girl's reaction was immediate as a slight blush rose on her cheeks. Ever since the rest of the army had departed leaving them behind to handle the administrative nightmare of a war, Annie, could have sworn she saw the two becoming closer. She herself couldn't blame the girl. Armin was a surprisingly handsome man especially after he got rid of the ridiculous hair style he had when they were in training. Now that he pulled his hair back and away from his face like her husband and many other northerners tended to he looked much more mature. On top of that with everyone gone for the most part it allowed them much more time for the two to spend together.

Historia finally nodded her consent as she too stashed away her embroidering and got to her feet. They emerged from the solar moments later. The two knights followed in their wake. Historia and the clicking of his claws on the sandstone revealing that Ghost had decided to remain with her as well. Margaery walked at her side arm looped through hers. It was a habit that had annoyed Annie to no end at the beginning of their forming bond. Over time Annie had managed to get Margaery to drop her fake smiles, her obnoxious girlish giggles, and the rest of her otherwise sycophantic tendencies by reminding her that they were now family and thus needn't to kiss up like the rest of the courtiers. Annie was much happier learning the true cunning woman that hide below the facade, and found she was quite happy that Marge would be in the North with Robb helping to keep that unruly lot of lords in line.

That cunning came with a lot of ambition to match though. It was made all the more obvious with her ‘musings’ on their children. Ever since Marge found out she was pregnant she would sigh out how romantic it would be if she had a daughter and their children could grow up in love and marry like in the songs. Annie had to resist rolling her eyes each time it was brought up. Dear Margeary couldn't be anymore obvious if she had it embroidered on a banner.

Annie herself felt somewhat disgusted with the idea of deciding whom her child would marry, but it was made infinitely worse by the fact that said child still resided in her womb. That hadn't stopped her and Jon from speaking on it though. He had said how he knew betrothing their child to one of Robb and Margaery's would shore up their alliances with the Tyrells and increase the security of their crown multiple times over, but that wasn't the only factor to consider. The major one being Lyax and who would control her after they passed. The more their children and their children married into other families the more other blood was mixed in, and the ability of the Targaryens to control dragons would diminish. Considering the fact that in this world's history dragons could live for hundreds of years her descendants not being able to control Lyax would be a recipe for disaster.

A solution could come in the form of Jon's aunt Daenerys. Granted the thought of her child being in an incestuous marriage turned her stomach, Annie, also knew it wasn't too strange in Westeros. Direct family relationships were considered sins in the eyes of their gods, but extended members of the family appeared to be fair game. In the long run having their child marry one of Daenerys' would result in them having children of their own with enough Targaryen blood to be able to maintain a good bond with Lyax.
She blew out an annoyed breath at the headache known as feudal politics. She felt a hand squeeze her arm looking over to see Marge with a beaming smile planted on her face and her hazel eyes crinkled. No doubt the girl thought Annie's huff was due to the burden of carrying her child around in her body, and surprisingly Annie was happy with that assumption. It was a better alternative than the doe eyed girl realizing how much Annie had been annoyed since the roses sprouted in Riverrun. It had absolutely naught to do with the changes of her body. Maester Vyman and aunt Cat had told her that she needed to take things easy and for the most part she did. She didn't train in the yard afraid a stray training blade could strike her tummy. She had also been careful to avoid any potential accidents. She had no idea how her titan healing powers would affect her child, and no desire to find out. However, she wouldn't sit around getting fat like a sow being prepped for slaughter. She spent hours a day just walking around. Every morning before breaking her fast she would do a round around the castle. She would greet the sentries on duty and give them her best wishes. The look of gratitude on the faces of the men being praised for what normally was a thankless job brought a sense of warmth to herself. Later in the day she would do a few laps around the godswood giving Ghost a chance to run around and stretch his legs. Her last trip would be in the early evening and would follow the same path as the morning though she would have the night crew of guards to greet. Almost every night she would stop at Ser Byrron's position so Kaina could have a few stolen moments with her lover.

Annie came out of her thoughts as they approached their destination. The door of Edmure's solar was currently guarded by two soldiers. The closer donned in the greens and golds of house Tyrell while the other was in the reds and blues of Tully. Both men lowered their heads respectfully as they neared and the Tully man gripped the handle and opened the door without knocking. Everyone present in the room stood when they saw Annie breach the door frame.

Her eyes scanned the people gathered before her. Lord Mace Tyrell was garbed in a dark green doublet golden-yellow thread stitch up his sides in the form of vines that each blossomed into golden roses. Armin stood next to the Warden of the South. He was dressed in his a simple white tunic with his black scout jacket Sansa had made for them over it, and black breeches. Both men had stacks of parchments before them. Next was Lord Edmure Tully in a red and blue doublet with a large silver trout embroidered across his chest. At the far end of the table was Maester Vyman in his grey maester's robes with the chain of his office hanging about his body. In front of him was another stack of parchment with an ink pot and quill beside it from where he scribbled notes of all their meeting. He was followed by Lady Olenna Tyrell. Everywhere Annie had been in Westeros had shown her repeatedly that the Realm was over all a patriarchal society, but it was pretty common knowledge that despite how much Mace Tyrell himself would argue the Tyrells were very much a matriarchal family. The woman before her in a light green bodice and skirt with matching wimple being said matriarch. She had cunning along with a sharp tongue that many others underestimated just attributing it to the known impatience of the elderly. Annie hadn't been fooled for a moment though. Yes, Lady Olenna was old, but the intelligence and determination that twinkled in the lady's eyes could never escape Annie's notice. Lastly, was her aunt Cat whom still garbed herself in simple black dresses mourning her late husband.

Annie approached the head of the table where normally her husband would sit, but since his departure from the castle it had become hers. Margaery and Historia following her lead and taking the two empty seats that sat to her right. As she smoothed her skirts to sit the rest of the room followed taking their seats simultaneously. Ser Barristan closed the chamber door before taking up a position over her right shoulder while Ser Brynden move off to the side of the room leaning back against the wall. Ghost let out a huff as he collapsed to the floor on her left. The great wolf now large enough that even laying down his eyes could see over the table top.
She grasped her hands together on the table in front of her as a steward placed a cup in front of her. Annie peered down into goblet at the dark golden-brown liquid inside of it. She sighed internally at the cursed substance. Once Jon returned and they moved their campaign on from Riverrun she would never touch another cup of apple juice as long as she lived. Apparently the Riverlands weren't know for diversity of fruit. They did however have apple orchards and an obscene amount of them. She truly couldn't complain too much though. It ultimately was better than being regulated to only water for nine months.

She let out a long breath as she took up the goblet taking a swig off the sweet tart liquid. When the cup rested back on the table she turned her attention to the Flower Lord, “You requested my presence, My Lord?”

“Yes, Your Grace.” Lord Tyrell answered earnestly. To Annie the man always seemed a little dimwitted and overly motivated to please. Though the latter was an obvious means to curry favor the man didn't mean it maliciously, so Annie had always took him in stride. It also didn't hurt that the man had the utmost dedication to the task her husband had assigned him. He stayed on top of making sure provisions for resupply made it to their armies despite the multiple obstacles that stood in their way. On top of that their men had been sending back hundreds of carts of spoils, and Lord Mace had yet to fail making sure they were cataloged and stored properly. “I thought you might be interested in hearing the latest reports of what has arrived in Riverrun. We also have a few messages that arrived over night.”

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“Very well, you may begin.” Annie would have preferred to get to the messages first, but she knew that Mace would want to go through the numbers first. He would preen as he read off the results no doubt wanting praise for the amount of work it all entailed. It could sometimes be exhausting, but Annie would never begrudge him accolades. It was after all a lot of work Jon had dumped on him just to keep him from the field.

Lord Tyrell nodded his head before clearing his throat. “We have three ships preparing to leave Seaguard on the morning tide. The small fleet made up of two galleys and a cog. Their cargo primarily being food and medical supplies. With some of the weight moved to the galleys they should be able to out run any Ironborn long ships they come across. Hopefully the presence of the two war galleys will add to dissuading the squids from trying to pirate.” Annie nodded along as the lord spoke. Ever since the Ironborn had stirred from their islands shipping had become a hazardous gamble, but they had no choice. Jon and the army had bypassed the Golden Tooth making it impossible for them to use the roads to resupply. Thankfully the Mallisters were willing to deploy their war ships to help support the effort. “If the weather and wind cooperates the ships should be able to make the trip to the Crag in just over a sennight.”

“That's good, My Lord. What of resupplying the men in the southern part of the Westerlands?” Annie asked.

Somehow the man seemed to puff up with even more in pride as he began answering, “My son and heir, Willas, has been handling that, Your Grace. The Reach is a strong fertile land, so he has been handling their resupply directly from our stores.”

“It appears that your son has taken your lessons to heart and is just as capable as you.” The compliment caused a huge smile to take Lord Tyrell's face pushing his cheeks out and reminding Annie of a squirrel packing its cheeks with nuts.

When his smile receded back to his normal jovial demeanor he placed the parchment he was holding aside before retrieving a new one. “Now, I imagine you would like to know what has arrived
since our last meeting, Your Grace?”

“Please do,” Annie answered as she took another drink of her juice.

“From Lord Umber's detachment wains carrying plunder arrived two days ago. They contained five chests of gold dragons, ten chests of gold ingots, twelve chests of silver moons, twenty chests of silver stags, twenty chests of silver ingots, and lastly fifteen chests of random jewels and jewelry.” When he finished the lord looked over the top of the paper meeting her eyes.

Annie allowed the numbers to wash over her. She still hadn't been able to discern the different value of all their coins beyond the universal copper is below silver, and silver is below gold. However, now was not the time to show what ignorance she still had of the land she would soon rule. She could always find out the difference of value between a moon and stag later. “What is the individual count of the coins?”

“That count is being taken care of as we speak, Your Grace, when finished you shall have a count of not only the coins, but the individual gems, type, and whether they are already set in jewelry or not.” Mace answered as his eyes kept scanning the parchment as if the answer would suddenly appear before him. The man took a break from his fruitless search to drink from his goblet. When he was finished he began speaking again. “Soldiers of the Mormont detachment arrived yesterday driving in a massive herd of a thousand cattle. With them came a convoy of wagons carrying grain. We haven't gotten a solid count of that just yet, Your Grace, but the moment I know you shall too.”

Annie was once again nodding her head along with the man when a sudden thought struck her. “I understand we need the food to help support the people of the Riverlands after the Lannisters burnt their way across, but what of the people in the Westerlands?”

“What of them?” came an angry sneer from Lord Edmure.

“Well, how are they going to eat if we are plundering so much of their food?” Her eyes turned from the auburn haired lord to the maester. “Maester Vyman, the moment this meeting adjourns I want you to send a raven to the Mormonts. I want them to cease plundering food. Precious metals and jewels are still fair game, but from only the nobles. The smallfolk don't need to be robbed blind due to us.”

The elderly maester nodded his head in an approving manner, but Edmure's mouth was agape in disbelief he managed to push out an aghast “Your Gra-” before Annie cut him off, “No, Lord Edmure, I will not have the smallfolk suffer for our war. Did the ranchers destroy your army below the Golden Tooth? Did the cobbler band together to hold you prisoner and besiege your family's castle? Is there a league of Westerland seamstresses holding King’s Landing preventing my husband from taking his rightful place?”

Annie scanned her eyes across all gathered at the table. Lord Edmure's mouth was flapping soundlessly like a fish out of water. Annie had to suppress a chuckle at how fitting the image was. Aunt Cat and Margaery both wore proud smirks on their faces. Lady Olenna, Historia, and Armin all had blank expressions waiting to see where she took this, and Lord Mace just looked lost.

“Anyone?” Annie asked waiting only a moment before continuing, “No? Alright, Lord Edmure, let me be one to tell you. My husband and your nephew, Lord Stark, along with your now good nephews are in the Westerlands trying to take the Lannisters source of power away from them before moving back east to take the capital. The Lannisters are whom have caused all the trouble that plagues us. So, it is the Lannisters who will be punished, but what happens after we bring peace to the Realm only to have a famine rise in the Westerlands because we plundered the food. How many lords will stay peaceful when their people are starving and it was those loyal to their
new king that caused it?”

“I will not have my husbands reign begin on the backs of starving children.” Annie finished her tirade with her eyes locked on the bright blue eyes of the Tully lord. For the life of her she could barely stand him. There truly were few things worse than a vengeful idiot that couldn’t think farther than two minutes into the future. Her attention turned back to the maester. “I want that letter sent.”

“It will be done with all haste, Your Grace.” The maester answered dutifully.

Annie nodded her head before turning her attention back to Mace Tyrell, “Is there anything else on that front, My Lord?”

The Tyrell lord shook his head as he set down the parchment, “That is it thus far, Your Grace. We can move on to the missives now.” Annie nodded her approval to the change of topics as she took another drink of her juice.

She watched as Lord Mace broke the seal of grey wax and unrolled the scroll. The room was silent as the man’s eyes scanned the letter taking in the words. When he was finished he looked up meeting her gaze, “It says that the mountain clans answered Lord Bran’s request for aid. Lords Liddle and Wull are marshaling their men to take back Deepwood Motte.” He looked back down to read the letter once again, and spoke again without looking up, “Also a man by the name of Steelshanks Walton is leading a force of men from the Dreadfort to meet up with Winterfell soldiers and retake Torrhen’s Square.”

“Steelshanks?” Aunt Cat asked out loud. “I thought Lord Bolton left his bastard in charge of the Dreadfort.” Annie agreed silently. It was all rather strange that the incursion to kidnap Sansa failed with all the men killed, and suddenly there was a new castellan of the Bolton fortress. She would file it away for later, but part of her wondered if it could just be a coincidence and if that particular thread was even worth pulling on.

“We’ll have to find out later what that is about, aunt Cat.” The woman smiled at her before Annie turned attention. “Anything else?”

“That is it from Winterfell, Your Grace.” Mace answered as he set the letter aside before reaching for other scroll. Annie watched as he rolled it over in his hand, and her eyes caught on the bronze colored sealing wax. She searched through her memories trying to recollect a house that had bronze as one of its colors, but was coming up blank. The mystery was solved for her when Lord Tyrell announced to the table as a whole, “It’s from Yohn Royce in the Vale.”

Once again Annie waited patiently as Lord Tyrell took in the words. After a minute the man began reading directly from the missive. “Lord Royce says the Eyrie still remains under siege. He is not sure how long it will last. They have no knowledge on the status of the castle's larders.”

When he had finished reading her aunt Cat just sat their shaking her head mournfully before she looked towards Ser Brynden, “What are we going to do with Lysa, Uncle? There is no way she could possibly understand the level of trouble she has caused. Then to top it all off she tried to pass off Baelish’s bastard as a trueborn Arryn.”

Ser Brynden shook his head in answer, “I don't know Little Cat. One thing I'm sure of it will be better if Prince Jon's forces end the siege over the Vale lords. If they are the ones to take the castle it's likely they throw her directly out the moon door. I'm hoping Ned's lessons planted a little more mercy in our future king, and he can handle it more objectively.”

This was one of the few times she wished that worm Littlefinger was still alive. Mainly so she
could kill him all over again. That man had caused so much pain and death in the kingdoms with his schemes. She quickly shook the thoughts away before addressing the whole table, “Is there anything else?”

Shaking heads all around was her answer until a look overtook Maester Vyman, and he suddenly called out, “Oh, Your Grace, I almost forgot. These came in just before the meeting for yourself and the Lady Margeary.” Out of his baggy sleeves the maester suddenly produce two raven scrolls. Even from the distance she could make out both were sealed in grey wax. Her brows creased in confusion as to why Jon hadn't used red wax with his dragon seal. She waited as patiently as she could as the scrolls were passed down the table.

When it was in her hands she turned it over to the direwolf pressed in grey wax with her name and title written next to it. Her confusion grew even higher when she saw it was Robb's writing. She slipped her thumb beneath the seal cracking it away from the paper. She unrolled it letting her eyes take in the words. It took a moment and rereading what her 'good-brother' had wrote for it to sink in. Her fist shot out colliding with the table causing everyone present to jump slightly and a worried “Your Grace?” to come from Ser Barristan behind her.

“My idiot husband has taken Reiner and Lyax and they have gone off to Pyke by themselves.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!!

We get to some action again in our next chapter.

NEXT: PYKE
RODRIK I

He had always found that immersing himself into the library of his castle was the easiest way to relieve himself of stress. The smell of musty parchment and aged leather filling the air somehow having a calming affect on him. It was much needed considering the last few moons had Rodrik's stress level to the maximum as he still couldn't figure out what his good-brother's motivations were.

The man had just started another rebellion to try and secede away from the Iron Throne. Donning the Driftwood Crown again and calling himself King of the Iron Islands would have been enough, but the fool decided to invade the mainland at the same time. He stated to all the lords in the great hall of Pyke that now was the time to strike while the wolves and lions were at each others throats. It was a foolish endeavor made doubly so by his targets.

Did Balon want to pillage and reave the Westerlands where gold and gems were as abundant as grain? No. Did he want to attack the Reach where they could get untold amounts of fortunes and goods to fence? No. What did he plan to attack? The God forsaken North. Coastal areas with only pine cones and wood as their treasures and little more than what could already be found on the Iron Islands. Towns that could barely be called such and filled to the brim with lowly peasants. Castles in name only made out of lumber rather than stone fortresses that may actually contain riches. The North wasn't ripe for plunder. The North constantly planned for the next winter, so what ever riches did lay in that barren land was hidden away like squirrels with their precious acorns. No matter whom they threatened the people of the North would never allow their means to survive the weather be stolen from them.

His good-brother was also throwing away the life of his heir. Balon's last living son and Rodrik's last nephew that had been held hostage in Winterfell since Balon's first rebellion against Robert Baratheon was crushed. When he had confronted him about it Balon had just waved him off saying a boy raise by wolves was not fit to lead krackens, and that Asha was a much more fitting heir.
Rodrik at that moment had been at a loss. He loved Asha as much as any uncle would. She was strong willed, good with her weapons, and was a proven and capable captain, but that didn't change the fact that she was still a woman. The Ironborn had never been led by a Lady Reaver before, and he doubted the lords and men would accept it in the near future. It would potentially lead to civil war amongst their people trying to claim the woman as theirs and the Seastone Chair along with it, or they would call a King's Moot to see who should take over running the islands after Balon died. No, Theon was their hope for the future. It was true he was raised on the mainland more than the Iron Islands, but it would only take a little time for him to get re-acclimated to his people and become an effective leader.

It was too much for Rodrik to take. Like all the other loyal vassals he had waited till the war plans were finalized and all meetings were concluded before he left. Balon had assigned him, his men, and his ships to harry Ironman's Bay and prevent the Mallisters from forming any defense against their raids north. As the Iron Fleet set sail from Lordsport Rodrik had his men set course back for Harlaw and the Ten Towers. A few of his captains that had been present for the briefings had tried to challenge his orders forcing Rodrik to have them 'motivated' back into compliance and his ships had returned home to wait for the inevitable failure of 'King' Balon's second rebellion.

For weeks he had spent his days up in his library reading books to keep his mind occupied. He was waiting for word from Pyke that Theon's head had arrived in a direwolf decorated box, and then he would have to crush what was left of his sister's heart when he told her that her last son was dead. The raven never came, and so Rodrik continued with his books. When his mind became too consumed fretting over Theon his escape into literature was stolen from him. His eyes would read the words written on the paper, but they would be meaningless in the maelstrom of his thoughts. He would sit there rereading the same paragraphs over and over again. When the frustration became too much he had finally relented.

The relief he sought came in the form of transcribing new copies of books. He had the servants bring him boxes of fresh parchment along with jars of ink and as many quills as they could find. He scoured the library for books that were coming apart or their ink was beginning to fade to time. The task allowed his mind to wander with its simplicity. All he had to do was copy what his eyes saw. No comprehension needed. A simple mundane task to occupy his hands while his thoughts were elsewhere.

The scratching of the quill that had been filling the air of the library ceased as Rokrik set it down. He let out a long sigh as he rubbed the strain from his eyes. When they reopened he gazed out the window his work desk sat below. The grey-green waves lapped at the beach below the castle as sunlight danced along their crests. He reached over to the side table where he kept his tankard of ale not wanting to risk a spill on his work. He took a long pull savoring the bitter taste of the liquid as it wet his mouth.

When his thirst was sated he set the tankard back to his side before turning his attention back to his current project. He was currently transcribing an interesting tome. He wasn't sure when it was originally written, but its contents were more than captivating. What little his mind absorbed as he transcribed it had at least been entertaining. It was about magical creatures that may or may not have existed long ago. It spoke of direwolves, dragons, krackens, ice spiders, harpies, and even a strange type of lizard men that supposedly lived east of the Five Forts in Essos. What had caught Rodrik's attention the most about the book was that it was written in a compendium style instead of a story. Each creature had their own section that not only described their appearance, but also their temperament, diet, mating habits, and even where in the known world they could be found. The original author had written this book as if these had all been true to life creatures. The thought made Rodrik snort through his nose in amusement.
He stretched his arms above his head feeling a small relief course through the muscles of his arms and back from the hours of being hunched over his desk. A long yawn escaped him at the apex of the stretch before he dropped his arms back to his side. As he was retrieving his quill the groan of the door echoed through the room. “My Lord?” He heard one of his most faithful guards ask.

He didn't bother hiding his irritation as he responded, “I thought I said I didn't want to be disturbed unless it was of the utmost importance?”

“You did, My Lord.” Roan answered quickly, “But you see I think this qualifies as that.”

Rodrik finally turned to the man that had been in his household guard since fuzz began growing on the boy's face. “What is it then?”

“Begging your pardon, but I believe you need to see it for yourself. If I was to just tell you I fear you would give me to the Drowned Gods believing me mad, My Lord.” the younger man responded. It was then that Rodrik noticed he had a paler tone to his skin than what was normal for their dreary islands. Knowing that Roan wouldn't expand further, Rodrik, groaned as he got to his feet to follow the man.

Minutes later found him standing on the ramparts over the gatehouse understanding exactly what madness Roan spoke of. There patiently waiting outside of archer range were two men and what appeared to be a dragon despite how much his own mind was arguing against it. The man standing closest to the dragon must have known he was the lord of the castle as his hand waved beckoning Rodrik from his keep.

He only took a moment to weigh his options. It was foolish to go out there, but at the same time both men seemed to be in a relaxed state. Neither of them were bearing arms or possessed naked steel. If the man truly meant them harm he could have unleashed the massive beast against the Ten Towers immediately, and there would have been nothing any of them could have done to stop it. Despite the instincts in his head screaming the opposite he decided he would parlay with the man and see what he wanted.

A minute later he was marching out under the portcullis with Roan and two other men. As he approached the waiting group his eyes stayed fixed on the dragon. The creature had to be at least the length of a long ship from snout to tail. There was no way to determine its wingspan since they were folded up and tucked in at its side. It's scales were the color of a clear blue sky that rarely graced the skies of their islands. The dragon's horns and spines were a opalescent white that sparkled different colors with every twitch it made. The man closest to it was gently rubbing a hand along its cheek in a reassuring manner. The whole time its tail waved back in forth in a steady manner like it was some giant reptilian cat.

As he and his men closed the distance Rodrik turned his attention to the two men now that he could see them in better detail. The farthest from the dragon was the taller of the two having an inch or two on the other. His head had close cropped blonde hair and bright blue eyes set in a determined face with a strong jaw. Over his grey tunic he wore a stange coat that only hung to the middle of his torso, and was decorated with a sigil that he had never seen before. It was a white wing overlaying a blue wing set on a grey shield. Leather straps seemed to cover his body and connected to the strangest scabbards he had ever seen. They were long, rectangular, and by the way the light hit them most likely made of metal that had been painted a dark green. Twin hilts poked out of them with dangling cords that connected the pommels to his waist.

Rodrik's breath paused when he took in the other man. Like the dragon beside him, Rodrik, was
sure he would have never seen their kind again in his life. The man's head was hidden under a black full faced steel helmet that had a pair of dragon wings sweeping back from the temple. A black fur collared cloak like Northmen were known to wear snapped out behind him in the wind revealing black steel armor running down both arms. Around his neck was a gorget with the three-headed dragon in the center over a black leather brigadine and crimson red gambeson. Black breeches covered his legs along with greaves that went from the top of his foot and finished over the caps of his knees. Around his waist was a sword belt holding the weight of a longsword and dagger. Both of which had rubies planted in the crossguards.

The crunch of the grass gained the man's attention and he turned towards them. His hands reached up and removed his helmet. Rodrik was in for the next shock of the day when instead of the fabled silver gold hair of the Targaryens curly chin length raven colored hair fell down about his face. A face that was set with a pair of steel grey eyes instead of a shade of purple. A dusting of scruff lined his jaw, and though at first glance he looked a Stark he could pick out the Valyrian features gracing the young man's features making him, dare he say, beautiful.

“Lord Harlaw, I am presume?” The young man in dragon armor spoke his voice thick with the burr of a Northern accent.

“You are correct...” Rodrik faded out not knowing how to continue.

“I am Prince Jon Targaryen the son of Prince Rahaegar Targaryen and Princess Lyanna Stark-Targaryen.” The younger man answered for him.

Rodrik paused trying to decide how to continue as his eyes drifted to the right before meeting two pools of slitted mercury the size of his head. Realizing that he should tread lightly he nodded his head slightly in deference, “Your Grace, welcome to the island of Harlaw and the Ten Towers. What might I do for you?”

“I think we both know why I am here, My Lord.” The prince answered back immediately. His tone was completely neutral, but he could sense the threat underneath. His men apparently did as well. Out of the corner of his eyes he saw all their hands go to the hilts of their swords. The two men before him didn't move a muscle, but the dragons lips peeled back revealing rows of black teeth the length of longswords. A low growl rumbled out of the creatures chest that he could feel vibrating the ground through his legs.

“That I do, your Grace.” Rodrik spoke quickly while also putting his hand out to halt his men from worsening an already tense situation, “but why come to the Ten Towers? Surely your quarrel lies with Lord Balon.” He knew his men wouldn't like the way he referred to his good-brother, but Rodrik had been alive long enough to know how royalty felt if you referred to another with a royal title in their presence.

“That would be best spoken of in private.” Was the answer he received.

Rodrik weighed his options as he took in the two. It was a risk bringing them into his castle, but at the same time there was just two of them. How much damaged could two men truly cause by themselves. Coming to his decision he nodded his head, “If you'll follow me.”

He turned back towards the castle. His men following his lead. He had taken a few steps before he realize he couldn't hear the additional foot steps behind him. He paused looking back to see that neither the prince nor his man had moved an inch. “Your Grace?”

“I would like to request guest right before we come into arrow range, My Lord.” Rodrik rolled his eyes internally. Bloody Greenlanders and their mistrust. They didn't observe guest right on the Iron
Islands. It was just assumed that the moment you invited someone into your home they were then under your protection. To violate that was a great affront to the Drowned God. They didn't need bread, salt, and wine to show that, but the Greenlanders sure seemed to love their ceremonies. He turned his attention to one of his men, “Have a steward bring bread, salt, and wine.” The man nodded before taking off at a sprint towards the gate.

After guest right had been rendered the prince and his man had followed him into the castle. They had immediately made their way to his solar. Like the library it was a place of escape for Rodrik, and filled with many books. These books were his favorites though. Kept in a personal collection for his easy retrieval if he ever had the desire to reread them. While the prince and the man he had introduced as Reiner Braun, a name Rodrik couldn't recall from anywhere in the kingdoms, took their seats he retrieved a jug of ale and three tankards. He set the mugs down filling them all. After he distributed them out he took his own seat behind his desk.

He took a drink of ale from his tankard before again asking the question that brought them here. “So, as I asked before what brought you to the Ten Towers instead of Pyke, Your Grace?”

As he spoke the prince had been drinking from his own mug. The prince's brows rose in surprise as he looked down into his cup. Rodrik felt a smile take his face at the expression. The Iron Islands weren't known for much. Their islands' mines were really only good for tin or other low quality metals, they didn't have soil conducive to farming a lot of produce, but they did know how to make a god ale when they had access to the ingredients. The prince snapped himself out of his inspection of the beverage to answer, “I came here on the recommendation of your nephew.”

It was Rodrik's turn for his brows to raise in surprise, “Theon? How is he?”

The prince raised his hand in a placating manner seeing the expression on his face, “Theon is fine, My Lord. I know he was kept in Winterfell as a hostage to stay Lord Balon's hand, but we were raised there as brothers.” A look took over the prince as if he was delving into his memories as a sort of serene smile pulled at his lips, “Albeit not the best of brothers, but brothers all the same.” The smile slipped then as if it had never existed. “Right now he feels both hurt and betrayed that his father essentially threw his life away, so that he could be king once again and invade the North.”

“Theon only ever had nice things to say about you, My Lord, so I felt it prudent to come see you myself and put my proposition before you.”

Rodrik felt his head tilt slightly as curiosity dug into him, “A proposition, Your Grace?”

“Theon said you were a smart and well read man.” Rodrik nodded confirming the prince's statement. “Then you surely know that this second rebellion of Balon Greyjoy's is an even bigger folly than the first?”

Again Rodrik nodded. “Then I would like you to prepare some of your men and ships to sail for Pyke.”

“Your Grace, I know with our islands' history of raiding and reaving that we are known to be an extremely violent people, but one rule we have always followed is that the Ironborn do not shed the blood of other Ironborn.”

“You miss understand me, My Lord.” The prince quickly answered. “You and your men will not be fighting. You will be going to secure the castle after I am finished there to run it as castellan
until Theon returns to take his place as the Lord of the Iron Islands.”

“That may be a problem, Your Grace.” the prince just raised one questioning brow at the question, so Rodrik continued, “Theon has spent his formative years on the main land. The Ironborn may not view him as one of their own, and pick one of his uncles over him. Most likely Victarrion, but the Drowned God forbid he ever show his face again they may pick Euron.” Rodrik purposefully left Asha’s name out of the potential options. Despite how much she would argue that she was the best choice as heir, the Iron Islands, would never choose to follow a woman.

“Well, Theon already has one less potential competitor. Lord Victarrion was leading the raid to take Moat Cailin from us, but between the crannogmen, the garrison we left, and the men that had been marching North already his forces were soundly defeated. Last news I had he wasn't yet identified amongst the dead, but the ships were crippled which means he is lost in the bogs of the Neck. Few in that position will make it out alive no matter the quality of warrior they are.”

“Balon also didn't account for the amount of men that would be in the North. We gathered a fighting force quickly enough to try and move on King's Landing to save my uncle. Thus, we left with just under half the men. The North has plenty of power left in its borders, and what few castles have been taken will son fall back to our grasp.”

Rodrik hadn't known there were still that many warriors left in the North. The revelation making his good-brother's folly seem all the more worse. Rodrik pondered for a few moments coming to a quick conclusion that the prince was completely right. Balon had sent their forces to their doom, and no matter how much they may not like the way he was raised there will be few to stand opposed to Theon taking the Seastone Chair. “So what is your plan, Your Grace? When do your forces arrive?”

“There will be no additional forces. Just us.” The prince responded in a neutral tone.

Rodrik resisted choking on the answer as his eyes went wide. “Just you two?”

“And a dragon.” the prince answered again still in the same deadpan.

He didn't know how, but the bloody dragon had slipped his mind. Then his mind traveled to Harran the Black and what happened to him the last time a dragon wanted a Ironborn out of a castle. He felt his face pale and when he opened his mouth to speak the prince held up his palm silencing him, “Worry not. I don't plan on burning Theon's castle down.”

That actually didn't help. All it did was bring a new question. “So, how do you plan on removing Balon.”

“Oh, Reiner and I are more than capable of wrenching that eel from his hole.” The prince regarded him in silence for a minute before speaking again, “So, My Lord, do you accept?”

Rodrik knew ultimately he didn't have a choice. This was what was best for Theon and the Iron Islands together. Balon's madness needed to be put to a stop as soon as possible. “I accept, Your Grace.”

The young man nodded in response before tipping his cup back emptying its contents down his throat. He got to feet and Reiner followed. He headed towards the door with his man in tow before freezing in the threshold. He turned back to Rodrik looking over his shoulder. “My Lord, your first task at Pyke will be to send out ravens recalling all your forces.” He responded with a nod that he understood before he felt a chill at the smile that suddenly took the prince's face. “Oh, and I hope you are familiar with the castle. It is going to need repairs.” With those words the two young men
disappeared from his solar.

He couldn't help the sinking feeling in his bones at the prince's parting words, and the discomfort was multiplied by the ominous tone of which they were spoken.

REINER I

He let out an irritated huff as he took in his surroundings. The other men in the army had been right when they talked about the Iron Islands. They truly were little more than shit stained rocks. That shit belonging to the gulls and what flocks of goats and sheep he had seen being herded around from Lyax's back.

They had left the Ten Towers immediately after Jon's meeting with the lord had concluded. It was true they had offered guest right, but Jon had said the less trust they gave the Ironborn the better. Reiner couldn't have agreed more on that count. Every man he had seen in that castle had seemed like they wanted to fight. Not towards any end at all just fight for the sake of it. They had flown to another part of Harlaw to rest and eat before heading to Pyke. Jon had waited till the sun was setting in the west before they took flight. They had arrived on the capital island well into the night with the darkness covering Lyax's movements. Jon had set them down in a wooded area a couple of miles away from the castle for cover.

They had rested for the rest of the night in their little grove waiting for the sun to rise before implementing their plan. Then, as the sun broke over the horizon to the east turning the sky to a mix of murky grey with purples, reds, and slight yellows mixed in they began. Reiner watched as Jon donned his winged helmet, climbed upon Lyax's back, and took to the skies. Reiner himself began his miles long hike to the castle.

Upon his arrival he took in the ancient castle of the Greyjoys. Compared to the other castles he had seen in his time in Westeros he had to say this was both the least and most impressive castle at the same time. The main keep itself wasn't much larger than one of the towers of the Twins. The impressive part was that there were three more keeps built on spurs of rock that rose from the grey-green waters that churned below. The four parts of the castle connected by rope bridges and walkways. Then there was a curtain wall roughly fifty feet tall that closed the castle and its courtyard off from the rest of the island. The only way you could by pass the wall without breaking through would be a perilous climb up the rocky cliffs.

Reiner made sure to follow the example they set at the Ten Towers and stayed well out of arrow range as he walked around the outside of the curtain wall. He could see sentries on the wall watching his every move. Their brown leather half helms giving their position away where they stood in a sea of grey stone and green vines. A few times he could hear their muffled curses and grumbles when the wind managed to carry them to his ears.

He made his way back to the side that faced Lordsport. The small port town was a few miles away, but with the height of the hill that Pyke sat upon it could easily be observed despite the distance. He had the town in his sight for less than a minute when it began.

A cloud suddenly burst apart as Lyax came barreling through leaving white trails in the air behind her. The two swept over the town quickly approaching their prey. From the distance the dragon may have looked little more than a silhouette for a bug, but when the bright blue flame erupted from her maw the entire harbor took on an eerie glow.
Reiner watched as Lyax began snaking through the air. Her wings tucked to her side before her entire body rolled over in a spin. She came out of it making erratic movements, and spewing more flames whenever the chance provided. Reiner wasn't sure if men were actually firing arrows off at the two, or she was doing it just to show off. If it was the former Reiner had to give those dead men their due. Took a lot of nuts to stand and fight a dragon that size with that meager of a weapon.

Reiner heard loud curses start raising behind him from the guards upon the wall. He ignored them all for the time being as his attention remained locked on the desolation of the Ironborn longships. Some of the ships simply caught fire as Lyax flew by strafing them and quickly turning into burnt out husks. Others weren't as fortunate splitting in half under the immense power of Lyax's flames direct assault before the seas swallowed them up.

Reiner blew a long breath out of his nose. Jon's destruction of the anchored fleet served three functions. First, it was a demonstration of power to make sure Balon Greyjoy understood the position he was in. Second, it prevented the Ironborn from fleeing and being a curse on the mainland until Lord Harlaw has established his control. The third, he was beginning to see. The trade ships that had been held hostage in the port to prevent Balon's plans from leaking were already raising sails to flee the islands now that the ships keeping them surrounded were being destroyed. Now, came the next part of the plan. He turned and started making his way to the main gate of the castle.

“Halt!” one of the sentries called from the top of the wall stopping Reiner when he was about fifty feet from the gate. He looked up meeting the man's face. “The fuck you want?”

“By order of Jon Targaryen, Crown Prince of the Seven Kingdoms and true heir to the Iron Thrones, Balon Greyjoy is hereby ordered to present himself to face the King's Justice for his latest rebellion.” Reiner answered as he pointed to Jon and Lyax to emphasis exactly whom he was talking about.

The answer he received didn't surprise him in the least. He heard the guard clearing his throat gathering phlegm before he spit a large glob that loudly smacked into the dirt. “You and ya prince can fuck right off, Cunt.”

Well, he did ask like Jon requested. His head turned towards his friend's direction. The two had just finished another run over the former fleet, and now appeared to be heading towards the castle. If he timed this right the two would land behind him right after he finished opening the gate for them.

He reached to the small of his back where a small dagger was attached to his belts. As the bared steel appeared at his side the same disrespectful guard called out again, “I said piss off, Cunt, or we'll fill your ass with arrows.”

Reiner just looked up at the guard. His eyes locked onto where the shadow of the guard's helmet hid his own from view. He tensed his jaw gritting his teeth together as the familiar sting of steel cutting flesh ached through his left hand. The force of the cut sending a spray of bright crimson blood onto the ground before him. The next moment he felt the power surge through him. The familiar sensation of his blood heating up as electricity danced across his skin. A crack of thunder resounded from the sky as the lightening struck him, and he felt his body raise in the air as his titan form grew around him. It had taken him so long to get used to the humid feel of being inside his titan, but now it was as comforting as a mother's warm embrace.

When he opened his eyes again he was of a height with the wall before him, but it was now devoid of sentries in his vicinity. The shock wave of his transformation having blown them from their posts to the courtyard below. Reiner lumbered his way towards the gate. The force of his steps...
shaking loose stones in the curtain wall where time and weather had worn away their mortar.

He reared his right arm back twisting his body at the waist to add more momentum to the strike. He threw his fist forward as hard as he could against the gate set in the wall. The wood of the gate snapped under his power sounding like a clap of thunder as the metal of the portcullis screeched like a wounded animal before it gave way as well. The gate house along with the arch bridge over the gate exploded from the shock of the impact adding stone and mortar to the mix of deadly projectiles filling the air.

Ironborn turned into patches of red mist in the air with sickening crunches or splats as stones crushed them or sent them flying. More bleed out where they fell with their bodies pierced by large splinters of wood or iron shrapnel from the portcullis. Others had been thrown in the air their broken bodies raining down like the other debris with their bodies breaking upon impact.

His ears suddenly filled with the slight sound of tinkling reminiscent of the pattering of rain upon a tin roof. He turned to the sound eyeing a group of sentries that had survived the breach. They were firing off arrows as fast as they could. The missiles bouncing off his golden armor to fall harmlessly to the ground at his feet. Reaching down he pulled up a loose chunk of the curtain wall and chucked it in their direction. At some place in the back of his mind he hoped that Zeke would be proud of his throw as he watched the rock's impact. Some of the men tried to flew from their doom only for the massive chunk of stone to impact on the lip of the wall destroying the entire section in a cloud of dust and blood.

He stood back to his full height surveying the yard. No other living Ironborn seemed to remain. Those that had survived must have decided to retreat into the keep rather than take on the Armored Titan. This would make their goal a little harder. Fighting inside a keep tended to get a little hairy, and no doubt these Ironborn would fight tooth and nail to protect their false king.

A loud thump resounded behind him with the ground vibrating up through his massive legs from the impact. He turned back to see Lyax lowering a shoulder to the ground as Jon dismounted from her back. His ironwood shield painted with the three-headed dragon on his left arm as his right drew Dark Sister from her scabbard on his waist.

While Jon approached he knelt down moving into a prostrated position as if he was begging for forgiveness. Reiner closed his eyes and pressed back. The nape of the titan's neck giving away in a burst of steam that was quickly blown away by the wind that caressed him with its chilly kiss, and the ligaments that connected to his face to the titan's form snapped away. He pulled himself the rest of the way out before walking down the arm as steam began pouring off the Armored Titan when it immediately began to dissolve. He dismounted the hand right as Jon arrived with Lyax trudging along behind him on her wing spikes like a giant reptilian bat.

“Are you ready?” Jon asked his voiced muffled slightly from the lowered visor of the helmet. Reiner nodded in answer as he drew both of his titan blades. Jon turned his head meeting Lyax's eyes before pointing to the main doors of the keep and in a cool tone he spoke, “Dracarys.”

Lyax's maw opened wide as the back of her throat took on an ethereal glow. A quick burst of fire blew out of her mouth instead of the usual constant stream of flame he was used to seeing. The force of the fire broke through the door with a loud crash sending the reinforced wood barreling into the hall behind it before the flame could take.

Lyax's head cranked back on her neck going into a 'S' shape. Reiner could hear the dragon's intake of breath as wind flew into her mouth filling her lungs to capacity. A moment later her neck snapped forward and a constant stream of blinding blue flame shot into the breach. He shielded his eyes with his elbow as his Jacket and Jon's cloak snapped in the air from the force. He could feel
beads of sweat forming on his forehead from the heat and his legs began stepping away trying to find relief from the sweltering temperatures. At the same times screams resounded in the keep as men that tried to stop their advancement into the castle were caught up in the dragon's breath.

What felt like an eternity later, but truthfully had only been a few seconds the flames cut off. Jon spared no time rushing through the door, and Reiner not allowing time for his mind to argue followed. As he entered the castle behind his friend he finally saw the brutality that Lyax could unleash so easily. The foyer of the keep was a sea of death. Some of the men had been instantly turned to ash as others were flash burned into positions of shock. Their charred bodies frozen stiff in their death throws. The weight of their weapons breaking off their limbs as they fell to the ground where some of their blades glowed red from the heat that had previously engulfed them.

One man still alive stumbled around screaming in agony. His skin an angry red and blistered in some spots as it melted off his body in others. Jon rushed forward lashing out with Dark Sister. The Valaryian Steel punching through the leather armor easily and piercing the man's heart granting him mercy from an otherwise long and painful death.

He watched as Jon looked around a moment seeing if there was anyone else that needed the gift of mercy. He was stopped as the sound of boots echoed towards them from one of the hallways. A man came rushing into the foyer clad in leather armor and half helm. A shield painted with a golden kracken on a field of black on his left arm as his right wielded an ax. The soldier let an booming war cry as he charged directly for Jon. The first swing was high trying to take the prince's head off his shoulders. Jon ducked under the swing and Dark sister lashed out in a wave of grey steel severing the man's legs above his ankles and below the shield that had been lowered to try and protect from the counter attack.

The now footless Ironborn hit the ground screaming out in pain but was swiftly silenced as Dark Sister pierced through his throat. As Jon wrenched the sword out it was followed by an arc of blood that spattered noisily on the stone floor. Turning to him the prince nodded his head in the direction the Ironborn had just come from. Reiner followed as Jon led the way. The prince was crouched slightly his shield held in a defensive position with Dark Sister poised ready to strike at a moment's notice. The position allowing Reiner to see as well as strike out with his blades over his friend's head if necessary.

Reiner felt relief flood through him when they finally came upon the double doors that had to lead to the main hall and the Seastone Chair. He wasn't exactly sure how long they had been making their way through the castle, but they had fought for every step they had taken. It was like they had wandered into a nest of fire ants that never seemed to stop coming. The only saving grace had been that the Ironborn weren't as adept at fighting as Theon liked to boast.

They were people made up of pirates and reavers, Their strength came from surging numbers and brutality against normal people just trying to live their lives. To well trained individuals the Ironborn were little more than pawns that had to be cut through to get to their prey. The blood that coated his titan blades and Dark Sister were a testament to the lack of skill their adversaries possessed when they faced against skilled warriors.

Reiner spared a glance down at Jon. His black armor glistened in random spots where blood had splattered across him. Dark Sister was red from crossguard to tip, and he could hear the pattering of blood as it dripped from the blade to the stones below their feet. He watched as Jon's body rose and fell slightly with his breathing. His friend was breathing heavy, but seemed to still have plenty of
energy left to spare. Just one more mark against the Ironborn and their so called ferocity and their claim to being great warriors. It seemed that the men that infested these islands were little more than boasting charlatans.

“What do you think Reiner?” Jon asked suddenly breaking the quiet that had surrounded them. “That door is most likely barred, and who knows how many more men are inside trying to protect Balon.”

Reiner looked over Jon’s shoulder at the doors blocking them from their goal. He tilted his head slightly as his eyes took in the faded grey wood. He actually didn't have to think too long before an idea suddenly burst to the forefront of his mind. Remembering a story that Annie had told him about when she was still undercover in the Military Police and was on a case about a missing girl.

“Jon, I have an idea. Get behind me, and as soon as I have the door open rush in. I'll be right behind you. We'll have to be swift to maintain the upper hand.” His friend looked up at him and Reiner gazed right where he assumed Jon's eyes would be if the darkness of the hallway and his helmet weren't covering them in shadow. After a moment of regarding him Jon nodded and the two switched places with Reiner taking up the lead now.

Reiner returned his blades to their containers on his thighs before retrieving the dagger from the small of his back. He ran the edge of the blade along his palm wincing slightly from the pain. Once again he could feel the power running along the surface of his skin. The need of his titan form to break out almost taking over his senses as yellow lightning danced across him. He held the power coursing through him at bay as he returned the dagger to its place.

He took a shaky step forward before another. He steps turned into a full sprint as he rushed down the hall. Ten feet from the double doors he cocked his arm back, and with all his might he threw his arm forward into a punch. As his fist cut through the air he pushed all the power crackling on him into his arm. His arm exploded in size as massive crimson muscle formed covered in golden armor. His now much larger fist crashed into the aged wood like a battering ram with a resounding crunch and a boom echoed through through the halls as the stone that surrounded the doors exploded along with the doors. Just as Reiner had instructed Jon rushed passed him and stormed into the room. Reiner quickly yanked his hand free from the titan arm to follow his friend.

He froze when he broke through the other side of the dust. The room was a wasteland, and bodies lay all over the ground in pools of blood. A few had died from stone colliding with their heads. As other were pierced repeatedly by splinters of the door.

Reiner spun sword up when a liquid filled cough cut through the air surprising him. There on the steps leading up to what he assumed was the Seastone chair was a man laid out. A large splinter of wood stuck through his throat. Reiner watched as another cough racked his body and a mist of crimson shot from his mouth. The scene reminding him of when he saw that newly made knight die in the lists during the tourney in King's Landing.

Jon moved to stand over him. His friend just watched with a gruesome patience as the other man slowly choked to death on his own blood. Slowly the coughing died down and the man Reiner assumed was Balon Greyjoy finally died. Jon waited a few more second before making his way up the stairs and with a heavy sigh slumped into the throne of the Iron Islands.
So, I put a vague easter egg in this chapter, and I hope some of you picked it up.

I was actually very excited to see how many of you could pick it up.

NEXT: CASTERLY ROCK
CASTERLY ROCK

Chapter Summary

The battle of the Rock begins.

Chapter Notes

WHEW!!!

So, I'm so sorry this chapter took so long to get done. I had so much going on in my personal life and even when I had time to write I just wasn't in the mood. It didn't help that I had another story for a different franchise burning a hole in my head. So, I started on the other story and got the first chapter out of the way, but that helped open the creative gates allowing me to get this monster finished.

I want to thank all of you so much for your patience and bearing with me on this.

Anyway on with the SHOW!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

EURON I

He couldn't stop the laugh that escaped his lips as he stood at the prow of the Silence and Pyke began raising in view from the distance. Black smoke billowed up from the harbor of Lordsport and even from the distance he could see dust blowing in the wind from the castle of Pyke itself.

His goals would be a lot easier to reach than even he had foreseen. He ran his tongue along his lips that had been permanently stained blue from Shade of the Evening. The drink of the Warlocks of Qarth had granted Euron visions of his future and guided his actions for the past few years pursuing that endeavor. Returning to the islands he had been exiled from years ago being the first step on the way. He needed to rule from the Seastone Chair to further his ambitions and the best way was to take the crown from his brother's head, preferably by his own two hands.

When he was declared king of the Iron Islands he would bring back the Old Way to his people the proper way. Raiding the North like he had heard his brother had them doing currently would produce nothing. The North was a kingdom of paupers compared to the south. He would show the Ironborn the right way. Once he wore the driftwood crown he would sail the Iron Fleet towards Old Town. There he would topple the High Tower and crush the Citadel below the heel of his boot. He would liberate the Kracken and Dragon eggs that the Grey Rats tried to hide away in their vaults. The fools thinking they could cleanse the world of magic simply because they couldn't
understand or control it.

When he hatched the monsters he would control both the skies and the seas and along with his Ironborn raping and pillaging, Euron, would take control of Westeros mile by mile. Once he sat the Iron Throne as the new king of Westeros all would know to fear him. Even the so called gods would know to tremble at his name from the Drowned God to the Black Goat of Qohor.

The name Euron Crow's Eye would be haled in the open while reviled in the dark corners of taverns. The thought brought a smile to his face for what could they even do. They would hide like roaches in the rushes knowing if they preached their treason in the light of day their lives and those of everyone they loved would belong to him to do with as he saw fit.

The height of his success would be the arrival of his queen. The Shade had shown him her face. She was a beauty that none in the world could compare with. Hair silver white that sparkled in the sunlight, with alabaster skin that made his mouth water, and bright blue eyes that had an other worldly glow. She would sit beside him as he ruled the Seven Kingdoms and give him strong sons who would continue his work and conquer the world. When their work was done Euron's bloodline would rule the known world for all time. All whom would oppose them would burn in their castles and have their fleets sunk before they could lift their blades in the air.

A loud roar cut through the air ripping him from his thoughts. His eye tracking to the ocean surface then scanning the sky when he came up empty. His eye cut back and forth across the clouds trying to locate the source of the deafening call. A slight bit of movement caught his attention. From the distance it was hard to make out, but the longer he focused the more the shape formed in his mind. The creature had to be massive considering the the size of the silhouette and the distance that was between them. He kept his eye locked on as it easily soared through the air. When the creature flapped what were reminiscent of bat wings, Euron, knew immediately what he gazed upon. It was a dragon.

It was at least the length of the Silence and had a wing span almost twice that. A smile split his face at the possibility that just presented itself as if he had somehow willed it into existence. His plans could be moved up exponentially with this beast at his disposal. He would no longer have to wait for the dragons he would rescue from the Citadel to grow to complete his conquest. The beast before him was already large enough to ride and he would be able to bring the Seven Kingdoms to their knees beneath its flame.

He turned his attention to the crew of mutes. Many of whom on the deck were staring at the same thing that had gripped his attention. Looks of fear marred their faces as the beast of legend approached them from above. “DON'T JUST GAWK! FETCH THE FUCKING HORN!”

Two of his mongrels snapped into movement at his command scurrying below deck to carry out his order. He commended himself momentarily on his ability to break and reform the men he had taken on as his crew of the Silence. He had barely waited a minute before the two men returned heaving the horn up from the hold to two others that waited to receive and pull it the rest of the way onto deck.

The horn was six feet in length made of black dragon bone. Three bands of gold circled its circumference and were engraved with Valyrian glyphs. The mutes placed it gently on the deck to his side before retreating a few steps. Euron removed his left glove running his hand along the surface of the horn. The dragon bone was always warm to the touch no matter the environment opposite of the cool smooth bands of gold. He pulled his dagger from his waist running the blade along his palm. He watched in a trance as the skin rippled open from the steel's kiss. Turning his hand over the gold bands he allowed his life's blood to fall upon the horn. The thick crimson liquid
rolled down the sides collecting in the glyphs before the rivulets continued on the way towards the
deck. When all three bands had a generous coating of his blood he held out his hand for one of his
mongrels to wrap. He allowed a slight grunt to escape him when the knot was tied off applying
pressure to the wound.

He looked at one of the men that had pulled the device up from the hold while pointing at the horn,
“Blow.” He ordered coldly. The tongueless man looked between Euron and the horn yet hesitated
with a look of apprehension on his face. A growl formed in his throat as he closed the distance
seizing the mute by the throat with his injured hand and squeezing slightly to emphasize his
seriousness. “Blow or I will slit your throat and cast your corpse into the seas.”

The mute nodded vigorously before Euron released him with a shove. He turned his eye back to the
sky. The dragon was now almost above them. Only a few more moments and the creature would be
directly over the ship. The mute must have finally found his backbone because a second later the
horn sounded beside him. It was a warbling screech that sounded as if a beast from the depths of
hell had been cast upon the world. He could hear the gargling sounds his crew of mutes made as if
the sound alone caused them physical pain. Euron himself was unaffected as his eye stayed locked
on the dragon above waiting for the Dragonbinder to take effect.

He didn't have to wait but a second longer when the dragon answered the horn's call with one of its
own. An anguished screech ripped from the throat of the beast above him as it began thrashing
around in the air. Then he saw something that made another smile stretch across his face. The
unmistakable silhouette of a man fell from the dragon's back. Euron's arms went straight out to his
sides as a triumphant laugh tore its way from deep within himself. Not only had he taken control of
a dragon he had disposed of its rider in the same move.

A suddenly bolt of bright yellow light accompanied by a crack of thunder killed the laughter in his
throat as he threw a hand over his good eye shading it from the light. A gale force wind plowed
over the deck taking men off their feet and ripping the sails free of their rigging. He was thrown to
his back sliding several feet across the red wood planks. His eyebrows shot up as a fist a few feet in
width exited the bottom of the ball of light. Followed by a massive arm and then a head donned in a
golden face plate with glowing yellow eyes. His breath caught in his throat and Euron felt a chill
run up his spine frozen in fear as the rest of the massive form seemed to materialize out of thin air
while it plummeted towards his ship.

He wanted to call to the helm for them to evade, but Euron knew what was about to happen at this
point was inevitable. His whole body tensed as the giant fist that was his doom suddenly changed
to be covered in pale blue crystal, and time seemed to slow to a crawl.

The mast of the Silence cracked under the impact as if it was a twig. The base exploded into a
storm of deadly splinters that impaled members of his crew close by. Euron swore he could see the
deck of the Silence ripple as the wooden planks buckled and he found himself catapulted into the
air as his ship cracked in half under the onslaught. His feet caught on the railing of the aft deck
sending him spinning ass over head before his back smacked into the oceans surface. The force
knocked all of the air out of his lungs as the weight of his Valyrian armor pulled him down. His
body betrayed his survival by trying to greedily suck in air only for his lungs to be filled with briny
sea water.

He could do nothing as his armor continued to pull him under and his body kept swallowing water
as he gasped for fresh air that would never come again. He could only watch as darkness
encroached on him and the sunlight dancing on the sea's surface faded. He was supposed to be
have become a God King that ruled over all that the sun's rays touched. The Shade of the Evening
had told him so. 'This isn't right' was the only thought that repeated through his head as he sank
The sun was rising higher in the sky as Mathis made his way to the northern wall of Lannisport. As the morning wore on the battle for Casterly Rock loomed closer and closer. Unfortunately, his division of the army had little to do, but watch from these walls. Some of the younger lordlings had tried to argue about wanting to join the battle, but Mathis and the other older lords knew there was still just as much honor to be had protecting the smallfolk. Even if those smallfolk didn't want you there occupying their city. However, that was the job given to him, and he would fulfill it to his best capabilities.

It had been three days since the army under his command marched through the gates of Lannisport. He had expected to be in the midst of a siege while the rest of the forces fought to take the Rock, but the news that his scouts had brought him had changed everything. After that he had immediately called a meeting with the lords under his command to relay the new plans.

He had walked into the war tent seeing the commanders below him already waiting. All the seats around the table were filled with the exception of the head of the table. Almost the moment Mathis took the remaining seat his squire had placed a goblet down before him filled with watered Arbor Gold. The boy had only been with him since the beginning of the campaign, but he had quickly learned Mathis' preferences. His was a reliable young squire that knew exactly when he was needed or when to disappear into the shadows. He gave the boy a nod of appreciation, and then he was gone from his sight.

Mathis had taken a moment to look over everyone at the table before him as he stole a quick drink from his goblet. There was Lord Osgrey. A family that was connected to the Lannisters long ago. The only remnant of that relation being their sigil of a lion. Instead of the gold on crimson the Osgreys' lion was checkered green and yellow. Beside him was the lord of the green Fossoways. The red Fossoways were with their third division blocking the Roseroad off from the Storm and Crownlands. There was Lord Appleton next, followed by Lord Oakheart. Lord Crane finished out the higher nobles at the table. The rest of the seats were filled with elder heirs, and other high commanders.

“My Lords,” Mathis began. All the eyes at the table immediately swung his direction giving him their undivided attention, “Our scouts returned in the night with some interesting news. We have spent the last meetings planning on our siege of Lannisport, but now those plans will no longer be needed. According to the scouts reports it seems the Lannisters of Lannisport along with its city watch have abandoned the walls. Our scouts witnessed them heading towards the Rock.”

Rowan allowed the words to sink in as he watched the expressions change around the table. Lord Crane was the one to break the silence, “What will we be doing then, My Lord?”

“We will be approaching the city as if we are storming the walls.” Mathis spoke starting to lay out the plan, “Lord Appleton will lead the van.”

His eyes turned to lord in question, “Approach with caution. If the scouts are to be believed there will only be the smallfolk in the city, but we could still face some small opposition.” He received a nod in return.
“Once one of the gates are secured we will move in and occupy the city.” At this Mathis pulled out a rolled up scroll he kept on himself since he had received it. Waving it in the air he continued, “I would remind you once again of the princess' words. There will be no looting, sacking, or raping of the smallfolk. The holdings of the Lannisters and their lords are fair game, but the smallfolk are to be left alone.”

“Make sure your men understand this to the letter. The last thing I want to do when we reform with the rest of the army is stand before the Targaryens and explain why your men couldn't keep their cocks in their breeches. Especially, a pregnant Targaryen that can transform into a fifty foot monster and has a dragon to boot.”

Some chuckles resounded around the table at his last comment, but Mathis needed them to understand how serious this was, “All joking aside this is of the utmost import. Any man caught defying her grace's orders will be clapped in chains and presented before Her Grace. There is to be no exception to this rule no matter their birth. Is that understood?”

“Yes, My lord.” echoed around the table as everyone responded at once.

“Good, I want us moving in a hours time. If we move with haste we could have the city under our control before nightfall. Remember, only harm those that resist. Otherwise I don't want a hair harmed on anyone's head.”

Mathis had been right with their time line. They had taken Lannisport before nightfall, and with very little bloodshed. There had been a few pockets of resistance. Smallfolk for the most part armed with makeshift weapons, but they had encountered a few guards that had stayed behind defying orders to try and defend their home city. Mathis had to give those men their due. They had died with honor doing what they felt was right, but a few city watchmen against the armored knights of the Reach hadn't stood much of a chance.

After Mathis had secured the Lannister's Lannisport manse he had sent out riders decreeing a curfew, and set about securing the city. They had been there a few days now, and he was happy that peace had reigned. The city hadn't returned to its normal state of daily commerce, but he really couldn't blame them. Having an occupying force hold your city had to be very unsettling. It didn't help that a few men had decided to test the princess' orders.

A couple men-at-arms had been arrested for raping some of the city's women. Thankfully, Lord Fossaway hadn't hesitated to clap the men in irons along with having them put in stockades in the market square. Since the incident the men had no end of ridicule from the smallfolk. Every time Mathis laid his eyes on the rapers they were covered in rotten produce and even a few eggs had been smashed against their heads. The plus side was that it served as an example to both the smallfolk and the men under his command. After that peace had once again reigned in the city.

He was broke from his thoughts as a far eye was offered up to him. He took the telescoping device from the captain before extending it to its fullest. Bringing the lens up to his eye he directed his attention to the north east. It took him a moment of scanning across the rolling green hills before what he sought came into his view.

Through the magnifying glass he focused on the sea of tents. Above all of them flew banners of the Reach and the North. The Tyrell rose, Tarly huntsman, Cuy sunflowers, Mulendore butterflies, Hunt upside down buck, Stark direwolf, Umber giant, Forrester ironwood, Cerwyn axe, Manderly merman, Locke key, Karstark sunburst, Glover mailed fist, and many others Mathis wasn't familiar with. Then, before them all was a banner he hadn't laid his eyes on in ten and seven years. The red
three-headed dragon on a field of black flew the highest amongst the others.

A bubble of pride came up in Mathis' chest at the sight. His family had always been staunch Targaryen supporters, and there had been no bigger insult than to sit out most of the rebellion as the dragons fell. While the country was engulfed in civil war Mathis had been forced under his liege lord to sit outside of Stormsend's walls trying to starve out Stannis Baratheon. This time though the Rowan's were actively helping to put the dragons back on their rightful throne.

Others would argue there wasn't much difference between then and now, but Mathis could see the bigger picture that the younger brash boys couldn't. Casterly Rock wasn't the end. There were still chances to fight the lions in the field the main two being Harranhal where Kevan Lannister was still held up, and King's Landing where the Old Lion, Cersei, and her bastards were dug in like ticks. The battle before them though could possibly be one of the bloodiest of the war, and Mathis felt no shame whatsoever being able to sit it out.

The quiet morning air was suddenly cut through and even from the distance Mathis could hear war horns ripping out the commands to muster as the Northern and Reach forces began gearing up to storm a castle that had never been taken by force in its entire history.

LEVI II

The porcelain saucer clinked slightly as he set his tea cup back in it. He pulled in a deep breath of the morning breeze that cut through his tent. He didn't think he could ever get used to the salty sea air that blew off the coast. The first time he had ever smelled it was when they approached King's Landing and he had unconsciously made a face that somehow Lord Stark had seen right through. His past friend had explained that it was the smell of the sea drifting in.

The thought of Lord Stark also brought darker thoughts in the wake. Every man had a line that they had to make for themselves and Lord Stark had been it for Levi. He had decided then that he refused to ever fail another person he followed ever again. Throughout his life he had already lost almost every person he let close to him. It still didn't stop him from making those relationships though. He had spent too long in the underground with only Him for company, and look how that turned out for him.

Granted, he couldn't push off all the lessons that had been imprinted on him. He still kind of had an off putting attitude, and he still only spoke when he absolutely had to. However, he did try harder to get to know the brats under him as much as possible. He couldn't be their friend per say. They had to keep the commander-subordinate relationship in place, but he would kill anyone in a second that tried to harm those ten little shits.

“Levi,” came the voice of his counterpart pulling him out of his thoughts as he turned his attention to the flap of the tent. A moment later Hange's bespectacled face popped into his vision. “Are you about ready? Lord Robb is getting ready to have the final meeting.”

Levi just responded with a nod before getting to his feet. “Let him know I'm on my way. I'll be right behind you.”

She didn't verbally respond, but a full smile that took her face as that maniacal gleam took to her
eyes. “Do you think they have any idea what is about to happen? HA!” She didn't wait for an answer before she disappeared, “I can't wait to see it!” She let out in a sing-song voice as she retreated.

No, no they do not, he thought to himself as he readied for the last meeting. Crazed looks aside he felt somewhat the same as Hange. He was kind of excited to see what it felt like to be on the other side of this particular tactic rather than the fear and anticipation hanging over your head.

He let the thoughts leave him as he began his final preps. He quickly connected the winch spool to his back, his scabbards/ gas canisters to his legs, and then connected his maneuver controls’ cables. The last piece of his equipment was the newly added helmet. He observed the nasal guarded half-helm for a moment. For all intents and purposes it was a rather standard helmet. It had a low profile to facilitate the use of their O.D.M., but that is where it stopped being standard. It had sides that came down to protect their ears and jawline. The last change had been when Hange had the smiths add leather straps to be able to secure it down and preventing it from falling off as they utilized their gear.

He had tried to argue against the helmet originally. They had never used them before, so why start now had been his very basic opposition.

“Exactly!” Sasha had exclaimed, “We have never worn helmets! Why the fuck not?!?”

It was obvious to Levi that the girl was trying to drive a point home, but even Hange seemed to be struggling at what it could possibly be.

The dark haired girl had let an exasperated sigh slip before continuing, “Why is it me of all people to think of this?!” The constantly eating girl's patience apparently snapped when she continued to receive blank looks from all of them, “WE FUCKING STRAP OURSELVES TO MASSIVE CANISTERS THAT ROCKET OUR BODIES THROUGH THE AIR WHILE DUEL WIELDING SWORDS! YOU WOULD THINK SOME HEAD PROTECTION WOULD'VE BE THE FIRST THING THOUGHT OF!”

The entire group had just let out a collective, “OHHHH!” in response.

However, it was followed up by Hange saying the about the worst possible thing she could at the moment, “Huh, never thought about it.”

Sasha's mouth had just fell agape as she stared at the older woman. “NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT?! Hey Sasha what's the matter?” She suddenly asked as if she was another person, “OH, nothing much just that our FUCKING SCIENCE OFFICER OR ANYBODY ELSE EVER THOUGHT ABOUT US WEARING HELMETS THE LAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS!” The girl then switched again, “But why is that so important?- Oh, its not like swing amongst trees and buildings at significant speeds where any manner of object could smack us in the head, and now we have added castles to the mix. No biggie they are just made out of FUCKING STONE!”

At this point Connie had jumped up with both hands waving at Sasha in a placating manner, “It's okay Sasha. We-We'll start wearing helmets. Just calm down.”

“WELL PRAISE THE FUCKING WALLS FOR THAT!” She exclaimed before storming from the room. The wooden door slamming loudly behind her.

“Soowoo, we are gonna wear helmets now?” Jean asked. Seven bobbing heads were what answered him.
Levi let a small smile take his face at the memory before tucking the head gear under his arm and throwing his tent flap aside as he departed to the war tent.

ROBB IV

Robb exited the war tent after their last meeting had ended. The brisk morning air signaled to him that the seasons were getting ready to change even this far south. It just reiterated how important it was that they get this campaign finished as fast as possible. He needed to get his bannermen back home to be able to prep the North for the coming winter. The people of the Seven Kingdoms always believed a long summer equaled an even longer winter, and the current season had lasted most of his life. So long in fact that Robb could barely remember the last winter. Whatever memories he had of that early age were of himself, Jon, Sansa, and a toddler Arya playing with toys in the Winterfell nursery.

He truly had no idea how harsh a Northern Winter could be. He only had the tales of his parents or the other people that inhabited his home. He definitely didn't want his people to have to make it through a winter without their new warden or the other lords there to offer their assistance.

Robb had originally planned to try and wait for Jon to return from Pyke. A rider in the night from the Crag had caught up to their camp on their march. There the man had delivered the letter from Jon. His brother-cousin's plans to quell the Greyjoys had been successful, and both himself and Reiner had come through the ordeal unscathed. Jon had followed up by saying they were staying put to wait for Lord Harlaw to come and take over the reins as the Castellan of Pyke before he could return.

He didn't know what to do with his friend though. Theon, surprisingly, had taken the news of his father's death a lot better than Robb had with his own. Then again, Theon seemed to take Eddard Stark's a lot harder than his own father's. His best friend's face since the news had constantly been a mixed bag. Not that Robb could blame him at all. Theon had lost two father figures in the same year. One from false charges of treason, and the other from blatant treason. The latter trying to throw Theon's life away in the process. That still didn't stop his friend from getting piss drunk the night the news arrived.

Once he had had time to reflect on everything, Theon, had just asked him to send word to Winterfell to see if Asha could be taken alive if they were able to capture her. Robb himself didn't have the heart to deny his friend that small gesture. He had quickly dispatched a rider back to the Crag to have his orders sent to Winterfell and disseminated through the North.

His thoughts turned back to the literal mountain of a castle in the distance. They had camped a couple miles away from the base of the Rock. There was no need to set a siege, and any closer would have impeded their plans.

The Rock itself was an image of intimidation. What he could pick out that could be considered standard castle structures sat at the summit. So high that wisps of clouds floated around the top. Even the Lion's Maw's two hundred foot height was dwarfed by the rest of the castle's height. A hundred foot curtain wall of white stone filled with defense towers and a massive gate house was set to protect and restrict access to a land bridge that would allow them to assault the main gate. On top of that were tens of turrets built into the rock of the mountain to deter any armies that managed to get past the curtain wall and would rain hell upon them as they tried to breach the Lion's Maw.
Robb had hoped that they would be saved from having to storm the castle. He had hoped that survivors from their previous battles would have told the Lannisters holed up in the Rock that trying to fight would be a fruitless endeavor. The combination of Lyax and the titans should have been enough of a deterrent to prevent a battle. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case.

Robb had rode out the previous day with Lord Tarly, Lord Bolton, and Ser Garlan to try to parlay. The idea was to invoke the same tactic that Jon had told him he used at the Green Fork. Show the Lannisters that they weren't beyond resolving this issue peacefully.

Their party had stopped halfway between the Rock and their camp. The three-headed dragon had snapped in the wind above him with the direwolf and flayed man banners to one side with the Tarly hunter and Tyrell Rose to the other. Twenty feet in front of them sat another rider bearing a white flag of parlay.

It had ultimately been for not. No one from the Lannisters side came to parlay at all. So, for two hours Robb and the other lords had just sat and talked. Tarly and Bolton mostly speaking of the most cold and efficient battle tactics they could while Robb and Garlan spoke of much friendlier things.

His good brother was almost as excited as Robb when word had come from Riverrun of Margaery's pregnancy. Robb himself had been floored initially. He knew from his lessons with Maester Luwin that sometimes it could take a woman a lot longer to become pregnant. It wasn't like the two of them shied away from their duties in the bed chamber. It was quite the opposite actually. It also didn't hurt that Margaery seemed to be just as enthusiastic about the encounters as he was. All the Same Robb didn't think that it had been enough to get her with child so soon. However, like his father before him no one should ever discount a Stark man's ability to leave an heir during a time of war.

The smile was still pulling on his face when he arrived at the side of his squire. Olyvar was finishing the last straps on his horse when Robb stopped. “All ready, My Lord.”

“Thanks, Olyvar.” Robb replied glancing over at his squire. He was a handsome lad that somehow defied all logic with his looks. Unlike the rest of the Freys, Olyvar, didn't have the features that reminded everyone else of the ferrets they were often compared too. No doubt his Rosby blood managed to win out over the less desirable Frey of his father. The boy also gave off a more loyal air than the rest of the Freys. Since, Olyvar had become his squire after the Twins he never had to question where he was. He was always right where he needed to be, and Robb had never heard one complaint from the boy. Even when sparring got rougher to try and catch him up to where he should be the boy just took his lumps and bruises and kept asking from more. “Are you ready for the battle?”

“Just a little nervous, My Lord.” came the reply in an anxious tone.

Robb reached over squeezing his squire's shoulder reassuringly, “This isn't your first battle, Olyvar. True, it may be our hardest, but just cover my side like you are supposed to, I'll cover yours, and we'll all come out the other side.”

“Robb's right, Olyvar.” Both their heads snapped over to see Theon coming their way leading his horse. The smirk that he was known for back on his face after a week of its absence. The golden kracken on his black steel breastplate gleaming in the morning sun. “The plan is solid and by tonight Casterly Rock will have fallen for the first time in history.”

At his words Robb couldn't stop the full smile that took his face matching Theon's. “Well shall we then? History waits for no man.” Theon just laughed in response as the three of them took to their
When they reached the front of the formed up army Grey Wind seemed to suddenly appear at his side. The direwolf shook out his coat as if amping himself up the same as the rest of the troops in the formations.

In front of the troops he met up with Lord Tarly, his heir Dickon, Lord Bolton, Lord Umber, and Ser Garlan. Out farther in front of the lords were the Scouts. Bertolt out the farthest with the seven others mounted in a line behind him. Their usual green cloaks missing with them adorned in northern style brigadines, leather bracers and greaves, and their new half helms.

He turned his head to Lord Tarly on his left, “All preparations ready, My Lord?”

The bald lord gave Robb his normal stoic look before a subtle nod, and a “Yes, My Lord.”

He nodded in response before blowing out a long breath. The first part of the plan was the hardest. It required perfect sync amongst all the parts to be pulled off without a hitch. The timing had to be flawless or the entire endeavor could blow up in their faces. Quite literally.

Robb took a moment to steel himself for the storm to come before looking to the front. Bertolt's eyes met his and with a nod the titan shifter pulled the reins of his horse towards the Rock and took off.

As Robb watched him race across the open expanse he sent a silent prayer up to the Old Gods. Let him make it through this, let everything with Margaery go well, let him hold his first born in his arms, and let Jon return to his side soon.

Once his prayer was completed he tossed the distracting thoughts aside and focused solely on the storm to come.

He looked down from the summit of Casterly Rock at the army gathering down below. Aidin couldn't believe what he was seeing. The army was actually getting into battle formations instead of a siege formation. He couldn't help the scoff that escaped him at the thought. Did the Northerners and the Reachmen truly believe they could take the Rock.

Aidin hadn't been able to stop his laughter after he had sent Tarik to alert the castle. Every Westerman knew the Rock couldn't be taken by force. Hells, Casterly Rock couldn't even be taken through a siege. The caverns below allowed access to the water behind the mountain, so unless there was a fleet sitting out there to stop ships there was no way for the castle to be starved out. Which, the rebels below were sorely missing.

After his laughter ceased anger replaced it. Aidin couldn't wait to watch this army break upon their walls. The rebels had severely over estimated their capabilities this time and he was going to enjoy watching their fruitless attempts to break his home.
Granted he wasn't a Lannister and the castle wasn't his family's, but he had grown up and lived in the Rock his entire life. His father had been a Lannister guard all his life and married a maid of the castle. Aidin himself had followed the same calling as his father and had trained with a sword almost from the time he could walk. He didn't get the same level of training as the Lordlings he grew up around. He was forced to train with members of the garrison as he watched the Lannister boys get trained by some of the best knights of the Western Kingdom. That hindrance didn't stop him from becoming a competent fighter his father could be proud of.

On top of becoming a guard like his father he had also met his own maid in the castle of an age with him. His mother had introduced them shortly after she began working at the Rock hoping to support the rest of her family in Lannisport. They had hit it off almost immediately and the smug proud look on his mother's face couldn't be wiped away for weeks after.

Their relationship had been put on hold as the war began, though. Aidin found his hours of watch extended exponentially. Despite the reputation of the Rock, Devan Lannister, wasn't going to take any risks. All day and all night the Rock was prepared for war. Troops patrolled the caverns below the castle proper, oil and pitch was prepared, arrows and bolts were batched up and distributed to the defensive positions, and other such duties needed to be prepared.

The work had only grown as the Northerners pushed Lord Tywin back. Aidin almost didn't believe it when he heard that their army had been smashed at the Green Fork or that Ser Jaime had been defeated at Riverrun. If it hadn't been for Lord Brax's men limping their way to the Rock after the failed siege in the Riverlands he would have never entertained the thought.

Then, word had reached the Rock that the Tyrells had joined the fray on the Northerners' side. It had only gone down hill then for his work schedule. Hours upon hours were added to his already busy work schedule. Then, the rebels had begun their campaign into the west.

Castle after castle fell as the rebels made their way west. Survivors that had made their way to the Rock after the battles had told unbelievable stories. Everyone in the great hall had to stifle their laughter as the men informed Lord Devan and Lady Genna of what had happened.

Giants, a giant wolf, and even a dragon. The story got more and more incredible as it went along. The worst was from the survivors of Oxcross. They had spoke of two giants at least fifty feet tall. The hall had broke out in laughter then. It was just absurd to think about. Even the mythological giants spoke of to scare their children into behaving were only ever described as fourteen feet tall. Through it all Lord Devan's face had just grown more and more red with rage when he heard that his father Stafford hadn't survived the rebels cowardly night raid.

From that day on their acting lord had refused to shave. Saying that a blade would not touch his face again til those responsible for his father's demise were dealt with. To Aidin it seemed that today would be that day.

Lord Devan had chosen that moment to appear at his side as if summoned by Aidin's own thoughts. Given the early time the man was currently only dressed in his normal clothes. A crimson Jerkin with a golden lion embroidered on it sat over a black tunic, black trousers, and shining black boots. He was in the process of scratching his cheek as he approached. His golden whiskers now at a length that seemed to make your face constantly itchy. Aidin grimaced slightly in sympathy for the man.

“What is going on?” the man asked as he stopped by Aidin's side.

“The rebels horns started a bit ago, My Lord.” He answered back before he elaborated further, “When they started forming up they appeared to be in formation to try and assault the Rock instead
of a siege.”

Devan scoffed having about the same reaction as himself before he held his hand out wordlessly. Aidin handed Lord Devan the Myrish far eye just as quietly figuring that was what the lord wanted. The man held the optic up to his right eye as it scanned the army below them.

Aidin turned his head back to the lands below the Rock. The rebel army was in the process of forming up, but from the distance and height the men might as well been ants scurrying around. As the formations below began taking shape he heard another scoff from the lord beside him, “My Lord?”

“How long have you been watching them?” Devan answered with his own question.

“Since I came on shift last night, My Lord.” Aidin responded immediately.

“Hmm,” came the absentminded reply before Lord Devan gave another inquiry, “And have you seen a Dragon, a giant wolf, or any giants at all?”

“Not one, My Lord.” He gave his reply without pause.

“Were you in the hall to hear the Oxcross survivors tale?” He asked while still observing through the far eye.

“I was, My Lord?” Aidin couldn't stop the nod that accompanied his response though the other man couldn't see it.

“And what do you make of it all?”

He felt his brow furrow at that question. It was rare that any of the Lannisters ever cared for their opinion on anything. He decided it was safest to be as respectful as possible, so instead of answering he had a question of his own, “May I speak frankly, My Lord?”

The man didn't move his face from the Myrish lens, but nodded along with a, “Please do.”

Aidin let out a long breath before he began. He knew he would be treading close to what could be considered a very dangerous way to speak about your liege. Especially, a liege with the reputation of Lord Tywin, “I believe it is all hog wash, My Lord.” That got the reaction he was expecting somewhat as he saw just one of Lord Devan's brows raise.

The man didn't respond at all giving Aidin the nerve to push on. “With all due respect I believe Lord Tywin made it all up.”

That did get a response then. Lord Devan lowered the far eye and turned towards him then. Aidin was surprised by the expression that was on the lord's face though. Instead of an angry expression being shot his way Devan only had an inquisitive look.

The expression caught him off guard, but he was smart enough to know it meant he needed to elaborate. “It makes sense in a way, My Lord. Lord Tywin is known as one of the most tactically minded men in the Kingdoms on top of his ruthlessness in battle. For him to be defeated by a decidedly smaller Northern army under a green commander could damage our cause. So, by saying they were defeated by a dragon and giants not only saves the campaign, but makes the smallfolk less trusting of the Northern forces. The fact that they had to resort to such hellish tactics to defeat Lord Tywin gives the perfect propaganda to paint the image that the Northerners are truly the savages we all say they are.”
“As smart as it was for Lord Tywin the other Lords just kept using the excuse to justify their failures. They didn't understand the unholy way that Northerners wage war and underestimated them. Thus, they had to cover up for their shortcomings and try to save face in front of you and the other lords.”

Lord Devan hummed in response for a moment before he handed back the far eye. “Those were along the same lines as my thoughts.” His head pivoted out to the rebels once more. His eyes scanning along the army before coming back to meet Aidin's once again. “Keep an eye on them. I'm going to don my armor now. I have a father to avenge and a follow up appointment with a barber.” As the man spoke he unconsciously began scratching his cheek again to emphasize the point.

Aidin watched as Lord Devan walked away with a shout to ring the bells. It took a minute for the command to echo its way across the castle, but not much later bells all over Casterly Rock began tolling out their call to arms.

He turned his attention back out to the rebels below. Raising the far eye up he peered through his lens. While he had spoke with Lord Devan it seemed they had finished getting into formation. Rows upon rows of infantry stood quietly in formation. In front of them were thousands of cavalrymen. Horses threw their heads as they pawed the ground in their impatience.

Following the cavalry was a group of what Aidin assumed were lords lined up with three knights with billowing white cloaks behind them. At least amongst them were banners that he actually knew. The Tarly huntsmen which honestly surprised Aidin. The Tarlys were know for their tactical minds, so why they would be apart of a farce such as trying to crack the Rock was beyond him.

Then there was the Bolton flayed man. Aidin himself wasn't very versed in the houses of the North, but everyone knew that banner on sight. The horrific stories told to them as children of the Red Kings and how they would flay their enemies to use their skins as cloaks was enough to ingrain that families horrific banner into anyone's mind.

Then, there was the Tyrell rose. The opportunistic liege lords of the Reach. Lord Tywin should have known better than to ever trust the Roses. Their family saying of 'Growing Strong' should be enough of a warning that they are nothing but schemers grasping at all the power they can grab. When the dragons were disposed of Lord Tywin should have taken care of them at the same time.

The next was the Stark direwolf. All his life Aidin had only ever heard how honorable and loyal the Starks of Winterfell were. If that was true then why was this the second rebellion they were fighting in less than twenty years apart. Their liege lord had been a traitor and instead of acknowledging that King Joffrey was right in putting a traitor to death They were trying to rise up with a puppet to over throw their rightful king.

Which brought Aidin to the last banner. In the center of the other four and rising higher was the red three-headed dragon on black. Another scoff escaped him then. The story that the Northerners were trying to spread was just ludicrous. That Lord Stark had actually hidden Rhaegar Targaryen's last child as his bastard was completely absurd. The Northerners just wanted to an excuse to rebel, and clean up their lord's image at the same time. All their tall tale proved was that bastards were just as conniving and dangerous as the Seven said they were.

Well, when the army breaks on the side of the Rock, Lord Devan, will be able to drag the bastard pretender and all the traitorous lords to King's Landing and throw them at King Joffrey and Lord Tywin's feet.

The lens moved to the last group of men. There before the line of lords were seven more troops
with one out before them. Even with the far eye he couldn't make out too much detail on them or why they were important enough to be separate from the rest of the formation. As he mused over the point the man farthest out front began charging at the curtain wall by himself.

Aidin actually lowered the lens in shock as he watched with his bare eyes as the one suicidal soldier charged all on his own. As the speck of a man closed the distance to the Rock he looked down the slope of the mountain to the curtain wall below. He could see the shapes of men running around to get in position.

He didn't know what the first man planned to accomplish besides getting himself riddled with arrows. As he was still trying to decipher the lone rider's logic his confusion was confounded when another single rider followed when the first was about half the distance from the Rock.

He raised the far eye back up and peered through trying to keep track of the first rider. He watched for minutes as the horse and rider ate up the distance struggling the whole time to keep the man in his sights. Through his lens he could see the blurred image of arrows flying by him as he came in range of the towers of the curtain wall.

Aidin felt a smile stretch across his face when he saw an arrow hit true and impale the man through the right shoulder. His glee was quickly replaced with confusion when he saw the impossible happen. The man suddenly began to fly from his saddle.

He quickly dropped the far eye no longer able to keep up with the speed the man had suddenly began to move with. He didn't even have time to see what happened next his eyes instinctively closed when a clap of thunder and a bolt of bright lightening crashed down before him. Even through his eyelids the light was so bright he winced his face harder to stop the burning of his vision.

Seconds that felt like minutes later he was able to take in what had happening. Peering through the blurriness of his vision he could make out little more than a cloud of smoke. However, as his vision focused his face paled.

A cloud of smoke and dust was speeding its way his direction. Before he even had a chance to scream out a warning a boulder the size of Gregor Clegane impacted him in the chest. As he laid there dying a fountain of smoke poured over the summit while rocks and debris rained down on Casterly Rock.

LEVI II

The horse's labored breathing rung in his ears as he felt the muscles of the beast propelling him forward as fast as he could push it. Levi and the rest of his unit were riding as quickly as possible to capitalize on the opening Bertolt was going to create for them. Eren's job was to clean up and prepare for their arrival.

Eren was currently half a mile ahead of them charging towards the mountainous castle. The distance between their arrivals mapped out to prevent them from being caught up in the blast that the Colossal Titan would create.

Right then as if taking the cue from his thoughts a golden stream of lighting flashed out of the morning sky accompanied by an enormous clap of thunder. Levi shut his eyes for just a moment as
a giant ball of light erupted from half way up the curtain wall. The horse below him stumbled slightly from the shock of the blast, but managed to right itself before stumbling.

When he looked up he took in Bertolt's titan form standing half again as tall of what little remained of the curtain wall. Above him rose a gigantic cloud of smoke in the air resembling a dark grey mushroom. The blast had also blown the Lion's Maw wide open, and just as they had hoped for the closest turrets to the main gate had been reduced to rubble with the mouths to the tunnels available.

The next phase of the plan happened when Eren jumped from his mount. Using Bertolt and his O.D.M. to get up high. He flew over the Colossal Titan's shoulder before transforming into his own titan form. Landing in a crouched position he laid both of his massive palms to the ground and titan crystal began to immediately form. The blue crystal grew away from his hands shooting over bridge before coating the walls of the main gate and continuing into the darkness of the castle tunnels coating the ceiling to block their murder holes. At the same time two ramps grew from the ground to access points of where the turrets formerly were.

Once the crystal was formed to his satisfaction Eren stood to his full height of forty-five feet, and began making his way into the mouth of the lion's den. Bertolt's colossal form lumbering behind to back him up.

A minute later and Levi with the rest of his detachment were making their way through the remnants of the curtain wall. There wasn't a single corpse or any type of other debris anywhere near Bertolt's blast. Everything in the immediate vicinity had simply been completely vaporized. When Bertolt had first told them that his transformation held this level of destructive power Levi had been reluctant to believe him. The boy had insisted though, and this plan was the child of Robb's faith in his friend. It appears that faith had been repaid tenfold, and taking Casterly Rock had instantly become that much easier. There was just the matter of cutting out the infection in this castle.

Speaking of which they were approaching the range of their gear, and with a quick hand signal they split. As planned Levi, Sasha, and Connie took the tunnel on the right. Hange, Mikasa, and Jean the one on the left.

With a burst of steam his anchors shot away. The satisfying sound of their sharp points impacting and embedding in the rock face reached his ears as he pulled the maneuvering triggers. The winch began spinning and with a stream of titan gas he was rocketing through the air to the tunnel.

Just as he was about to enter the mouth of the passage he spun his body. Flipping his body so he was angled feet first. His anchors disconnected from the mountain side, the winch retracted the cable back to the spool, and sent his body twisting through the air. As he passed into the shadow of the castle a Lannister soldier was just getting back to his feet.

Levi impacted the man's chest right as he rose to his full height. The bastard didn't even get a chance to regain his wits before his chest plate was crushed in. The crunch of steel and cracking bones met Levi's ears as the man fell to his back padding his landing. He didn't have any doubt that the impact probably broke the soldier's sternum and every rib, and he was probably slowly drowning in blood from two punctured lungs. Levi quickly stabbed one of his swords through the man's heart to spare him a lengthy and painful death.

As he regained his footing he heard two sets of boots impact behind him. His subordinates stood at the ready. Both their blades held in a firm yet relaxed manner ready to strike at a moment's notice. It was a posture and confidence that only could be yielded from countless hours spent in the training yard. Sasha's golden eyes scanned the tunnel jumping around waiting for the slightest threat to emerge while Connie eyes just held a look of determination.
Levi turned his attention back to the tunnel before him after he had made sure the two were prepared for the next portion of the assault. The tunnel went out before him before the distance merged into darkness despite the best efforts of the torches' orange glows trying to beat it back. An unsettling feeling rode up the man's spine as memories of growing up in the underground city below Mitras tried to reemerge.

He pushed the old memories to the side focusing back on the mission at hand. Pointing his bloodied blade ahead to the intersection of tunnels just ahead of them, “You two watch both directions. We have to secure the entrance till the rest can show up.”

A quiet “Yes, Sir,” was the response he received from both of them as they raced by carefully picking their way through the corpses and debris. The two took positions with their backs against the walls. Sasha pulling watch on the direction over Connie's shoulder and him doing the same for her.

It was only a few minutes later that the thundering footsteps of hundreds of troops made their way up the titan crystal ramps. The first through the breach was the Greatjon. The giant of a man's normally jovial expressions changed to one of focus. In his right hand was a great sword he was capable of wielding single handed. His left arm was adorned with a tower shield that was Levi's height, but the man hefted as if it were nothing more than a buckler. Behind him followed Ser Laurence and Ser Loras. Their steel plate embossed with the three-headed dragon giving away their identities. They had thankfully listened to Levi and ditched the white cloaks before making the ascent. The last thing the two young knights needed in close quarters combat was giving their enemies extra garments to grab a hold of.

Behind the Kingsguard was a young man with a green surcoat decorated with a dark red archer over steel plate, and his head covered by a burgonet helmet. The young Tarly heir's head was on a swivel as he took in the carnage around him. His face paling slightly as he took in the corpse by Levi's feet. It only took him a moment to realize the boy hadn't seen death this intimately before. For most of the campaign so far the reach's forces and more specifically the heirs of the lords' had been kept in reserve. They were only utilized today due to the massive scope of the castle and the need for everyman possible to flush the Lannister forces out.

The giant Northern lord broke Levi out of his observation of the young lordling. While he surveyed the damage that Bertolt's transition had created he addressed everyone in his booming voice. “Everyone knows their part of the plans, so let's go kill some lions while there are still some left!”

A war cry echoed through the tunnel in answer as the men started racing past him following the Greatjon. Levi quickly reached out and pulled the two Kingsguard to his side along with the young Tarly heir before they could follow the mass of blood thirsty soldiers. The Tarly heir wasn't originally supposed to be apart of Levi's squad, but he ultimately felt it may be better if he kept the grouchy lord's son safe where he could keep an eye on him.

The boy looked at him with a question on his tongue, but Levi spoke first cutting loudly over the noise filling the cramped tunnel, “Change of plans. Stay close to us Tarly.” The boy's mouth opened like he was about to argue for a moment before his teeth clacked shut and he gave a silent nod of understanding.

It took a few minuets for the tunnel to start thinning out as the troops began following their assigned lords or knights into off shooting tunnels. Once it was easier to navigate through the throng Levi gave the signal for his small team to follow. They quickly began making their way through the tunnel system as the sounds of steel clashing started reverberating through the halls.
Robb's sword was red from tip to hilt and sweat stung his eyes as he made his way through the tunnels below Casterly Rock, or was the whole mountain considered Casterly Rock. He quickly shook the errant thought away. He didn't have the time to be distracted as he continued to fight.

From almost the moment they had entered the passageways carved through the mountain he had been fighting. Thankfully, though everything had gone according to plan. Bertolt's transformation had almost completely destroyed the curtain wall protecting the mountain. Eren in his titan form had used their strange crystal to block all the murder holes in the tunnel to protect himself and Bertolt. Then, the Scouts had entered the tunnels to secure entry for the army's approach.

From there it had turned into hours of almost non stop fighting. That time had devolved in his mind to nothing more than parries, feints, and strikes. Robb couldn't help but feel a little sympathetic for the men he had slain in the tunnels. Most weren't professional soldiers at all. Just men dragged from their home's and conscripted into this fight. Their skills were far below standard, but they probably hadn't expected to actually be exchanging blows with their opponents. They were thrown into the caverns to just man the murder holes and stay out of the brunt of the fighting. The ability to fight in the tunnels had taken a major advantage away from the Lannister army, and they had used the opportunity to its fullest.

The two titans had completed their part of the plan without a flaw. Thanks to the information that Lord Tarly provided from his previous visits to the Rock, Robb, and the war council had come up with a pretty solid plan. They had assumed that the most skilled soldiers would be grouped together in the main tunnel of the Rock that lead to the castle above. Bertolt's shift had provided just enough chaos through the massive castle to keep the Lannisters on their toes and their plan intact. The Rock defenders had scurried to protect the main access to the castle and had fallen right into a trap.

While their forces in smaller groups scoured through the side tunnels the two titans had made their way through the main thorough fare. The main infantry defense force of the Lannisters had rushed down the tunnel right into Eren's trap. Resulting in the majority of the castle defenders were now trapped in a section of the tunnel surrounded by walls made of Eren's titan crystal.

Given a quick moment to catch his breath he looked around at his comrades. Jean had a introspective if not guilty expression marring his face. No doubt the taller boy was thinking along the same as Robb in regards to the quality of defense they had encountered so far. Mikasa looked completely indifferent. The whole ordeal no more that any other menial task that just had to be completed.

Ser Willas looked contemplative. His great sword at his side drenched in as much blood as Robb's own. The giant of a man had been wreaking havoc during their assault. Every opponent the knight came upon was at a complete disadvantage. Even if they attempted to block his swings the amount of power he could put behind his sword would completely negate their efforts. The blood splattered across his steel plate further evidence of the number of men that had fell to him.

The expression lighting up Hange's face made a shiver run down Robb's spine. Her face was split in a wide toothy grin and there was a manic gleam in her eyes. He wasn't sure if the woman had an insatiable blood lust or just really enjoyed battle highs. Either way he wasn't brave enough to ask. Olyvar was the last of their group and he was stood silent with his face pale. Like the rest of them his armor was splattered with blood.
The sound of boots echoing through the tunnels had his party snap to attention. Ser Willas stood out front raising his tower shield while preparing his great sword. Robb took up position to his right with Mikasa next to him. Jean and Hange mirroring them on the left. Olyvar at the back providing rear security.

A few moments later bodies began pouring out of a tunnel on their left fifty feet down. The Lannister soldiers failed to see Robb and his company as they kept looking over their shoulders at whomever they were running from.

The man at front realized their mistake before any of the others. He yelled out a warning before rushing at them sword raised to strike out. It would be the last action the man ever made. Willas’ shield shot out knocking the blade into a harmless direction before the great sword lashed out quick as a snake almost cleaving the man in two.

At the dying cry of their comrade the other Lannister soldiers halted their advance forming a circle. The formation attempting to defend against Robb’s group and whomever else was pursuing them.

It became a fruitless endeavor. The moment they stopped their advance Mikasa and Hange both shot anchors into the ceiling before flipping in the air and landing in the middle of their formation. The next few seconds turned into a melee of blades, blood, and body parts as the two women went to work on the Lannisters. Robb swore he could almost hear Hange cackling over the sound of steel clashing.

The last body came to rest on the ground as the groups pursuers came in sight. Lord Bolton was at the front of a group of his men. The Leech Lord's pink armor marred in streaks of blood and gore from his own violent adventure through the tunnels. The man's unsettling pale eyes drifted over them till they settled on Robb. The man bowed his head slightly, “My Lord.”

“Lord Bolton,” Robb answered the greeting, “how goes it?”

“Very well, My Lord.” Bolton replied, “As you can see we have the lions on the run.” The lord of the Dreadfort looked down at the corpses strewn about before speaking again, “I feel we have to be getting close to the castle proper. We are encountering less and less soldiers.”

“I agree,” Robb nodded, “It appears the Lannisters threw their larger forces at the bottom of the mountain to hold us there. Hopefully it should only be a few more levels. I think it would be prudent for us to stick together from here.”

Bolton nodded in response, “I believe that to be wise, My Lord. No doubt the entrances to the castle will be much better defended, and with more skilled soldiers.” He turned his attention to his men behind him, “Form up and lead the way,”

The Bolton soldiers wasted no time following orders. In seconds they had a four man front created ready to march for the castle. As they moved out Lord Bolton waited till Robb's group caught up to him before he fell in at his side.

LEVI II

His heart was pounding in his chest as he sprinted round the bend in the tunnel. The Lannister
soldiers he had been pursuing for the last few minutes came into view less than a hundred feet from him. His eyes widen when he fully took in what was before him. There past the troops was a door way. Being the first door that Levi had seen in the hours of fighting he knew exactly where it lead.

Unfortunately, the troops on the other side had also seen him and were preparing to close the access to the castle and leave their comrades to his devices. Deciding that he couldn't let this opportunity to pass he jumped as high as he could and shot off both of his anchor lines. A moment later a loud crack echoed through the cavern when the hooks gripped into the thick wood of the door. He mashed down all four triggers on his controls. The winched whirled to life humming and the gas nozzle hissed loudly as he shot down the tunnel over the heads of the men he had been chasing.

Seconds later he collided with the barrier just before the defenders were able to latch it in place. The wood splintered under the power of his legs as the door went shooting open. The first man to fall had the front of his helmet collapsed in from the force that the gateway had collided into his face with. The second followed a moment later. He screamed out in pain as Levi's blades cut through his center. The third guard took a kick to the knee cap. The joint breaking in the wrong direction. He crumpled to the ground before a blade pierced through the back of his armor. The fourth took a blade across the throat dying the fastest of all of them.

The fifth man had been granted enough time to react. He came at Levi with a side swing. He quickly switched his left sword to a reverse grip catching the guard's sword. Levi's right sword came across at an upward angle piercing below the man's breastplate. He fell lifelessly to the ground the moment the blade withdrew.

The sixth man was quivering with fear after watching his mates die in seconds. However, that didn't stop him from letting out a loud war cry and charging. He just happened to die seconds later braver than most.

Levi gave the room a quick once over to make sure no other soldiers were waiting to surprise him. When he was satisfied that he was indeed alone he made his way back to the door to deal with the troops he had bypassed.

It turned out to be unnecessary. Connie, Sasha, the Kingsguard, and Dickon appeared to have caught up as Levi was securing the sally port, and dispatched the Lannister troops quite effectively. He gave them all a look over to make sure they weren't injured as they attempted to catch their breaths. The worst he saw was a cut on Connie's cheek. It may end up needing a few stitches, but the boy didn't seem to irritated by it at the moment.

When the five of them were finally standing tall again Levi laid out what they were going to do next. “Sasha, I want you to head back the way we came.” The dark haired girl nodded along as her golden eyes were locked on him, “Find any one you can and send them this way. We have a foothold into the main castle and we have to take advantage of it.” With one final nod she turned and with her O.D.M. firing off she was gone.

He then turned to the rest of them, “He have to hold this room at all cost. Once, more troops arrive we can push into the castle. Ser Loras and Ser Laurence keep watch on the interior door.” Both knights nodded before taking positions on either side of the mentioned door. “Lord Dickon watch the exterior, but don't stand directly in the door. If more Lannister troops are still roaming the tunnels I don't want us discovered easily.” The young lordling moved quickly to follow through on Levi's orders. That left Connie standing in the middle of the room waiting for his order. Levi gestured to the guard's watch desk, “Connie take a seat there and let me get a bandage on your
cheek while we have time.”

DEVAN I

To say Devan was angry would be an understatement. Today was supposed to be his day. To finally show his uncle that the main line of Lannisters weren't the only ones that mattered. He was also supposed to be able to get vengeance for his fallen father. The thought of his father making him reflexively scratch his cheek as he tried to relieve the itch of the beard.

He had so been looking forward to visiting the barber after this fight concluded. It looked like that wouldn't be happening anytime today. This should have been an easy win for the Westerland forces. The rebels should have just broken upon the curtain wall, but they had somehow almost destroyed it entirely. He still couldn't believe what his eyes had seen when he had peered down the face of the Rock to see Northern savages and knights of the Reach pouring through the remnants of the defensive wall.

Last word he had received of the battle was that rebel forces were fighting through the tunnels of the Rock like roaches. He had tried to divert his more skilled warriors to intercept them, but he hadn't heard anything from the bulk of his forces since they set out to battle.

The whole battle had turned into a debacle. If he wasn't able to turn this around he would go down in history as the first and only Lannister to lose the Rock. Wanting to avoid that destiny he had quickly redeployed what was left of the garrison as much as possible. Their whole goal now was to reenforce the sally ports that lead from the main castle into the tunnels that wormed through Casterly Rock.

Through everything that had been happening he had to thank the Seven for his aunt actually listening for once. Genna Lannister could be an outspoken woman to the point it was infuriating. She wouldn't hold back on belittling anyone at any moment. It had become a side effect related to her position. Even though she was married to a Frey, Lady Genna, had been titled the Lady of the Rock from the moment his aunt Joanna was interned into the Lannister crypts.

For once his aunt had actually listened when Devan told her to take all the children, herself, and the ladies to a secure position in the keep. At least with her out of his hair he could think clearly. Unfortunately, that left him with her fool of a husband following him around adding suggestions for their defenses.

Each suggestion had been just as useless as the previous. Emmon Frey could be called many different things, but martial was not one of them. The man had the tactical intelligence of a slug, and knew next to nothing about fighting. He would never understand why his grandfather had insisted on the union. The Freys brought no advantage to the Lannisters at all. Their house were a laughing stock. Even their own lord paramount didn't show them any level of respect,

Thankfully, he had managed to trick Emmon into thinking the most important thing he could do at the moment was make sure the vaults were secure. The man had instantly disappeared from his side with a small contingent of men. Devan was pretty sure that he had sentenced the man to death, but he wasn't about to lose any sleep over it. No doubt even his aunt would actually thank him for the service of ridding her of him. A chuckle ripped from him as he remembered all the times he
had witnessed his aunt berating Emmon.

His laughter died in his throat when he heard the wicker of a horse. The man he had sent to see what was happening in the main tunnel was returning. The horse was just slowing to a stop when Devan made it to its side. He looked up to the rider. He was one of the younger household guards. He didn't remember the boy's name, but that wasn't important right now. What was though was the fact that the boy's eyes looked like they were bugging out of his head, his face was pale, and he was breathing heavy to the point of almost hyperventilating.

“What did you see?” Devan snapped.

The boy's eyes snapped down to him as if just now realizing he was there. “My Lord?”


The boy just started shaking his head, “It is unbelievable, My Lord. They have to be from the Seven Hells. They shouldn't be here. They shouldn't be here.” As he spoke the boy began trembling all over before devolving into another breathing fit.

Devan yanked the boy from the saddle. His armor clanking noisily with the impact against the stone ground. He followed it up with a quick slap that seemed to finally snap the boy out of his fit. Seeing that he finally had his undivided attention Devan once again attempted to get the information he needed, “So, what did you see?”

“Gi-Giants, My Lord.” The boy stuttered out.

“What do you mean giants?”

“Just like in the tales, My Lord, but they were massive.” the boy spoke with a crack in his voice, “There were two of them. One of them was so tall its head almost hit the ceiling of the tunnel. It looked like it had no skin with all of its muscles showing.”

Devan could feel his face pale at the boy's words. He had been guilty of laughing at both lords and soldiers returning from the Riverlands speaking of giants and dragons. It had all been too ridiculous and outlandish to be the truth. The only thing that made sense was that these stories had been spread to justify their failings. Confirmation that he had been wrong was the last thing he wanted.

He shook it away realizing there was more important things to worry about at the moment, “What about the soldiers?”

“I believe they were capture, My Lord.” The boy cringed this time when he answered.

“What do you mean captured?” Devan responded disbelief lacing his tone, “Ten thousand troops went down that tunnel. You mean to tell me they were all captured by the rebels?”

“Yes, My Lord.” he shot back, “There were these high walls that surrounded our men. They were made out of some kind of strange blue crystal that glowed. I could hear the men inside though. I didn't want to risk getting closer, so I rode back as fast as possible.”

This wasn't good. If all his forces sent to slow the rebels down had been captured he only had a few thousand left in the castle proper. The rest being in the tunnels that the Northern and Reach forces were currently rampaging through.
He looked down at the boy as his thoughts rushed through what he should do. The Lannisters had never been in this position before. They had always relied on the curtain wall and the intimidation factor of the Rock itself as its main defenses. Once the tunnels were breached there weren't many effective defenses to be able to hold the castle.

His fears and what he had been trying to prevent became reality when a soldier came running from across the courtyard waving frantically, “MY LORD! MY LORD! THEY HAVE BREACHED A SALLY PORT!” The soldier came to a stop a few feet bowing before continuing at a lower tone, “The rebels managed to take a sally port. We have tried pushing them back, but they have dug in, My Lord.”

Devan grit his teeth as his frustration threatened to overwhelm him. “Gather everyone you can. We need to go sec-” That was as far as his was able to get before a massive roar cut over him. It was so powerful that Devan swore he could hear glass rattling in their frames, and he saw several men instinctively duck. He himself had reflexively flinched, but after the initial shock his eyes shot to the sky.

His vision moved back and forth across the sea of blue above him trying to locate the source of the noise. It wasn't until movement in the corner of his eye revealed the location of the disturbance. When his attention landed firmly on it his blood froze in his veins. There flying hundreds of feet above the castle was a dragon. It's scales matched the color of the sky so closely only the movement of the white flesh that made up its wings betrayed the dragon's position.

He stared mouth agape as the creature thought long dead passed over the castle. His eyes somehow widened further when he saw the silhouette of a man fall from its back. As the man fell the dragon tucked its wings steering widely and allowing the pull of the earth to speed it away.

A hundred feet above the castle the falling man was struck by a bolt of golden lightening that somehow manifested in the cloudless sky. The shock of the accompanying thunder threw Devan from his feet sending him tumbling across the stone ground. At the same time something impacted the sept causing all the stained glass windows of the temple to blow out in a storm of shards and dust.

As he regained his footing Devan looked around him. All the soldiers that had been previously rushing around to man their posts had frozen stiff. His eyes gazed about his surroundings to see the same expression on all the faces. Every man all wore a different level of terror as they all looked upon the sept.

What happened next felt like a lifetime, but only lasted a manner of a second or two. The wall of the sept closest to Devan suddenly blew apart. A gigantic fist made up of angry red muscle appeared through the breach. The knuckles appeared to be covered in some type of golden armor, and through the hole Devan could make out two glowing golden eyes before a foot kicked out the remainder of the wall. He had just stood there in a daze as a stone from the sept bounced across the ground before impacting the side of his head and sending him into blackness.

JON VII

He stood staring at the Lannister family where they were lined up across from him. They were a fairly easily family to pick out from their subordinates. Their golden blonde hair and emerald green
eyes were very distinctive. He had even heard from Eren that some of the Laniisport Lannisters tried blending in with the regular soldiers, but their features had quickly betrayed them.

It was a funny thing really. A family being brought down by their own hubris. Lannisters all seemed to be obsessed with their looks. Every family member before him had blonde hair and green eyes combination with the only exception being of the two young boys whom were technically Freys. Even the women married into the family possessed those same features. It was like Tywin only approved the marriages if the new bride had that hair and eye color combination. Jon felt his eyebrow raise as he took them all in. He guessed he really couldn't argue with the results. They were all arguable very beautiful people. Though that mixed with their wealth bred an extreme amount of arrogance.

He supposed there could be an argument made that he was being hypocritical in that aspect. His ancestors had married in the family for centuries to try to keep their blood line pure along with their distinctive Valyrian looks. Jon would counter that the blood line was more to make sure the family maintained their magic and thus control over the dragons. He supposed that after the dragons died it became more about tradition than the previous need. Over his youth he had heard stories about how Aerys would talk of what it means to be a true dragon and most of his rants revolved around their looks. His brow pulled into a scowl at that. Well, he surmised that he was being a little hypocritical.

He shook the thought away as he resumed perusing the family of 'lions' before him. It had been about two hours since the battle had ended and the sun was just beginning to decline into the western sea.

From the moment Reiner had burst from the sept in his titan form the battle had been all but over. He had had Lyax slowly circling the castle trying to find a place secure enough for him to set down and join the fight. It had been on the second pass when he saw a commotion in the courtyard. Levi and the rest of the scouts came bursting out of a door. They were followed by his cousin, Kingsguard, and many of the other lords and soldiers.

By the time Jon's feet were on the ground the battle was finished. They had just spent the time since gathering all the Lannister troops together and put under guard while the Greatjon led some men to bring the Lannister family together.

He was pulled from his line of thought when a little girl caught his attention. She had the distinctive Lannister coloring along with a dusting of freckles across her nose and cheekbones. She had to be about the age of Bran or Shireen, but what really caught his attention was her positioning. She was near the family, but not close enough to be among them. Also, her dress was nicer than the servants he had already seen rushing around, but not as opulent as the other Lannister ladies. It didn't take him much longer to realize what she was having been in those same shoes just a few years prior.

He signaled towards the girl for her to step forward. A small squeak of surprise came from her, but he was more interested in other reactions. Upon his gesture the woman behind the girl stiffened sharply and a household guard tried to suddenly move before Torrhen Karstark sent him to his ass. The girl jumped slightly when the man collide with the ground, but otherwise didn't move.

He didn't fail to notice that nobody in the Lannister family seemed to take notice or care that he had beckoned to the girl. He supposed it was true the way southerners treated the bastards amongst them. For once he truly understood how much of a difference it made being raised by his uncle than any of the other lords.

When he signaled again this time adding a small smile to his face the woman behind her gave the
girl a gentle nudge forward. Slowly with uncertain steps the little girl closed the distance between them. When she just a few feet away he dropped to his knee to be closer to her height and shot her the most reassuring smile he could. “What is your name, Sweetling?” He asked as he held out a hand to her.

The girl looked unsure of what to do next before she tentatively put her much smaller hand into his. “I-I'm Joy, My Lord, Joy Hill.”

Jon felt his smile widen at the girls response and he rubbed his thumb along her knuckles to try to relax the girl further before he turned his eyes up to the darker haired woman who had stood behind Joy, “And who was that you were standing with, Joy?”

The young girl's eyes followed Jon to the woman in question, “That's Teya, My Lord.”

“Is she your lady in waiting?”

The question got a small giggle from the girl, and Jon thought it was one of the greatest sounds he had ever heard, “No, My Lord. I'm not a lady, so I can't have a lady in waiting.” Joy's laughter died abruptly then, “She has just taken care of me since my father went missing.”

Jon nodded to her in understanding before signaling for the woman named Teya to approach. Unlike her charge she wasted no time joining them, and dropping into a very refined curtsey, “My Lord.”

Jon heard one of his Kingsguards' armor shift behind him. They seemed to be content letting a little girl mistake his identity, but apparently the opposite with an adult. Jon himself let it slide for now. He had more important matters to handle than worry about propriety. “Little Joy here tells me you take care of her.”

The woman nodded in response, “I have been watching over her for the past five years, My Lord. They won't let her attend the lessons with the other girls, so I took upon myself to teach her what knowledge I do have on top of caring for her.”

Jon gave the woman what he hope was an appreciative smile. “Tell me, My Lady, do you have any family here?”

“No, My Lord. My parents died many years ago of a sickness, and my brother died on the Iron Islands during the Greyjoy Rebellion. I was too busy working for the Lannisters to worry about starting a family of my own.”

“Are you familiar with the running of this castle?” was Jon's next question.

“Of course, My Lord.” Teya answered.

“Very good. I want you to organize the staff of the castle. Quarters need to be prepared for my lords. Also, let the steward know I wish to speak to him at dinner.” As the woman nodded her head in understanding Jon added one last part, “Oh, and Teya take little Joy with you. She could use the learning experience to catch on knowledge she should have already been learning.”

The woman beamed at him then before curtseying again. Taking Joy's hand the two departed and with a signal relayed from Jon to Robb two Stark men followed in their wake.

The moment Teya and Joy were out of sight Jon felt his face shift back into his neutral mask he used to deal with the unpleasant aspects of ruling. With a small wave of his fingers two umber men reached into the Lannister family before pulling out a man in the familiar red and gold armor. His
Devan Lannister was dropped to his knees before him. His golden hair and beard matted with sweat and the left side dyed a dark red from crusted blood. The result of a minor head wound that had knocked the man out in the latter part of the battle.

As he took him in, Jon, was thankful that looks couldn't kill. If they were he was sure that he would have been impaled on no less than a hundred swords. The man's green eyes were searing as he gazed up.

“Lord Devan, I'd like to thank you for your hospitality.” Jon spoke down to him condescendingly, “I do wish it was under better circumstances, but you see I couldn't remove your traitorous uncle, cousin, and her bastard from King's Landing and leave you the ability to attack me from behind. This was an unfortunate step to take back my throne.”

“Your throne?” the Lannister man sneered back, “The Targaryen scum lost their throne through conquest to the Baratheon's.”

“Conquest?” Jon hummed rhetorically, “Is that what Tywin calls massacring babies?” He began nodding his head, “Yes, I guess it does make sense after the Tarbecks and the Raynes. Murdering a small child, an infant, and their mother after that just ensures that people would be too afraid to challenge him. Hells, they were too afraid to even call out the crime itself.” Jon mussed to himself before turning back to Devan, “But do you know the problem with ruling through fear?” He didn't wait for the man to respond before answering himself, “It can only last for so long. Especially in an instance of a hidden prince seeing the way his realm is being run into the ground by Tywin's pride and that evil bastard you lot try to claim as king.”

Jon once again turned his eyes upon the man before him, “But if you want to talk about right of conquest over birth right we can do that.” He looked over to the leech lord standing silently by Lord Tarly, “Lord Bolton, a block if you would be so kind.” The lord of the Dreadfort signaled to one of his men.

A minute later a man in armor depicting the flayed man pushed his way through the crowd before depositing the log of wood at Jon's feet. The two Umber men wasted no time before hoisting Devan Lannister over the block exposing his neck. Under normal circumstances Jon would have followed with the words his uncle had taught him growing up. He bypassed it this one time for the simple reason of sending a message.

The scraping of steel against wood rang through the courtyard and echoed off the stone they were surrounded by. Jon spared no thought before raising Dark Sister above his head, and with practiced ease her blade sung through the air separating the acting lord's head clean from his shoulders.

Moans and cries rose up from the Lannisters as waves of blood poured from Devan's neck, and his greaves noisily clanged against the ground in spasms. With a signal he waved towards the rest of the Lannisters to be taken away.

Unbeknownst to them their fates had already been sealed. In the morning all the women with the exception of Joy would be shipped off to the Starry Sept in Old Town. There they would be given the option of either becoming a septa or a Silent Sister. The men on the other hand were all destined for the Wall.

With that part of the day done he decided to seek some solitude. So, with Ser Loras in tow Jon made his way to the stone garden of the Rock. He had always heard growing up that the garden possessed a small weirwood and he sought its comfort as he cleaned Dark Sister. As he walked a
small smile took his face. He had provided more man power for the Wall in the last few months than the entire seven and ten year reign of the Lannisters and Baratheons.

Chapter End Notes

So, I know that I originally said that the next chapter would be Daenerys I, but things changed. The next chapter originally was just going to be one of the little inserts I add to other chapters, but the words kept coming and before I knew it there was an entire chapter all its own which will come first.

NEXT: ALLISER I
Chapter Summary

Lord Renly Baratheon arrives at the Wall with a certain lion.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone.
Don't really have anything to throw in here today,
so let's just get to the show

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Alliser let a groan slip as he pulled himself up in his bed. His body ached all over from the cold of Castle Black. Over the years of his forced exile at the Wall he had gotten older and with that age also came the aches from the cold. Which came with the unfortunate fact that it was always cold here.

A sharp shiver shot through him as his bare feet touched the wooden planks that made up the floor of his chamber. Another groan pulled from him as he stretched out his cramped limbs. The stretches were accompanied by satisfying pops along his spine as he extended to his full length. Getting to his feet he shook out his limbs before turning and making his bed. A habit that he hadn't been able to shake since his days in King's Landing as a man-at-arms for the Targaryens.

After his bed was done he went about the rest of his morning ritual. He scrubbed his teeth, gave himself a cold shave, and donned his blacks. At least the clothing colors hadn't changed too much from his court days. Just even more black and no red. He gave his room one last look to make sure everything was still in place. Satisfied everything was organized he threw his black fur lined cloak over his shoulders and made his way out of the chambers.

The entire 'castle' seemed to protest his movements with each step he took. Every board protesting his weight, and every wall creaking. If he hadn't already survived one strong winter in the Watch it would be easy to think that the first strong snow storm could bring Castle Black down to rubble.

Making his way across the grounds he pondered on his duties for the day. First like always he would break his fast. After that he would have morning drills for the recruits that had yet to take their vows. His current batch he was dealing with were exceptionally useless. Some days he would spend hours in Castle Black's small sept trying to ask the gods what he had done to offend them so that this was the life he was given. Especially after this batch had arrived.

Two rapers that both wore sneers on their faces constantly. Both looking as if being sent to the Wall was the greatest affront to them. The little bastards actually deserved their fate unlike himself. Rapers deserved so much more punishment than a life in the Watch. However, that wasn't his place to worry about it anymore. The Watch didn't have the luxury of being discerning in whom they received. That wouldn't stop Thorne from making their lives a little more miserable.
There was a thief. The story he had heard was that the boy had been caught trying to steal some cheese for his sister and himself. The boy had chosen the Wall instead of losing a hand. Thankfully, he had some smarts to him, but was as wiry as a reed. It would take a lot more training to build up the muscle required to even be a halfway competent sword. To save both time, effort, and stress once they moved on to full brothers Alliser will just recommend the boy to the Stewards.

The next was a larger boy. He at least as far as Alliser knew was a volunteer. Gods know why anyone would actually volunteer for a life here, but at least he wasn't a criminal. He felt that this one could potentially become a decent swordsman with training. It helped that he was the size of an aurochs, but came with the down side of being about as smart as one. The boy had to be guided through his swings multiple times before they even began to sink in. In the end with a lot of teaching and patience the boy could be molded into a halfway decent Ranger.

The last major thorn in his side had been Samwell Tarly. The little piggy lordling that had been off loaded onto the Watch. That boy had been one of the most useless men Alliser had ever been cursed to know. The boy had been completely useless with a blade. For growing up in Horn Hill he somehow didn't even know which end to hold. When put into spars in the yard he would yield before the first strike even landed. All the little fatty ever seemed to concern himself with was kitchen duty or library duties.

The latter actually giving him the perfect excuse to wash his hands of the useless fucker. The solution actually presented itself from the aurochs Grenn of all people. However, the more he thought of it the boy had been put up to it by the other recruits. He truly wasn't smart enough to come up with it on his own. Thorne wasn't about to let a gift horse escape though. So, the moment he had finished speaking with Grenn, Alliser, had made his way to the Lord Commander's solar. By nightfall Samwell Tarly was essentially assigned to the Stewards and had taken up the roll as Maester Aemon's assistant. The current man, Chett, hadn't been happy about it, but he could care less about what made that pox ridden fool happy.

The wooden door's hinges screeched in protest as he entered Castle Black's mess hall. Throughout the massive room men of the Watch sat already deep in their meals as the air was filled with their japes. He never understood how the other men could still have their sense of humor after being in this living hell for so long.

He shook the thought away before making his way to the high table. As he moved to his seat he looked at the others already present. Othell Yarwyck the First Builder, Bowen Marsh the First Steward, there was an empty seat for Benjen Stark the First Ranger. He had been beyond the Wall for the last few moons on a ranging to try and locate Ser Waymar Royce and his men. After the First Ranger's chair was the Lord Commander's which also sat empty. The Lord Commander was most likely breaking his fast in his solar. It was the norm for Jeor Mormont, so he could respond to missives with his squire as he did so. Next to Alliser's chair was Maester Aemon.

He was essentially the only person Thorne could completely tolerate in the entire castle. One of the last surviving members of the family that Alliser had sworn his life and sword to. His age had robbed the old man of his sight, but his intelligence had not even come close to abandoning him. He was also the oldest man Alliser had ever met at over a century of age. All the while the poor maester had been stuck at the Wall as tragedy after tragedy struck his family.

As he took his seat he patted the maester's wrinkly hand in greeting. “Ser Alliser,” the man responded with a toothy grin.

“How are you this morning, Maester?” Alliser asked his tone always lighter when he got to speak with the elder.
“Very good.” Aemon responded, “I have to thank you again for sending me Samwell. I forgot how useful it was having an assistant that was fully literate.”

Alliser’s eyes turned from the elderly man at his side to the fat boy shuffling around behind them. The boy breathing heavily as he scurried about preparing the maester's meal, “I would be lying if I said that it wasn't a favor to both of us.”

The response elicited a chuckle from Aemon as he patted his hand back, “Aye. I had heard his lack of battle prowess was quite stressing for you.” A more serious look pulled on the man's features, “Though, it is important to remember that every man has a purpose they can fill, and even if Sam coming to me wasn't your idea it is still what works best for the Watch.”

“As you say, Maester.” Was the only response Aliser could come up with. The whole thing was truly beyond him really. He didn't understand how in their world the boy could be that useless with a blade. Hells, Aemon was the smartest man he had ever met and he would bet a fistful of gold dragons that back in his youth the man still knew his way around a sword.

Their conversation was cut off then when a pewter plate clanked down on the wooden table. “Ah, thanks young Samwell.” Aemon graciously spoke to his new personal steward.

“Yo-you're mo-most welcome, Ma- Maester Aemon.” Alliser rose an eyebrow at the chunky lordling. Was the boy always such a stuttering mess, or was it just that he was there?

He didn't have time to think of it too much when a plate was placed before him by one of the other stewards. He decided to shelve all of his other thoughts and just concentrate on his food. One of the few joys he actually had in this frozen wasteland.

This morning he had a decent sized heel of black bread, three boiled eggs, a few strips of thick cut bacon, and lastly three wedges of an orange. The latter part of their daily meals in place to prevent outbreaks of scurvy amongst the men.

As he tucked into his meal he let his thoughts drift to what he had for the rest of the day. After the trainees' time in the yard they would have luncheon. His afternoon would start with a meeting of the senior leadership in the Lord Commander's solar. After the meeting would be the training for the rest of the Rangers. Dinner would come after, and then he would be done for the day.

He truly didn't miss his days as a Ranger, but the repetitive nature of his schedule almost made him beg for any type of change. If anything just to break the monotony of it all up.

As he was preparing for morning drills it appeared the gods themselves for once decided to listen to Ser Alliser's thoughts and gave him exactly what he wished for. Like always after breaking his fast Thorne had waited as patiently as he could for his charges to arrive. They were currently all in the armory outfitting themselves in training armor. He would normally already be yelling at them to get the weight out, but he was feeling somewhat generous today. He supposed his meal could be given credit for the change. Neither the bread or bacon was burnt at all, and his tea had been brewed to perfection. Minus waking up already miserable it had been a fairly good morning so far. No need to ruin the day himself before these green boys took upon themselves to do it.

He watched with a neutral look on his face as they arrived. All of them the bane of his existence in their own little ways. Once all the knuckle heads had finally arrived he began going through the simple drills. They were essentially no more than basic exercises designed to help strengthen the boys and get them used to the weight of the sword without having to worry about thinking their
way through a spar.

It was then that the horn sounded from the top of the Wall. When a second blast didn't follow Alliser let a little hope build in his chest that Benjen had returned. The man wasn't anywhere near what Alliser would consider a friend, but the watch was too undermanned to lose both a knight and experienced Ranger like Stark.

The hope died a quick death though when he gazed up the Wall to see a watchman looking down as he pointed to the south. With the height of the Wall they couldn't exactly lock eyes, but they both knew they had each others' attention. With a wave of his hand he acknowledged the man letting him return to his watch. He turned to his charges telling them to relax in place and wait for his return.

Fast as he could Aliser made his way to the southern 'gate house' of Castle Black. When he reached the walkway over the gate. What he saw upon his arrival made his eyes widen.

Approaching Castle Black was a procession of easily a thousand men. Wagons loaded with crates were intermingled amongst the caravan. What really caught his attention though were the banners. He saw Locke keys, Cerwyn axes, and a few other smaller Northern house banners that he couldn't recall at the moment. Though his attention was on the front of the massive party where the crowned stag of Baratheon waved along with another. The last one caused him to blink several times to make sure he wasn't hallucinating. He never thought he would see the three-headed dragon displayed out in the open for the rest of his life. Yet here it was leading this parade of men and supplies to the Wall.

By the time the gates to Castle Black creaked open he had already redistributed his charges. He had them return their training armor to the armory. With the length of the procession the boys would need to aid the stewards in distributing the supplies or help guide the new men to the places in the barracks.

His head turned to see the first horses trotting their way into the courtyard. Their hooves clomping loudly against the frozen ground. Alliser felt his blood begin to boil as he took in the first man behind the banner bearers. There sat high on a destrier was a ghost from Thorne's past. The jet black hair, chiseled jaw, and bright blue eyes was like he was looking at the vision of the man whom had doomed him to his exile at the Wall. The only crime Ser Alliser had ever been guilty of was upholding his oaths, but to Robert Baratheon he was decried as nothing more than 'dragon loving scum.'

Maybe it was cowardly to accept the Wall over losing his head, but to him it was the same either way. He would still die from his convictions, but at least this way he had gotten to enjoy a few more years.

His opinion of the younger man didn't change at all when he dismounted. He had a beaming smile on his face reminiscent of the Usurper. The only thing at this point keeping vitirol from spewing from Alliser's mouth was his confusion over the presence of the Targaryen banner. If this was truly Robert before him the flag would've been burned to ash, pissed on, and buried before he ever marched behind it.

“Greetings, Good Sir,” The man spoke while holding out his hand in greeting. The man’s smile never left his face and his voice was just as deep as he remembered Robert's to be. It only lacked
that commanding boom that the man always seemed to speak in. “I'm Lord Renly Baratheon. I was charged by the crown prince to bring these supplies and men to the Wall. On top of that I'm to be His Grace's liaison to the Watch until I'm called back to King's Landing.”

The young Baratheon's words along with the circumstances only added more confusion to Alliser's already addled mind. He didn't even realize till he felt the warmth of the other man's hand that he had instinctively returned the greeting. Clearing his throat to buy himself an extra second he decided for once to be diplomatic. There were too many variables he didn't have answers to, and if he wanted them it was best to play along for now. “Welcome to Castle Black, Lord Baratheon, I am the Master-at-Arms, Ser Alliser Throne.”

“Many thanks, Ser Alliser,” The man responded jovially with the smile never leaving his face. “I have many things to discuss with the Lord Commander. I'm not sure on how much news reaches you here, but the Seven Kingdoms are changing quickly. Hells, even the news I have for you by now will be plenty outdated.” The Baratheon man extended an arm towards the caravan that was still pouring through the gate, “but first I have brought you a very special recruit that His Grace was more than generous to provide you with.”

Alliser followed Renly as he began walking down the line. They didn't have to go too far before they stopped by a horse that two men were pulling the occupant from. The blonde haired man crashed to the ground like a sack of potatoes. When he looked up from his prone position catlike green eyes met blue-grey, and Thorne couldn't help the sadistic grin that cut across his face. “Well, if it isn't Ser Jaime Lannister, the Kingslayer.”

He watched as the two men in Cerwyn livery yanked the traitorous knight to his feet. When his eyes focused on the man's bound limbs he couldn't resist provoking the Young Lion a little, “It seems you lost both your white cloak and a hand, Kingslayer.” He didn't give the Lannister time to retort before turning to two stewards waiting off at the side. “You two, show these men the way to the ice cells and deposit the Kingslayer there till we know what the Lord Commander wants done with him.

Ser Alliser stood silently with Renly beside him. He wanted to take a moment to just savor the image of the Kingslayer being dragged away in chains. All in all Thorne had to admit it was rather cathartic and he enjoyed every second of it. As the small group passed the Lord Commander's tower he saw Jeor standing out on the landing watching the chaos that had over taken the courtyard. When their eyes met Alliser was beckoned with a wave of the hand before the Lord Commander turned back and reentered his solar. “Lord Renly, I believe that the Lord Commander would like to have words.”

“Very well. Shall we?” was the response he received. The smile still placed firmly on the younger lords face.

Renly fell into step at Alliser's side as they made their way across the castle ground. Noticing his charges still grouped together he called out, “Aurochs.”

“Ser?!” came the immediate reply.

“Send Yarwyck and Marsh to the Lord Commander's solar. While you are at it make sure Ser Piggy brings Maester Aemon as well.” Thankfully the oaf didn't waste anytime going to find the requested people. He then turned his attention to the rest of them, “You lot help get these carts unloaded.”
It was fifteen minutes later when the door to the Lord Commander's solar opened and Maester Aemon came shuffling in with the assistance of Samwell Tarly. Once the elderly maester was seated and his steward had provided him with a goblet of water the Lord Commander waited until Tarly had retreated from the room before beginning.

He turned to the Baratheon man whom was currently taking a sip of ale from the horn in his hand. “To whom do we owe the great boon you have so graciously brought to our gates? King Joffrey?”

Alliser flinched when a booming laugh ripped from Renly. The sound set his nerves on edge with how much it reminded him of Robert. “Joffrey? Gods no. I doubt that little fool could even point out the Wall on a map even if it was already circled for him.” The man proceeded to wipe the foam from his lip with a handkerchief before reaching into his doublet. His hand reemerged with a rolled parchment secured in his grasp. As he offered it over to the Lord Commander Alliser caught sight of a blob of red wax sealing it shut.

The Old Bear reached across his desk accepting the missive. The solar was so quite that the cracking of the seal seemed to echo throughout the room. He wasn't sure how the others were feeling, but Thorne found himself anxious to hear the answers that the letter held and Renly had been careful not to reveal himself.

He watched as Mormont's eyes scanned the parchment before he looked up at the other occupants of the room. His eyes seemed to stop on both Maester Aemon and himself before a slight smile took his face. He cleared his throat beginning to read out loud.

““To the Lord Commander of the Night's Watch Jeor Mormont. I am sure you are wondering about the sudden influx of supplies and men. To answer your question they are survivors of the Battle of the Green Fork and the Lannister's failed siege at Riverrun. The most notable of the men sent to you is Ser Jaime Lannister.”

“The Lannister's say they always pay their debts, but Ser Jaime's were long over due. So, he will pay them by serving the rest of his life in service to the Realm.”

“As far as the supplies go most of them were a generous donation made by the Tyrells when Lord Robb Stark wed the Lady Margaery Tyrell.”

“I had tried to coerce Lord Mace to include some fine Arbor wines for your men, but getting them to give up their fine wine is harder than getting blood from a stone. Nonetheless if my instructions were followed properly there should be kegs of ale from Winterfell instead.”

“The war currently rages across the south, but once I have secured the Iron Throne and my family are back in their rightful place I will be sure to have supplies and men found for you regularly.”

“In the mean time I have sent Lord Renly Baratheon to represent me as a liaison to the Night's Watch. Let him know everything you require and when he is recalled to King's Landing I will get the information straight from him.”

“Jon Targaryen, true born son of Prince Rhaegar Targaryen and Princess Lyanna Stark-Targaryen, Crown Prince of the Seven Kingdoms.”

Jeor set the paper down after he finished. The room remained quite as everyone seemed to be absorbing the news of the letter, but one thought kept nagging at the back of his head. He looked over at Aemon whom currently was trembling slightly as a few tears ran down his cheeks. Figuring
that the old man wouldn't be speaking anytime soon Alliser took it upon himself to ask the question, “Who in the Seven Hells is Jon Targaryen?”

“You would all know him better as Jon Snow, the Bastard of Winterfell,” Renly shrugged as he took another pull off his drinking horn.

“Ned Stark's bastard?” Mormont asked incredulously.

“Apparently, he was never a bastard to begin with.” the stag lord spoke as he peered into his drink. “From what I gathered when I was in his camp the prince was hidden by Lord Stark to protect him from my brother and Lord Tywin. He told me originally he wasn't going to push his claim at all. However, the prince felt compelled to after the Lannister bitch allowed her bastard to murder Eddard Stark.”

“I don't know what news has made it up here, but Lord Stark was able to discover that all of the children that my brother claimed were actually in fact bastards. Bastards born of an affair between Cersei and her twin brother the Kingslayer.”

Gasps resounded around the room, but it was Aemon who spoke next, “As much as my heart begs me to believe what you say. Does the boy have any proof that he is indeed my family?”

Renly looked directly into the maester's milky eyes, “He claims he has documents proving the marriage of Rhaegar and Lyanna. As well as the record of his birth signed by Ser Gerold Hightower, Ser Oswell Whent, and Ser Arthur Dayne. I haven't seen the documents with my own eyes. However, the two pieces of evidence I saw for myself were compelling enough on their own. One was the sword Dark Sister.”

“How in the Hells did this boy get his hands on Dark Sister? Wasn't the sword presumed lost?” Bowen cut in before Renly was able to continue.

“That's an easy question to answer. I gave the sword to Rhaegar myself.” Aemon answered nonchalantly, “A few years before the rebellion Prince Rhaegar traveled here in disguise to talk with me. The sword had been in my possession from the day that Bryden Rivers disappeared beyond the Wall. No doubt wherever Eddard Stark found Dark Sister is the same place that he found little Jon and Lyanna.”

Aemon then turned from Marsh back to the Baratheon, “What was the other thing you were going to say, My Lord.”

It took Renly a moment for him to get back on track before his eyes suddenly lit up, “Oh, the prince's dragon. She alone is a very compelling argument all on her own.”

Alliser's eyebrows rose as he took in the words just spoken before Jeor spoek up, “The dragons have been dead for over a hundred years, Lord Renly.”

“Well they aren't dead anymore.” He shot back, “I saw her with my own eyes. She was easily the size of a long ship. Her scales are the same shade of blue as the sky and her eyes look like two molten pools of silver. The prince has even already rode her in battle. At the Green Fork she blew fire on the Lannister lines causing the Old Lion to break and run back to King's Landing with his tail between his legs.”

Thorne could feel his excitement building up inside of him, “So, what was the latest news before you headed north?”

The Baratheon lord took another long drink before speaking, “Well, from what I know the prince
was sending Lord Velaryon, Darry, and the Red Viper's daughters to find Princess Daenerys and bring her home. The prince along with the bulk of the Northern and Reach forces were going to campaign into the Westerlands, and the prince's wife Princess Annie Targaryen was staying in Riverrun since she is currently with child.”

“Very well then.” Mormont spoke. “It's not like it is really our place to worry about the Seven Kingdoms here,” He then turned towards the elderly maester, “but this has to be good news for you Aemon.” The man didn't speak but nodded his head in answer. Jeor seemed to take him in for a moment to see if he would get more of a reaction, but Aemon just stayed silent.

Alliser didn't know what the Lord Commander expected, but to him it seemed that Aemon was still trying to process all the news. He couldn't imagine what it felt like to think you were the only member left of your family left. He knew the Thornes hadn't been treated well by Robert, but they were at least still alive.

“Right,” Jeor cut across Thorne's thoughts, “We have a lot of new men to get situated. Thorne, most of them should be mostly trained so that makes your life a little easier, but I still want all these men interviewed to see where we can best use them.” His brows furrowed and his expression became stormy, “The Kingslayer, however, will swear his vows tonight. The rest by the end of the week.”

Alliser felt the first genuine smile take his face in years. The family he had dedicated his life to were rising from the ashes and in the process of casting down the lions. Surprisingly, it was all due to Eddard Stark protecting the last son of Rhaegar Targaryen. He supposed he owed Benjen an apology when he finally returned from his ranging.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: DAENERYS I
Chapter Summary

Daenerys stews in Qarth, but has some very unexpected visitors

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone,

I hope all of your holidays and the start of the year went well for everyone.

As you could probably guess I got caught up in a bunch of holiday events and they effectively chewed up my time, but I'm back, and we have the next few chapters well lined up for us to chug through.

SOOO, without further delay lets get to it.

“...You see, if his fleet is able to finish the full trip through the Jade Sea, on their return, the merchant would be able to afford a manse in Pentos. He would be so wealthy he would no longer have to actively work himself. His life's work would have ensured that his children and their children after them would be able to live very wealthy lives, and the fleet would keep their purses full. He may even be able to expand his fleet to include ten more ships.” Doreah smiled as she finished spinning her tale of the fleet they had seen arrive earlier.

It had become one of Daenerys' favorite activities as they watched the dragons play in the garden of Xaro Xhoan Daxos' manse. It sat high on a hill giving an unobstructed view of all of Qarth and the bay beyond. As the dragons would dart from tree to tree chasing each other, Doreah and herself, would watch the ships come and go from the docks taking turns weaving stories of where the ships came from and where they were going after their stop in “The Greatest City on the Planet,” as Xaro would say.

The subject of Doreah's most recent tale had been a fleet of ten ships. The bay was too far away to be able to make out details, but all of the ships had the same blue-green colored sails. That had given the former pleasure slave the idea that they were all together, and from there she had woven quite the pleasing anecdote of a merchant growing a fleet of trading ships all his life to try his hand at the Jade Sea trading run.

Daenerys knew all of the fabled trading route. From her years of running from the Usurper's knives she had spent her fair share of time at sea. There were few things for a child to do out on the open water, so she would mostly listen to the sailors and their own tales. From what she had pieced together from all the men she had talked to was that if you could successfully make a trip through the Jade Sea you would be able to live out the rest of your days in luxury once you returned to your homeland. The rarities you could get your hands on would be able to fetch a mint amongst the highborn customers you would be able to deal with.
She blew out an annoyed breath. These little story times were great distractions, but it never lasted for long. The reality of her situation always seemed to push back to the forefront of her mind. Every time it did her mood would be pulled back down to earth, and sometimes to greater depths.

Daenerys couldn't help but hope that today would be the day Ser Jorah finally returned with good news. He had been spending the last moon going to the docks everyday to try and find them a ship to be able to leave the city they found themselves more or less stranded in.

They had spent the last few moons in Qarth. It truly was a beautiful city, and she wanted to explore and enjoy it to the fullest. It was their leadership she had an issue with, though. Specifically, the Council of Thirteen.

She had come to this city to try and get help for the small khalasar she led. However, everything had changed when Ser Jorah had told her what he had heard from Westeros.

King Robert was dead, and war had broken out in the Seven Kingdoms. Her bear told her it was hard to garner the truth from all the different sailors' stories. What they all shared though had to be the absolute truth.

Robert Baratheon had died. There were several different variant stories to the Usurper's demise, but the most common was that he was savaged by a boar on a hunt. In the turmoil Lord Stark had been arrested and charged with treason. He had tried to wrangle control of the throne away from the Cersei Lannister and her son Joffrey. To Daenerys it made total sense. The Starks were Robert's dogs, and were traitorous through and through, so it made sense their lord would try to grab power the moment it presented itself.

Ser Jorah had vehemently disagreed though. He had told her that no matter what her brother had told her growing up he was greatly mistaken. Despite how he had to leave his home, Jorah, spoke highly of how honorable Eddard Stark was, and that the charges against him had to be false or exaggerations.

Their discussion had almost descended into an argument over the Starks at that point. She couldn't see how honorable they could possibly be considering they had rose in rebellion against her family. They were one of the main factors in her having to spend her life on the run. Thankfully, in the end he had gotten them back on track before the conversation could devolve anymore.

After his arrest, the boy king Joffrey, had publicly executed Lord Stark plunging the Kingdoms into war. The latest news that sailors had provided said that the North had risen up in. Enraged at the death of their liege lord on charges they deemed false they had conducted a march of fire deep into the Riverlands.

This was the perfect opportunity for her. There would be no better chance for her to reclaim her family's throne. She still wasn't sure if she was ready for the responsibility, but she was the last bastion of House Targaryen, and Daenerys would show them all the wrath of a dragon.

Getting there was easier said than done. During her time in Qarth she had met with each of the Thirteen at one point or another. After hearing the turmoil of her home land she had set her pride aside and essentially begged for the rulers' assistance.

Over those meetings she had been showered with gifts. They had tried stroking her ego and offered up false words to try and placate her. It may have worked if she hadn't seen this same act played out over the years of her life. She had witnessed the same thing countless times as Viserys and her had drifted through the free cities. The various magisters that would host them would stroke her brothers ego and toast to the return of the dragons upon the Iron Throne. They would even call him
'Your Grace' and act like they were vessels bending to his whims. Then, whenever he was out of earshot they would call him the 'Beggar King' as they laughed amongst themselves.

That was when she realized that they were just an oddity for them to appreciate. To the magisters the two orphaned Targaryens were no different than the animals of a menagerie. It appeared that the Thirteen of Qarth felt the same way.

She had been offered marriage a few times by their members. Xaro being the most persistent in that endeavor. The remaining men hadn't even bothered with the guise of marriage. Instead bluntly offering to have tumbles in the sheets. Apparently her no longer being a maiden meant these men could do away with both decorum and decency.

The only member of the Thirteen that didn't seemed to be interested in her body was Pyat Pree. His obsession was completely different than the others. He was either constantly asking to see the dragons or insisting that she come to the House of the Undying where the rest of his warlock brothers resided. Much to Ser Jorah's relief she had decline every invitation of the sort politely as possible.

The lack of want to help on the Thirteen's part is what had lead to Ser Jorah's current endeavor. If they continued to fail in finding passage away from Qarth she could potentially end up losing the opportunity to take advantage of the chaos Westeros had been enveloped in. A long tired sigh escaped her at the morose thought.

“Khaleesi?” her eyes snapped up to be met with Doreah's sapphire blue eyes lighting with concern.

“Hmm.” She hummed in response.

“Are you well, Khaleesi?” the former pleasure girl asked sweetly.

“Oh, I'm fine Doreah. Just got lost in thought for a bit.” She sent a slight smile the other girl's way. A much brighter full tooth one was sent back. Daenerys took a moment to really look at her companion. The blonde girl had come into her service after being bought for her as a wedding gift. She had later learned the girl's job was to teach her how to please Khal Drogo in the marriage bed. She had been apprehensive of the lessons at first, but over time they had worked to break Drogo down. In private at least, and that had been a boon in its own way. Over time bedding her Khal had become much easier, and she was had no longer been sore the following days.

The down side had been that Viserys took too many liberties with Doreah. He had always used the attitude that anything of Daenerys' also belonged to him, and that apparently included the Lyseni's body. Too many times she had seen the bruises on the other girl from her brother's proclivities. Doreah would try to smile and wave off any of her concerns, but Daenerys could always see the pain in the other girl's eyes.

That had all changed after Viserys got himself killed by her former husband. Little by little a different Doreah emerged. She felt like she was meeting an entirely different person, and that also helped them grow closer. However, Doreah's smiles never met the magnitude they do now until she had freed everyone the night her dragons were born. Even with how much of the original khalasar had abandoned her Doreah stayed by her side now as a fully free from her former shackles.

Realizing that she had once again drifted into her thoughts, and the other girl was still waiting for her to continue she decided to speak her thoughts, “I was just hoping that Ser Jorah is finally successful today.”
Doreah didn't speak at all. She just nodded her head in understanding before her eyes turned back to the view before them. They stood there in silence a few minutes before a ship could be seen in the distance. The sail was fully extended catching the wind and displaying its red and grey colored stripes proudly. Her eyes suddenly lit up again, “It's your turn, Khaleesi, if you still feel up to it?”

Daenerys' gaze stayed locked on the ship for a few moments. A sense of loss rose in her chest knowing that yet another chance of leaving this city had just slipped away. Another tired sigh escaped her, “I think I'm done with this for right now, Doreah.” The other girl had a putout expression take her face, but nodded in understanding before she departed leaving Daenerys to her thoughts on the balcony.

She really didn't think through anything else. She just stood there in a daze as she watched the sunlight shimmer across the sea surface, and with what noises could reach her listened to the bustling city beyond the estate's walls.

She was brought back to reality when a squawk sounded next to her. There on the railing was her smallest dragon. His cream colored scales seeming to glow in the daylight. She watched as his head tilted in curiosity while his golden eyes gleamed up at her. A small smile pulled at her lips from the innocent look before she reached out to him. Viserion began making a purring sound as she ran her fingers over his head.

An annoyed screech cut through the air as Drogon smashed against the railing in front of her. Once her black dragon had caught his balance he hissed out and snapped his jaws at his smaller brother. Daenerys tsk'd at him before bopping him on the nose, “Now, now, Drogon. You can't have all my attention to yourself. Your brothers need love too.”

She was rewarded for the attempted parenting by Drogon shooting out a huff of smoke. She couldn't help the chuckle that escaped her at his reaction. However, like his brother he calmed and began purring as soon as she started rubbing his head with her free hand.

A sudden jolt stumbled her a little as her third child impacted her shoulder. The green and bronze dragon sunk his claws into the fabric of her dress, and his tail loop around her neck to secure himself in position. She tried giving the newcomer a reproachful look, but Rhaegal ignored it. He just began purring as he rubbed his head up against her chin. Daenerys simply gave up at that point with a sigh, and just enjoyed the comfort her three babies could provide her.

She didn't know how long she stood there gazing off in the distance. She had just allowed herself to get lost in the love of her children. Her ears occasionally picked up the chattering of Irri, Jhiqui, and Doreah as they worked in her chambers. From their quiet tone she couldn't pick up their words, but just hearing her friend's murmurs somehow added to her now more relaxed state.

Her serene mood couldn't last though. A new voice suddenly added itself to her maids'. She knew right off the bat it was a man from the deeper baritone it carried. The four in her chambers went back and forth for a few seconds before she could hear their steps approach her on the terrace.

She kept her gaze out on the bay not turning to her new companion when their steps finally came to a stop behind her. She truly didn't want to lose the calm she had finally gained, but it was all for not when Rakharo's voice reached her ears. “Khalesi, Jorah the Andal has returned. He says there are important guests to speak with you.”

Daenerys felt her heart pick up a little. She attempted to stamp down the hope that began to bloom with the thought that maybe her bear had been successful. At this point she didn't think she could
handle the disappointment of more failed negotiations.

It was a couple seconds before the way Rakharo had spoken processed in her mind. He had spoken with an enthusiasm she hadn't heard in a while. The last time he had spoken with such joy was when he returned with word of the Thirteen granting her an audience.

Allowing just a little hope to bloom in her heart she turned to take in the face of her bloodrider. There was a small toothy grin pulled on his face, and a bright gleam in his brown eyes. Curiosity finally getting the better of her she asked, “Did you see any of these guests?”

“I did Khaleesi.” His small smile now pulling into a full grin, “I know not who they are, but Jorah the Andal seemed very happy to see them, and their guards all wear the same iron armor as him.”

The infectious nature of his smile caused one to pull on her own lips. “Then by all means let's not keep them waiting.” Turning around she scooped Drogon and Viserion off the railing. Both dragons curled their tails around her forearms before settling into the crooks of her elbows. With the smile still pulling on her face she followed Rakharo to the audience chamber of Xaro's manse.

When she entered the room the first thing she noticed were the remaining Dothraki warriors that had followed her standing tense. Their arakhs were drawn but hung at their sides. Their eyes were locked on the other occupants of the room, and their bodies were tense as if waiting for any provocation.

She followed their line of sight to her guests. There were two grown men along with three young women whom could only be a few years older than herself. Behind them stood a row of guards. Like her bloodriders their bodies seemed tense yet their blades remained sheathed in their scabbards. Jorah stood by the table that separated the two settees in the room. A large smile adorned his face. Opposite of her Dothraki he stood with a relaxed posture. His hand resting relaxed on the pommel of his sword like usual.

Her eyes turned from her faithful bear to her guests. The two men stood in from of the settees with the young women behind it. The first man had light brown hair with blue eyes. He was dressed in a brown doublet with black trousers. On the breast of his garment in black embroidery was what appeared to be a farmer with a plow. Some part of Daenerys' mind jumped at the image, but her memory couldn't quite pull out what made it seem familiar.

The second man was more of a shock than the first. He stood a few inches taller than his companion, but what really caught her attention was his features. His silver hair so like hers, and his purple eyes were calling out to her. The smile that was on his face had the warm feeling of family, and she couldn't fight the warmth that the expression caused to surge through her body. He wore a blue green doublet with a silver seahorse on his breast paired with white trousers. This sigil she had no trouble placing at all. Between the books that Jorah had gifted her and Viserys' many stories she could identify the sigil of the Velaryons anywhere.

Her observations then turned to the young women behind the two. The first was the tallest and what Daenerys assumed whom was also the oldest. Her hair was pitch black and her eyes a chocolate brown. Her skin tone was more a sun kissed brown than the Dothraki's copper skin. She had a rather strong jawline for a woman, and she was adorned in what looked like leather armor that appeared to have the texture of snake scales.

The second matched the first in hair and eye color. That however was where the similarities ended. Unlike the first she had a much more feminine demeanor. Her jawline was soft and she had prominent cheek bones which added to her beauty. She was dressed in orange and yellow flowing silks that contrasted deeply with the armor the woman beside her wore. A snake wrought in bronze
The third was completely opposite to the first two. She had blonde hair so pale it almost bordered on silver with bright blue eyes. She still had tan skin, but unlike the others it was a tone that Daenerys herself would possess if she spent more time in the sun. The gown she wore gave the appearance of being religious in nature and gave her a pious feel.

She was broke from her observations as the two men bowed their heads and greeted her simultaneously with a, “Your Grace.”

The silver haired man took over at that moment speaking for everyone, “I can't tell you how happy we are to find you safe and of good health, Princess.” The man then gestured to himself, “I am Lord Monford Velaryon.” His hand moved to the man beside him, “This is Lord Raymun Darry, and the three ladies behind us are Obarra, Nymeria, and Tyene sand. The daughters of Prince Oberyn Martell.”

Daenerys nodded her head in greeting to each of them as they were introduced. After which she seated her self on the settee. Her dragons crawling from her arms to curl up on the cushion beside her. Rhaegal the only one to stay in his position on her shoulder. She waved her hand signaling for the two lords to be seated. As they made themselves comfortable Doreah appeared with a tray loaded down with goblets of wine. After they were distributed and she had taken a sip of the delicious blend she cleared her throat before speaking, “To what do I owe the honor of your visit, My Lords and Ladies?”

“We have been sent as representatives to invite you back home to Westeros, Princess.” Lord Velaryon spoke in answer.

“No offense, My Lord, but for seven and ten years I have grown in exile. During that time my brother and I had to flee from city to city to avoid the Usurper's hired knives.” She had tried to keep it hidden, but she knew they had picked up on the bitterness that seeped into her voice, “So, enlighten me to what has changed now that Robert is dead. I highly doubt that the Lannisters would be pleased to know you are here.”

She watched as a sympathetic look took the lord's face before he responded, “No body feels more remorse for how you had to spend your life than the Velaryons, Your Grace. Our families have been kin from almost the time Daenys led the Targaryens to Dragonstone. We wanted to help, truly, but the Usurper watched all the families that were true Targaryen supporters constantly.” He gestured to Lord Darry, “the Darrys for example had the majority of their land stolen from them and divided up amongst those that aided Baratheon in his rebellion. They barely retained their lordship in the process.”

A long sigh then escaped him, “He even placed his brother Stannis as the Lord of Dragonstone to sniff out any treason from the other Narrow Sea Houses that had been staunch Targaryen loyalists.” He then took a sip off his goblet before setting the cup down. “To answer your other question. You are correct. The Lannisters would never welcome you home, but much has come to light in the moons since the Usurpers death.”

“The most important one being a dragon that was hidden amongst the people, and was protected from the Usurper under the cover of lies. Unbeknownst to the Seven Kingdoms your brother had a third child. He was born to your brother and good sister, Princess Lyanna Stark-Targaryen, in Dorne at the end of the war.” If there had ever been news that would have knocked the breath from her that had been it. She coughed harshly as the sip of wine she had been taking went down the wrong way from surprise. Her eyes went wide as she looked back up to the silver haired lord.
“Sorry, for the shock, Your Grace,” a light laugh escaped him as he continued, “Eddard Stark found his sister dying from child birth. He knew the boy would be in danger after seeing what had happened to the Princess Elia, Princess Rhaenys, and Prince Aegon at the hands of Tywin's dogs, and decided to hide the boy. Your nephew was raised under the guise of being Lord Stark's bastard. No one questioned it at all considering from all reports the boy was essentially a younger version of the Lord of Winterfell. He has the dark Stark hair along with their grey eyes. On top of that men have always been known to lose their ways in war trying to find comfort anyway they could, so no one questioned it. Least of all Robert whom viewed Lord Eddard as a brother and someone whom would never betray him.”

“So, what brought my supposed nephew out of hiding?” Daenerys couldn't help the skeptical tone she took. She just hoped her guests could understand why she felt this was all a little too convenient. Especially, with the way her brother always talked about the Starks’ treachery. Velaryon shot her an understanding smile, “From what I understand your nephew's path to war began when Lord Eddard Stark took up the position of Hand of the King to Robert. Once in King's Landing the new Hand got first hand knowledge of how poorly the Realm was being governed. You see, the North, even though beholden to the crown has always remained somewhat its own country. Minus major wars that they get pulled into they tend to focus on their own dealings leaving the other six kingdoms to their devices. Lord Eddard followed in the same pattern as his forefathers. The status of King's Landing and the other kingdoms was a shock for the man and then from asking around while investigating the death of Lord Jon Arryn, Lord Stark, discovered that the children Robert claimed as his own were actually bastards born of an affair between Cersei Lannister and her twin brother.”

“After Robert's death Lord Stark tried to secure the throne for the true heir and get it out of the clutches of the Lannisters. During a confrontation in the throne room he was betrayed by the Gold Cloaks and arrested for treason.”

The lord took a moment to wet his palate, and Daenerys found herself slightly annoyed by the break. She was now fully enraptured in the story at this point. This was the most reliable news she could get her hands on that wasn't warped by a sailor's tendency to embellish. She was almost beside herself when his goblet finally rested back onto the table, “It was a little after Stark's arrest that a raven arrived at Driftmark from the North. It spoke of the birth status of Joffrey and his siblings along with what proof Lord Stark had found. You see, though Cersei may have gotten her hands on Lord Stark she hadn't been able to capture his daughters or his most senior guards that he had entrusted to get this proof to his heir. On top of that the raven spoke of your nephew, and how the North was challenging the Lannisters for the Iron Throne by backing a dragon hidden amongst wolves.”

“I much like yourself was extremely skeptical at first.” She allowe a small smirk to take her face at her fears being acknowledged and gave the man an appreciative nod, “So, I sent my brother Aurane to King's Landing. He was there hidden in the crowd when Lord Stark was executed. Before his death he was given a chance to confess his treason.” a small dark chuckle escaped him at that point, “I don't think the Lannisters were expecting what the man was actually going to say. My brother told me that Lord Stark used his last few minutes alive to denounce the queen's son, and proclaiming your nephew as the true king. There were too many people present then for the Lannisters to be able to silence them all. Word spread through the Realm quickly. The more I thought about the tale told of your nephew the more it made sense. It would have been so easy to hide the Crown Prince in the North especially with his coloring. Besides, he wouldn't be the first Targaryen borne without the typical silver hair and purple eyes. Even the Princess Rhaenys had her Dornish mother's black hair.”
“The other lords and I decided that we had no better time to strike. Swiftly we rallied our men and took Dragonstone from Stannis Baratheon and raise the three-headed dragon back to its rightful spot above the castle.”

“With that first step out of the way I decided to verify this boy's identity for myself. So, under the guise of presenting him with Lord Stannis I made my way to Riverrun where he was at the time.”

“It makes me pleased to tell you that you are no longer alone, Princess, the boy claiming to be your nephew is every bit Rhaegar. Just with Northern coloring. On top of that he is as much a warrior as his father was. He led a much smaller force against Tywin Lannister at the Green Fork, and there he forced the Old Lion into retreat. At the same time his cousin Robb Stark led the remaining Northern forces to Riverrun liberating it from a Lannister siege.”

Daenerys felt a small smile pull on her lips at the expense of Tywin Lannister's embarrassment. Two defeats at the hands of essentially green boys had to be infuriating to the man. “Besides his looks being reminiscent of my brother Rhaegar is there anything else that backs up his claims of being my kin.”

“The Crown Prince was more than happy to dissuade our fears showing us the documents from both your brother's marriage to Princess Lyanna and his birth. Seeing the signatures of the Kingsguard witnesses was more than enough proof for me.”

“What about Priness Elia. She was already Rhaegar's wife.”

The middle sister was the one that spoke up answering Dany's question, “From what our father and uncle told us our aunt's marriage was annulled. Her and Rhaegar had a friendly marriage, but love was not a part of that. The only condition that was set in place was that Aegon and Rhaenys retained their position in the succession.”

“But this whole mess with Rhaegar and Lyanna caused their deaths. Surely, Prince Doran would be more upset about Lyanna's son claiming the throne now.”

Obara was the one to speak now. Her voice matching the sneer upon her face, “Your father was as much the cause of our aunt and cousins' deaths as Tywin's mad dogs. While your mother, you still in her belly, and your brother were swept away to Dragonstone our kin were kept in the Red Keep as hostages. All to keep Dorne loyal.”

Lord Darry quickly waved the girl down in a placating manner before speaking, “What Obara says is true, Your Grace. If Aerys had kept the family together things could have ended much differently. The loyalists would've had the motivation to keep fighting. However, that was not how things played out and my uncle ended up fleeing Dragonstone with your brother and yourself.”

Daenerys nodded along with the man another soft smile pulling on her lips. Her years with Ser Willem in the house with the red door had been the best of her life.

Lord Velaryon clearing his throat brought everyone's attention back to him, “Apologies, Your Grace, but we got off topic there.” Dany gave the man a nod acknowledging that fact that they did indeed drift off. “Much happened during my stay at Riverrun, Your Grace. The Tyrells arrived shortly after myself to secure an alliance with your nephew.”

“And what did this alliance entail, My Lord?”

“The Lady Margaery was wed to Lord Robb Stark, and the youngest Tyrell son was named to the Kingsguard. After that alliance was sealed your nephew then commanded the largest force in
Westeros. The North, Riverlands, and the Reach all combined together. It was then that we were tasked to search for you.”

“As we speak the Riverland forces are keeping Tywin pinned in the Crownlands as the Northern and Reach forces campaign through the Westerlands.”

“Forgive me if I sound ungrateful at all, My Lord, but what could my nephew want with me?” Dany kept her tone neutral as she spoke, but before she agreed to anything she had to know what the conditions were and what was expected of her. “In my experience nobody does anything out of pure kindness. I only have one hundred Dothraki loyal to me. My dragons are too young to be any use in war. Does he intend to marry me to stop anyone from questioning his legitimacy?” Daenerys didn't want to have to wed her nephew to be able to go home. It wasn't that she was opposed to the thought of them being kin. After all, she had always assumed that she would marry Viserys before he had sold her to Khal Drogo. No, her problem with it came from the idea that he would only want her back in Westeros for her womb, and if that was the case he would be sorely disappointed on that front.

“Not at all, Your Grace.” Lord Monford answered immediately, “I probably should have mentioned this before, but His Grace is already married to the Princess Annie. On top of that we learned before our journey that she was already with child. The potential heir is already on their way, so worry not on that. As far as your dragons go there is no concern there either. I also should have mentioned earlier that part of the reason your nephew was able to defeat Tywin Lannister so easily was because of his own dragon.”

“Excuse me?” Dany coughed out as once again the sip she had taken from her goblet went down the wrong way. Why did this lord insist on dropping this big news when she was drinking. “What do you mean his dragon?”

“Lyax is her name, Your Grace, and she is one of the most beautiful creatures I have ever seen. She is hard to seen in flight since her scales blend into the sky, but I saw her plenty of times roosting on the top of the keep at Riverrun.” She didn't know if she could believe the fact that another living breathing dragon existed with her nephew, but the more she thought on it a certain observation came back to her. None of her guests had been staring at her dragons. Ever since they were hatched they had always been the focus of any room, and yet here were five people that regarded them no differently than a group of cats.

“How did he hatch her?” She couldn't kept the disbelief out of her tone as she spoke. She always would be lying to say she wasn't curious to know what price her nephew had paid to hatch his dragon considering that hers had been so high.

“From what I understand the Prince and Princess were able to hatch her together, but they never speak of the specific way they were able to do it.” Lord Velaryon paused to take another drink of his wine, “Believe it or not, Your Grace, like the man that raised him the Prince is honorable through and through. He wants you home for the simple fact of being kin. There are too few Targaryens left in the world for you not to be united together.”

She scoffed at the mention of Lord Stark being honorable when Ser Jorah cut in, “I believe this to be true, Your Grace. Last I saw the boy that is your nephew he was a quiet lad. Seemed to constantly have an air of melancholy, but was otherwise very polite. From what I saw he was quite skilled with a blade even at his young age. Also despite what your brother may have told you the Starks are the most honorable lords I ever knew.”

Dany raised her eyebrows at Jorah's words. She took a moment to let them soak in. He was probably right. There was so much that Viserys had filled her head with that has turned out to be
false. She had to admit that he was rather delusional, and it would probably serve her better to discard all she thought she knew.

As hard to believe as everything she had just learned was she had to take a moment to consider if she really wants to turn away from the opportunity presented to her. She potentially had family out there, and they wanted her with them. For no other reason than to be a family.

She felt the flame of hope burn bright in her chest for the first time in years as she allowed her musings to take her. If he was born at the end of the war then they were close to the same age. With any luck they would end up having more of a sibling type relationship. She would gain a new sister along with a niece or a nephew.

She felt a much larger smile split her face. “What does my nephew wish for me to do then?”

Lord Velaryon smiled in response, “I was instructed that if you agreed we would escort you to Dragonstone. With the war raging in Westeros it would be the safest place for you. His Grace said once King's Landing was secured he would call for you.”

“How soon can we leave, My Lord?”

“It will take a few days to restock the fleet, but we will accomplish that as fast as possible.”

Dany allowed her eyes to scan the chamber they were in for a moment before returning to the silver haired man, “If possible may I move onto the ships tonight? I wish to be out of this manse as soon as possible.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!!

NEXT: VARYS II
The time he spent in a mummers' troupe during his formative years were definitely paying off in dividends now. There was nothing Varys wanted more right now than to let his face split into a huge grin. Only through training, experience, and a vast amount of discipline was he able to keep the desired expression at bay.

The angry looking lord sat at the head of the table was assisting that endeavor in his own way. Lord Tywin's teeth were gritted so tightly he was surprised he couldn't hear them grinding, and there was a fire burning behind his gold speckled green eyes. The scroll crumpled up in his clenched fist was the major clue and cause of the Old Lion's ire, and Varys was not going to provoke it any further.

Varys distracted himself for a moment taking a sip of his summer wine. The atmosphere in the Small Council Chamber was stifling, and the gigantic pressure of Ser Gregor looming in the corner wasn't helping the matter at all. He could only hope that Pycelle and Tyrion made haste, so they could get this underway and over with.

He didn't even have to guess what the emergency meeting was for or what news the letter clutched in Tywin's hand so tightly contained. His little birds had gotten word to him quickly about the fall of Casterly Rock, and how the home of the Lannisters now sat firmly in the palm of his king's hand.

His little birds in the castle had even already informed him of the Old Lion's reaction to the news. They had spoke of Tywin raging in his chambers as he broke some of the furniture. He had been so elated by the news he had actually given the child a gold dragon for just that little bit of information.

His king figuratively now had the lion by the tail (pun intended), and Varys was looking forward to how the old lord would handle it. As it stood now the lions only had control of King's Landing, the Crownlands, and a small corner of the Riverlands surrounding Harranhal.

His king possessed so much of the country that Tywin's defeat was almost certain at this point. He
came from the North with that kingdom's fealty, liberated and earned the lords of the Riverland's loyalty, with his cousin's marriage secured the Reach, from his little bird's in Riverrun learned that the king had crushed the rebellion that tried to sprout on the Iron Islands, and finally taken the Westerlands through force. It truly was a bad time to be named Lannister, and Varys was enjoying the whole situation to the fullest.

For seventeen years he had waited for these days. Varys still retained the bitter taste in his mouth when he had to swear fealty to Robert just to keep his head. On top of that it had taken years to actually earn the trust of the Stag and Lion. He had to sing his songs in a way that pleased the fat king, and the right whispers had to find their way to the Old Lion via Pycelle.

So, for seventeen years he had played on how to get the Targaryens back to the throne. Then, Lord Stark had offered a better alternative to Viserys, and Varys couldn't have been happier. It seemed the young man that will be their king was the perfect blend of dragon and wolf. From what information his little birds had gotten to him showed a young man with the proper amount of mercy. Yet, completely merciless to his enemies.

He was a little dismayed to find out that the Targaryen prince was already married, but he could work with that in the end. The information that he had received about the soon to be queen was just as reassuring as the boy himself. From the reports he had she was a strong outspoken lady, but had a big heart when it came to everyone she interacted with. He couldn't help but wonder what type of history she had growing up for her to be that way.

The news that they were already expecting a potential heir had been a huge boon all on its own. The fact that their reign could already be secured for the next generation would settle a lot of the lords' worries. With any luck they would both be able to instill their values with their children and the ups and downs that cursed the first Targaryen dynasty would be avoided by the second.

There was the added bonus that Daenerys would be available for marriage and children when she returned. Two dragon families could ensure the Targaryen line more, and keep instability of the Realm to a minimum. Varys could only hope that the princess took her nephew's offer to return.

However, all of this was still moons away. Right now he had to focus on prepping King's Landing for the prince's arrival, and with the Westerlands under control it won't take too long before dragon banners are marching east.

As if prompted by his change in thoughts the Small Council chamber door groaned open. Tyrion Lannister came waddling through the breach whistling a tune to himself. Like his father he was dressed in the finest leathers of crimson and black. A golden lion embroidered on the left breast roared proudly.

The littlest lion wasted no time making his way to the refreshments. Pouring himself a goblet of Dornish Sour before heading towards the table. Varys did allow a small crooked smile to take his face as Tyrion brought the decanter of wine with him. The small lord ended up seating himself at the other end of the table.

As much as Varys disliked the Lannisters he had to give Tyrion a little bit of credit. He didn't think there was anyone else alive that could so easily get under Tywin's skin, and stay there constantly. It was extremely amusing to watch Tyrion quip at his father's expense, and manage to retain his head. Today, though seemed to be an exception. The small lord had taken one look at his father's disposition and wisely stayed silent.

The door to the chamber opened again, and the clinking rattle of metal alerted them all to the arrival of Grand Maester Pycelle. The old codger came shuffling into the room, and Varys let loose
a small sigh at the sight. The ancient lecher took small steps barely lifting his feet off the floor as he moved with his back stooped. He knew the man was trying to lure people into a false sense of security around him. The image of the kindly harmless old man allowing people to relax around him and let secrets spill.

He didn't know why he bothered doing it here. Everyone in the room knew it was an act, but apparently the idiot insisted. The annoying raspy breaths, the heavily stuttered speech, and his incessant tittering was almost too much for Varys to deal with. The only people that it still fooled were Cersei and Joffrey, and that spoke more about them than words ever could.

It took Varys a minute to realize that this was it. The Small Council had grown ever smaller. The former Master of Ships had gotten himself killed in a trial by combat against Levi. He still didn't know what Stannis was thinking that he had any chance in hells of securing the Iron Throne. Especially, after allowing that red priestess into his council.

The former and soon to be reinstated Master of Laws was on his way or at the Wall by now. A true show of His Grace's mercy to allow one whom tried to claim the crown to be given just a short exile. Then again, he did strip him of the Stormlands as well. Allowing those lands to pass to Stannis' daughter Shireen.

The now two previous Lord Commanders of the Kingsguard were missing. The first the more important of the two was where he belonged with the dragons. Protecting the future queen and their potential heir. The other locked in chains and dragged to the Wall.

Then, there was the one that pleased him the most. The former Master of Coin Petyr Baelish. The little lord whom thought he could. Oh, Varys had had so much fun with that one. Suffering through the years of that weasel's self satisfied smirks had all been worth it in the end. If only he could have been there to see the fuck sacrificed to the Old Gods.

The only way it could have been better was if Littlefinger could see what they were doing with his coin. The fool thought that because he was the Master of Coin that he could embezzle all the funds he wanted and no one would notice. Varys knew why Robert never noticed, but he could never wrap his head around why Jon Arryn never questioned the numbers. Hells, the man never even asked to see them.

Unfortunately for Baelish he wasn't near as clever as he thought, and it was overly easy to get a spy amongst his ranks. Olyvar had become even more than Varys had hoped. The boy literally rose to being Littlefinger's protege. It was almost too absurd to believe, but that had paid off dividends now.

With Baelish's demise Olyvar was running all of the deceased's pleasure houses, and through Varys things had changed drastically. The Lord of the Fingers had kept a vast amount of establishments' profits to himself which gave them a great deal of coin to work with. Mostly, they had used it to feed some of the poorer parts of Flea Bottom, and in the process made sure they knew it came from the dragons.

Lord Tyrion clearing his throat bringing Varys' attention back to the matter at hand. “Father, as much as I enjoy everyone's company I assume you brought us here for more than just staring at each other.”

Varys had no idea how it was possible, but somehow Tywin managed to get angrier from the dwarf's words. The Old Lion's brows furrowed farther, but as he got ready to speak the chamber door burst open. The wood crack loudly against the stone wall, and Cersei's screeching voice filled the Small Council chamber, “WHAT IS GOING ON FATHER?!” She wailed as she entered in a
storm of crimson silk. Ser Meryn Trant followed in her wake with his normally grouchy expression firmly in place.

Varys had to close his eyes momentarily to fight off the headache that her shrill voice always seemed to bring on. When they opened again his head was turned to take in the unimpressed expression lining Tywin's face. “What are you doing here, Cersei? I have no need for you to be here.” he responded completely ignoring her question.

Her face became red with indignation as she took in her father's flippant tone, “I HAVE NO PLACE HERE?!?” Her screech somehow reaching an even higher tone exasperating the grating of Vary's nerves, “I AM THE QUEEN OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS!”

“You are the queen mother.” Came the response, but in place of Tywin it was Joffrey that spoke. He came strolling in bedecked in crimson and black with a crown nestled in his blonde hair. Sandor Clegane shadowed the boy like always. “The only reason we ever let you attend these meetings is so you can feel somewhat useful.” Varys couldn't fight the reaction of his eyebrows raising. “Now, Grandfather, what is this I hear about Casterly Rock?”

The tone which Joffrey spoke had sent off warnings in Vary's mind. The boy never spoke this calmly if there was distressing news to be heard. Especially, something as major as their family losing both their home and money in one fell swoop.

Tywin's eyebrows furrowed in annoyance, but in a neutral tone meant to cover his rage he answered the question, “It appears this Targaryen boy with his army took Casterly Rock.”

“How?!” both mother and son shouted at once.

Tywin moved his eyes to the scroll still clenched in his fist, “Apparently they just smashed down the curtain wall and stormed the mountain.”

Varys managed to keep his face placid, but he truly wished there was a way he could record the reactions happening around him. Pycelle was sputtering like a fool. Tyrion began choking on his wine after he had just taken a sip. Cersei had silent tears running down her cheek. Joffrey had turned red as a tomato, and he knew the boy's rage had simmered to almost the point of blowing up. Tywin though had gritted his teeth so hard Varys now heard them grinding.

The boy king finally seemed to have exhausted his restraint, “I knew this would happen!” He turned to his mother pointing one of his pale digits in her face, “I told you grandfather was a mistake as hand, but you wouldn't let it go!” His hand dropped as a derisive scoff escaped him. “That's what I get for listening to a stupid woman.”

The hand moved faster than even the Master of Whispers could acknowledge, but the resulting smack of flesh on flesh echoed through the council chamber. Joffrey's cheek had already turned a bright purple from his mother's hand, and a small cut from one of her rings began seeping blood.

At that Joffrey's face turned absolutely feral as Cersei's turned pale realizing too late what she had just done. His fist reared back, but before he could deliver retribution Tywin's steeled tone cut through freezing the boy's movements, “And what is that supposed to mean?”

The boy king's rage then turned to his grandfather, “You.” Joffrey growled, “You, Grandfather, are one of the biggest failures I have ever witnessed. Everyone, talks about the great Tywin Lannister, but all I see is an old man that thinks to highly of himself. I don't even see why everyone fears you.”
Varys could swear he could feel the temperature of the room lower. Cersei must have felt the same thing when she took an unconscious step away from her son. Joffrey was too caught up in his own voice to realize the danger his words were putting him into. “You truly are pitiful. Everyone praises you, but all I see is a man that is only capable of killing women and children.”

“The Reynes and Tarbecks,” Joffrey scoffed again, “Pitiful useless houses. Then, during the Rebellion while my father was busy fighting the war you were hiding in Casterly Rock. Only to show up when it was all but won. What did you truly contribute? You killed a sickly woman and two children.”

“Now, you can't even defeat a bastard pretender, and his northern savages. You have allowed them to defeat you again and again. You always speak of the family, but it seems you are the most useless one of us.”

For the rest of his days Varys would never forget what happened next nor the amount of glee he felt watching it. The speed Tywin suddenly moved betrayed his advanced age. The room filled with a loud crunch as his fist impacted Joffrey's cheek. The boy squealed like a stuck pig as he collapsed to the ground, and his crown noisily clanged as it rolled across the stone floor. Cersei screamed in both shock and fear. Ser Meryn whom had stayed silent at the back since he followed Cersei into the room reached towards the pommel of his sword as he began to move. He had barely taken a step forward before Ser Gregor's mailed fist collided with his helmet. The Kingsguard fell unconscious against the wall. His armor screamed out with the grinding of metal against stone as his body puddled on the floor. Sandor Clegane throughout the exchange stood stock still. The only movement he made was the corner of his lips twitching as he held back either a smile of laugh.

Tywin reached down pulling the sniveling boy up by the collar of his doublet until they were almost nose to nose, “Listen, and listen well you little shit. You are only king for one reason. I allow you to be. If for a minute you even think you have somehow earned the right to sit that throne you are sorely mistaken. Between your madness and your mother's idiotic machinations I'm the only one keeping all of your heads off of pikes.” Spittle coated the boy king's face with every word that Tywin had sneered into his face. “I'm of half a mind to drown you in the Blackwater and let Tommen be king. At least he knows how to listen.”

Varys watched as both Cersei and Joffrey's faces turned white with fear at his words, but it seemed he wasn't quite done. “I'm tired of cleaning up behind both of you. If either of you step out of line again your punishments will be swift and severe. If you even hurt any of your servants at all I will see the same punishment instilled on you both. Do. I. Make. Myself. Clear?”

When they both silently nodded Tywin released Joffrey allowing him to fall back to the floor with a thump. The moment the Hand stepped away Cersei rushed to her son immediately coddling him.

Tywin jerk his doublet freeing the wrinkles from his garment as he retook his seat at the head of the table, “Now,” he begun all trace of anger gone from his voice, “is there any good news to be had?”

Varys took a moment to debate whether or not he should divulge the information he possessed. He ended up deciding that kicking a man while he was down was too much fun to resist, “Lord Hand, through my little birds I was finally able to discover the location of Ser Jaime.”

Tywin shot him an incredulous look, but it was Tyrion that spoke, “We already know where he is, Lord Varys. He is in the dungeons of Riverrun where he has been.”

“He was in Riverrun, My Lord, he no longer resides there.” Varys answered as he looked over at the smaller man, “After your failure at liberating Ser Jaime, Jon Snow, decided keeping him in
Riverrun was no longer safe.” He turned his eyes back to the Hand, “Ser Jaime along with the survivors of the both the Green Fork and the siege of Riverrun have been moved to the Wall.”

Varys pocketed away the expression Cersei made for enjoying later. Her jaw had dropped wide open, and her eyes immediately turned glassy. Varys wondered if she truly believed her own reaction. The amount of affection she held for her brother/ lover would be much more convincing if she wasn't fucking the Kettleback Kingsguard every other night. He wondered what the Kingslayer would think of that if he ever found out. He didn't get time to ponder it too deeply before she spoke, “Pycelle, send a letter to the Night's Watch immediately. They are to release Ser Jaime immediately. I don't care if he took his vows or not. Some bastard pretender had no right to send him there. If they do not we will make sure that no supplies or men ever make it there again.”

Lord Tywin just nodded at Pycelle when the ancient maester turned his eyes to him, “O-of course, Your Grace.” Varys resisted scoffing at the small exchange. It wasn't like the Lannisters were helping the Watch to begin with. You can't miss what wasn't there.

“Pycelle,” Tywin spoke up, “I also want you to write to the Stormlords. From what Varys has told us before Stannis is dead, and Renly has been missing since the beginning of the war. I want you to remind them that that leaves their liege lord as Tommen. Thus, I want their numbers mustered in King's Landing as soon as possible.”

A small smile tugged at the corner of his mouth, “If all goes well my plans will come to fruition in the next few moons. The moment they do we will march out from King's Landing to meet with Kevan at Harranhal. We will meet this dragon on the field in the Riverlands and finish off his forces.”

“And what plans are those, Father?” Tyrion's face was a mix of curiosity and doubts.

“That is for me to know.” Was the rebuke shot his way, “It has been costly, but I have learned over time that none of my children are smart enough to trust with my plans. I will handle this myself as I should have from the beginning with Lord Eddard.” With that the Old Lion got to his feet without another word and departed the Small Council Chamber.

Varys waited till most of the castle was asleep before departing his chambers. It only took him a few minutes to navigate the quiet castle before he arrived at his destination. He checked over his maroon robe one last time to make sure he was presentable. Once he was satisfied he rapped his knuckles against the thick oak door. His hand retreated back into the sleeves of his robe moments before the door creaked open revealing the target of this night's endeavor.

Varys bowed his head slightly with a respectful, “My Lord,” when Tyrion came into view. The dwarf lord huffed an exasperated sigh before answering with an unamused, “Lord Varys.”

The two stare at each other silently. Varys felt he was going to be turned away, but the half-man finally pushed the chamber door open wider. He waved his hand in invitation for him to enter.

Varys took in the chamber as he entered. It looked exactly the same as all the other times that he been in there. What did catch his attention was the large book that currently sat on Tyrion's desk. There was a golden colored ribbon holding the spot of where the little lord left off. As Varys sat in the plush chair he sneaked a look at the title. The Dragons of Valyria. A interesting read indeed.
No doubt Tyrion was trying to read up on the weaknesses of dragons and if it could be exploited.

As far as Varys knew the only dragon killed in Westeros during conflict was Meraxes. The dragon and Rhaenys were shot down by the Dornish with a scorpion. If his history served him well the bolt went through Meraxes' eye killing him instantly. It was a point of pride for the Dornish allowing them to remain independent for almost a century longer. What history forgets to mention is the amount of luck that assisted that shot. No matter the skill level of the marksman hitting a dragon while in flight with a scorpion is already a monumental task. To add that you have to hit it in the eye ups that difficulty exponentially.

He was broke from his train of thought when Tyrion spoke. “To what do I owe the honor of this late night visit, Lord Varys?”

“Wildfire, My Lord.” Varys answered meeting the shorter man's mismatched eyes.

“Wildfire?” Tyrion's head tilted a little to the side in confusion, “What about it?”

Varys blew out a breath, “Your brother has told few people about what truly happened in the throne room during the sacking of King's Landing, but I'm willing to guess that you factor into that number.”

Tyrion nodded in answer, “You would presume correct. He killed the Mad King because he had ordered caches of wildfire ignited to destroy my father's army and the capitol.”

“That would be correct, My Lord. After the throne changed hands I had my little birds scour the city until all the caches were found. In secret I had all the wildfire removed from under our feet and stored in a safe location. That way if it was to accidentally detonate there would be minimal damage.”

Tyrion raised his goblet in salute “Well, I would thank you for that. However, what does that have to do with here and now.”

“It appears your sister has taken a page from the Mad King's book.” Varys answered back, “I'm not sure if you know this, but King Robert had banned the alchemists from ever making wildfire again. He felt it was a tool of the Targaryens and he wouldn't suffer dragon sorcery in his city. However, since his death Cersei commissioned the guild to begin making the substance again en masse.”

Varys watched Tyrion's eyebrows almost reach his hairline before a suspicious look crossed his face, “Why are you telling me this instead of my father?”

Varys tittered at that, “My Lord, there are almost half a million people in King's Landing, and your father cares for naught a one of them, your sister only cares for power and how to keep it, and your nephew is beyond mad. He makes Aerys look sane in comparison.”

“You are the only one smart enough to think of how to utilize the substance efficiently without burning the city down in the process.” Varys paused for a moment to allow his words to sink in. He has played this game a long time and he knows exactly what to say to spark the egos of lords. Especially ones that think they are better than everyone else. A trait that the Lannisters excel at. He got back to his feet. “I'm afraid, My Lord, if your family is to survive this war it will have to be on your shoulders.”

With those words Varys gave a polite bow before quickly departing the dwarfs chambers. He waited until he heard the chamber door click shut behind him before allowing the smile to take his face. If Tyrion took the bait then he would be making a trip to the alchemist guild in the next few
days. While the Lannisters were busy thwarting each others' plans that would leave Varys free to plan his next moves. He had to prepare the Sons of the Dragon for their part in the arrival of the Targaryens.

Chapter End Notes

THANKS FOR READING!!!!

NEXT: ASHA I
A horn blowing in the distance caught her attention, and when she looked up she felt the breath leave her lungs. There in the distance behind two massive grey stone walls was Winterfell. She had never seen a castle that large in her life. Throughout her life she had always spent her time raiding villages and small holdfasts on the coasts. Even the castles she had seen in her travels paled compared to just how large Winterfell was. She would almost guess that you could fit two Ten Towers within the walls of the ancient home of the Starks.

The walls were so tall she could only see the top few floors of the keep and the pointed tips of the towers inside. One part of the castle had a massive crown of red leaves jutting out revealing the location of the castle's godswood. She felt her mouth drop open as she took it in. like the castle she had never seen a weirwood that large before. The few she had seen were no larger than a decent oak. She couldn't help but wonder how ancient the tree truly was to grow that much.

She sat in silent wonder as the walls grew larger and larger. To the south of the castle it looked as if there was a small town. Dark smoke rose from the chimneys, and Asha could feel herself grow jealous of the warmth that their hearths were currently providing. She pulled the blankets around
herself tighter hoping to alleviate just a little of her discomfort. Her face twisted into a sneer when she
heard one of the clansmen chuckle at her, but she didn't deem it worth any type of response. It is hard to be taken seriously when your teeth are chattering the whole time you are trying to be intimidating.

It took another hour of riding in the wagon before she was passing through the gatehouse. The wheels below her clanked noisily against the wooden planks of the drawbridge that separated the two walls before she was going through a second gatehouse. This one almost twice the depth. That wasn't the only impressive thing about the castle as she looked around. As she took in the many towers that ringed the inner wall she could easily see why the Starks held the north for thousands of years. This was the definition of a fortress.

It wasn't just the military aspects of the castle either. It looked as if an entire town existed inside the castle. There were wooden structures spread intermittently throughout the grounds. People milled about taking care of their duties and children ran playing. It was something Asha never expected to see. She couldn't imagine there were many greenland lords that would allow smallfolk to set up their residences inside the castle walls even if they worked there.

She was pulled from her observations as a man in Stark livery approached and bowed to the man that had been leading their party. As he straightened back up she got a better look at him. The man was built like a barrel. His belly had gotten soft with age, but the shape of his chest and arms showed that he still maintained a great deal of strength. His Side burns had grown to such an absurd length that they hung braided below his chin. “Lord Liddle. Greetings, I'm the castelan of Winterfell, Ser Rodrik Cassel, Lord Brandon welcomes you to Winterfell. He apologizes for not greeting you himself but he wanted to prepare to speak with our mutual guest.”

Asha scoffed under her breath at her being called a 'guest', but the moutainclan chief didn't seem offended at the lord not being there to greet them. “Aye, The Ned's lad no doubt wants to speak with the squid as soon as possible.”

The other man nodded in response, “Some stewards will help you and your men get settled, and Lord Brandon asks that you join him at the high table with his sisters for supper.”

“Many thanks, and I would be honored to.” with their conversation seemingly to come to a close the Stark man gave a signal to two other guards that quickly approached the wagon, and they proceeded to not so gently yanked her from the back of the wagon by her chains.

She managed to stifle the scream that wanted to erupt from her throat when her bad ankle impacted the frozen earth first. Thankfully, she managed to regain her balance before face planting in the solid mud.

She was bent down attempting to rub the soreness away from her ankle when Lord Liddle spoke again. Albeit this time in a much lower tone, “Is it true that the Stark children have direwolves?”

The other man smiled fully, “Aye, tis true. Found them in the woods after executing a Night's Watch deserter. There was one for each of them. Even the Targaryen prince got one. All white it is with red eyes, and eerily silent.”

“Ah, the Targaryen boy.” Liddle nodded as he spoke. “rough life growing up a bastard, but The Ned did right hiding him from the stag and lions. Between the two of us I never believed the whole kidnapping to begin with. The Starks have always been wolves, but that girl was all Flint. Just as wild as the mountains her grandmother called home.”
“It was always hard to believe myself, My Lord, but who am I to question my liege.” The old knight answered back.

“HAR! Right you are good Ser!” The mountain lord's expression suddenly changed becoming more serious. “It has to be a sign from the Old Gods themselves. The wolves are truly back, and I look forward to seeing what this generation does.”

“Aye, Prince Jon and Lord Robb are currently letting Tywin Lannister know what it means to mess with the North.”

“Speaking of which,” Liddle responded, “Could you speak over a mug of ale and tell me of this dragonwolf prince?”

A smile split the knight's face as he held an arm up directing the lord to the keep. Asha stood there held by her elbows between the two Stark men as the other two disappeared. The moment they were out of sight she received a sharp tug pulling her along.

They walked through the castle for several minutes. Asha's eyes had been darting around the whole time seeing much of the same. She still couldn't wrap her mind around what she was seeing. This felt more like walking through Lordsport rather than a warden's castle. The biggest difference were the smiles. Generally the people back home went about there business with a grim disposition. Here, however, the people seemed much happier. She watched as people greeted each other in passing or stopped to have small talk for a few seconds before resuming their tasks.

They finally stopped walking allowing her to hiss out in pain at her wound. There before her were two more Stark guards flanking the sides of a iron gate. The men nodded their heads in greeting to their comrades. “We brought the squid to speak with Lord Brandon as requested.” One of her escorts spoke.

One of the sentries wordlessly opened the gate. She stared at the passageway motionless before a sharp push on her lower back sent her forward. Once again her bad ankle took the brunt of the effort to keep her on her feet. She shot a glare at the man. His grim demeanor didn't change in the slightest. He just bobbed his head in the gate's direction, “Get going, girl. Don't keep my lord waiting.”

She took a few painful steps forward. Her bad leg dragging slightly with each step. She had made it a few paces passed the gate when she stopped. Realizing she wasn't being guided she turned back to the four men whom hadn't moved an inch. “Aren't any of you coming?”

“Nah,” One of them spoke, “Lord Brandon wanted to speak to you in private.”

“Oh, he is that confident, is he?” She answered back.

All four men laughed long and hard at her question. It took almost a minute for one of the men to compose himself enough to speak again, “Girl, if you want to take the risk to hurt Lord Brandon you're more than welcome to try. However, you will be dead before you can so much as even twitch in his direction.” He nodded his head down the dirt patch behind her, “Now go, girl, it is rude to keep him waiting.”

Her brows pulled in confusion as she processed the man's words. It was strange that Brandon Stark was so confident that he didn't deem her a threat. She knew her reputation preceded her. She was known the seas over. Maybe not by name exactly, but men had learned that the Greyjoy girl was not to be trifled with. On top of that if she remembered correctly Brandon Stark was still but a boy. He probably wasn't even old enough to know the warmth of a women or even started thinking
Asha decided she wouldn't push the patience of the men before her any further, though. Her ankle was already screaming bloody murder from them, and she didn't want to risk any additional damage. Blowing out a breath she turned and made her way down the path. The deeper she got into the woods the more the smells of the castle left her, and the scents of nature took over. As her eyes drifted over ancient oaks and pines she noticed she had stopped shivering. As much as the moving pained her it at least got her blood pumping and warmed her up slightly.

She had limped her way for a few minutes before the path opened up on a clearing. There was a decent sized pond filled with black water that held the reflection of the massive weirwood that stood a little from its bank. Her gaze drifted down the bone white branches covered in their crimson leaves till her eyes settled on the base. There three people waited for her, and what appeared to be some form of creatures with them.

Her eyes widened in disbelief as she got closer and was able to see what was before her in better detail. The first girl had to be a little older than the boy. She had dark brown hair pulled into a messy bun with her bangs hanging loose to frame her face. She wore a fur collared cloak that hung over a strange grey coat that only covered half her torso. Below that was another strange garment Asha had never seen. It was black in color, but it appeared to have some sort of pouch on her stomach. Her legs were covered in knee high boots over white breeches. Around her waist was a sword belt and her right hand rest on the pommel of a skinny longsword designed for her petite size. At her side stood a massive grey wolf. It stood almost shoulder height of the girl and had bright golden eyes that looked at her if she was a meal to be savored.

The two girls were split by the boy that she took for Brandon Stark. He had brown hair that gave off a red sheen when the sunlight that cut through the leaves danced along it. His bright blue eyes seemed to be taking her in as she did the same. Like the Stark girl he too wore a fur collared cloak. Though, under that the garments he wore were more familiar. Calf length boots, black breeches, and a grey doublet. Like the girl he too wore a sword belt. His sword appeared to be more of a standard longsword, but smithed for a young man. His left hand rested casually on the pommel while his right gripped the top of a cane that was made of white wood matching the weirwood they stood before. Next to him was a light grey wolf with yellow eyes that like the other seemed to be debating how Asha would taste.

The last girl set Asha's nerves on edge. Compared to the others she seemed the most relaxed, and that alone was enough to put her on guard. She was sat demurely her grey dress pooling around her. Like the others she wore a fur cloak over her shoulders, but possessed a hood. Her bright auburn hair and pools of blue that were her eyes made her look out of place amongst the north. The blood of the south made itself abundantly clear in the girl, but the white and grey wolf's head resting in her lap showed that the girl was Stark all the way through. The creature's eyes were shut with a look of content on its face as the girls dainty hand stroked the fur on its head. What Asha couldn't believe was what sat behind the girl allowing her to lean on it was a massive flint bear. It's fur was also a bright auburn almost matching the girls perfectly. Its massive head was lifted off the ground staring at her with its eyes of dark brown.

"Welcome to Winterfell," the boy spoke breaking Asha out of her observations and pulling her eyes back to him, "I am Brandon Stark, and these are my sisters the Ladies Sansa and Arya." signaling with his left arm which of the sisters were which.

The dark haired girl tsked. Asha repressed a smirk at the girls action. Like her the younger probably hated being reminded what gender she had been born to. If they hadn't been put on opposite sides of a war she was sure her and the little Arya would have been great friends. She
could teach the girl a lot about handling both weapons and the opposite sex.

“I trust your travel here was pleasant enough.” The boy continued.

Asha scoffed in reply, “As comfortable as being chained to a wagon with shitty blankets can be.”

The boy just casually shrugged his shoulders in response as if her suffering was no concern of his. “Well, you did attack and took control of our bannerman's castle. Your suffering is a little discomfort compared to those Northmen whom will never see their families again because of your actions. So, you will have to forgive me for my lack of sympathy.”

The way the boy spoke greatly unnerved Asha. He was so young yet spoke as if he was a man grown and had been ruling for years already. Unfortunately, that appeared to be the way of war and their world. Boys had to grow up fast or they would be weak and the rest of the world would eat them up. “Make no mistake, Asha Greyjoy,” Brandon started again, “If I had my way I would have already lopped your head from your shoulders, but alas even I have people to answer to.”

Asha had another scoff tear from her throat in response. This boy was absurd if he thought for a second he was strong enough to even remove her head with a sword. Even despite the weight she had lost on the journey she highly doubted the boy had the strength. “So, what am I now, a hostage to ransom, or am I taking my brothers place to keep my father in line?”

“Well, we already know how well that deterrent worked in the first place.” A sad smile was on his face, “I was upset when I heard your father wanted to rebel again. I have known Theon my whole life and considered him an older brother. Thankfully, our new king is a more forgiving person.”

Asha internally felt like she had been slapped repeatedly from all the information. Not only had the Starks raised Theon as one of their own, but he was still alive. She had mourned and made peace with the fact that her brother was lost. Her father had declared that even if they ever gave Theon back he wouldn't have been a true Ironborn. The greenlanders would have made him one of theirs and he would have returned carrying blasphemies against the Drwoned God with him. He had declared Theon a necessary lose and they would be better for it in the long run. They would have never had a better time to strike then when the Starks and Lannisters were fighting.

They hadn't killed Theon though. If what the boy was saying is true then her brother was still alive and well somewhere. That thought was what drove her next question, “So, where is Theon then?”

A full smile took Lord Stark's face at her question, “Last we heard he is fighting with my brother and cousin in the Westerlands. Though, you should know that there was a price for your brother's survival.”

Of course there was a price. Asha wasn't stupid. There was no way that Theon gave up his head without making a deal. “What was the price?”

“Your father's life.” The boy replied a serious blank expression taking over his features.

Asha let a laugh ripple out of her. “As if it was that easy. I know that the Seven Kingdoms subdued us before, but that was with the entire Realm united. Now, there is no chance of that happening with war raging everywhere. My father is quite safe in Pyke.”

“Oh, you misunderstood me, Greyjoy.” Brandon spoke and with his words Arya's face split into a malicious smile, “Your father is already dead.”

She felt the air leave her in a rush and she suddenly felt light headed. There was no way that could be true. The Ironborn fleet would have been able to hold off any attack. The years since the
rebellion they had built a massive number of ships in secret coves all over the Iron Islands. They always made sure ships were sailing to hide their true numbers. There was no way any fleet could have safely made it to Pyke to take the castle. “How?” was the only word that could escape her at the moment while she tried to process it all.

“Our cousin Jon flew on his dragon with one other man and took Pyke. Lyax burned the Ironborn fleet in port and Reiner crushed the castle’s defenses. Your father died during the conflict, and now Lord Harlaw rules in place of Theon till the war ends and your brother can take his rightful place.”

There was too much information in that small amount of speech for her to properly digest. It was like complete madness came dribbling out of the young man’s mouth. The Iron Fleet burned by a dragon? That was impossible. The dragons were all dead. Two men took the entire castle of Pyke and killed her father? Just two? It was completely insane and had to be a ruse from the Starks to break her will. There was no way that this was the truth. Her mouth opened and she couldn’t fight the biting tone her words carried, “You will not fool me, Stark. That was complete nonsense you just spewed, and you thought that would get me to betray my father? The Ironborn would never accept a greenlander like Theon as Lord Reaper.”

A small sympathetic smile took the boy’s face, “I told you nothing, but the full truth, Lady Asha. Your father is dead and with him the Old Way of the Iron Islands died with him. Theon will rule the Iron Islands. Like I said your uncle is currently at Pyke setting things right after your father foolishly thought we were undefended.”

“I truly wish we could speak more, but I fear time is limited.” Brandon spoke again after a few minutes of silence. “I needs must speak with the lords that escorted you here.”

With that the boy lord took his leave. She watched home go as he walked casually away. He walked well for someone that required a cane, and from the looks of it the device did not bear much of his weight. The wolf that had stood by him stared at Asha for a few moments longer before departing as well following in the boy’s wake.

The auburn haired girl got to her feet then. The wolf let out a disgruntled noise at being disturbed as the girl dusted her dress off. When she looked up her blue eyes met Asha’s, “We will have you taken to the maester to have your ankle looked at. You will stay in Winterfell as long as it takes for you to heal. After that you will depart back to the Iron Islands. While you are here you will always be under at least two guards.”

“Aye, that's generally what happens with prisoners.” Asha scoffed once more.

A small smile tugged on the girl's lips then, “Oh, forgive me. I didn't mean as a prisoner. You are our guest, Lady Greyjoy. The guards are for your protection, not ours. There are many Northerners whom would love to see your head on a pike, and they disagree with our king’s treatment of you and Theon. Alas, he is king though, and his word is law.”

As the young lady held up an arm to signal their return trip to the castle proper the other girl's voice cut through the still air like a knife, “Make no mistake, Greyjoy. Behave, or I will not hesitate to shove my sword straight through your eye.”

Chapter End Notes

So, I always took younger Arya as the type to emulate those that she looked up to. In
this case out of the whole Stark family she loves Jon the most, and the way she looked up to the females in the the Scouts the obvious choice of person for her to copy would be Jon's wife. So, at this point Arya is essentially a little Annie, hahaha. Well at least in fashion, hair, and attitude.

Thanks for reading

NEXT: JON VIII
JON VIII

Chapter Summary

A trial in Riverrun and a trout is committed to a Frey.

Chapter Notes

So, here we are at 200k words. Who would have thought it! It seems the closer I get to the end of this war the more chapters seem to pop up in the way.

I want to thank off of you for coming on this weird journey I have put us through. OH! and the other day I stumbled onto someone mentioning this fic over on r/citadel. Gave me a little warm feeling inside.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!!

Word of note: I will be starting at a new job soon. It may take me a while to figure out time for writing, but I will try to get as many chapters framed out before then to take the pressure off.

anyway, enough of all that!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jon closed his eyes against the light pouring through the stained glassed windows lining Riverrun's great hall. His head was pounding and his eyes were aching from lack of sleep. He took a moment to rub the bridge of his nose trying to dispel the discomfort. At least the headache wouldn't last too much longer thanks to the elixir that Maester Vyman had thrown together for him.

When his vision somewhat cleared he looked to his right to the cause of his aches. His wife sat in the high chair normally reserved for the Lord of the Riverlands. Her hair was pulled into one single thick braid that hung over her left shoulder. The exception being the loose bangs that hung over the right side of her face as it always did. The Tully red maternity gown she wore clung to her changed body showing off the growth of their child. A decorative cord of black and red was tied in a bow below her chest, but above her belly. Her right hand was propped on her stomach as she rubbed it in a soothing manner. Her sword was leaned up against the side of the chair now that she was no longer able to wear it.

On the other side of the throne laid ghost. The great white wolf's head easily seen over the chair's arm despite him laying down. While behind her stood three of their Kingsguard. Ser Barristan, Loras and Willas were all present. Laurence pulled the short straw having to stay outside their chambers last night.

A small contented smile rested on his wife's face as she looked out upon the gathered lords and
knights before them. He didn't know how she could seem to be so happy considering they both were currently lacking from sleep. Granted, he wasn't complaining too much. He just wasn't expecting her to be as demanding as she was when he returned. Maester Vyman had tried to warn him when they had first found out that Annie was with child that her appetite to engage in marital activities would increase. He must have completely underestimated to what extent the maester was truly speaking of, and on top of that the moons he had been gone must have exasperated the issue. She had woke him up several times throughout the night with demands for his attention.

He was paying for it today now that his whole body was sore from said attentions. It was the first time he had learned that men could get this way. Growing up he had overheard maids speaking that they were sore from the previous night's activities, but never once had he heard the same comments from a man.

He shifted his feet slightly trying to get the pressure off the chaffing. A small snicker caught his attention as he looked up to see a smirk on Robb's face. His brother-cousin was stood on the other side of the throne with his own wife by his side. He watched him for a moment noticing that he too had slight dark bags under his eyes and that he was also shifting lightly. It was a small mercy to see that at least he wasn't suffering alone.

Margeary herself had a gentle smile on her face. Her right hand resting on her own growing belly that was adorned in a grey gown. On her chest was a direwolf stitched in silver with a laurel of green roses stitched onto its head. Greywind sat on his haunches at her side like Ghost with Annie.

Next to the young couple were his aunt Lady Catelyn with a neutral look on her face. Jon felt his mood lower slightly seeing her still adorned in black. He had hoped that by now she would have had a reprieve from grief, but his uncles death was still taking a huge toll on her. It didn't help that on top of that her father got added to that as well.

Beside Lady Stark stood her brother and uncle. Both bore stern expressions on their faces. Jon couldn't really blame them though. Like Lady Catelyn they were both adorned in black from head to toe. True, it wasn't out of the norm for Ser Brendyn, but it was a far different look on Lord Edmure. Jon had found out on his return that while they were campaigning in the Westerlands Lord Hoster had finally succumbed to his illness.

To Jon's left stood Lord Mace and Ser Garlan. He wanted to have some of the Northern lords up there with them, but realizing the rest of the Lords on the dais were Wardens he didn't want to seem to be showing favoritism to any of them specifically.

Out on the floor the great hall was filled with their lords and high ranking knights. The Scouts stood down there between the dais and the gathering facing into the crowd. Levi, Mikasa, Eren, Armin, and Historia stood to the right. Leaving Hange, Connie, Sasha, Jean, Reiner, and Bertolt on the left.

Just inside the massive double doors stood the reason for the trial they were all here for. Between four Tyrell guards were the two men-at-arms that had been caught in the process of attempting to rape two women in Lannisport.

With a subtle wave of her hand, Annie, signaled to the herald whom called the accused forward. The four guards seized the elbows of the two men dragging them forward. The shackles they were secured in clinked loudly against the sandstone floor as they were escorted to the front. When they reached their destination they were unceremoniously dumped at the foot of the dais. Both men had clearly seen better days. Their hair and beards looked scraggy and unkempt, but their clothing looked presentable enough. At least their jailers were decent enough to bathe and dress them better before presenting them before the new royals. Jon was also impressed by the fact that they seemed
well fed. Normally men that had already served that amount of imprisonment looked malnourished.

“Whom is presenting the charges against these men?” Annie called out to the crowd. His lords had tried to argue with him before that he should hold the proceedings himself. He had just shot back that they were Annie's commands that had been violated, and thus her justice they would face. Thankfully, that had been the end of that, but not enough to dissuade the grumbling that had followed.

“I am, Your Grace.” A man announced as he stepped forward from the crowd of Reach lords. He was an older lord with his grey hair cut short. His face was distinctive with a sharp jaw line that was shaved clean. He wore a snowy white doublet embroidered with a golden tree over his stout frame. “Lord Mathis Rowan.”

“What are the charges the accused bear?” Annie answered back keeping her voice neutral. Of course she was already aware having been briefed before hand, but the process had to be dealt with for everything to be done properly.

“Your Grace,” Lord Rowan began signaling with his hand towards the two prisoners, “The men before you are guilty of attempted rape against smallfolk women of Lannisport. A patrol of four men had heard screams on their patrol. When they arrived at the home the two men before you were literally caught with their pants down in the process of trying to rape a woman and her daughter.”

“And were my orders distributed down to every man like I had specifically said?”

“Indeed they were, Your Grace,” Rowan answered diplomatically, “The morning before we marched on Lannisport is when I received your orders. I announced them during that war meeting and specifically said that they were to be relayed to every man under our command without exception.”

“How have they been treated thus far?”

“Nothing too extreme, Your Grace.” The lord answered back, “Everyday we were in Lannisport they were shackled in the Stockades. At sundown they were returned to their cells and given a proper meal.”

Annie nodded in response before turning her attention to the two men prostrated before her, “What are your names?”

“K-Kanan, Your Grace.” Came the first response as his eyes turned up to her for the first time. Her eyes then fell on the other, “And you?”

“Gordar.” The other responded with a slight sneer in his voice. The disrespect caught him a hard mailed cuff to the head from one of the guards, but the man persisted not adding any honorifics.

Jon watched a fire alight in his wife's eyes as she took in the latter of the two men. For a moment he thought she was going to go against what they agreed to and have the man's head taken off. Thankfully, his fears were relieved when she drew in a deep breath before a calm look came back over her face.

“Under normal circumstances you would get a choice as for the form of justice you would receive.” she began, “However, due to your blatant disrespect I will withdraw that option. Both of you are found guilty of attempted rape and dereliction of duty in respect to your orders. I hereby
sentence you both to the Wall.”

Approving murmurs rippled through the hall at his wife's declaration. In the mean time both of the convict's faces had gone pale. Maintaining eye contact with the two criminals Annie had one last comment on the matter before concluding the days trial, “Lord Rowan, make sure that word spreads amongst the Lannister prisoners what these two men did. I'm sure their future Black Brothers would be quite intrigued.”

The lord bowed his head respectfully, “It will be done, Your Grace.” With a wave of his hand the two men were dragged to their feet by the guards and hauled away.

With nothing left to address court was adjourned and helping her back to her feet Jon escorted his wife back to the solar they shared adjoined to their chambers.

Jon pinched the bridge of his nose once again. Anything he could do to chase away the ache burning behind his eyes would help at the moment. As his hand dropped back to his side he focused his vision on the view from the window.

Beyond the walls of Riverrun their gigantic army sat in camp. Three kingdoms worth of fighting men sat encroached on the lands surrounding the castle. Thankfully, the encampment was a lot more organized than the last time. The chaos that had ruled in setting up the camps in their first stay were now replaced with careful coordinated rows.

With the suggestion put forth by Hange the rows of tents were now being split by a 'road' made up of wooden palettes. She had said that the make shift pathways would keep the camp from tearing up the ground unnecessarily. The extra work was worth not having to trudge their way through a muddy mess everyday just to traverse the camp.

He watched men rush around hastily setting the wooden platforms that all the carpenters were quickly producing. Jon truly appreciated the idea greatly, but now they would be even more carts in their already long luggage train that would have to haul all the palettes along with the army. Atleast they would be readily available any where they would camp for an extended period of time.

“Are you sure that this is a wise move, Your Grace?” Lord Edmure's voice cut into Jon's quiet observations. The new Lord of the Riverlands may have used honorifics, but his tone was borderline laced with disrespect.

He let a sigh loose showing a mixture of tiredness and exasperation. “I'm sure, My Lord.” He answered back. “You are now the Warden of the Riverlands, and you have a responsibility to both your family and the Riverlands to further your line.”

“But does it have to be a Frey?” The man literally sneered as he said the name with disgust.

Jon took a deep breath asking the Gods to bless him with patience as he buried the anger that was bubbling underneath his skin. It was a disconcerting feeling sometimes. Growing up he had always felt he had unlimited patience. Dealing with the stain of growing up a bastard he had dealt with a lot of discrimination and insults. Yes, he had lost his temper and broken his fair share of training dummies, but he always did so away from anyone else. In private he could vent his frustrations and not be disturbed.

Over time in the last year he had felt that constant grip he held on his emotions slowly slipping.
Especially, whenever his anger was even remotely antagonized. He had thought over it extensively the last few moons and had ended up coming to one conclusion. *Dark Sister* was to blame.

He could remember reading books over his Targaryen family in Maester Luwin's turret as often as he possible could. His obsession with the Dragon Knight and the Young Dragon had him absorbing everything he could about his at the time unknown ancestors.

He remembered passages about the sword he now possessed that spoke of it being beyond a normal sword. Well as normal a sword as Valyrian steel could be considered. The maesters that wrote the books spoke of how its former wielders spoke of the blade seeking blood and never seeming to be able to satiate it enough. Over time the sword was slowly wearing away the restraints on his anger. No doubt she thought that the less he held back the more often she would be drawn to coat her surface in the blood of the vanquished.

With the knowledge of how it was affecting him he could potentially fight back, or at least being cognizant of it would help him fight the urges back. Hopefully, after the war is over he can hang her up above a hearth the way *Ice* sits back at Winterfell. *Dark Sister* is just too dangerous of a weapon to be worn at all times.

“Your Grace?” Robb's voice caught him off guard not realizing he had wandered off into his own thoughts once again. He could feel the eyes of all the men in the room burning into his back and his entire body froze realizing that his left hand was resting on *Dark Sister*'s hilt from where he had been stroking it as if it were a cat.

He dropped his hand back to his side before turning towards the occupants of the room. They were in one of Riverrun's conference rooms. His eyes moved to the opposite head where Lord Edmure sat. Robb and Ser Brynden to the sides, and Ser Willas and Ser Loras stood on either side of the door. The last occupant of the room was Robb's squire Olyvar. The Frey boy had been serving as their cup bearer for the meeting. If looks could kill, Lord Edmure, would already be burning in the deepest parts of the Seven Hells from the young man's expression.

Jon shook his head to clear his previous thoughts and get himself back on topic. “Through your family's history when was the last time a Tully wed a Frey?”

He quickly held up his hand to silence the lord before he could speak, “I know your mother was a Whent. I'm sure if we looked into your history we would see Darrys, Brackens, Blackwoods, Pipers, and all the rest with the exception of the Freys.”

“That old weasel has coveted me for one of his daughters since I was born.” The petulant lord grumbled.

“And why shouldn't he?” Jon shot back. “Marriages are meant to secure relationships in the Realm and individual kingdoms. On top of that you need to face one major fact Lord Edmure.” The red haired man raised a brow in questioning manner at the statement. The look on the rest of his face showed that no matter what he said now Jon would never be able to sway him. “As it stands right now, due to the battles that occurred before we were able to march South, the Freys make up an overwhelming number of your troops. That shouldn't be something you snub so easily.”

Lord Edmure now had a sour look on his face as if he had just been force fed a gallon of lemon juice. The two men stared at each other neither one wanting to back down from their position. His cousin and Ser Brynden wisely took this time to be quiet and watch the proceedings unfold. The stalemate was suddenly broken by Olyvar of all people, “Your Grace, My Lord, may I offer a solution?”
Jon was shocked to hear the other young man's voice come out so clearly. He was normally silent and always just where Robb needed him. A sense of guilt washed over him a moment later. Even though he wasn't the one spouting insults about his family he had once again completely forgotten the squire was even in the room.

Of course none of these emotions played across his face. The only benefit he had growing up the way he did was that even though inside he may have been a torrent of different emotions he could maintain his exterior expression rather easily.

Curious to see what the other young man had to say he gave him an encouraging nod.

Olyvar set the wine decanter he had been holding on the serving table beside him before walking to where they were. As he approached he reached into the collar of his doublet pulling out a chain with a decent sized oval locket on the end. “I may have a solution to the problem despite the insult to my family.”

Jon found his eyebrows raising at his sudden show of confidence. One had to have some pretty big balls to call out their liege lord in such a way. Thankfully, instead of getting upset Edmure had the decency to look ashamed for once. Robb shared the same look as himself whereas Ser Brynden let out an amused grunt as he leaned back in his chair and crossed his arms over his chest.

Olyvar opened the locket before laying it on the table. There inside was the painting of a young maiden. Her face had soft curves that led to a rounded pointy chin. Dark chestnut hair flowed loosely around her face and captivating hazel eyes stared back.

The girl was definitely beautiful and when he looked up at Olyvar the young man answered the unasked question. “This is my sister Roslin. She is the last of my siblings from my mother Bethany Rosby.”

“Hmm,” was the only response that sounded through the room turning everyone's eyes to Edmure. There seemed to be a small smile pulling at his lips.

“I take it you would accept Lady Roslin then, Lord Edmure?” He asked as Olyvar retrieved his locket from the table.

“That painting was from a year ago, My Lord. Believe me my sister has become even more beautiful as she grew.” The squire added as the silver chain draped back around his neck.

“Yes, yes, I accept.” Jon resisted rolling his eyes at the new Liege Lord's sudden enthusiasm. Instead of commenting on the change of attitude he directed his next question at Olyvar. “You said that Roslin was the last of your siblings from your mother's union with Lord Frey?” The squire nodded in response leading him to his next question, “Do you have any older brothers in the Army with us?”

“Yes, Your Grace, our oldest brother Ser Perwyn is with us.”

Jon nodded acknowledging the answer, “Olyvar would you go fetch Ser Stevron and your brother then. I'd like to get this finalized as fast as possible.”

The young man didn't waste anytime following the order. He was out the chamber door before any other instructions could be added.

The room fell into silence as the squire's retreating footsteps faded, but was suddenly broken with another grunt from Ser Brynden, “All that arguing and posturing broken the moment you laid eyes
on a pretty face with doe eyes. You truly are a fool Edmure.”

Jon didn't react at all, but on the inside all he could do was fully agree with the older knight's sentiment.

They sat together in the solar quietly just enjoying each other's company from being apart so long. Jon was currently seated in a large Tully red velvet chair as his wife sat in its counterpart with a small table between them. He silently nursed a tankard of ale staring aimlessly into the fire. The clacking of his wife's knitting needles providing a soothing ambiance with their repetitive cadence.

After the long day and lack of sleep on top of wanting to spend as much time with Annie as possible he had elected for them to eat privately instead of the great hall with all the lords. They had enjoyed a nice meal of roast, potatoes, and some mixed greens that grew in the Riverlands.

After dinner they had just retired to the solar to be by themselves. Thankfully, everyone had left them alone for the most part, but unfortunately he had one last matter to deal with before they could go to their bedchambers for well needed sleep.

It was the better part of a hour before their peace was disturbed by a knocking on the solar's door. Jon looked up as Ser Barristan's head popped through the doorway. “Your Grace, Lord Bolton is without.”

“Let him in.” Jon answered with a smile. Not so much for the lord himself, but the fact that now he was that much closer to being able to sleep for the night.

As the door opened all the way to admit their guest Annie stashed her work away in the basket at her side. Her hands came to rest in her lap as all her attention turned to the Lord of the Dreadfort.

Bolton entered dressed in a dark red doublet with black trousers. The sigil of his house on his chest in pink thread. His pale ice grey eyes scanned the room. Not necessarily being nosy, but assessing for any possible threat. It was a habit Jon had also found himself falling into the more after all the battles he had already partaken in.

When his eyes finally landed on the royal couple he bowed his head respectively, “My Prince, My Princess.”

“Lord Bolton,” He answered warmly. “Thank you for coming to see me.”

“What is it I can do for you, Your Grace?”

“I don't know if you have heard yet, Lord Bolton, but Edmure Tully has agreed to wed one of Walder Frey's daughters.” Jon answered the lord's question. “The reason I asked for you tonight is that I would like you to head to the Twins in advance and prepare for our arrival.”

Bolton nodded his head in answer as he continued, “Take only cavalry with you so you can move faster and clear out any potential Lannisters that maybe waiting to ambush us.”

“You can count on me, Your Grace.” the lord answered back in his quiet monotone voice.

“I know I can, Lord Bolton. You have proven that multiple times during our campaign.” Jon smiled slightly, “and Lord Frey has plenty of daughters. Might as well find one for yourself while you are
Bolton “Hrmph'd” in reaction with just a slight twitch of his lips. The closest Jon thought he was going to get as amusement from the man. “It will take me a few days to get everything in order, but I'll depart as soon as possible, Your Grace.”

Jon just nodded back. “We hope to leave within the fortnight, so that should be plenty of time. Have a good night, Lord Bolton.”

“You, as well, Your Grace.” The man spoke as he turned his attention to Annie before bowing his head again, “Your Grace.”

With that the Leech Lord departed. Jon stood watching till the door click shut. The moment the wood rested in place Jon collapsed back into the chair letting out a sigh.

He was so deep into to his own thoughts that he didn't even realized what was happening till an appreciative groan escaped his wife's lips. Opening his eyes he saw an euphoric expression on her face, her eyes closed, and her head resting back into the chair. Her body was slouched down so that her foot could reach into his lap. He looked down to see his fingers massaging the ball of her foot. He had been so lost in his head he had acted reflexively when she had offered her foot up. Her slipper laid discarded by the leg of the chair he occupied. They say in silence for a few minutes as he continued his ministrations to relieve the tension out his wife.

When he light patted her calf she instantly withdrew her foot before offering the other. As he pulled the slipper from her foot her eyes cracked open before a scoff cut through the air, “God, I have hippo feet.”

“Hippo feet?” He arched a brow with his question.

“Yeah, you know like a hippopotamus.”

“A hippa-what?” He chuckled as he tried to repeat the confusing word Annie had just spewed out.

She sat there looking at him incredulously for a few seconds before a her eyes suddenly lit with a revelation, “Oh, you probably don't have them here do you? They are these giant grey animals that like to live in water.”

Jon shot his wife a deadpan expression at her rather in depth description answering with a sarcastic tone, “Sounds... interesting.”

“Oh, shut up.” she smirked back, “We're both too tired to be doing this right now. Take me to bed.”

Though she made no effort to get up under her own power. His wife just held her arms up like a toddler waiting to be lifted. Chuckling lightly he got up from his chair, scooped her up under her knees and back, and pulled her from the chair. Her arms went around his neck and she pecked him affectionately on the cheek.

As he stood to his full height a stressed groan escaped him that till his dying breath he would contribute to his lack of sleep, but the look of death written on his wife's face said he was definitely going to pay for it later.
Thanks for reading!!!

NEXT: ROOSE II
Chapter Summary

Plans are made at the Twins for the Wedding of Edmure Tully

Chapter Notes

So, so much happened in the last month. I won't bore you with all the details, but the gist of it was that I spent two weeks studying for a test for a new job, passed said test, got job, then learned everything they wouldn't divulge during the interview process, and I already left said job.

I had been working through this chapter all during that time whenever I could, and I apologize for the wait, but here it is.

lastly, I hope you are all being safe during this time, and hope soon we can all get back to business as usual.

OH! and lastly I noticed that my master word doc and my published word count didn't match, so I scoured through till I found the section I had forgot to publish.

The previously unpublished section is now at the beginning of Chapter 30 (ROBB III) if you care to back track and read it.

Anyway, here we go!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

ROOSE III

Roose sat at the table in his chambers sipping a steaming cup of tea. It hadn't taken long for the servants in the Twins to pick up on what and how he liked things in the morning. In the two weeks he had spent in the river spanning castle the help had quickly learned that before he was up in the mornings he liked his fire stoked back to life and for a pot of tea to be waiting on him.

Mornings were one of his favorite times to just sit and reflect. This past moon had given him a lot to ponder. He would never speak it out loud, but knowing how the soon to be king felt about him brought a huge sense of pride to the leech lord. Granted he had tried to poison the boy and his wife before, but that was when he thought that Tywin might have been a better side to back.

Being given this mission was a big sign from the Targaryen how important he felt Roose was. The Lord of the Dreadfort was not going to risk anything with the assignment either. Three days after they had met in the prince's solar he had departed Riverrun. Like requested he stuck with cavalry to be able to move faster and he did so in the company of three thousand riders.
They had made quick time from Riverrun to the Twins. Covering the distance in just over a week. Thankfully, the way was clear, and the proposed path the prince's party would take was far enough from Harrenhal that Lannister troops wouldn't make it in time to intercept.

He was greatly disappointed that the prince hadn't warned him beforehand about the Twins. The entire castle smelled like a sock soaked in sewage, allowed to mildew, and then baked in the sun. It had taken days for him to get used to the smell enough to the point he no longer noticed it. However, that didn't stop him from having an all new wardrobe commissioned from a nearby tailor. He knew no matter how much washing the garments were subjected to the smell would most likely never come out of his clothes. Better to just replace them than worry about it. His washer women had their hands full enough with the army.

The shuffling of blankets had him glance over towards the bed. He watched quietly as the remaining occupant tried to get herself comfortable to sleep a little longer. The dirty blonde hair of his new wife laid tussled and splayed out over the pillows.

She was something he hadn't planned on initially. He had had his sights set on Lady Hange, but the more time he spent around her the less likely it had come to seem. The effort was made to get to know the woman better and hopefully gain enough of her attention for her to agree to a betrothal. However, the more he learned about her the more he realized that there was no way the woman was going to leave the scouts even if was to marry a powerful lord. Where they came from women were a lot more in charge of their destinies, and there wasn't anyone alive that would be able to force her into something she didn't want. The reality of his situation persuaded him to wed the Frey girl. Well, that and an extremely ridiculous dowry.

In the first few days he had been in the Twins, Lord Frey, had made sure to parade his daughters and grand daughters around as much as possible. With the exception of the Lady Roslin of course. With the girl being promised to Edmure Tully she was kept well away from his sights. The other daughters though had been utilized to their fullest.

His now wife had been the bravest of all of them. She had waited one night till the rest of the castle had been sleeping before she crept her way into his chamber. The poor woman would have been dead had he been anyone else. His habit of being a light sleeper had saved her life when his dagger was at her throat. His senses returning fast enough for him to realize that instead of a threat it was but a naked woman straddling his thighs.

Four major factors had contributed her now being Lady Bolton. First, was he respected her boldness. Not many women would be brave enough to use such a tactic against a man with his reputation. Second, she was an attractive woman. She wasn't the most beautiful lady he had ever seen, but compared to the rest of the Frey brood she may as well have been. Third, he had heard of her reputation. She was known through the castle as being extremely promiscuous. He had later learned that she had been married before, and already widowed. Apparently, her former lord husband died in the midst of consummating their marriage. She had taken the fact that her maidenhood was gone to be able to seek her own pleasure.

That was actually a point of discussion he had with the woman before he fully committed to their union. He wanted to use her enthusiasm for the marriage bed to get the heirs House Bolton desperately needed. He told her in no uncertain terms that he would entertain her in the bedroom to her hearts content, but she had to stay fully faithful. There could be no question to the legitimacy of their children. To sweeten the deal he had offered her a quarter of the dowry for her own use in anything she desired.

That had ended up being less expensive than he initially thought. When he had spoken with Lord
Frey to hammer out the details of the dowry the Frey patriarch had already offered the girl's weight in silver. The leech lord had used the old man's desire for power and influence to override his greed for coin. Using the excuse that due to the shame of the girl being spoiled he deserved three times her weight. They had gone back and forth on that point for a hour before the old weasel finally gave in. Two night's later Lord Bolton found himself with a new wife and a great deal more money.

His new wife had taken to her role in their marriage like a duck to water. She had used her youthful vigor against him to the point Roose felt himself exhausted. He had never been the most lustful of lords, but his new energetic wife had seemed to unlock something in him. She had discovered his libido, knew how to feed it, and then pushed beyond its boundaries. Even the thought of bedding his wife right now seemed taxing. From experience he knew it could take some time for a woman to become with child, but he would not be surprised if she already was from how much she had taken him.

The blankets rustled again, and he watched as her blonde head rose from the pillows. Her disheveled hair fluttered around her face as sleepy eyes tried to take in what was happening. When they finally landed on him a small smile took her face. Amaeri let out a large yawn as she moved the blankets and furs from herself and she climbed from the bed getting to her feet with out a sliver of modesty.

Though she truly wasn't his first choice, Roose, had to truly admit that maybe it was for the better. The view of his wife padding across the room naked was almost enough to get his blood pumping to a roar again. Unfortunately, the view didn't last and with a sly smirk shot his way her body was covered with a blue cotton bed robe.

As Amaeri made her way to the table he poured her a cup of tea. He was rewarded by her hand sliding across his shoulder as a kiss was placed on his cheek in gratitude. “Morning, my lord husband.”

“Morning, My Lady. Sleep well?” He wasn't sure if deep down he truly cared, but he knew that it was a polite question. On top of that in just a few days he found himself truly desiring to make this a happy marriage.

A lustful smile took her face after she placed her cup back down after taking a drink, “Like a lamb. You truly wore me out, My Lord.”

Her tone had quickly turned to a sultry purr, but Roose didn't have time to deal with that right now. He shifted the conversation as quickly as possible before she tried to take the opportunity to drag him back between the sheets, “I'm am to be meeting with your father soon to plan for the prince's and Lord Edmure's arrival. What do you have planned for the day?”

A pout took her face for just a moment at having her small advance ignored, but she answered the question anyway. “I was planning on visiting the tailor you have employed to commission a few items now that I am no longer a Frey.”

Roose nodded along with that. He most definitely didn't want them made in the castle, and carry the funk that seemed to permeate the entire grounds with them on the march. “Make sure she gets a nice one done in time for the prince's arrival.”

Another smile took his wife's face as she answered with a nod. With their small exchange at an end they fell into companionable silence. With the view of the Green Fork out their window they finished their morning tea. It wasn't long before the maids came to fetch Amaeri to prepare her for the day. Some of her sisters were amongst them giving his new wife jealous looks. With another kiss to the cheek she departed leaving him alone to prepare for the dreaded meeting he would soon
Roose sat there for a few more minutes enjoying both his tea and solitude. It was peaceful watching the morning fog roll across the banks of the river the Twins sat over. However, life seemed to want to move on with or without him, so finally mustering up the will to get this over with he pushed to his feet to get ready for the day ahead of him.

His brows furrowed in irritation as he watched his good-father sloppily eat his meal. The experience was truly off putting to an extenuating degree. The man before him was supposed to be considered a high lord, but had the table manners of a pauper from Flea Bottom. His smacking maw as he attempted to chew had been grating on Roose's nerves from the moment the dreaded meal had began. It wasn't helped by the fact that at the old weasel's age he had few teeth to work with. Thus, his eating ended up with him trying to gum the food into submission.

Roose felt a small shudder rise up his spine the comparison of Freys to the weasel family that everyone in the Realm made brought the image to his mind of an opossum trying to chew on butter. Roose adverted his gaze from the elderly man as he spooned another mouth full of his own pie. He found himself pleasantly surprised by how well the meal actually tasted. No wonder the old man was attacking his own with such gusto.

The irritating meal carried on for a few more minutes before his good-father finished his pie. Roose's fist clenched around his spoon in a death grip when the man continued to smack his lips. The serving girl in the room wasted no time approaching the table the moment the old man's spoon rested on the tray. As she retrieved the pie tin a loud smack echoed through the room, and the girl seemed to freeze for just a moment. A look of disgust took her face as Frey spoke from behind her, “I'll have another one, girl.”

“Yes. Milord,” came her mousey reply as she tried to escape his reach as fast as possible, but it wasn't fast enough. The ancient lord managed to get a hand on her buttocks giving the serving girl's rear a hearty squeeze before turning his attention back to Roose, so he missed the violent shudder that racked her whole body.

“Heh, heh,” The old man began, “It doesn't matter how old I get I still enjoy all the little serving girls of my castle to the fullest.”

“That could explain why your castle is exploding with Freys and Rivers.” He deadpanned back. He truly had no desire to indulge the old man in his perversions. Especially, when it came to his rutting. The Twins were overly packed with his progeny, and there were so many of them that when the old bastard died there would undoubtedly be a inheritance crisis in the castle that could potentially rise into an inner family war. One that could be bloody enough to require the involvement of the Lord Paramount of the Riverlands and the king.

His retort hadn't passed by the Lord of the Crossings. Roose did have to give the man credit. He was incredibly bright even for his age. Too bad that only applied to him being able to recognize insults. “Better to have too many than not at all, heh,” came his sharp reply. “If you are so concerned about how many I have you can take some off my hands. Make them part of your household or soldiers. Hells, you could even make them stable hands for all I care. All I know is that everyday every one of them is watching me like vultures. Just waiting for the day I finally die, and they can steal all I built over my life.”

He resisted any reactions he may have had to the man's words. He was truly amazed at how the old weasel could unironically complain about a problem that was completely of his own creation.
blank look he was giving off didn't deter his good-father in the least as he kept talking. “I could even send you some of my other bastard daughters. True any children you had wouldn't be trueborn, but it never hurts. Better to have and not need and what not.”

Roose began shaking his head before Walder had even finished, “I already had one bastard. He was way more trouble than he was ever worth.” When the older man raised an inquisitive brow he continued, “I always believed that the boy murdered my heir out of jealousy. I was never able to get my hands on solid proof, so I wasn't able to give him up to Stark for justice. Thankfully, he was courteous enough to get himself killed in a hunting accident.”

A very unsettling and creepy smile took the man's face as if Roose had just given him some great ideas. He was saved when the moment was broken by the same serving girl returning carry a new meat pie in her hands. This time she was smart enough to stay on the opposite side of the table as she place the fresh pie before the lord.

The girl retreated to the same spot on the wall. She had barely settled in when Lord Walder spoke, “Leave us girl. What Lord Bolton and I have to speak of is not for your ears.”

The girl gave a shallow curtsey before making her way to the servants entrance. With the door open she was frozen in her steps when the weasel spoke once more, “Be in my chambers tonight, girl.”

She paused for a few seconds longer before giving a slight nod and exiting.

When their eyes met the old man wiggled his eyebrows at him. Once again Roose fought back all the reactions his body wanted to make. Instead he thought he would move this along and see what the man truly wished to speak of, “So, what is so important that we need privacy.”

“This up coming wedding.” The man sneered back.

Surprised by the amount of venom in his tone he felt that clarity was of import. “Forgive me, My Lord, but I would have thought you would be ecstatic that a Tully would wed your daughter.”

The old man's lip curled as he spooned some of the new pie into his maw. Unfortunately for him, the weasel decided to continue speaking while smacking down on the meal. “Those Tullys think they can insult me all my life, and then when they do finally decide to wed one of my daughters they dare to demand Roslin.”

“Is that a problem?”

“That girl is my crown jewel,” Frey sneered, “She is the most beautiful of all my brood. She should be able to catch me an even more advantageous alliance. Instead I have to let her go to an overly posturing trout.”

Roose decided not to add anything. He just waited in silence to see if Walder would continue, and he didn't have to wait too long, “On top of that the Riverlands will fall into ruin under the leadership of a fool like Edmure. That idiot lost his first true battle because he cared more for glory than victory. No one of any sense would rush into the clutches of a Lannister army. Especially, one led by the White Lion. If it wasn't for you Northerners the Riverlands would belong firmly to the lions.”

“That doesn't stop you from feeling the same though, does it?” Later he would never admit it, but at the time the question had truly caught him off guard.

“What do you mean? Speak truly, Lord Frey. You made sure we had privacy here, so there is no
need for riddles.” Roose truly didn't mean for the amount of irritation to sink into his tone that he was displaying, but Frey was bordering on dangerous territory.

“HEH!” Came the immediate reply, “Relax, Lord Bolton. We are family now, and we are both working with the same man for the betterment of our families.”

Roose sat frozen as the other man fed himself some more. Thankfully, this time he waited to speak until after he swallowed. “I have been in contact with Lord Tywin for several moons now. I didn't know how I would be able to help him from my castle with all these Northerners you left running around, but he did tell me of how your were involved and that I should assist you anyway I could. When I heard of Tully's desire for Roslin, and the fact that you were coming here in advance we finalized our plans.”

“And what plans are those?” For once Roose didn't have to fake the intrigue that laced his tone. He may have decided to dedicate himself to the new regime, but the opportunity to have a traitor literally tell you all their plans in advance was too exhilarating to pass up.

“We will welcome them to the Twins, I will be the most gracious of hosts, and then during the wedding celebrations we will attack them when they are off guard. We will strike after the bedding ceremony. They will be the most relaxed then, and anyone that truly posed a danger will be too far in their cups to do anything.”

“How will you convince your men to betray the prince? They have been fighting beside him for moons now. I don't know if you are familiar with this fact, My Lord, but after many battles a bond forms between men stronger than any other.”

“Heh, I'm sure, I'm sure.” Walder answered. “However, from what some of my men have said only a few are truly close with the prince, Stark, and Tully. Those men will be distracted with an errand that will take them from the castle for a few days.”

“After we have taken the head off of their army they will be in chaos. Lord Tywin will take back to the field and clean up the remnants. After the war is done you and I will be rewarded greatly. I shall be named Lord Paramount of the Riverlands, and you will be Lord Paramount and Warden of the North. Everything we have always wanted will be in our hands. On top of that you will have finally completed what generations of Boltons ahead of you attempted and failed.”

A small smile pulled on Bolton's face. The old Frey must have thought it was Roose's form of acceptance to the plan because an even larger one spread across the ferret's face. Oh, he was all too happy to learn of this plan. However, this would work out in his favor and his alone. Uncovering this plot would be the perfect way to solidify his place in the soon to be king and queen's favor. His new goal of raising House Bolton through the more common means was already paying off. If Amerei gifted him a couple daughters on top of sons one of them could potentially become a princess.

Others would aim to have their daughters marry the crown prince and become queen, but Roose prided himself on his practicality. No matter how many boons he accomplished for the royals he was still just a high lord. If the daughters of the Lords Paramount were passed over there could potentially be chaos. So, a second or third born son would have to be good enough for any of his potential daughters or granddaughters.

There was also the thrill of once again foiling one of Tywin's schemes. Over the course of the war his respect for the man had plummeted significantly. The fact the man resorted to such underhanded tactics made Roose sick. This was just the icing on the cake. To plan to massacre your enemies at a wedding under guest right goes against everything anyone of high birth is taught.
His focus was brought back to Frey when the man made a loud slurp on his wine goblet. Roose took just a moment to decide how he would proceed as the man shoveled some more of his pie into his mouth. As his good-father smacked away his irritation finally snapped. Right as Old Walder was beginning to swallow he struck. Quick as a hawk snatching a rabbit Roose's fist smashed into the old man's throat. Just as he had hoped the surprise combined with the strike made the weasel take a deep breath causing some of the pie he had been eating to lodge in his windpipe. He watched impassively as the old man's eyes bulged and he began making sick croaking noises.

He watched on in serene satisfaction as the man choked to death before him. The look of betrayal on Lord Frey's face only seemed to make the whole experience that much more enjoyable. He sat in silence watching until he was sure that the man was beyond saving before he quickly stood from his chair knocking it back. The wood clattered loudly against the stone floor as he called for the guards. Both men barged through the door a second latter with their swords half drawn. “Quickly, one of you help him! He's choking on his pie!” Roose truly surprised himself with the amount of panic he was able to inflect into his voice, “And get the maester as well!”

TYWIN I

The Hand of the King looked down at the parchment in his hands once more. He felt a small smile of satisfaction take over his face as the words rolled around his mind once again. The letter from the Twins was some of the best news he had received since this debacle of a war had begun.

He sighed getting to his feet. Leaving the letter behind as he made his way over to the wine he kept in his solar. He rarely partook in alcohol himself, but he felt that today would be one of those rarities. He pulled the crystal stopper on the decanter before pouring himself a hefty amount of Arbor Gold. He replaced the container before retrieving his goblet and walking to his window. Taking a long drink he savored the flavor of the wine as he looked out upon the Blackwater. The sun glimmered off the tips of the small waves created by the breeze. He stood entranced as the small glitters made the water's surface morph into a sea of jewels.

He swished the contents of his goblet as he blew out another sigh. He had come so close to losing everything he had spent his life building up. His youth had been used to try and rebuild the family's reputation after his father Tytos had all but squandered it. He snorted in derision thinking of the whore his father used to let traipse around in his mother's jewels.

After dealing with the harlot the Reynes and Tarbecks felt they could rise against his family. Like the Tyrells the Reynes were not content with being second best. They had felt that Tytos was a weak lord and that they could over throw them and take over as the Lords Paramount of the Westerlands.

His father refused to do anything about it. He blatantly denied the allegations against their two bannermen believing it all to be hearsay. Tywin not willing to risk allowing these houses to reach beyond their station rallied the rest of their bannermen. He had caught the two houses by surprise while they were still trying to marshal their forces. After his orders were issued their forces and their families eliminated. It was those actions that had influenced the bard who had wrote the
Reynes of Castamere, and the song had quickly become a warning across the Seven Kingdoms that House Lannister was not to be trifled with.

After that, though he abhorred it, arrangements had to be made for his father. He truly did care for the man, but if he was left in charge of their family he would have seen the Lannister name brought to ruin. Thankfully, the people that Tywin had contracted were smart enough to handle it in a way that made the poisoning seem like any other natural ailment.

After he was the head of their house he had spent his time showing the Realm that the Lannisters were not to be taken lightly. From the battles in the Stepstones, being hand to Aerys, his actions in the Rebellion disposing of the dragons, his daughter becoming queen, and then dealing with the Greyjoys. His adult life had built up exactly what he wanted. The name Lannister had become associated with power, and they were both the most respected and feared of the families in all the Seven Kingdoms.

Then, his children had become adults. It should have been a time for him to relax and enjoy the fruits of his labors. Instead he was now having to deal with the messes that his children and grandson had created. In less than a year and a half the four of them had been able to undo everything that Tywin had created.

He turned back towards the parchment once more. There lay the best solution to the problems he was facing. Lord Frey and Lord Bolton together would finally take care of Robb Stark and this Targaryen bastard. With the rebels leaderless they should ultimately crumble easily enough. He will even offer a betrothal to the newly widowed Lady Margeary to try and entice the Tyrells away sooner.

He would like to punish the Tyrells for even siding with the Rebels in treason, but he had to tread lightly. They were too powerful now with the losses his forces have suffered, so he would just have to settle for Mace prostrating himself in the throne room to make up for it. He would just have to make sure that Joffrey didn't open his mouth and cock it all up.

Once the forces of the Stormlands finish marshaling and make it to King's Landing he will march out with them. Meet up with Kevan at Harranhal and root out the rest of the rebel forces. With the Targaryen gone the dragon should become a non factor with no one left to control it. He would also have mobile scorpions fabricated to take care of those monstrosities that the Northerners were employing in the field. They may have made fools of standard troops, but he'll see for himself how they stand up against five foot bolts penetrating their bodies.

Once he had control of the Westerlands again he would march his forces north. When he was done all the Starks and Tullys would be dead. The Freys would rule the Riverlands and the Boltons the North. Though, with them being joined by marriage now he would have to keep eyes on them in case they also decided to challenge their rule.

When the war was completed he would deal with his children and grandson. He didn't know just yet what he would do with each of them, but some thoughts had already come to him. First, is that when Jamie returned from the Wall he would take up his place as Lord of Casterly Rock. He would marry a daughter of one of the Westerland houses that didn't rollover for the dragon and wolf. Most likely a Lefford or Marbrand. As for the 'king', Joffrey, may end up finding himself in a similar situation to Tytos Lannister. The boy was too similar to Aerys for Tywin's comfort, and the Seven Hells would freeze before he left the Seven Kingdoms and their legacy in the hands of a madman. No, Tommen would be a much better king than Joffrey, and he was still young enough to be taught properly.

Another sip of wine went down to his gullet as he thought of all the work that still laid ahead of
him. It would be a busy year and a half, but as long as he maintained control of the situation the lions should come out on top at the end. Then, the true Lannister dynasty could begin uncontested.

Chapter End Notes

So, I had this idea for this chapter for a while mainly because there was no way I was going to let Old Walder die without a pie being involved.

THANKS FOR READING!!!

NEXT: RIVERRUN II
Chapter Summary

There is a new arrival at Riverrun

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!

So, I have an announcement to make:

I feel I have the rest of this part of the story planned out. Barring any last second chapters I want to add we should be done with this section of the story at chapter 50. I will also be added a sort of 'epilogue/prologue' that will act as the bridge between the two parts.

I want to let you know that I will be taking some time off from the story between them. I have some ambitious stuff planned, and want to make sure it works in my head first.

Here is where I would like your opinion. Do you think I should just continue on with the same story, or turn it into a work and each half is its own story. Let me know in the comments.

Speaking of comments. I have been terrible at responding to them. I mean to, and then get distracted. I just want you all to know that I read every single one that comes in, and appreciate all of them!

Anyway on with the show!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

CATELYN III

Catelyn held a small smile on her face as she looked about the room she was in. The solar of the royal apartment was currently filled with the light chatter of several whispered conversations, the crackling of the fire place, and the repetitive clacking of Annie's knitting needles.

The princess sat in one of the two plush chairs as she worked on a black wool blanket intended for the baby she carried. The other plush chair was occupied by her good-daughter Margaery. Whom was currently in the process of embroidering a direwolf on a extremely tiny doublet meant for her first grandchild.

Around the two expectant mothers was a gaggle of girls. There were Margaery's cousins Megga and Allana, Mirra Forrester whom had been fostering at Highgarden. Historia and Sasha of the
Scouts each held embroidery hoops of their own, and Shireen Baratheon was next.

Catelyn's heart had immediately gone out to the girl when she had heard how she was treated on Dragonstone. Due to the Greyscale marring her face she had essentially been locked away on her own never to be seen. She was happy to see that the longer the young lady had been at Riverrun the more she had come out of her shell. She now sat with a smile on her face and a sparkle in her eyes as she absorbed whatever tale Sasha was currently telling them of her escapades from their homeland.

Joy Hill rounded out the last of the younger girls in the room. She wasn't working on needle work like the rest of the girls, but sat with a cup of juice held between her hands as she listened in on the story. She didn't know how to feel when she first saw the young blonde haired girl arrive in Riverrun along with her caretaker. Catelyn just knew she had to be careful how she reacted. She had made too much progress with Jon to lose the ground they had made by her mishandling it. Against everything she had ever been taught she had welcomed the girl to the castle as she would any other highborn.

Annie had seemed to take to the girl almost immediately. Anytime that Annie was out of her apartment you could be sure to find little Joy Hill and Teya in the princess' company. Speaking of the girl's caretaker she was currently talking with Hange on the other side of the table that the older women were sat at. Olenna Tyrell sat next to herself with her good daughter Alerie on her other side.

There was another table by the door that was populated with all of their knightly companions. Her uncle Ser Brynden, Ser Barristan, and Ser Davos made up the most experience sat there. Levi sat next to Barristan his steel grey eyes ever scanning for any potential threat even when seemingly relaxed. Along with their captain sat Reiner, Connie, Bertolt, Jean, and Armin. Jon's talk of what it was like in the Twins had been enough for the majority of the Scouts to happily turn down the trip to the wedding. Levi had insisted that some of them go, and Eren and Mikasa's abilities were a good enough reason to send the young couple along. There was Lady Olenna's two guards Erryk and Arryk, or as the old woman called them Right and Left. The last occupant at the table was Loras Tyrell. The young Kingsguard was off duty for the night, so was dressed casually in a green doublet.

She listened to the occasional laugh that ripped from their table. She had no doubt that the older three were regaling their younger counterparts with tales of battles past as they shared horns of ale.

She let a sigh escape her. The only way her current situation could be better is if her two daughters were there as well. The two girls already had a good relationship with Annie, but being able to start building one with Margeary would be a great boon.

She shrugged slightly to herself as she realized that with the pace they were going it wouldn't be too much longer until she got to see them again. Besides, Cat was sure that Jon would request they all come down to King's Landing for the coronation. After that she would be able to return to Winterfell with all her children and grandchild.

As much as she enjoyed the company of the assorted ladies she was still a little sadden to have been left behind. With her father gone now her brother was Lord Paramount of the Riverlands, and as his sister she should be there when he wed. Especially, considering that it is to one of the bigger houses he is the liege over.

She had had the same initial reaction Edmure himself had to him marrying a Frey. That was until Jon had explained his reasoning to her, and she couldn't lie to herself about the points he had made. Their father and her ancestors had painted Edmure into a corner. Their constant ambitions to raise
their family higher had most definitely left some holes in the unification of the Riverlands for others to exploit. The rebellion was a prime example. The kingdom had been split nearly in half between the Targaryens and the rebel forces.

Hopefully, like Jon had insisted this wedding would show Edmure's bannermen that he was willing to put ambition aside and do what was necessary for their betterment. It also didn't hurt that the girl her brother would be marrying was of a much better stock compared to the rest of the Frey brood. The painting that Robb's squire Olyvar had shown her displayed how much the girl's Rosby blood had overtaken the Frey.

She had put up a fight with staying behind, but after a good few disagreements she had ultimately agreed with great reluctance. Annie's time was fast approaching, and her own grandchild wouldn't be too far behind. It was important for the younger women to have as many experienced mothers around them as possible to alleviate their fears.

And speaking of which Cat was suddenly torn from her thoughts and the entire solar went silent at the sound of a loud gasp as all eyes turned to Annie. She had a bewildered look on her face as she stared down at her stomach. Ghost was on his feet head whipping back and forth to try and defend his mistress from whatever had shocked her.

The rest of the room seemed to be frozen in shock not knowing what to do. The room sat silent for another minute before the young princess' eyes turned up to Cat. The older woman could see a small glimmer of fear in her blue grey eyes as they sat there looking at each other. Cat didn't know how long they just stared at each other both not knowing how to proceed. The stalemate was broken when Annie's face scrunched up in pain and another harsh gasp escaped her.

That seemed to break the stupor that the room had sunk into, and Oleena was the first to react as she used her gilded cane to get to her feet. "It's time!" The old woman spoke. Her voice filled with authority as she issued orders that left no room for argument, "Levi, fetch the maester, have him send his fastest bird to the Twins to alert the prince, and then have him meet us in the birthing chamber. Left, Right, carry Her Grace. Teya fetch the midwives. Alerie get the maids moving. We are going to need plenty of hot water and clean cloths. Sasha, Historia, escort young Joy and Shireen back to their quarters. Men go do whatever it is you do. Just stay out of our way!"

The whole room remained quiet as they tried to absorb all that the woman had just spewed out before Lady Olenna had enough of their hesitation. Her cane cracked loudly against the stone and with a yell of, "NOW!" the room exploded into motion.

JON IX

There were a lot of things Jon had expected when he arrived at the Twins. Roose Bolton waiting to receive him with a new wife and informing him that Walder Frey had died choking on meat pie was no where listed in there.

He looked around the great hall of the Twins taking in all that was going on around him. The wedding celebrations for Edmure and Roslin were in full swing, and by the attitude permeating the room you would have never thought their lord and sire died less than a week ago.
The Greatjon along with his son Smalljon were currently in a drinking contest with some Freys. From the view he had at the high table it was not going well for the Freys. Greatjon's bellowing laughter rang through the hall as one of the crossing men began swaying in his chair.

Robb was on the dance floor having been dragged off by Dacey Mormont before any of the Frey girls could move in on him. Eren and Mikasa were also on the floor not to far away. His friend twirling his raven headed bride to the music. The smile on her face making Jon miss his own wife stuck back at Riverrun.

Theon was off to the side chatting up a young woman. The distance making it so Jon couldn't tell if it was just a serving girl or one of the other Frey women. On the march back to Riverrun from Casterly Rock was when Theon seemed to come back to himself after the death of his father. With the picture before him it seemed the Ironborn was all the way back to his old ways. He just hoped his friend didn't leave a bastard in the Crossing behind them.

Roose and Amerie Bolton sat at the closet table to the high table. The man had definitely earned himself a place of honor. He watched as the man's new wife kept occasionally whispering in the Lord's ear bringing an actual authentic smile to the man's face, and why shouldn't it. The Lord of the Dreadfort had carried Jon's orders out perfectly, and after the death of Lord Frey had uncovered a plot to massacre them during the wedding feast.

They had barely arrived to the Twins when Lord Bolton had implored to speak privately with himself and Ser Stevron. Once they were alone Lord Bolton had laid everything out for him, and he was shocked by what had been revealed. Not only had the foolish lord kept the missives sent to him by Tywin Lannister he had also written down which members of the Frey brood were going to be involved and what each of their roles were.

The ones that had been in the Twins had already been imprisoned in the dungeons before his arrival. The others had been rounded up by the Northern garrison as the army marched into the Twins. The cells under the Twins were currently fill to the brink of bursting. However, the pressure would be relieved on the morrow when they were escorted to the Wall.

He had also been shocked to see how much the Twins had changed in such a short time from his first visit. It was easy to see that the Freys will most definitely do well under Stevron's leadership. The castle had already been given the thorough cleaning that was much needed, and the place no longer reeked like a privy on fire.

Now that the Twins were in hands that could be trusted he was able to pull the garrison away giving them a few hundred more men at their disposal. They all couldn't be used in the war effort, though. Some of them would be dispatched to escort the traitorous Freys to the Wall. Making sure they got there and took their vows.

The plus side was that this war was going to end sooner rather than later. Once they had returned to Riverrun they would marshal their forces and march east. He would split some forces off to the Vale to help them end the siege of the Eeyrie. The rest would make for Harranhal. After Kevan Lannister and his forces dug in there were dealt with there would be nothing blocking their approach of King's Landing.

He could only hope the Lannisters wouldn't resort to using the city's populace as living shields. It wasn't a strong hope considering the level of cowardice that Tywin had sunk into to try and win the war.

He blew out a breath before taking another pull off his ale. It was supposed to be a celebration, so he didn't want to ruin the night getting worked up. A slight smile took his face as he saw the new
Lady Bolton drag her overly serious husband out to the dance floor.

A sharp clap on his shoulder pulled his attention up to the beaming smile of Robb. There was a strong flush on his cheeks from the combination of ale and dancing. “What has you so morose tonight, brother?”

Jon couldn't help the chuckle that escaped him at Robb's question. Ever since the revelation of his true parentage Robb went out of his way to reaffirm his feelings. He didn't know if was for his own reassurance or Robb's, but it seemed his adoptive brother didn't want there to be any questions about how he felt. “Just thinking about what could have happened if Lord Frey hadn't choked on his pie.”

“Yeah,” by the tone Robb spoke with Jon realized he had just dragged his brother down into the same sullen mood as himself. He closed his eyes a moment as he mentally kicked himself, but stopped when Robb continued, “Who would have thought that the Leech Lord would be the one to uncover it.”

Both of their eyes moved to said lord whom was currently still moving about the dance floor with his bride. “It is a little convenient. Don't you think?” Robb was shooting him an inquisitive look, so he quickly elaborated. “That Roose Bolton is the one to uncover this plot after the Late Lord Frey chokes on his pie while having a private luncheon. There was no one in the room except those two.”

His brother nodded his head acknowledging Jon's points. “Father used to always say to keep a close eye on Bolton. It's a lesson every Stark lord has passed down to their heirs since our house was created.” He broke off his explanation to take a pull off his own tankard of ale wetting his tongue. “And despite how reluctant Lord Bolton seemed to be in following us into this war it can't be denied that the man has proven himself invaluable.”

Jon chuckled lightly in response as he nodded, “Aye,”

A long sigh escaped his brother as went to take another drink, but his cup paused on the way to his lips. His eyes suddenly went wide with a realization, “GODS! If his new bride gives him sons he is going to ask for a Stark daughter for them.”

Jon's head snapped back as an actual full laugh took him before he responded, “That's quite the revelation to have, but you have to admit it isn't uncalled for with how he has performed.” he reached over squeezing his brother's shoulder, “Look at it this way, Robb. You may finally be able to bring lasting peace between Starks and Boltons.”

“Yeah, but at what cost?” his brother huffed, “Marg will most likely have my balls in a jar after I tell her.”

Another laugh ripped from his throat as he clapped his hand on Robb's shoulder giving it a comforting squeeze. “Just make sure you have plenty of kids before telling her then.”

His brother knocked his hand away with a playful scowl on his face. Right as his mouth opened to retort the Greatjon's thunderous call of “YOUR GRACE!” echoed through the hall. In less than a second the music had cut and all eyes snapped to the giant of a man at the back of the hall.

“It is time, Your Grace.” The man continued once he had everyone's attention. The answering cheer that rang through the hall became deafening for a few seconds before it quickly silenced
once again waiting for his affirmation.

Jon's eyes drifted from the waiting crowd to the other side of the high table beyond Lord Stevron where Lord Edmure and Lady Roslin sat. Edmure's face was lit in a knowing smile, but his new wife had a completely opposite expression on her face.

The young woman that sat half pulled into Edmure's lap was frozen still. A Blackberry held up in her fingers that she had been moments away from feeding to her new husband. It was strange seeing the fear light in her eyes. It wasn't the same level that he would see in the eyes of his men before battle, but it was there all the same.

It was the first time Jon had seen any other expression on Roslin's face since he had been introduced to her. He initially wasn't sure which had made the girl so happy. Whether it was the fact that she was getting married and would be able to escape the Twins, or it was more in line with the rest of the castle that had been celebrating since her lord father had finally died.

As morbid and rude as it was he couldn't help feeling the same relief as the rest of them. The old bastard had been prickly and hard enough just to organize an alliance with. One that shouldn't have needed any negotiations to begin with. He could only imagine in the darkest recesses of his mind what it would have been like to have to live under the yoke of his control.

A throat clearing suddenly brought him back to reality. He shook his head pushing everything away before turning his attention to the new Lord of the Crossing. “It is your home, What say you, Lord Frey?”

Lord Stevron got to his feet holding his wine cup out in a toasting gesture, “I agree with my friend the Greatjon, Your Grace. It is time to bed them!”

Cheers rang out as the Greatjon roared toasting with his tankard throwing ale everywhere around him. Seconds later the high table was swarmed with men and ladies. Jon stood there silently as he watched Roslin get carried away the look of fear still plastered on her face. Edmure on the other hand was handling it much differently as he traded bawdy japes back and forth with the ladies that were hauling him.

“I find it quite funny, Your Grace.” He tried not to jump when Lord Bolton's voice unexpected rose next to him.

“What's that, Lord Bolton?” He asked turning to acknowledge the other man's presence near him.

“That you support the bedding here, but refused it during your own wedding.” Though man's face held it's normal blank expression.

Jon wasn't sure if the man meant to mock him or if he was just generally curious. Deciding to go with the latter option he allowed a smirk to take his face and a playful tone to take his voice, “Oh, Lord Bolton, that was for the protection of the men, not my wife. I'm sure they realized that fully after the Green Fork.”

He watched the corners of the man's mouth twitch slightly. It wasn't much, but to get that much of a response from the stoic lord, Jon, was going to count it a win. His attention turned back to the table as he topped of his tankard from one of the jugs left there.

He took a long drink before looking back to the Leech Lord, “While I have you here, Lord Bolton, I'd like to thank you again. Your quick actions taking control of Twins after Frey's death saved us from potentially showing up to a castle in complete chaos.”
“I may not have even been capable of it if you hadn’t been wise enough to leave a Northern garrison here in the Twins.”

“All the same thank you, Lord Bolton. You have no idea how much my wife and I appreciate all you have done for us during this campaign. We will not forget it.” Jon spoke stopping Lord Bolton from deflecting the praise he was rightly entitled to.

The man stared back at Jon with his ice grey eyes before dipping his head. “I thank you, Your Grace. I also may have thought up a way to buy us more time, and catch the Lannisters on their back foot.” The man seemed to weigh his next words carefully before continuing, “I know your family raises you to fight as honorably as possible, but in light of the tactics Tywin has tried to utilize I feel we should do some of the same.”

Jon thought over the proposition for a minute silently. As much as all his instincts were trying to blatantly shoot down the proposition Lord Bolton was right. While Jon and his lords had been fighting this war conventionally Lord Tywin had seemed to use nothing but dishonorably means, and wanted to fight the war in the shadows. Hoping Lord Eddard would forgive him in the after life he made his decision, “What- YOUR GRACE!”

His words had been cut off when a young page adorned in the blue and grey of House Frey with the two towers emblazoned on his chest came tearing into the hall. The boy's face was pink with exhaustion and as he covered the distance of the hall waving a parchment frantically.

The boy halted before him holding out the paper as he bent at the waist. He wasn't sure if the boy was actually bowing or just trying to catch his breath. He shook the errant thought away before taking the message with a 'thank you'. When he rolled the scroll over in his hand he saw the seal imprinted with the Tully trout had already been opened. When he saw the script next to the wax depicting 'read immediately' he understood why.

A foreboding sense settled into his bones as his fingers pulled the scroll open. His eyes scanned the parchment one, twice, and a third before the message finally managed to settle into his brain. A wave of different emotions suddenly crashed through him as he tried to make sense of it all.

He must have displayed his internal struggle on his face as he was snapped out of it by Robb's worried call of “Jon?”

He was met by looks of concern pressed on the faces of all the lords and ladies present. He had already forgotten that the page boy's call had pretty much silenced the room once again. No doubt they were waiting to hear what was so important that the message had to be delivered in the midst of a wedding. He scanned the room as he tried to swallow the lump that had formed in his throat. When he felt he could speak without his voice straining or cracking he addressed them, “My Lords and Ladies, news from Riverrun. My wife has taken to the Birthing Chamber.” He went to continued, but was cut off as another wave of cheers and clapping resounded through the hall. He waited as patiently as possible till it died down, “As you can probably guess I need to make haste back to my wife's side.”

Nods of understanding were his answer, and he then turned to those that were nearest to him to give orders for his absence. “Robb, command here is yours. Be safe getting everyone back to Riverrun.” His brother nodded in response. “Lord Stevron, you have my permission to stay here to get the castle's affairs in order.”

“My thanks, Your Grace.” The new lord answered, “Ser Perwyn will take over command of our levies in my absence.”
“Lord Bolton, we didn't get a chance to go over your plan. Consider this my express permission for you to carry it out. Just fill me in when you return to Riverrun.”

“It will be done, Your Grace.” The man spoke with a gleam in his eye. It made a strange sensation ride up his spine, but it reaffirmed the fact that he was extremely happy the man was his ally instead an enemy.

“Ser Willas, stay with Lord Robb. Ser Laurence with me. We leave immediately.”

Twenty minutes later Jon strode out of the main keep of the Twins donned back in his armor. Lyax sat on the east side of the keep. Her tail hung off the edge of the bridge swishing through the air impatiently. No doubt his dragon was sensing his complex emotions through their bond. The men that had been celebrating the wedding had given her plenty of space. He could only imagine the surprise they had suffered when she had suddenly come in for a landing.

As they approached, Lyax, laid her wing down as a ramp. Jon and his white shadow quickly climb her side and settled in amongst her spines. When he looked out on the questioning faces of the men he decided to sacrifice one more minute to explain why he would be leaving in the middle of the festivities, “Men! Word came from Riverrun that Princess Annie has taken to the birthing bed. I make haste back to her side!!”

Lyax decided then she had waited long enough and with two jolting strides she jumped from the bridge. Her wings easily caught the air before pulling them back up into the air. They flew off into the night with the cheers, catcalls, and toasts of his men in their wake.

LEVI III

If there was one word that he could use to describe the feeling of the castle right now it would most definitely be tense. From the moment that Annie had been rushed to the birthing chamber the castle had filled with an overbearing aura. The servants, maids, and guards continued their normal routines with the exception of those in the chamber with the princess. While all the lords and knights seemed to be on a knifes edge waiting for the results of Annie's battle.

Twelve hours later Levi found himself in the solar just down the hall from the birthing chambers. Hours ago the room had been alive with excited chatter. Everyone impatient to meet Jon and Annie's baby. They had gone through the night speaking almost none stop.

It had all changed a few hours ago when some of the maids of the castle brought breakfast up for everyone. The first rays of the sun were just peaking over the horizon, but as anxious as everyone was most of them realized how long it had been since they had eaten. Between the full stomachs, the warmth of the hearth, and the multiple plush settees around the room most everyone in the room were passed out in deep slumber. Levi himself had just partaken in some bread and a few slices of bacon. The only other person awake with him was Ser Brynden. The old knight stood like a sentinel by the window as he gazed out upon the Riverlands.

Ser Barristan currently stood guard outside the birthing chamber. His younger counterpart was getting rest with his sister Margaery whom he had to drag from the chamber to rest herself. Levi
didn't understand why it was even an argument. She was with child, so she should know how important her rest was.

He didn't have doubt that the moment Lady Margeary was awake she would return to assist. The plus side is then Ser Loras could take over for Barristan and let his friend get some rest for himself. The old knight had stood there steadfast from the moment the door initially closed. Even when the chamber opened and Annie's pained cries echoed through the hall the man didn't react at all. It made sense when he stopped and thought about. He was never a father himself, but Ser Barristan had been in the Kingsguard so long he had to have stood outside of birthing chambers many times throughout his life.

He was hoping that they would have word soon though. After the first few hours Hange and Maester Vyman had left the chamber to rest. The veritable army of midwives would handle everything until it was time that maester was absolutely needed. That time had apparently come an hour ago when one of the midwives had come and retrieved Hange from her slumber. Fifteen minutes after she had disappeared back into the chamber Vyman came wandering back down the hall chain clinking until he too disappeared behind the door. Since then he had stood in the doorway to the solar. His eyes locked on the birthing chamber waiting for any type of update. He felt his hopes rise as the door opened once again. A moment later Hange stepped out, but the look pulled on her face sent his hopes crashing down. It was only made worse by the severity of her pace as she cut the distance between them.

Ser Brynden must have heard her determined steps because a moment later he was at Levi's side. Her eyes turned to look at the grizzled knight for a moment before leaning forward. Understanding what she meant to do both men leaned in as well.

“We've run into a complication,” Hange whispered, “The baby is transverse.”

Levi clicked his tongue in irritation. “What does that mean, Hange?” He didn't mean to give an angry tone, but child bed is dangerous enough on its own without complications being added in.

“It means the baby is sideways,” Levi wasn't as learned as the rest of the Scouts. Beyond reading and writing he knew two things leading and fighting, but the tone that his counterpart used let him know just how bad it was.

“GODS,” The shocked reply from Ser Brynden cut in before he fell silent again.

Levi looked off to the side for a moment as he grit his teeth to get himself back under control before meeting her hazel eyes again. “What do you need from me.”

Hange wet her lips for a moment before speaking again, “I think we need to cut the baby out of her, but Vyman is too scared. He thinks we'll lose Annie, the baby, or both of them.”

The Blackfish nodded along as if agreeing with the maester. “I believe Vyman must be apprehensive since he lost my good-sister in childbirth.”

Levi could understand that. Hell, he had seen other leaders in the Survey Corps take completely different routes after they had suffered a massive defeat at the hands of the titans. However, that wasn't always a good thing. A lot of the times it made those same leaders too wary. They would over think their actions, and that reluctance to commit would also cost more lives. It was a double edged sword that wasn't afraid to cut you.

Through experience Levi had learned that the best thing to do was retest your first approach. Many
times the circumstances of that first defeat were completely out of your hands. The most important factor though was just to commit. Indecisiveness was detriment to any action you tried to undertake.

Maester Vyman was suffering under the same affliction as those other men Levi thought of. The added fact that this was the future queen and heir of the Seven Kingdoms was not helping the man in the least. He could understand the fear that the maester was facing. Having to face Jon and tell him that he lost either or both of them was not something even Levi wanted to think of.

Annie, however, could do something no other woman could do in the same situation, survive and do it easily. “Did you tell him that Annie can easily survive this?”

“Of course I did,” Hange shot back exasperatedly, “but he doesn't believe me, and he is in charge in there. So, until we can convince him we are stuck in a stalemate.”

“What do you mean she can survive this so easily?” Ser Brynden cut in again.

Levi cut his eyes over to the Blackfish, “You haven't seen it, but I'm sure you've heard that Annie is also a titan shifter.” It wasn't quite a question, but the older man nodded his head in answer anyway. “Well, you haven't had to see it yet, but that power gives them regenerative abilities. If they don't shift it can take hours or days to heal. However, if the damage is too great or they pass out from the wounds they will shift automatically to be able to heal immediately.”

“Seven Hells!” The man whisper shouted, “So what are you going to do?”

“The baby needs to be cut out,” Hange began in a tone that brokered no argument, “but we need to act fast. If she goes into shock or passes out she could shift, and that would destroy a good portion of the castle along with killing all of us.”

Levi fell into silence as he pondered their situation. Whatever option they took it would have to be done quickly. He was ashamed he hadn't thought of it before, but Hange was right. They were balancing on a knife's edge, and most of the castle's occupants heads were on the block.

Multiple scenarios quickly rushed through his mind before one jumped out ahead of the others. Turning to the other two and seeing contemplative expressions on their faces he decided to take charge.

Rushing into the solar they had been waiting in he strolled over to where Reiner was asleep. The blonde boy was sitting relaxed back into the chair. His head resting against his fist held up by his elbow on the arm of the settee. He kicked the soul of his boot hard enough to wake him. His hazel eyes shot open and his head snapped back and forth in alarm before settling upon Levi. “Reiner go put on your O.D.M. and meet me back here.”

“Huh- Wha-” The boy went to ask. His hand trying to rub the sleep away from his eyes.

“NOW!” Levi whisper shouted. The urgency had the intended affect as the boy sprang to his feet tearing out of the room. He then turned his attention to Sasha. She was passed out next to Connie. Her head leaning on his shoulder as a small ribbon of drool rolled down her chin from her mouth.

“Sasha,” The man knew that was all that was required. Growing up in the country had made the dark haired girl a light sleeper. The looming threat of brigands raiding her small farming village kept the small hamlet on a constant sense of alert. Less then a moment later her golden eyes shot open taking in her surroundings. “Sasha, we don't have a moment to lose. Get your O.D.M., Annie's bathing robe, and meet me back here.”
The girl only nodded springing to action faster than Reiner had. Levi followed the young woman to his own chambers to retrieve his gear.

Ten minutes later the two younger soldiers stood before him. He gave them a once over making sure they had everything they needed. Sasha showing her tension by how tight her grip on the dressing gown was. Nodding he turned to the birthing chamber meeting Ser Barristan's confused expression, “What's happening Levi?”

“We need to save Annie and the baby, Barristan.” He answered the old knight, “The baby is sideways in the birth canal, and if we don't do something quick we'll lose them both.”

The older man's face paled slightly, but a determined expression took over. He clapped his mailed hand on Levi's shoulder as sky blue eyes peered into his steel grey ones. “Do what you have to to save them.”

Levi nodded wordlessly as the Kingsguard stepped aside allowing them entry.

The scene he came upon was pure chaos. Annie laid wide eyed on the bed dressed in a shift that barely protected her modesty. It was the first time Levi could ever remember the girl having an expression of fear upon her face. Teya sat beside her holding one of her hands as she dabbed her forehead with a wet washcloth with the other. Lady Catelyn sat to the other trying to coach her through breathing. The midwives in the room were currently between Annie’s thighs doing whatever it is they do. Off to the side Hange and the maester were in a very heated debate. Though they kept their voices low their expressions gave everything away.

He left the two squabbling as he went to the window. Throwing the curtains open the morning sun shine flooded the chamber as it sparkled off the surface of the Tumblestone. The final pieces of his plan fell into place as he looked at the castle's surroundings. As reckless as it was with the army camped on the south and east sides of Riverrun no one else would be at risk. Satisfied with the potential outcome he turned back to assist his associate with the stubborn man she was dealing with. The words the maester was hissing became clearer as he approached the two, “-o, no, no. She is under my care and I don't care what you think will happen. I'm not risking those two with your bullheaded ideas.”

At this point he had already heard enough. The man's fear at having to face Jon was going to result in a much more severe conclusion. Reaching forward he yanked Vyman towards him by the multi-linked chain that was around his neck, and the chamber echoed with the clap of skin on skin contact as he slapped the maester across the cheek.

The man immediately shut up and his eyes went wide as Levi pulled him even closer. “Listen and listen well. We are cutting this baby out and we are doing it now. Annie is not the one at risk here. I have seen her survive much worse than this, so we are going to save her baby and we are doing it now.”

The man finally began bobbing his head in agreement, “O-okay, we-we'll cu-cut the ba-bay out. Le-let me gr-grab the e-ether.”

“No.” Hange immediately shot back, “If she goes under we all die. Do you understand?”

The old man began nodding furiously and somehow managed to pale further than he already was. That was when Levi noticed the condition he was in. “And Hange will perform the surgery. You're gonna have to talk her through it because you are shaking like a leaf in the wind right now.”
Once more the man just nodded. Happy with finally getting through to the man he went to the bedside. After he asked Teya to move he took up Annie's hand himself. Her blue-grey eyes were glassy as she turned to him. “Annie, we are gonna have to cut the baby out. We can't have you shifting, so you are going to have to deal with the pain. Can you do that for me?”

The girl responded with a raspy, “yes,” her voice hoarse from screaming throughout the night.

Brushing some of her sweat soaked hair off her forehead he gave her the most reassuring smile he could. Considering how little he did it he wasn't sure it had the desired effect. When he glanced away from Annie's face he saw that the midwives had set up a divider over her stomach so they couldn't see what was happening, and Teya offered him a piece of tightly rolled leather. When he placed it against her lips Annie took the hint opening her mouth and biting down on it swiftly.

He could slightly hear Hange and Vyman whispering back and forth, but he knew the moment the first cut was made. Annie's grip on his hand tightened and tiny streams of yellow lightening began coursing across her body. Catelyn gasped shifting slightly away from the bed afraid she would get hurt.

Levi didn't give the lady a second thought a second thought. He concentrated all his effort on Annie and keeping her from shifting. He kept his voice low reassuring her as best as he could. He began to feel a small amount of fear that they weren't going to make it in time when her eyes began taking on a yellow glow and the lightening became more intense.

He wasn't sure how much longer they were going to make it. His hand was going numb and the bones were aching from her grip. Tears were running down her cheeks in rivers and the leather gripped between her teeth creaked loudly.

Levi's fear rose to a fever pitch as Annie's expression slackened and her eyes began to become vacant. As he turned to yell for Hange to hurry the chamber filled with the wailing cries of a baby. Not waiting a moment longer he spun out of the chair, gripped its back, and flung it towards the window. The glass panes exploded out into a deadly rain as he called out to Reiner.

The blonde boy didn't hesitate ripping away the divider before scooping Annie up in a carry and running to the window. Annie's lightening began intensifying as her limbs went slack and her head lulled back against Reiner's bicep. A second later the pair disappeared out the window with the snap of Reiner's anchors fired, the hiss of his gas canisters propelling them, and the boy yelling out warnings to the guards below.

Moments later a gale of wind flooded the chamber through the window after a twin pair of thunder cracks resounded outside. The second the wind died he was out the window himself with Sasha in tow. As his O.D.M. propelled him over the castle walls he took in the scene below him.

Reiner stood in his titan form in the middle of the Tumblestone. The river waters swirling around the waist of his massive armored form. Annie's female titan laid face down on the opposite bank from the castle half submerged. The guards on the wall were dusting themselves off as they got back to their feet while spouting loud curses.

As his anchors returned to his waist he immediately fired them again. The two arrow heads sinking into the flesh on the shoulder of the Female Titan. The winch of his O.D.M. whirled loudly as he reeled himself to her prone form.

His feet had barely made contact before his twin blades flashed out in quick slashes. The nape of the titans neck exploded in a cloud of hissing steam before Annie's bare back came into view.
He returned the blades to their scabbards before gripping her under the armpits. With a strained grunt he pulled as hard as he could. The ligaments that connected her to the titan giving way with wet snaps. The sudden lack of resistance causing him to fall back with the unconscious girl in his lap. Sasha appeared in his sight quickly wrapping Annie in her robe to cover her naked form.

The moment they had Annie settled back into her normal chamber with the wet nurse watching over the new mother and babe Levi made his way to his own chamber. He took the minute to disconnect his O.D.M. before falling face first into his mattress exhausted.

JON IX

The first rays of the morning were beginning to shine on the Riverlands when Lyax touched down on the roof of Riverrun's main keep. Jon barely waited for his dragon to settle before he was leaping from her back. As he raced to the door to access the interior a crash of steel sounded behind him. He didn't know if Ser Laurence fell in his attempt to dismount or if Lyax had shook him off, but he didn't waste the time to look behind him as he barreled through the wooden obstacle.

He flew down the stairs taking them two at a time before he came out into the family wing of the castle. Not losing a step he ran as fast as his feet would carry him. Startled maids and stewards that were preparing for the day jumped out of his path bowing their heads as he rushed passed.

It seemed like the hallways were going to stretch on forever before he turned the corner to where his chambers were located. The sight of Ser Loras standing by the door calmed his heart a little. The young knight jumped from fright as he came to a halt in front of them.

"Is Annie in there?" From the look the knight shot back Jon quickly realized he had asked a stupid question.

"Of course, Your Grace, they are both fine and sleeping." Loras answered back with a smile pulling on his features.

Jon allowed the words to wrap around his soul like a warm blanket. The word 'they' carried so much weight with it. They were no longer a semi-newly wed couple. They were a family now, and his thoughts took him back to his youth. He remembered the joy that always lit up Lord and Lady Starks' faces whenever they held Arya, Bran, or Rickon. He could only hope in the deepest parts of his heart that with Annie they could be as successful of parents as the example he grew up watching.

With a deep breath he pushed the outer chamber door open while ignoring the smirk that lined Ser Loras' face. He strode across the solar before coming to stop at their bed chamber's door. With another deep breath he slowly pushed the door open. His face scrunched up at the groan the hinges gave out, and prayed to the Old Gods that it hadn't woke his wife up.

When he stepped into the bedchamber the first thing to catch his attention was the clicking of knitting needles. Sitting in a rocking chair was a woman he had never seen before working on some project, but given the context he automatically assumed she was either a wet nurse or a nanny.
Then his eyes turned to his wife in bed and his heart stopped. There resting on her chest was a bundle of clothe. The only clue to its contents was a tiny hand poking out. He unconsciously held his breath as he stepped closer.

He looked his wife over as she slept. Her dark blonde hair splayed out over the pillows surrounding her head. Her face was completely relaxed into a neutral expression. The sound of her steady breathing made his muscles relax slightly as his mind finally registered that she was fine.

His eyes then fell down to the bundle on her chest. The breath he had been holding escape him in a shaky wheeze as he took in his first born child. The baby's skin looked as smooth as velvet and their small pinks lips made suckling motions as they slept along with their mother.

Jon's attention turned to the top of the baby's head. There decorating their crown were sparse tufts of downy silver gold hair. As if in a trance his hands pulled his gloves off before tucking them into his sword belt, and shakily reaching out to run them through the little amount of locks his child possessed.

The sudden sound of tongue clicking broke him from the haze that had taken over his mind. His eyes snapped up to see the woman in the rocking chair glaring at him. Later when he thought of it he would laugh at the lack of shame she had at reprimanding her king, but she had a job to do and that was caring for the royal baby. In a moment Jon shrunk in on him shelf as if he was six name days once more and cowering in the shadow of Lady Stark. The nurse maid nodded her head in the direction behind him, and when he turned he saw a wash basin with a bar of soap and a hand towel beside it.

Jon felt a complete fool when the realization set in. Memories of his youth flooded him once more remembering that before he was ever allowed to hold his younger siblings he had to thoroughly wash his hands. Babies were very susceptible to sickness, so every precaution must be taken.

Wish a sheepish expression on his face, but determination in his step he moved to the wash basin. He stood there for minutes scrubbing his hands. He had even found a small brush behind the basin he used to get all the dirt from under his nails. When his impatience was verging on the point of breaking he had finally finished. Turning around as he dried his hand the women gave him a approving nod before returning to her work.

When he made it back to his family's side he reach out to his child. Being delayed from contact had washed away his doubts, and when his hand brushed through the soft hair and felt the smoothness of his child's skin he realized one thing.

There was nothing in existence that could possible match how divine it felt.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks For Reading!!

NEXT: BRAN IV/ VARYS IV
BRAN IV / VARYS IV

Chapter Summary

News of a child's birth is celebrated.

Chapter Notes

Hey, don't really have any thing to say before this one.

I just hope you are all being safe and taking care of your families.

Let's do it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

BRAN IV

Bran couldn't describe the feeling that was currently crawling through his body. If he was forced to put it in words he would most closely label it to be apprehension. What he had allowed to happen screamed against all his instincts, but he was just a lord. Not even a full lord mind you. An acting lord. He was just holding his brother's place till he returned from the south, and took control of Winterfell back off his hands.

So, ultimately his position to question Jon and his decisions was nonexistent. Letting Asha return to the Iron Islands was a bad choice. He could feel it in his bones, and it was supported by how restless Summer had seemed the last fortnight. He couldn't tell if it was his direwolf's instincts warning him, or the other way around.

The lack of apprehension in the others around him added to his own anxiety. When Asha Greyjoy had departed from Winterfell, Sansa, had been completely relaxed. She had stood poised as a proper lady should as they wished the Ironborn woman safe journeys, and that had been it. Even Lady and Autumn had been content and calm.

Arya was the same as their sister. The one of his siblings that Bran thought would have the same instincts as him had just smiled and clapped forearms with the older woman like warriors were wont to do. After some thinking it through he shouldn't have been surprised. As impulsive and stubborn as Arya was she was ultimately predictable. Granted she had been cautious of the Greyjoy woman initially. Over time Arya's constant awe of warrior women had ultimately won her over. He had even stumbled upon them several times training in the yard. Asha didn't move too much due to her healing injury, but as she stood there she would talk his sister through motions of wielding an axe. So, as much as he hoped she would have worried about freeing the squid he shouldn't have been surprised when she showed no qualms about it whatsoever.

Rickon couldn't have cared either way. His younger brother was much too obsessed with riding
Shaggydog around as if he were the most vicious mount known to man. The tack he used was custom made by the castle saddlemaker at Rickon's pouting request. The man had held out for longer than anyone thought possible, but Rickon had eventually weathered the man down. The man had ended up having to get the measurements from Lady after several failed attempts at getting Shaggy to cooperate.

Now, the boy was the terror of the courtyard. There was no telling when the youngest Stark would come tearing through the area. Astride the back of the direwolf Rickon would point forward with his wooden sword as if he was in the midst of a cavalry charge against the North's enemies. Unfortunately for the guards they ended up repeatedly whacked falling involuntarily into the roll of villains.

Bran would never admit it out loud, but it was rather impressive to watch. The set up required no reins. Their connections to their direwolves allowing Rickon to maneuver Shaggy with his thoughts alone. As he sat in the saddle Rickon would just hold firm to the horn of the saddle with his off hand as he swung his wooden sword as if he was the Warrior himself. Now, the entire castle lived in fear of the Scourge of Winterfell.

He had tried to assure his fears by keeping an eye of Asha's traveling party. She had been sent with an escort of Tallhart soldiers that had come to deliver the full reports of the Ironborn's attempt to take Torrhen's Square. The men were less than thrilled to have to escort a Greyjoy, and Bran really couldn't blame them. However, like himself they were not in a position to question Jon or his choices. So, through the days as their party made its way across the north, Bran, would watch from the eyes of whichever bird he could find in the area. He had kept his vigil until the ship she had boarded made it down the Ashwood River into Breakwater Bay.

He didn't truly understand why he felt the compulsion to watch her. It made the young lord feel even worse that he was the only one of them that felt the need to do it. As if he was just being overly paranoid. He liked to think that if his mother was here she would agree with him. After the attempt on their lives the night Mikasa saved them his mother wasn't one for taking any chances.

He was suddenly yanked back to the present by the harsh sound of a throat clearing. He turned to his right to meet the wizened eyes of Maester Luwin. Though, at the moment they held a judgmental look of exasperation.

“Have you come to a decision, My Lord?” Bran refused the smile that wanted to pull on his face. He knew he would get an ear full from the maester later for letting his thoughts wander when he is supposed to be holding court, but relieved the man would cover for him in the moment making it look like Bran's silence was contemplative.

He turned back to the man before him. He used the moment to jar his mind back onto what they were talking about. If he wasn't mistaken the lord had been complaining that he needed work done on his keep. He had his own masons, but at the moment he was stuck with older men that couldn't handle all the work themselves. Their apprentices had answered Jon and Robb's call to arms and sought glory in the south.

He brought his hand to his chin rubbing the smooth skin contemplatively. After he began a small sheepish feeling overtook him. He was sure the look didn't hold the same weight as his father with no whiskers of his own. It didn't help that he heard a soft snort from the end of the table where he knew Arya resided. Using all his will power he ignored his sister finally delivering his decision “If we were to loan you four of our masons for six moons would that suffice?”

The lord's eyebrows rose in surprise before he could school his features. Bowing deeply the man failed to hide the joy from his tone, “That will be more than enough, My Lord, many thanks!”
Bran smiled and nodded his head in response as the other man took his leave of the floor. Before Maester Luwin was able to call the next petitioner forward one of the household guards approached him. Bran watched as the man leaned in whispering to Luwin. The maester nodded his head, and as the guard retreated Luwin turned his attention back to him, “A raven was just spotted entering the rookery. I best see what it is. Will you be able to manage for a few minutes?”

Bran just shot back a smirk eliciting a chuckle and pat on the back from the old man. He waited till the maester's foot steps and the clinking of his chain had receded before continuing. He called forth the next petitioner and watched as the man approached.

He was easily ten years older than Bran's parents. His head was in the later steps of balding, and his face was wrinkled from many hours spent toiling in the sun. His tunic and trouser had definitely seen better days. There were multiple spots that had been embroidered to patch the garment back together. His shoes had distinctive scuff marks. Many other highborns would look down on this man for his presentation. Bran, however, realized that this was probably the best that the man could afford, so he wouldn't hold anything against him. He had obviously wanted to put his best foot forward before his liege.

The man came to a stop in the middle of the floor ten feet from the dais, and bowed deeply. Bran offered his own polite nod in return, “How may I help you today...?”

“Chrestan, My Lord.” the man answered back when he had trailed off.

“Chrestan,” Bran repeated, “Well met.”

“You as well, My Lord, it is always a pleasure to be before my liege.” The man responded in an enthusiastic tone.

Bran smiled again. It always nice to see how happy their smallfolk were to be in their presence. It was an attribute his father had worked hard on throughout his life. He was always known to invite random servants from around the castle to sup with them. He liked to hear their concerns and help address them. It had granted his family a positive reputation that had quickly spread throughout the North. “So, what is it I can do for you Chrestan?”

“Well, you see, My Lord, you may be too young to know, but your father had come to visit my farm many times.” Bran nodded his head along with the explanation. It was a well known fact that his father would stop at such places to visit the people on his way to or from visiting their bannermen. “I have the land with the mill just beyond the Acorn Water. My farm has provided food stuffs directly to Winterfell for many generations.”

“My issue comes from the fact that last winter tragedy struck my family.” Even from the distance Bran could see Chrestan's eyes take on a glassy sheen, “A fever struck us and my wife and I were the only two to survive when the cold thawed into spring. Unfortunately, my wife is past her birthing years, and I must think to the future of how to handle the land.” When he finished laying out his dilemma the man bowed his head slightly.

Bran had to admit this wasn't the type of problem he was expecting. He was expecting the man to ask to borrow some gold to get better equipment, more seed, or maybe buy new live stock whether for food or labor. He was not expecting the man to be more concerned with how the farm would be handled once he and his wife died.

He looked to his right passed Maester Luwin's empty chair his eyes met Sansa's. He was hoping she would have an idea, but he saw the same indecisive look as he knew his own face held. Turning to his left he met Arya's vision, and she didn't even bother trying. She just shrugged her
shoulders helplessly. Rickon sat in the seat to the other side of Arya. He didn't even bother asking. Not only was Rickon too young to fully understand what the issue was, but he wasn't even paying attention. At the moment his younger brother was more concerned with devouring the walnuts that were laid out before him.

Sighing he turned back to Chrestan. The man had yet to move a muscle. Still keeping his head down facing the floor as he waited for Bran's advice or decision. He sighed again as the weight of the problem fully settled on his shoulders. He didn't want to admit it out loud, but this was the exact reason he didn't want to be acting lord.

He knew that there must always be a Stark in Winterfell, but this type of ruling was beyond him. He was still a boy for the most part. Marriages, children, and inheritances were the worries of his elders like Robb and Jon. They weren't too much older than him, but they were already married. Their experience would far outweigh his and they would be able to come up with a solution.

He was just about to growl out of frustration when it suddenly hit him. Marriage and children were the solution, but they didn't have to be in that order. What if it went children to be married. Schooling his features back into what he considered his best 'lord's face' which received another snort from Arya he decided to give his suggestion to the man.

“I believe I may had a solution for you Chrestan.” The old man's eyes shot up to meet his and after Bran gave him a reassuring smile he continued, “I would suggest you go to the Winterfell orphanage. Speak to the mistress, and pick a boy and girl. I would suggest near my age or just a little older.”

The man was nodding his head along as Bran spoke hanging off his every word. “Be sure to tell them in advance the responsibilities they will be inheriting, and make sure they would be comfortable being betrothed together. How does that sound?”

The man tilted his head contemplatively for a moment until a small smile took his face. “I believe that would work, My Lord. My wife always wanted a daughter of her own, so this may be the best.”

Bran felt a full smile pull on his face, and was matched by one from Chrestan. “If that is all then I wish you good fortune till I see you again, Chrestan.”

The man bowed his head repeatedly, “Bless you, My Lords and Ladies, and bless our men in the south.”

Chrestan had barely taken his leave from the floor when the side door to the great hall burst open. The room fell quiet with the exception of the clanking rattle of Maester Luwin's chain as he hustled up to the dais. As he arrived at his side the maester's huffing filled the air as everyone in the room watched on to see what was so important.

Bran's eyes immediately locked on to the scroll of rolled parchment that Luwin was offering. As Bran gripped the offered letter Luwin offered up a quick explanation, “News, from Riverrun, My Lord.”

When he spun the scroll over he saw the seal of the three-headed dragon pressed into red wax. The seal was broken and had no doubt been read by Luwin, but if his lack of worry was anything to follow it wasn't bad news. However, it had to be extremely important for him to interrupt the day's petitions.

Not waiting any longer he unrolled the parchment. His eyes took in the familiar scrawl of Jon's
hand. The joy he felt at receiving a missive directly from his brother-cousin completely overrode the content of the letter. He reread the message a second time before the letter's contents fully processed in his mind. When it finally settled into his consciousness a large smile pulled onto his face.

Looking up and seeing everyone present having their attention fixed directly on him he thought of his next actions. Pushing his chair back he got to his feet. Resting his hands on the table he leaned forward to address the hall. “News from Riverrun came in from my cousin the crown prince. Court is adjourned for the day, but I want news spread through the castle. All residents of the castle are invited to feast tonight where I will reveal the contents of the letter. Maester Luwin have the bells rung, and I bid you all a good day till this evening.”

Hours later Bran waited in the passage that led through the side door into the great hall. Ser Rodrik stood beside him. The old knight was dressed in some of his finer wear. A dark grey doublet decorated with the multiple direwolves of House Cassel, black trousers and calf high black boots shine to perfection.

Bran himself wore the same doublet his mother made for him when Robert and his retinue arrived. A white velvet piece with the snarling direwolf head embroidered in silver thread. Like Ser Rodrik, Bran, also wore black britches and black boots. Beside him Summer sat on his haunches waiting for the rest of his family.

The wait wasn't too long and before he knew it they were walking out to the dais in a line. The rest of his siblings in Winterfell were dressed just as nicely as himself. After the great hall had emptied earlier in the day he had informed them of what the letter entailed, so that they would understand the need to dress so formally.

Sansa followed him dressed in a blue-grey velvet gown. Rickon was dressed in a matching doublet to Bran's and he was carried by their elder sister on her hip. She was flanked on each side by Lady and Shaggydog. Arya followed them up dressed similarly as Sansa. Under normal conditions getting Arya into a dress would be tantamount to a full on battle. However, like usual when anything involved Jon she was more than ready to just go along with the flow. Like the rest of them Nymeria trotted along at her side.

As they each came to their chairs the direwolves moved to the front of the dais. The four giant wolves took up positions across from their respective familiars before laying down.

Bran stood their motionless as he took in the room. Like he had requested the entire population of the castle was present. Those that lived in Wintertown though not present were having their own feast. He had sent word down for food and drink to be distributed to the people, and the town crier was putting out the word at the same time Bran would be doing so here.

Deciding he had made everyone wait long enough he reached over and clasped his goblet of Summerwine. His father used to allow them one glass at celebrations, and if there was ever a celebration to indulge it would be this one.

Lifting the goblet up in a toasting manner he began, “As many of you know word came from Riverrun today. You can probably guess what it's contents were from the bells of the castle tolling, but allow me to confirm everything for you. The letter came in the hand of our cousin Jon Targaryen. I am happy to announce that the royal family welcomed their first son and heir: Prince Aemon Targaryen.”
Cheers ripped through the hall accompanied by tankards and hands being slammed on the table tops. He waited patiently until the clamor died down. When silence finally reigned once more he spoke again, “A toast: To King Jon, Queen Annie, and Prince Aemon. Long may they reign!”

“LONG MAY THEY REIGN!” ripped through the room as tankards and goblets clashed.

VARYS IV

Joy was not an emotion that Varys got to feel very often. For many years his goals had been his only form of reassurance. His desire to be able to assist and influence the creation of a realm that would help all people prosper no matter their birth had been a long and arduous journey.

He never truly had a harsh life in his early years, but that all changed when he was cut. After the unfortunate run in with the sorcerer who took his manhood was when he truly learned what the world was like. It still amazed him how the world treated certain people harshly. Especially, when the ones that were treated the worst were the ones that had no control over what happened to them. Whenever it was discovered that he was an eunuch sneers and taunts were generally the nicest forms of abuse he would receive. It's almost as if people thought he wanted his manhood chopped off and volunteered for it to happen.

Like all men though even Varys wasn't infallible. He had made his own mistakes with the manipulation he had utilized in Westeros. Aerys had been useful getting himself into a position of power. The Mad Kings paranoia left him in a state where he didn't trust any of the lords in the Seven Kingdoms to be his Master of Whispers.

Varys had been surprised when representatives for the Iron Throne showed up in Pentos looking for him. He had thought long and hard about whether to take the position. At the time it seemed almost contradictory to his goals. However, the more he looked at Essos the more he realized his dreams would never reach fruition there. Between Tyrosh and Myr constantly fighting over the disputed land, the Dothraki pillaging and enslaving everyone they could in the Great Grass Sea, and Slaver's Bay Essos relied too much on raising the highborn on the backs of the low.

It wasn't helped when overtime his longest held friend Illiryo Mopatis began pulling away from him. He wasn't sure what would possess the man to start keeping secrets from him, but there was nothing Varys could do. The fact that Illryio had been by his side as he began cultivating his flock of Little Birds allowed him to know how they worked and ways to avoid his spies.

So, it had come with great reluctance that he accepted the post in King's Landing. Within a short time of arriving in the Seven Kingdoms he knew he had made the right decision. If there was one place in the known world that Varys could cultivate into his version of a utopia it would be here.

They were already on the right track with slavery being outlawed. The truth was a little uglier than that, though. Granted the people were free to somewhat decide their fates, marry whom they wish as long as it didn't conflict with their station, and barring summons for war they were generally left to their own devices. Ultimately it was still just a different type of slavery, but the world wasn't going to change over night. There were somethings that had to be handled gently over time.

The biggest blunder he had ever made came with the Rebellion. He had fallen in line with the
rebels and believed that a change of monarchs would help the Realm prosper. He had secretly added to and influenced the war against the Targaryens, but he had learned the error of his ways too late.

The day that Robert Baratheon had stood over the corpses of Elia, Rhaenys and Aegon smirking and calling them “Dragonspawn.” He had realized the level of depth his failure had taken him. There was nothing that could have been done at the time though. He had to hope that something better would come his way, and that had initially been Viserys and Daenerys Targaryen.

The last two Targaryens alive was what Varys put his hope in as he watched a warrior king turn into a fat whore mongering drunkard. The same man who cared so little about ruling he allowed the Lannisters to ride rough shoulder over him and didn't lift a finger to stop them. As long as Tywin's gold kept flowing in to fuel his vices the Stag King couldn't care less.

He had used what connections he had in Essos to track the two children down. Eventually it brought his path back to Illyrio, and in the process had re kindled their friendship. The man wouldn't do it for free out of the gentleness of his heart. His friend had asked if he aided Varys with his plans he required the position of Master of Coin as his payment. If there was one thing his friend was good at it was managing money. The man had literally gone from a sell sword to one of the richest magisters in Pentos, and considering the state of Westeros' finances after the stag and lion's reign the new Targaryen monarchs would need all the help they could get in that regard.

After years of trying to track them Varys' efforts had finally bore fruit and the two Targaryens were whisked away to the safety of Illyrio's manse. There under the protection of his friend's unsullied they would be safe until it was time to move for the throne, and Varys possessed the perfect catalyst to get the Targaryens back on the throne.

He still didn't understand the level of arrogance that the Lannisters possessed to think they could pull the wool over everyone's eyes. Granted at first Cersei and Jamie had tried to be discrete with their trysts. Eventually, they became emboldened when they felt they weren't going to get caught. Varys was truly shocked that more people hadn't known.

He had just needed to light the fuel, and then move his pieces around with finesse. It would have all been neat and clean. Then he had been forced on the back foot time and again.

First, Illyrio had betrayed him and allowed Viserys to marry Daenerys off to the Dothraki. Varys had been furious. His friend was meant to just keep them safe, and hire the Golden Company as their soldiers. He didn't know what the man had been thinking, but it was the first time Varys realized the man had his own plans he was trying to carry out. However, he had ran into the same barriers before. The magister was too familiar with Varys' information gathering to allow even the smallest crumbs of information to reach him.

Two could play at this game though. He had retained parts of his plans for his knowledge only, and after Illyrio's betrayal he had been relieved he had done so. His former friend would get his recompense soon enough, but at the moment he had more important matters to handle.

A smile pulled on his face as he looked down at the roll of parchment held in his hand. The missive had been sealed with the king's seal. It was the first direct message that he had received from his king, and he couldn't be happier from its contents.

After years of schemes and misery some true joy had finally reared its head. He would have to figure out how the king knew to get a message to him, but that was a worry for another day. He knew exactly whom needed this news even more than himself.
Moving to one of the many hidden compartments that were scattered about his chambers he pulled out one of his favorite disguises, but rarely got to wear.

He had waited till it was later in the evening, and he knew he wouldn't be sought after at all before getting ready. After another half hour he departed his chambers via the secret passage under his bed. His disguise consisted of an old worn gambeson, black trousers, boots, and mismatched armor. The wig he wore was woven of dirt brown hair, and with the proper application of some coal he added sleep deprived bags under his eyes. A sword belt around his waist would discourage any ruffians from messing with him on his journey.

Varys knew he wouldn't fool anyone if he was actually forced to try and wield the blade. However, the build he had would give the impression of someone that had been a fighter for many years, but time had starting catching up to. Half of every disguise was confidence in what ever you were doing. As long as you acted like you were doing and going where you were supposed to few people asked questions.

He eventually came out of the tunnels under a stable hidden behind one of the lower quality whore houses on the Street of Silk. Instead of following the road to Cobbler's Square and towards the Gate of the Gods, Varys, made his way through the city using the back roads and alleys.

Through his entire journey he would take random turns sometimes even doubling back on himself. Varys knew the odds of him being recognized was slim. Being followed was an even slimmer chance, but he didn't make it this long in life with throwing caution to the wind. The people he was meeting were too important to risk. Especially, with the war closing in on the end game he would not risk his and their position, so fifteen minutes of walking in random directions was time still well spent.

Slowly, but surely the spymaster made his way through the capitol of the Seven Kingdoms. After a half hour of walking the building he sought came into view. It was a four story Inn that was hidden a block off of the main thoroughfare. The first floor being made of stone, and then wood making up the rest. The slate roof was the same reddish brown as all the others that surrounded it. Hanging over the door was a wood plaque held aloft by chains. The surface was whitewashed and a bouquet of poppies were painted upon it. The red flowers depicting the name for those that were illiterate.

Varys let out a chuckle like he did every time he thought of that little detail. The owner purposely bought the inn off the main road to keep attention on it a little lower, and the sight of King Robert off of it. Varys didn't begrudge the man his precautions, but it's not like the stag would even be smart enough to figure out the slight the name of the inn gave.

The moment he pulled the door open he was assaulted by the clamor that inns were known for. Every one of the long tables were filled to capacity, a large fire roared in the hearth, and the air was filled with the cacophony of men shouting, belching, and tankards slamming against wood. As the bell above the door jingled announcing his arrival a young woman spun his direction. She was a raven haired beauty flirting with the cusp of womanhood. She was dressed in a simple blue cotton dress with a white apron tied around her waist. In her hands she expertly carried three tankards each and before she was fully facing his direction she began speaking, “Welcome to the Poppy Field. I'll be ri-” She cut herself off when her green eyes locked onto him. Her tone suddenly shifted to a higher octave, and a full smile took her face, “Ser Conleth! It is so good to see you!”

“You as well, Alys.” He replied a small smile pulling at his face.

She held up both arms displaying the tankards in her grasp as an apologetic look took her face, “I can't talk right now, but you can't escape without telling me some of your adventures you have gotten into.”
“I promise I will,” He didn't want to be out too late tonight, but he could rarely ever deny the young girl. “Your father in his solar?”

“Yep,” she answered popping the 'p' along with a nod as she turned back to continue serving her patrons. The poor girl had to be worked to the bone, but the amount of coin the family was most likely earning was definitely worth it. The orders from the Red Keep to not allow anyone in or out of the city had left many without their own residences. Thus, those that had just been in the city for business or visiting court had essentially turned into a captive audience for the hospitality businesses.

He made his way out of the common room into a back hallway. To the right would have been the kitchen, but he continued on his way till he arrived at the oak door. With three light raps against the door his summons was quickly answered with permission to enter.

He was meet a moment later with the view of Tayla formerly of the House Cressey. She was still a handsome woman in her later thirties. Her dark hair was pulled into a single braid that hung over her left shoulder. She was dressed simply in a matching cotton dress and apron to her daughter. Her blue eyes regarded him from behind the desk that she sat at. The quill held in her hand frozen in the air over a ledger of some type. A sparkle of recognition lit in her eye, “Good evening, Ser Conleth. We were not expecting you.”

“I had not expected visiting this night, My Lady, but joyous news has arrived.” He answered back in his regular voice.

Lady Tayla didn't ask any questions. She just let a small smirk pull her face before nodding her head in the direction of the secret panel to her left. No other words were needed to be exchanged between the two. Varys knew she trusted her husband completely, and he would inform her of it later.

He approached the panel popping the release and swinging the wall panel away. Behind it stood a room lined on three sides by shelves. Various ledgers and small chests of coin were placed for the sole purpose of distracting curious parties from the true nature of the room. It was strategically done to make anyone assume the secret room was only meant to guard the inn owner's records and treasures.

Varys glanced to his right reaching out and twisting the sconce on the wall till it was upside down. A click audibly sounded when the opposite wall from him moved slightly. Pushing it in revealed a wide sandstone staircase that descended into the darkness below King's Landing.

After several flights of stairs he emerged into the tunnels below the city. This had been one of Varys' greatest accomplishments in the last few years. The tunnels were teeming with men, women, and children coming and going.

It was the den of the Sons of the Dragon. The women helped care for the men by cooking, cleaning, and caring for their wounds when they returned. Most of the children that resided down here were his little birds. The effectiveness of the children multiplied when they had a warm and dry place to slink back to with food waiting for them. Lastly, the men were the dragon's claws. The warriors of the insurrection that had been plaguing Tywin Lannister's rule.

He stood watching the members of the make shift army as they performed their duties. His eyes scanning from person to person until they locked on his target. The man he sought stood watching two of their recruits as they sparred. The fight was interrupted severally times as they were given pointers or their foot work was corrected.
The clashing of steel became louder as he closed the distance. As if sensing his presence the man turned in his direction. Ser Richard's eyes didn't betray any emotions at all as he took in Vary's appearance.

If there was one partnership that Varys had never expected to have through his life it would have been this one. Ser Richard Lonmouth had been one of Prince Rhaegar's closest friends, and the knight made it no secret he didn't like or care for the Spider.

Varys had been all to happy to stay away from the man. Not that he feared him or anything. It was more of the fact that the man was truly inconsequential. His family were just landed knights after all. They were insignificant in the Game of Thrones.

Everything changed after Varys learned the error of his ways. He had his little birds scour the kingdoms for any news of anyone that he could trust to have been loyal to the Targaryens, but at the same time wouldn't draw attention. His web had quickly caught word that Ser Richard had survived the Trident, and had been nursed back to health by the Darry's in secret.

He had had some of his agents bring him back to King's Landing, and there he had left the inn under their charge. Richard and Tayla were originally meant to just operate under the guise of being a married couple, but Varys assumed that over time pretending became reality.

They originally had only used the tunnels below the inn as a means to come and go, but as the current war grew on the horizon they began developing it into a makeshift headquarters.

The tunnels allowed for the Sons of the Dragon to quickly strike and disappear before the Gold Cloaks could react. As the insurrection grew gaining man power many of the alcoves in the tunnels were quickly converted into living quarters turning the place into the perfect barracks.

From the moment that the king's true parentage had been revealed Ser Richard had taken it upon himself to take charge of the martial side of the uprising. He had begun training the men they recruited in swordsmanship to make them more efficient. The standard Gold Cloak didn't receive too much in martial training, but even they would be able to dispatch a complete amateur in combat. They needed men that would live long enough to be able to assist in training others with their experience.

It had been a resounding success. Their numbers now counted in the thousands all spread out amongst the populace. They would come a few days at a time to keep their training sharp before returning to their regular lives.

“I didn't expect you tonight, Lord Varys.” The Knight of Skulls and Kisses spoke as they came face to face together breaking Varys back out of his thoughts.

The Spider allowed a giggle to escape him as he nodded, “Your wife said the same, My Lord.”

Varys fished into a pouch on his belt before extracting the scroll he had received earlier and offering it over. “Word from Riverrun.”

Ser Richard's brows rose in a questioning manner before reaching out and taking the scroll in hand. Varys watched as the man turned it over and ran a finger along the indentation of the three-headed dragon pressed into the wax.

After he unrolled it the spy master watched as a myriad of emotions played across Ser Richard's face before like himself it settled on joy.

The knight turned and began walking away. Understanding the silent request Varys followed in his
wake. They made their way across the cavern they used for drill until they approached a door that looked to be a light oak. The wood still giving off a fresh scent showing how recently it had been hung. Ser Richard swung it open revealing an alcove that had been refurbished into a solar that matched the one Tayla worked in above them.

The furniture was of a simpler nature, but it was function they needed over fashion. Ser Richard moved to the side where a table sat with various decanters on it. He pulled the stopper from one before filling two cups with a rich red liquid as Varys occupied the seat that resided in front of the desk.

Ser Richard moved from the table offering a cup to him. When he took it his companion moved around the desk taking the other seat. He sat there for a moment just staring at Varys. The same smile still on his face before raising his cup in a toasting fashion, “To Aemon, first of his name.”

Varys didn’t want to jinx the toast, so he clinked his cup before taking a drink. The tart taste of Dornish Sour hit his tongue, and though he generally stuck to the Arbor vintages when he indulged he couldn’t begrudge the Dornish of their skills in winery. After he swallowed he looked from the contents of his cup back to the knight, “Well, before that we have to secure Jon, the first.”

Ser Richard nodded his head before taking another sip of his wine, “How goes the campaign?”

“Very well,” Varys responded, “With the birth of his son I assume that the king will go full tilt in his war effort. How goes it on your side?”

“Very well,” Ser Richard answered another small smile appearing, “our agents we planted into the Gold Cloaks have been able to integrate seamlessly.”

“Good,” Varys smiled, “and the wildfire?”

“As it is delivered to the storage points to prepare for the siege our men switch them out whenever they are guarding the bunkers.”

One of the smartest things Varys had done was alert Tyrion to the production of the volatile liquid. He didn’t know what Cersei planned to do with the substance, and Varys hated variables. Especially, the unpredictable type. Tyrion though intelligent was a lot more predictable. The Lannister Dwarf had decided to prove him right, and had taken command of the alchemists and how the wildfire was to be used.

Tyrion had come up with the plan to have the pots of wildfire delivered to the siege engines. Then, when the king’s army attacked the catapults could launch the wildfire into their lines. It also added a shield to the walls as well. Once the wildfire was shown the king wouldn’t be able to attack using his dragon. The risk of setting off the substance would deter him from utilizing the beast.

That would have been all well and good if Varys and Ser Richard hadn’t counteracted the plot. Richard had contacted a boy by the name of Lommy whom was a dyer’s apprentice. Since his recruitment Lommy had been providing them with green dye.

With that in hand the Sons dyed pots of animal fat, so it would match the consistency of the wildfire. Then, the pots would be switched out, and the wildfire would be safely moved to join the caches of the Mad King’s.

Content with that portion of their plans Varys moved on, “Have you selected your men for your part of the siege?”
A sinister smile replaced the gentler one that had been there on the knight's face, “Yes, and our training has been very productive. Worry not, dear Spider, when dragon banners rise on the horizon the lions will fall.”

Chapter End Notes

THANKS FOR READING!!!

NEXT: TYRION IV
TYRION IV

Chapter Summary

News of a wedding at the Twins reaches King's Landing

Chapter Notes

Hey, I know it's Wednesday, but I had this chapter finished. I wasn't going to sit on it for a week just because I was too busy to post yesterday.

Just a little set up beforehand. In terms chronology this chapter takes place later in the night from Varys section last chapter.

OH! and this story now has over 500 Kudos! Thanks so much everyone for your continued support! It means a lot!

Anyway, ENJOY!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

To say that Tyrion was annoyed would be an understatement to a degree he couldn't even fathom at that time. It was just one night. One bloody night that he actually wanted to himself to be able to relax and forget everything that was happening in this shitty world.

Of course the one time he actually went against his father's desires he would be found. From the moment he had received word to act as hand for his father he had followed the man's commands to a 'T'. So, for moons he had to play the Game all the while going without the comfort of a woman. His father had strictly forbidden him from whoring while acting as Hand, and he had done just that.

For once he hadn't argued with the Old Lion. He understood that right at that moment image was everything, and the Lannisters needed to look like they were going to be a different type of ruler than the Baratheon before. So, the first step to distancing themselves was to stop having whores come to the Red Keep, and also anyone directly involved with the court were barred from going to the establishments.

His father's other reasons for not wanting him to whore was for marriage purposes. Tyrion didn't know what his father thought was going to happen, but Tyrion was no fool. Due to the secretive nature of his old man he didn't know how many betrothals were turned down for his hand, but he was sure that it was a lot. Tywin seemed convinced that the name Lannister would have been enough for any lord to want to marry their daughter into their family. The reality of the situation was quite the opposite. It seemed that no matter the benefits of the union no man in his right mind wanted to punish their daughter with a marriage to the Dwarf of Casterly Rock.
A small chuckle ripped from his throat at that last thought. He guessed he would have to come up with a new epithet. He couldn't really be called the Dwarf of Casterly Rock if they didn't possess Casterly Rock. He figured that little part had to be especially grating on his father. The very image the man had tried to cultivate his entire life was wiped out in one battle. Seriously, why should anyone fear you if you can't even safeguard your own home.

The lose of Casterly Rock had sent their family into a tail spin. His father seemed to gain a new sense of determination he had never seen before. The man had raged of course. Tyrion had made the wise decision to stay out of his sight for a fortnight after. It was what he saw after that terrified him. His father had suddenly been calm and collected. As if the disastrous battles of the Westerlands had never happened. Always being the observant one Tyrion quickly realized his father had a plan. One he of course wouldn't be privy to until the time was right. Tywin had been quite clear that they weren't to be trusted, and so whenever he hatched his schemes Tyrion and Cersei were not included in his council.

Cersei had been much the same as their father. She had ranted, raved, and there were a few instances of her hurling wine decanters at serving girls. Then, like their father she had suddenly seemed to calm. Though, she was still confined to her quarters whenever Tyrion would visit her she would once again be wearing her self assured smug smile.

His sister had always been an enigma to him. For someone that seemed to think she was so smart she sure made a lot of mistakes, and her schemes always seemed to fail. If it hadn't been for their father always picking up after her nothing she ever wanted would come to fruition. The worst part was that she didn't know how to keep silent. When he had asked what had changed her mood so quickly she had been all too happy to gloat and stroke her own ego.

She had sent one of her Kettleblack minions to Castle Black with a group of men. Apparently, they were to infiltrate the Watch and smuggle Jamie back out. Tyrion had no doubt that she had used her cunt to sway the man into such a suicidal mission. It would have been fine if it had ended there, but apparently there was more. Since, she was forever a slave to Joffrey's whims she had directed the men to go passed Winterfell, and kidnap Sansa Stark on their return trip.

Tyrion had had to rub the bridge of his nose then to dispel the migraine that had almost burst into existance with the thought of that plan. The idiot boy king had already failed to have the girl stolen once. Apparently, that had only inflamed Joffrey's obsession. The boy never liked being denied anything, but this was just complete folly that could only end disastrously.

Tyrion in essence had had enough. Everyone around him were still doing as they liked while he tried to toe some invisible line his father had laid down. Even when she was confined to quarters his sister was still taking whomever she wished to bed, so why couldn't Tyrion?

He had waited late into the evening. He wanted to make sure that there was no way he would be needed. Once he was sure that there wouldn't be any late night Small Council meetings he put his own plan into effect. He had grabbed Pod along with the two Lannister men that had rode with him on his adventure to the Wall. Of course they weren't hard to convince at all. They had learned early on how generous Tyrion could be.

A lesson he learned early on in his life was how to get people loyal to him. Everyone had their own way in his family. Jamie inspired men with his skills and war making ability. His father used fear. Ever since the Reynes, Tarbecks, and Targaryens there were few men alive that wished to test his father's patience. Cersei... well, Cersei, used her cunt. She had been told since she was a child that she was one of if not the most beautiful woman in Westeros, and it went straight to her head. She had grown up having men fall over their feet trying to win her favor. The few she deemed worthy
or if they had a service that she found extremely necessary she would award them a romp in the sheets.

Tyrion, though, had to use a different method. He used generosity utilizing his family's ridiculous funds. He knew he wouldn't ever be good enough with a sword to inspire devotion. He couldn't go his father's route because who would really be intimidated by a dwarf. Cersei's route was completely off the table. He was handsome enough, but he was still a dwarf. No woman ever fell into his bed voluntarily, but that had been the catalyst. He realized early on that everyone had their price, and if you could match it they were yours. He was more than happy to exploit his family's wealth to keep people in line.

So, with his three compatriots he had set out into the city for a little rest and relaxation. They had made their way to Chataya's establishment. She was a former whore that had managed to break free from her former employer to open her own pillow house. She had taken her years of experience in the business to make her whore house one of the most popular in King's Landing. She also had the best selection of girls. The other whore houses themselves had plenty of selection from the Seven Kingdoms, but Chataya was able to provide more variety. She had girls from all over the world. The biggest factor that weighed Tyrion's choice had been her lack of a connection to Little Finger. The former Master of Coin owned the majority of the whore houses in the capital, and apparently had tried to buy Chataya's place on several occasions. She had sent him packing each time. Tyrion liked that, and thus he liked and respected the woman immensely.

When he had arrived at Chataya's he had thrown down enough coin to make sure that he, his guards, and Pod were thoroughly entertained, wined, and dined until dawn. He along with the two guards got a good laugh as a sputtering Pod had been dragged off by two Dothraki girls. After the boy had been taken to be turned into a man his two men were making their own choices. He saw one take the hand of a girl that from appearance Tyrion assumed originated from Yi-Ti. The other not wanting to be left out had managed to find another that almost matched the first.

Once his three companions had been seen off he approached Chataya with his request. The dark skinned woman had just smiled knowingly at him. She had escorted him to a room personally before showing him in and with a “Enjoy, My Lord.” she had departed leaving him in the company of a very beautiful girl.

She had to have been around nine and ten or twenty. Her face was soft yet held distinctive cheekbones that would normally be found in the higher born and aristocracy. He had stood memorized as his mismatched eyes stared into a pair of crystal lavender. Her silver-gold hair flowed down to her waist. She had some pulled over her shoulders that hung down hiding her breasts from his view. Her womanhood however was on full display. His eyes became locked on the small strip of hair that remained above the slit between her legs, and he felt his mouth go dry as she walked towards him her hips swaying seductively.

He had requested this girl for one purpose. In reality he would never get an opportunity such as this. His family was losing the war that his idiot nephew had ignited. The Targaryens were taking everything that his family had built, but tonight would be different. He knew she wasn't actually a member of the family. She was just a whore that originated from Lys where some of the genes of the Dragon Lords was still prevalent. So, tonight he would pretend. Tonight Tyrion would fuck a Targaryen exactly the way they were fucking his family. He was going to have his way with this girl so much she would be bow legged the next day.

At least that was what he had wanted to do. He was only into his second time of taking the girl when the messenger arrived. They didn't even bother knocking before the steward and two more Lannister men barged into the room as he was balls deep into the Lyseni girl.
He had tried to tell the men to wait until he finished, but they had informed him that the Small Council was meeting now. With great reluctance he had untangled himself from the girl, and got dressed. His men had been equally pissed as he, but Pod just seemed to have a serene smile on his face as he stared off into nothingness.

The call at the gate house for them to open dragged Tyrion out of his thoughts, and his annoyance at his father resurfaced full force. He wasted no time directing his mount towards the stables. The stable hand had quickly taken the reins, and before he could resist one of his guards had lifted him from his saddle to place him on the ground. He shot the man a reproachful glare, but he just shrugged in response.

Tyrion knew the man meant well. The poor stable boy in his sleep addled mind had probably forgot the steps, and his father was probably growing more impatient every minute he waited for Tyrion to present himself. He pushed the feelings away for a moment to address them. He had built a good rapport with the three of them, and didn't want to do any damage to it in a moment of anger. So, instead of snapping he calmed himself before speaking, “You two go ahead and get some sleep.” He then let a small smile light his face, “We'll have to pick up where we left off another night.” That seemed to do the trick as both men smiled and bowed before departing. He then turned to his squire, “Pod, you go get some sleep as well. I'll see you in the morn to break our fast.”

A small smile and “My Lord,” were all he received from the quiet boy before he hustled off to his own chambers.

Even with having to stop to rub cramps from his thighs it only took him a few minutes to reach the Small Council Chamber. The later hour of night helping him hasten his journey without the servants blocking up the halls.

A sigh full of irritation left him when he turned the corner to see Kingsguard standing without the chamber. His mood soured further when he saw that it was Ser Osmund and Ser Meryn waiting meaning Cersei and Joffrey were there too. Though, seeing Trant outside caused a sadistic chuckle to escape his lips. Ser Meryn always prided himself on being the boy king's constant shadow. Nevermind, the fact he was a mediocre swordsman at best and had a sadistic streak that was only surpassed by the king's. However, ever since the Mountain rung his bell the man would stay out of any room Clegane was present in. That would leave Joffrey under the watchful eye of Sandor Clegane.

The two knights combined wouldn't even amount to the worst of Aerys' Kingsguard. The White Cloaks were a sad state these days. Instead of knights of renown that actually deserved the right to protect the king it was filled with warriors that would barely pass as household guards. Ser Barristan was the only one since the Rebellion that was worth his weight in salt. The rest of the positions had been used to garner favors or bought to help fund Robert's and Cersei's vices.

These two were prime examples of how far the Kingsguard had truly fallen. Kettleblack spent his nights between his sweet sister's thighs instead of guarding like he is supposed to. Trant was a special case all his own. He was known to frequent Littlefinger's brothels. That wasn't the bad part. It was the service he had requested when there. The man had a proclivity for extremely young girls. Most being victims of the man before they were even flowered.

The man's attitude had only soured day by day since Baelish's disappearance. Apparently, the man had been turned away from the brothels every time he had tried to indulge. From what Tyrion had heard he had even tried to threaten the young man that was running the establishments in Baelish's absence. To the knight's detriment the man hired to guard the brothel was a much better fighter and
Ser Meryn had found himself face first in a gutter.

Said knight sneered, “Imp,” as he passed. Tyrion didn't even waste his breath replying to the man as he passed his way into the Small Council Chamber. No doubt the idiot would consider it some type of victory. Like he was the first man to ever sneer at him or use that particular insult.

As he entered the chamber his mismatched eyes quickly scanned the room. His father sat with his brows pulled into an irritated scowl. Cersei sat next to him looking resplendent. The meeting must have been called before she had drank herself to the point of retiring for the night. Her face was alight in her normal smug smile. Pycelle was further down the table. The old man trying to act like he was asleep with his head bowed slightly. Tyrion sometimes wondered if the old lecher realized that there wasn't one person that bought his act, and there was really no reason to continue it. Varys sat opposite the Grand Maester. Tyrion felt his eyebrows raise as he took the man in. For the most part he looked as he always did along with the ever present cloud of lavender that constantly surrounded the bald eunuch. What gave Tyrion pause was the bags that appeared to be under the man's eyes. They weren't too bad really. Just a slight darker shade than the rest of his face. It just struck Tyrion as odd. Under any normal circumstances no matter the hour the man never looked tired.

He felt his lips pull into a confused frown before movement over his father's shoulder caught his attention. There pacing back and forth was Joffrey. The boy king looked absolutely thrilled. His face was pulled into an ear to ear grin showing off all his teeth. That was when Tyrion felt his stomach sink. Joffrey smiling never boded well for anyone.

Deciding quickly that whatever was about to be discussed needed the supportive hand of alcohol he made his way to the side table. He had just pulled the crystal stopper from the decanter when his father's voice cut through the silence, “I trust you were enjoying your night?” It should have been a straight forward question, but his father's tone let him know it was anything other than that. He shrugged his shoulders as he poured his glass of Dornish Sour, “It was going well, and I was quite enjoying the company. Thank you for asking.”

He knew the last part would annoy his father. Tyrion couldn't resist looking over and confirming his suspicions. His father teeth were gritted so hard he was sure they were grinding, and there was a fire in his emerald eyes. He had just retrieved his goblet as the response came, “And what did I tell you about your whores?”

“Uh, uh, uh, Father.” Tyrion's finger waggled along with his response, “You said if you found them in my bed. You never said anything about me being in theirs.”

As he took his seat at the opposite end of the table his father's mouth opened to retaliate only to be cut off by Joffrey, “Enough about the whores! Tell him! Tell him!”

The young boy king was bouncing around looking like a little child impatiently waiting for their nameday gifts. “Tell me what?”

His father shot an annoyed look at Joffrey, before looking towards the Grand Maester giving him a nod. The suddenly awake Pycelle produced a raven scroll from within his sleeves.

He slowly reached out with his shaky wrinkled hand offering the missive. Tyrion knit his brows when the old man stopped at half his reach causing Tyrion to practically lean on the table. Just before his fingers touched the parchment the old man dropped it from his grasp. A chuckle covered
by a raspy coughed escaped him as he spoke in his raspy voice, “So-sorry, My Lord. Old hands.”

Tyrion rolled his eyes before climbing from his seat to retrieve the scroll. Once he was settled back in his chair he unrolled the letter, and read aloud, “Roslin caught a fine fat trout. Her brothers gave her a fine wolf pelt and glorious dragon hide.” He creased his brow as he let the letter roll back on itself. “What is this? Bad poetry?”

“Robb Stark is dead!” Joffrey responded excitedly, “and that bastard claiming to be a Targaryen.” He quickly shifted his attention from Tyrion back to Maester Pycelle, “I want ravens sent out to every castle. Let them know that the bastard and Robb Stark are dead. I want a celebration planned for my victory.” Tyrion watched as the last comment caused a twitch in his father's face as Cersei looked on like Joffrey had hung the stars in the sky himself.

“The king is right on one part.” His father began regaining everyone's attention. “We need to spread the word quickly. Get the criers out to spread the word of this dragon pretenders’ demise. It should demoralize the insurgents if not kill their movement all together.”

“With their leadership gone the rebels will be in disarray and should fall apart. I have already sent Ser Harys Swift to the Stormlands to see what has taken them so long to marshal their troops. When he returns I will march with all the forces here, meet up with Kevan, and we will put down the rest of their forces in the Riverlands.”

His father's plans were met with smiles around the table until a throat clearing brought everyone's attention to the Spider. “Before we get too far into plans and celebrations there is news from my little birds in Riverrun.” The eunuch looked around the table meeting everyone's eyes before beginning again, “Though Robb Stark and this Jon Targaryen may have been killed at the Twins, but his newly widowed wife just gave birth to a little silver haired boy named Aemon.”

Tyrion watched the faces around the table pale, but it was the scoff that came from Joffrey which pulled his attention, “So, what if she whelped some bastard of a bastard. I'm not concerned with a baby.”

“Are you simple?” Tywin's voice cut through the air like a knife. The derision clear in his voice. “Let me tell you why this baby is important. This baby gives them something to rally behind. He may be a babe at the breast, but they will fight for him. They may have wanted revenge for the loss of their king and lord, but the men would have been demoralized. Now, they have someone to fight for.”

Tyrion knew his father was right. If anything this would embolden the Sons of the Dragon. They had resorted to back handed treachery to achieve their win hoping this one strike would essentially let them control the war. Now, with this young baby the entire Seven Kingdoms will have someone to rally around whose father had only used honorable means of fighting.

The Lannisters had declared to the Realm that they along with the Freys had no honor. They were willing to break guest right and murder people during a wedding to get what they wanted. He knew his father and sister wouldn't care. He had heard their personal words of 'A lion doesn't concern himself with the opinions of sheep' countless times throughout his life. What they failed to realize was that some sheep had horns and there were a whole lot more sheep than lions. No matter how strong the lion if enough sheep get together they can take it down.

“You can't speak to me like that! I am the king!” Joffrey's screech pulled Tyrion back from his thoughts. The boy king was red faced with rage, and he hands were pale white from how hard his fists were clenched. Apparently, he had not taken kindly to his grandfather question his wits.
Tywin looked up at the growling boy king with an unimpressed look upon his face. "Any man who says 'I am the king' is no true king." His father than turned his attention from the still fuming boy to address Cersei, "I gave you one task in your life. Become the queen and bear heirs competent enough to lead House Lannister's legacy." The man's teeth clenched tightly, "You failed miserably. This boy," He spat signaling at Joffrey with a hand, "is a cruel, vain, spoiled fool. You two idiots started a war that has torn the Realm apart."

Joffrey apparently had enough of his grandfather's criticism. He reached out grabbing the finger pointed at him, "YOU DON'" was as far as he got before Tywin's other fist connected with his jaw with a sharp crack. Even sitting down the punch caused Joffrey to collide with the wall. Tyrion wasn't sure if the result was from his father's power or the fact that Joffrey weighed next to nothing.

The boy king immediately began whimpering as Cersei flew from her chair with a cry of, "Joffrey!"

To his credit the boy king didn't stay down for long. He sprung back to his feet his finger pointing at Tywin. "That is the last time you ever do that! You are lucky you are my grandfather or I'd have your head!" Tyron had to suppress the scoff that wanted to escape him at the scene. It was a substantial threat that took quite a bit of backbone, and had silenced the chamber. Too bad it was undercut by his eyes being glassy and his voice cracking repeatedly.

The screeching of the wooden legs of his chair filled the air as his father got to his feet. The man slowly walked towards Joffrey until the finger the boy king was pointing was pushed firmly into his chest. The two stood silently for a few moments staring into each others' eyes as Cersie looked worriedly between them. When Tywin finally spoke his voice was low and inquisitive in a threatening manner, "And whom would remove my head from my shoulders?"

Joffrey, thankfully, was smart enough not to answer. His father's question seemed to hang in the air until he was satisfied the boy was going to stay silent before he continued. "Let me tell you who would take my head. Nobody. That is what you don't understand and your mother failed to teach you. Nobody here is loyal to you and your mother. They are loyal to me. You haven't earned anything. You think because you are the king everything is owed to you. That is the shit your mother has filled your head with all your life. People only listen to the both of you and your demands because of me. It is the threat of my actions that keep them in line. Not you or your mother."

Cersei's face was beginning to match Joffrey's from their father's comments, but the man didn't seem to care as he continued. "I have sat here listening to you insult the Targaryen boy constantly. Do we know he is truly whom he claims to be? No. He could be trueborn, he could be a Targaryen bastard, or he could truly be Eddard Stark's bastard as he led the Realm to believe."

Tyrion was wondering where his father's speech was heading. He wasn't the only one it appeared as everyone seemed to be leaning in their seats hanging on the Old Lion's words, "The difference between you two is he earned his own loyalty. Every battle that he has been involved in he was near the front. At the Green Fork I saw with my own eyes as he cut men down at the front line along with his men. A usurper he may be, but he at least earned the men that follow him." A sneer suddenly cut across his face, "Do you even know how to swing a sword?"

"Of course I do! If this bastard was still alive I'd cut his guts out myself." The boy king screeched with indignation.

His father 'hrmphed' right in Joffrey's face at the boy's posturing, "Is that what you tell yourself to sleep at night? I doubt you could even best Tyrion in a spar."
The boy's eyes turn to him. Fire burning in the twin pools of green, “I would never lose to that little monster.”

Tyrion's comeback burst from him. His temper had already been fueled with his father using him as a comparison to Joffrey's lack of swordsmanship, “Monster is it? We'll I'd take care, Your Grace. Monsters are dangerous and there are currently four of them in the Riverlands that would like to see your head squished like a grape. Especially, the one we are responsible for now being a widow. Accidents happen in the training ring all the time. Who knows, they may welcome me as one of their own afterwards.”

He felt a satisfied smile take his face as Joffrey stood there gaping like a fish. His father just raised a brow as if he was taking Tyrion in for the first time. Cersei's face somehow became a darker red as rage took over, but it was Pycelle's sputtering that cut through the quiet, “M-my-Lord, Lo-Lord Tyrion, just thr-threatend the king. H-he should ap-apologize.”

“Do shut up, Pycelle,” Came the harsh reply from his father. The man whose attention had shifted to the aged maester continued to stare him down until he bowed his head looking back at the table.

Once he was satisfied the old man was going to remain silent, Tywin, turned his attention back towards the boy king before him. He reached up placing a hand on his shoulder. Tyrion could tell from the wince that appeared on Joffrey's face that it wasn't gentle at all. “Let me make one thing clear, Joffrey. I have had enough of you and your foolishness.”

Even from where he was sitting Tyrion could see his father's thumb digging into the boy's collar bone driving his point home. “I have strode for one thing my entire life. The betterment of the Lannister name, and you and your mother have put that in jeopardy. I will not watch my hard work go to waste. I am telling you now that whether we win this war or not when it is over you will no longer be king.”

Tyrion like everyone else in the room was shocked at the new revelation. He unlike the others, though, had to restrain the smile that wanted to take his face. The resounding screech of “Father!” cut through the room from his sister.

Whatever else she was going to say was cut off when their father addressed her directly, “I would shut my mouth if I was you. I haven't decided what I'm going to do with you. However, I have decided that leaving my legacy in your hands was a mistake.”

His father suddenly released Joffrey with a shove that sent the boy back into the wall. Lord Tywin didn't spare anyone another look as he stormed from the room, but before he departed he called over his shoulder one last time, “I expect Tommen in the Office of the Hand after breaking his fast. I need to begin his training as the new king. One that will actually be worthy of the title.”

His father's steps had barely faded before Cersei was scooping Joffrey into her embrace. As the two went to leave they both shot him a look that said they held him responsible for what had happened somehow. Pycelle left a moment later with a scoff directed his way.

The only one who didn't rush away was Varys. The spy master just sat staring at him for a few minutes. Tyrion didn't want to speak to the eunuch. He truly didn't trust the man. He knew that his tip about the wildfire was an attempt to form a sort of partnership, but Tyrion wasn't going to fall for it.

The former man waited a few more minutes, but once he realized that Tyrion wasn't going to say anything he decided to leave. The spider rose and with his hands still tucked in his sleeves departed the Small Council Chamber leaving a cloud of perfume in his wake.
Tyrion just sat there stewing in his thoughts as he partook in his wine. His father had put on a confident front, but Tyrion knew the man had to have the same thoughts as him. Even if the Targaryen and Robb Stark were dead they hadn't stopped the rebellion. The birth of the baby had changed the Game again. A game that his family was failing at. They had lost every battle, and the kingdoms that should be still loyal to them weren't responding.

His father had essentially sent Harys Swift and his men to their death. The Stormlands may not have joined with the Rebels, but their lack of response meant that they were not willing to get involved. Tywin trying to strong arm them into marshaling under Tommen's name was a mistake, and it stank of desperation.

Tyrion wasn't fooled. They were going to lose this war, and a babe at the breast would be king. His father was stubborn and wasn't going to go down with a fight. One which will drag the rest of the family down with them.

As he downed the last of his Dornish Sour one though overrode all the others. His family never cared about him, so why was he trying so hard to save them. It was time Tyrion started looking out for himself and come up with a contingency plan.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!

NEXT: DAENERYS II
She waited at the prow of the Sea Dragon as her eyes stayed locked on the approaching shore performing the same vigil she had held from the moment she had finished breaking her fast.

Just as she was polishing off her meal Lord Velaryon had entered the mess deck and informed her that they would reach Dragonstone by midday. Her kinsman had made it abundantly clear that it would still be hours away, but she couldn't restrain her excitement. She had gulped her tea down thankful it had cooled enough to be able to stomach that quickly. It was a strange thing in itself. The fact that she could literally walk into fire to hatch her dragons, but tea could still scold her tongue and mouth.

The moment the cup had touched the table she had rushed through the ship to make it to the deck. As sailors had been busy adjusting rigging, scouring the deck, and multiple other tasks she wasn't interested in she rushed to the prow.

For hours she had watch the ship cut through the fog that had risen on the seas surface from the rains the night before. Eventually her patience had been rewarded when the top of the Dragon Mount became visible over the horizon.

She had ended up filling much of her vigil watching the Sand Snakes spar in small amounts to break up the monotony. Throughout their journey she had come to greatly appreciate the company of the three women as they almost seamlessly merged into her inner circle.

Obara was the most standoffish of the three. Through the moons of travel they had gotten to the point of being able to speak and trade japes, but the oldest of them still kept herself at a distance. Dany sometimes wondered if the woman's own insecurities could come into play in that regard. She could understand somewhat, though, she couldn't relate at all. Obara would most likely never be considered feminine let alone beautiful. It probably didn't help that every woman she was surrounded with was by standard perception gloriously beautiful.

Nymeria was the next oldest. She was beautiful in every way that Obara wasn't. Her skin was extremely fair, but still had a hint of olive tone from her father's influence. Her hair was an ebony black and was consistently in one thick braid that hung almost to her buttocks. She had a slim willowy build, but when she moved in certain ways Dany could see the muscles that rippled below her skin. She was also just as deadly as her sister. Though Nymeria didn't advertise her weapons at
any given time there were multiple knives hidden all over her body.

Tyene was the youngest of the three Sand Snakes in Daenerys' company. She was Nymeria's opposite, but still just as beautiful. Her eyes were two deep blue pools and her skin was a pale white. Well, as pale as a dornish woman could be. Her hair was a honey blond that she let fall loose around her shoulders. She dressed the most conservative of the three. Her white robes almost seeming to be religious in nature. She had taken to Tyene the quickest of the three, but she had also learned that she was the deadliest of the bunch. Where Obara and Nym used weapons for their killing, Tyene, used poison. She was well versed in their applications and which ones would benefit in what scenario. All this hidden under the guise of an innocent demure maiden.

Daenerys scoffed when she thought of the last part. Tyene was an expert at appearing innocent, but Dany had caught her several times leaving Doreah's cabin in the early morning. One time the Sand Snake had even wagged her brows and offered for Dany to join them the next time. She had laughed it off to take attention away from her embarrassment. It wasn't that the thought disgusted her. It was that she wasn't expecting the girl to be so open and forthcoming with it.

After the Sand Snakes had completed their morning spars, Dany, had turned her attention fully back to the approaching island. She stood there a time by herself enjoying the wind blowing through her hair as she watched the land fill up more and more of her vision.

When suddenly her peripheral on both sides filled with red. She didn't need to actual turn to address the two. From how much of her sight they filled individually she knew whom was whom. To her left stood Kinvara the High Priestess of R'hllor, and to her right was Benerro the High Priest of R'hllor.

The two had joined their fleet when they stopped to resupply in Volantis. She would never forget the eerie feeling of seeing the two red clad priests waiting for them as the ship pulled into dock. The two stood side by side like statues as deck hands and slaves scurried around them. Dany was enraptured how no matter what was being carried no one asked them to move or make way. They would just be bypassed as if the dock workers were afraid to inconvenience them in the slightest.

"Absolutely not!" Lord Velaryon had raged when the two fire priests had requested permission to join them on their voyage to Westeros, "We already suffered one of these fire fanatics on Dragonstone. Lord Stannis allowed Melisandre to burn people as sacrifices to this Lord of Light, and he lost his head for it." That wasn't exactly the full truth. Lord Monford had told her before that Stannis Baratheon died in a trial by combat against a man named Levi. Selyse was the one to lose her head to her nephew's sword. Dany let it slide. Arguing that point would just be semantics.

She feel disgust pool in her stomach and her features twisted into a snarl as she look at the two red garbed figures in a new light. The man who had introduced himself as Benerro hadn't been affected by her sudden change in attitude. Instead the furious look on his face was attributed to the words that Lord Velaryon had spoken. "Melisandre," the man literally spat on the ground as he said the name, "She was a heretic, a shadowbinder from Asshai."

Lord Monford went to speak again, but with a quick hand to the chest she silenced him. The gesture also gained the attention of the Red Priest, "What do you mean heretic?"

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The man's entire demeanor shifted with the curious tone of Dany's voice, "She claimed to do the work of the Lord of Light, but it was all a means to fuel her shadow demons. Those from Asshai are not to be trusted, Your Grace, fore they live amongst the dark."

"What of the burnings that Lord Velaryon spoke of.” Dany asked, “Do you not perform sacrifices to your god?”
“We abhor such practices, Daenerys Stormborn.” The Red priestess spoke then. Her voice was a silky sound that seemed to caress and soothe her soul the moment it touched her ears. “The Lord of Light rejoices in life. He would never require a life to be given to bestow his blessings.”

“Then what would possess this Melisandre to operate under the guise of a Red Priestess?”

“The Great Other has many disciples, Your Grace,” Benerro answered, “He would mean to sow distrust amongst us and your people.”

“To what end? What does this serve in the end?” Was Dany’s next question. It was frustrating speaking to these two. They did answer questions, but never fully. It seemed each answer only led to another question.

“For many years now the fires have shown us the rise of the Great Other.” Benerro responded, “Then, a few years ago everything changed.”

“How so?” It was an easy question for her to ask. Now, It seemed like she was about to get some straight answers, and she wanted to jump on it as soon as possible.

“The visions changed drastically.” Kinvara spoke up, “Before, in the flames we saw you fighting in the snow with a dark haired man at your side. The two of you riding your dragons to slay the Great Other’s minions. After which you would rule together as king and queen.”

“How did that change?” Daenerys asked her voice quiet as her mind raced. She assumed that the dark haired man was her nephew, Jon. It was strange to hear that they would have been married and ruled the Seven Kingdoms together in these visions that apparently would no longer come true. The revelation came with a small pang of loss. It was a strange thing really. Mourning something you never had or now never would.

“This is all happening too soon.” This time it was Benerro that spoke up, “You were not to pass through here for years to come yet. Then, in the flames we saw monsters tall as the walls of castles, and a dragon already in Westeros.”

“We must come with you to see with our own eyes what is happening in Westeros.” Daenerys was ready to deny them, but the more she thought of it the less she could refute them. They knew of the titans that Lord Velaryon and Darry had told her of. They knew of Jon's dragon as well. The only logical explanation she could come to was that they were telling the truth.

With an affirmative nod of her head the two priests had smiled, but Lord Velaryon had sputtered in indignation. She paid it no mind. She understood where the man was coming from and why he was skeptical, but they themselves had said with much vitriol they had no connection to this Melisandre her lord companion so despised.

The three stood together just watching the ship close the distance to the island in companionable silence. The only sound reaching her was the water crashing against the prow of the ship before the screeching cries of her children cut through the serenity.

Her eyes rose skyward as she took them in. Her children had grown considerably during their travel. Their constant flying due to them otherwise feeling stifled aboard the ship, and the abundance of life for them to hunt in the seas had facilitated their exponential growth.

She could remember through the trip wasting time just watching them wheel through the sky in flight. If some prey caught their eye they would tuck their wings in before slamming into the
water's surface like an arrow. Seconds later they would emerge back into the sunlight water steaming from their heated flesh with some form of sea creature caught in their jaws. She would watched mesmerized every time it happened as they threw their prey into the air before engulfing it in flames and quickly swallowing their charred meal.

Drogon her black and red son led his brothers as they flew over the boat towards the island. In the time since they left Qarth he had gone from the size of a small dog to almost a quarter the length of the boat she was currently on thanks to the length of his neck and tail. His main body was easily the size of a draft horse. Rhaegal and Viserion though grown were still slightly smaller than their black brother, but still impressive in their own right.

When her head followed their flight her eyes fell upon the castle of Dragonstone, and she felt the breath leave her lungs. Being lost in her thoughts she hadn't realized how close they had come. Now she could see the castle in all its glory. Black walls rose high above the island that was said to have been made with a combination of her ancestors magic and dragon fire. Every where her eyes looked were dragon motifs. Even the castle itself seemed to resemble a massive dragon all its own.

Her eyes then landed on a winding stair path that led from the castle all the way down to the beach where a massive gatehouse stood. Even from the distance she could make out the two stone dragon guardians that sat to either side along with another flight of stairs that ended at the sand itself.

She began mentally preparing herself to finally feel the land of her birthplace under her feet when the ship suddenly turned. Confusion ran through her over their course change as she turned to shout a question to the helmsman she jumped slightly to see Lord Velaryon behind her with Jorah next to him.

Both men were dressed to impress. Lord Velaryon was in thigh length jacket that was the blue green of his house colors. Two rows of silver buttons ran up his chest, a silver sea horse was embroidered in the center, and silver trim finished out the decoration. Under it was a pair of white breeches and calf length black boots.

Ser Jorah himself must have had new clothes made through the voyage. He was dressed in a dark green doublet with a black bear embroidered upon it and black breeches. He also wore black boots that were shined to perfection. The only piece of his outfit she recognized was the old sword belt and peacock feather decorated scabbard that hung around his waist.

Lord Velaryon somehow knew exactly what question was on her tongue for he spoke before she had a chance to, “On the other side of the island is a deep water port that will allow us to pull right up to the dock. Plus the village is there, and I'm sure the people would love to see the return of their princess.” He finished with that fatherly smile that seemed to reassure her whenever she saw it.

She nodded her head in understanding, but when she went to gaze upon the island some more she was stopped by his voice, “Perhaps you would like to go get dressed, Your Grace, we should dock right as you finish.”

She shot the man a challenging expression as one of her brows raised, “Is there something wrong with how I am garbed, My Lord?”

The retort elicited a snort from her Old Bear. Lord Velaryon just gave her an unimpressed look back, “Absolutely not, My Princess, but these are your people that have missed you for seven and ten years. First impressions and what not.”

She gave the man a smile in return. It was a very valid point he brought up, and she realized she
couldn't argue against it. It was then that she felt her arm get taken by Kinvara, “Come Princess. I will assist you along with your Dothraki hand maids.”

It was just a hour later that her handmaids were putting on the finishing touches. She watched them in the full length looking glass as they worked around her. Her hair had been done by Irri and sat around her head in a set of intricate braids. They met at the back of her head where they coiled into a thick bun. She wore a dark crimson high neck cotton tunic. Over that was a black waist coat laced up the front and went down her to mid thigh. It sat over a skirt that matched the tunic in collar, and reminded her of the skirts she wore when amongst the Dothraki. From the front or back it would seem to be a regular skirt, but when she moved it exposed the slits that went up the sides to allow free movement. Under the skirt was a pair of black breeches and her feet were adorned in black calf length boots.

Doreah approached with the last part of her outfit. It was a black wool cloak with a collar of black thick fur on it. As her two handmaids settled the weight onto her shoulders she couldn't resist closing her eyes and rubbing her cheek against the fur. It was soft and tickled her flesh. When she felt Doreah step away she reopened her eyes and took herself in again.

Her eyes immediately zoned in on the middle of her chest. There sat between her breasts holding the straps of her cloak in place was a large medallion. It was painted midnight black with the engraved three-headed dragon enameled in blood red. She felt a smile take her face when she realized this was the first time in her life she was allowed to wear the sigil of her house openly without fear.

“What do you think, Princess?” Kinvara asked as she moved into the reflection of the looking glass from behind Dany.

She spun around the smile on her face still held in place, “I think it looks great, and it feels even better.” She swung back and forth a little enjoying the range of motion the garments allowed. The cloak making a slight swishing noise as she did so. “But why is it this style? It reminds me a lot of the way Ser Jorah dresses.”

Kinvara nodded her head in understanding, “This is true, Princess, it was done as a show of unity.”

“Unity?”

“Indeed,” The red woman answered back, “Your nephew was raised in the North, and that is also where his wife has spent the last few years of her life. During that time she adopted some of their styles too. So, by dressing like them you show that you are also supporting them. It is better for the smallfolk to see that you are one and the same on everything.”

Dany took a moment to soak in what the priestess just spoke. It did make sense. They were in the process of taking back their family's rightful place and the last thing the realm needed was the new monarchy being as unstable as the old. They need to put up the image of a united front, and this was such a little way of doing it that required next to no effort. Just a few extra layers of clothes. Small sacrifice all things considered.

When she finally pulled herself from her musings to respond she was cut off by the deep warble of a horn. A full smile pulled on Kinvara's face revealing her pearly white teeth and a pair of handsome dimples. “Let us go and see your people, Princess.”

Daenerys gave just a subtle nod in the affirmative as she smiled back. Kinvara pulled the door to
her cabin open, and they departed to the main deck. Dany leading the way with Kinvara, Irri, Doreah, and Ser Jorah pulling up the rear joining them from where he had stood guard outside her cabin.

When she was exposed to the open air again she felt her breath hitch and her eyes turned glassy as she took in the docks of the fishing village. The area was completely packed with people cheering as their boat pulled the last few feet into the pier. Her eyes transfixed on the banners being waved above their heads with her family sigil on them.

The sight brought back memories of her brother and how he used to boast of such a thing. “The men drink secret toasts to my health as their women sew dragon banners in anticipation of my return as their rightful king. When I have retaken the throne I'll show the Stag and all his dogs what it means to wake the dragon. Mark my words, Sweet Sister.”

She wondered what he would say if he was here now. She could almost hear his voice screech in excitement, “See, Daenerys, what did I tell you. Dragon banners waving proudly in the air just as I said they would. Now, we take back what is mine with Fire and Blood.”

There wouldn't be true happiness on his face though. No, his eyes would glint with the madness that she had seen lurked under there. He would try to claim that her dragons belonged to him because he was the last dragon.

Her body shook slightly as a small chuckle ripped through her at the thought of how Viserys would react when he heard of Jon. No doubt he would scream, call Lyanna Stark a whore, and Jon a bastard. He would try to demand that Lord Velaryon, Darry, and the Sand Snakes pledge fealty to him, and help him kill the half-breed dragon. They wouldn't kill Viserys of course. Her nephew had asked them to be brought back unharmed, so he would probably be kept under guard 'for his own protection' until they met Jon. Then, her brother could get to see what a true dragon looked like.

Lord Darry said Jon didn't have the traditional Valyrian look. His mother's blood had won out on that front giving him dark hair and grey eyes. It would probably be a hard thing to prove if not for the massive dragon that would be sat by his side. Once, Viserys saw it she could hear him demanding the bastard turn it over to him, 'a true dragon’. Her brother would immediately forget about her three once he saw a much larger specimen. His madness would cause him to forget the one most important truth of dragons. That they chose their riders. Not the other way around. There would be no reasoning with him, and if he was lucky it would have got him locked up on Dragonstone where he couldn't be seen, and destroy their family himself. No, it was much better that Viserys had died at the hands of her Sun and Stars. He wouldn't have a place in the new regime her nephew was building. It was a time for dragons, and her brother had never truly been one.

A gentle hand on her shoulder broke her from her thoughts. She turned looking into the blue grey eyes of her old bear. A small smile pulled on his lips, “We are ready to disembark, Khaleesi.”

She felt her eyes widen in shock for a moment before she turned, and saw that what Ser Jorah said was true. The ship had been completely moored, and the gang plank was laid down. All eyes on the deck were locked on her waiting for her to lead them to the waiting crowd. With a small smile she nodded and made her way off the ship to the island her ancestors had settled centuries ago.
It had felt like an eternity before she got to sit down again, but what a seat she found herself in. Sitting higher than anyone in the room she looked down at the table before her. It was a work of art in a class all itself. The table was carved into the shape of Westeros. It was commissioned over three hundred years ago by her most famous ancestor Aegon I Targaryen. She rubbed her hands back and forth along the leather coated arms of the chair.

This was exactly where he sat as he and his sister-wives planned the invasion of the continent. In her mind's eye she could almost see the two gorgeous women to either side of her. Visenya in her armor with Dark Sister on her hip as she leaned against the table. While Rhaenys looked on. A playful smirk pulling her lips as the red dressed she wore hugged her curves in all the right ways.

Of course nothing at this point was original minus the table. She was sure over the centuries the chairs around the table had to have been replaced. The colors of the table still looked vibrant, so that meant an artisan came in periodically to refresh it. Even the leather under her grasp had to have been reupholstered at points.

She let her eyes roam the table some more from her seat. Aegon had had this seat created for one purpose. From it's position in the spot where Dragonstone would be and raised up she could easily see the entire Realm. She took it all in her breath still accelerated from the fact she was truly here.

Her attention was then turned to the serving woman to her left when a goblet came into her line of sight. She took the offered cup thanking her before she took a sip. Her tastes buds were suddenly swarmed by fruits with just a slight bite at the end. Dany raised her eyebrows in surprise at the wine, and how the taste had taken her off guard for a moment. She was so used to the overly sweet wines of Essos that she was not expecting the more reserved taste that Westeros was able to create.

A chuckle came from her left where Lord Velaryon and Aurane Waters were sat. When she peered over the younger of the two added a shit eating grin on his face as Monford tried to reign his half-brother in. Dany didn't know what to make of the Bastard of Driftmark so far. From what she had seen so far he seemed dutiful. He had been left as castellan of Dragonstone from when Lord Velaryon had left for the mainland to met her nephew. So, the man obviously knew his way around managing a keep.

What she didn't like was his smile. She had seen the same one on the faces of many a man growing up. Dany had always desired by men for as long as she could remember even before she flowered. They would all try being charming and hope that their smiles would be enough to lull her into their beds. If there was one thing she was thankful to Viserys for it was that he always protected her from them. Now, in hindsight she didn't know if he did it so she wouldn't have to deal with that at such a young age, or that he was protecting her maidenhood to secure him the most advantageous match when the time came.

Daenerys couldn't argue the fact whether or not the man was attractive. It was merely a fact. The blood of Valyria was strong in the Velaryons even with him being baseborn he was still extremely attractive. His silver gold hair flowed down past his shoulders. Though he didn't have the purple eyes the green he did possess were breathtaking. They were brought into greater relief from the silver of his coat being the reverse coloring of his brother's.

She maybe young and not know all the ways of the world, but she did know what men desired from the looks in their eyes and their mannerisms. Aurane Waters may well have screamed it from the battlements by the way he looked at her, and how he lingered his lips on her hand when he had initially greeted her.

Dany just hoped he was wise enough to realize it wasn't going to happen. Even if she was a widow and could do as her heart desired she would never think of allowing the man into her bed. She
couldn't risk it for a simple tumble in the sheets. The scandal alone would be enough, and that was the last thing a new regime needed on their plate.

Lord Velaryon had been decent enough on their journey to inform her how gossip through the court could tarnish her image. There was also the fact that the royal family could influence the trend throughout the Realm. If she really wanted to cause a scandal she could just wear some of her Qartheen dresses around the Red Keep. She could already see the scandalized looks of the septas and older ladies, and hear the gossiping as men worried over their daughters following in her example of liberated wear.

A subtle waggle of his brows brought her back to the present, and she was ashamed to admit that she had been staring at Waters this whole time. She resisted rolling her eyes. Instead closing them momentarily to compose herself. She turned from the Bastard of Driftmark to take in the two other men that were new to her. Both were dressed in over sized grey robes with chains of linked metal, and were the reason they were all now gathered in the Chamber of the Painted Table.

The first and older of the two was had been introduced as Cressan. He was of a pretty advanced age. His hair had all gone to grey and thinning on the top. He seemed friendly thus far, but for some reason had difficulty looking her in the face. Instead he kept his hands busy playing with the scrolls laid out before him.

The other maester had no such issues. His eyes had been alight in wonder from the moment she had walked into the fortress. The younger man named Pylos seemed to be shifting around with nervous excitement causing his chain to rattle and clink.

She returned his infectious smile as she spoke, “I believe we are all here now. What word do you have?”

The older man startled at her voice sending himself into a small coughing fit, “Ye-yes, Your Grace.”

“Then by all means, please speak.”

“O-of co-course, Your Grace.” She watched as he nervously fumbled through the missives. A multitude of colored wax seals coming into view as he tried to put them into order.

“Maester?” She spoke softly, but added enough strength to catch the man's attention.

“Ye-yes, Your Grace?” She rubbed the bridge of her nose in exasperation already finding herself annoyed by the man's stutters. There was also the fact that this was the man she would have to allow to examine her. She wouldn't trust the younger maester to handle such a delicate subject. Considering how hard Lord Velaryon had argued with her over letting a proper maester check her over before declaring to the Realm she was barren. She had eventually begrudgingly conceded, but she would need the man to be more confident if she was going to be willing to accept his verdict.

She pushed her frayed nerves down before adopting an understanding smile, “On my journey here Lords Velaryon and Darry both imparted on me the knowledge of the duties maesters undertake. I know you served the Baratheons for many years, but you were just doing your duty. I hold you no further responsible than I do the people in the village. Relax, you are in no danger.”

She was rewarded with the elderly man giving her his first true smile since she walked in the castle. The reassurance that he wasn't going to be harmed in any way seemed to be enough for Maester Cressan to gather what confidence he had to start speaking. “Well, the first news to arrive after the expedition to retrieve yourself, Your Grace, was a letter informing us that the Ironborn
decided to take advantage of the chaos the war was creating and tried to declare themselves independent. That probably would have been the end of it, but they decided to raid the North as they did so.”

“I noticed you kept using past tense, Maester. I take it they have been dealt with already?”

“Indeed, Princess. The North only brought half their forces south, so the raiding parties encountered fully prepared keeps. On top of that the king flew his dragon to Pyke. He burned the Iron fleet that was at anchor, dispatched Balon Greyjoy, and instilled Lord Harlaw as castellan until Theon Greyjoy can take his rightful place as the new Lord of the Iron Islands.”

Dany's head jolted back in surprise at the fact that her nephew took on the Ironborn on their home territory. However, he was showing the world the true power a dragon brought to the battlefield. There was one thing that concerned her, and that was what her next question addressed. “Why is he letting a Greyjoy keep the Iron Islands if his father just rebelled?”

A throat clearing brought her attention over to Lord Monford who answered, “Theon Greyjoy was held as a ward at Winterfell since the last time his father thought to crown himself King of the Iron Islands. He is more a Northerner than an Ironborn. From what I witnessed King Jon, Lord Stark, and Lord Greyjoy have a fairly close relationship, so your nephew must feel there is little risk of the Iron Islands rising again.”

She “Hmmned,” as she considered all that. She was sure her nephew knew the man much better than herself, and was confident in his decision. She took another sip of her wine before turning back to the maester, and signaling with her hand to let him know to continue.

Unrolling the next scroll he cleared his throat, “The next event was the fall of Casterly Rock.”

There was a sputtering to her right where Lord Darry choked on the wine he had just attempted to drink. After the man had finished coughing, and few pats on the back from Ser Jorah he managed to clear his airway enough to speak, “What?!”

The Maester nodded earnestly to the Riverlands lord, “Truly, My Lord, if the letter is to be believe the Rock fell in a morning. Our forces didn't even set siege lines. They just launched an all out assault on castle.”

An impressed whistle came from Lord Monford, and Aurane wore a huge smile on his face. “Well, I'm not as familiar as I would like to be, but that sounds like an impressive feat.”

“Indeed it is, Khaleesi,” her old bear answered, “In all of our recorded history the only time Casterly Rock was taken was by Lann the Clever whom the Lannisters are said to descend from. That was in the Time of Heroes, though, so there is no telling how accurate the tale is.”

She still wasn't sure how impressed she should be, but she was sure she would be once she understood more of the land. She once again signaled for the maester to move on.

He had a small pile off to the side that he gestured towards, “These are all connected, Your Grace. There was a massive plot to kill the King and Lord Stark when they attended Lord Tully's marriage at the Twins. Lord Bolton was able to uncover the conspiracy before it was discovered, and the danger was averted. After that the King had Lord Bolton send a missive to King's Landing telling the Lannisters that they had been successful in a ploy to give the King the element of surprise with their next engagement. As you can see a lot of ravens were utilized to make sure we stayed abreast of the situation.”
“Truth be told we didn't know what to believe until we finally got this one certain letter in the King's own hand.” The maester fell quiet as he began mumbling to himself while he shuffled through the letters trying to find the next piece of important news. “Ah ha,” he proclaimed as he found the correspondence. “Oh, yes! You'll definitely like this one, Princess.” A huge smile pulled on the old man's face and Dany felt herself lean forward in her chair a sense of anticipation building in her chest, “Prince Jon Targaryen and Princess Annie Targaryen welcomed the birth of their son and heir Aemon Targaryen at Riverrun. Both mother and babe are doing fine. Congratulations, Your Grace.”

Dany felt herself sink back into the chair as the tension seeped from her body. A full smile pulled on her lips as she basked in the news that she just received. The last year had been a whirlwind for her, and at one point she had thought she was the last of her family. Now, she had a nephew and a grand nephew. Not only was the future of her family looking more secure by the day, but it was growing. One babe at a time, but growing all the same.

Not wanting to risk the mood this last letter put her in she quickly decided that it was best they end now, “I thank you all for everything you have done for my family. This news requires celebration, so lets call this meeting adjourned. I would like some time to myself, and I will see you all at supper tonight.”

As the room emptied around her she took a long pull on her goblet. She didn't know how to explain it, but the wine suddenly tasted infinitely better.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

NEXT: THE EYRIE
YOHN I

Chapter Summary

Annie travels to the Vale to set it to rights before the campaign can move on to the Crownlands.

Chapter Notes

WOW!! Time just got away from me.

There was so much going on and I couldn't get time to write.

However, I got a fire under me to finish this chapter and it is thanks to alperez. Their latest chapter of The Dragon Cub got me fired up and itching to go. Seriously, if you haven't read that story yet you are doing yourself a disservice. I'll leave a link in the end notes.

Any way, Let's do it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Four wars... four wars he had lived through now. Well, lived through was a bit of a stretch really, and there were many other smaller skirmishes that had popped up sporadically throughout his life. The main four he referred to were the ones that the Vale had ultimately been dragged into.

The first was the last Blackfyre Rebellion or the War of the Nine-Penny Kings as it was more commonly referred to. The last Blackfyre, Maelys the Monstrous, had tried invading Westeros to try and claim the throne in the name of the Blackfyres using the Stepstones as a staging area. That had ended in disaster for the Golden Company when the armies of the Seven Kingdoms landed in the island chain. Maelys had lost one of his heads and comparably the more important one to Ser Barristan's sword. With his death the Blackfyre line had been extinguished, and the Golden Company retreated back to Essos. He was too young himself to go on the campaign, but the stories he had heard from those that had been there told tale of a short but extremely bloody war.

The second had been Robert's Rebellion. Still to this day Yohn had nightmares of the things he had seen and done during that time. Jon Arryn had always been praised for standing up and defending his foster sons when Aerys called for their heads. It seemed the Realm forgot that the Vale had as much justification as the North. Their kingdom's heir had been murdered along with Brandon Stark. There was the fact that it was done behind closed doors instead of a public disgrace like what happened to Rickard and Brandon took a lot of attention away from it. There was also the detail King Robert constantly boasted loudly that he had gone to war to win back his betrothed from the dragon prince. Over time the true reason that the war had began became overshadowed by the tale of the now king's love being stolen away from him, and the valor he showed to win her back. It had been all for not and ended tragically when Eddard had returned to King's Landing with the bones of his sister.
The third war had been the Greyjoy Rebellion. Lord Balon had felt that the Realm couldn't have healed enough from the rebellion, and that it would be the perfect time to separate from the Seven Kingdoms. His entire strategy revolved around the grudges still being held from the previous war and the Ironborn had struck Lannisport first. The war had been short. It had taken more time for them to travel to Casterly Rock than the actual fighting. Pyke had been breached less than a moon after the forces under King Robert had amassed.

The whole experience was eye opening when it came to the Ironborn. They truly thought highly of themselves and considered themselves strong warriors. It was laughable. How strong of warriors could you be if your mettle was only ever tested against merchant ships. They are at their core nothing more than a culture of pirates that could only thrive on ill gotten gains. The moment they faced true fighters the lot of them crumbled faster than a sand castle.

Now, he was here involved in another war. This one so far had required a lot less fighting than the previous two he was involved in. He could now somewhat understand the ridicule that Lord Tyrell suffered under due to his actions or lack of actions in the Rebellion. Here he sat with the might of the Vale behind him and was just holding siege to a castle as the rest of the continent engaged in a heated war.

He understood why it had to be done, and frankly he was a little happy about it. The insult that Lysa Tully and Petyr Baelish were trying to subject the Vale to was too much. The arrogance of that whoremonger to think he could pass his bastard off as the trueborn heir to House Arryn was infuriating.

When the letter first arrived from Eddard Stark he had wanted to outright deny it. Like Eddard himself he had been raised with the honor driven values cultivated in the Vale. The entire idea had been ludicrous that a highborn lady would allow such a minor lord to cuckold her husband.

The pieces started to fall into place later as he thought of it more. Lysa had always been over protective of the lad. Which overall isn't unheard of with mothers, but there was more to this. He remembered the letters that Jon had written him over the years venting in a way only long time friends could. She had denied Jon starting the boy's training even well past when he should have at least had a wooden sword in his hands. He had even heard rumors that the boy was still on the breast even years after he should have been weened.

Then, he had seen it with his own eyes. Lady Lysa had summoned all the lords to the Eyrie to make sure they all reaffirmed their vows to her son. Lord Royce had no issues with that. It was expected of him to swear his loyalty to the heir of his lord. Then he had entered the High Hall to Lysa sitting on the Weirwood throne with the new 'Lord of the Vale' in her lap. The boy well over six years old clung to her breast as if he was still a babe. That was when he realized that it was the first time he had ever seen the boy, and it was the same for his fellow lords and ladies. The boy didn't look like an Arryn in the slightest.

It was easy to forget how they were supposed to look with Jon being the last of the main branch of the family. He was such an advantaged age his hair had been fully grey for the last couple of decades, so most had forgotten that a sandy blonde was the signature color of their hair. When his eyes landed on the mud brown of 'Lord Robert' Eddard's words had came back to him. With the raised dais he couldn't get close enough to see what color eyes the boy had, but something wasn't right.

His suspicions were raised higher when she went into a screeching fit when Yohn had said that her boy wasn't going to be Warden until he reached majority. Any other lady would see the wisdom in it and use her rights as regent to select one of the lords to fill in till their heir came of age. It became
obvious that the woman was hoping to keep that path open for her grasping paramour to be able to
step into. Lord Royce would die before he allowed a little worm like Baelish to take control of the
Vale.

In hind sight he should have wrestled control of the Eyrie away from her in that moment, but honor,
like always, dictated his actions. Thus, he had convinced the other lords and ladies to discuss the
matter in the Gates of the Moon.

It had taken less than one night for them to come to a consensus once back at the base of the
mountain. He had laid out all the evidence that Eddard had informed him of. Some of the other
lords had been just as reluctant to believe has he had been, but like himself the more they thought
on it the more it seemed the truth. The other lords had voted his cousin Nestor Royce as acting
Warden sighting his years as being the High Steward for the Vale while Jon was in King's Landing
and the banners had been called. Nestor had been decent enough to send a raven up to Lysa to
inform her of the lords' decisions and requesting she step down peacefully.

For moons he had sat below watching ravens come and go from the Eyrie. The birds flying too
high for the archers to reach them. Then, one day the ravens stopped. That was when Yohn's
suspicions had been fully realized. It had been a fortnight after the last raven arrived when two
birds arrived at the Gates of the Moon. The first was from River-run informing them that Petyr
Baelish had been executed for crimes against the Seven Kingdoms. The other was from the
mountain top castle above them. The message had been completely mad. Royce could almost hear
Lysa's grating voice as he read the insane scribbles. She had demanded they lift the siege and that
all the lords step down from their positions and take the black for committing treason against their
liege lord. It held none of the subtlety her old messages used to contain. Which told him one thing.
Without Baelish to pull her strings Lysa was a rudderless ship.

After that things had fallen quiet, and they continued to hold their siege of the Eyrie. Yohn wasn't
sure how the provisions of the castle were holding up, but it couldn't have been too good. Slowly
over time more and more guards came wandering down the mountain eager to escape Lysa's
demented version of ruling.

The irony of the whole situation hadn't escaped him either. Here he was holding a siege against
what was supposed to be his liege lord's castle as a Targaryen fought to reclaim the throne. The
very family he had fought to dispose less than twenty years ago. It was enough to send his head
spinning, and it wasn't aided by the fact that the woman whom would be queen was on her way.

They had received a raven a moon ago saying that the prince was on the move and that the princess
would be coming to assist with ending the siege. The Targaryen boy had wrote that it wasn't for the
need of the Vale troops. No, he wanted to make sure that everything in the Vale was set to rights
before leaving the back of his army open to a kingdom in disarray.

That was why he now found himself in the courtyard of the Gates of the Moon. A rider had arrived
a hour ago announcing the approach of the princess' party. All the major lords of the Vale were
arrayed out for the reception of their would be queen. Thankfully, he wouldn't have an
unobstructed view when she arrived. As family he was in the front row stood next to Nestor's
daughter Myranda.

The sound of hoof beats filled the air as the party came riding through the main gate. Like most
processions the first two in were standard bearers. The grey direwolf on white flapped proudly to
the left giving place of honor to a sigil he hadn't seen in almost twenty tears. The ruby red three-
headed dragon on a field of black. A few more northern men-at-arms flowed through the gate
before he saw the person they had all gathered to meet.
To say Yohn was surprised would be an understatement. Through his years of greeting those of a higher station he was very familiar with how ladies would present themselves during arrival ceremonies. The soon to be queen was the complete opposite. She actually looked like she could blend into the soldiers with which she traveled.

Her hair was pulled up into a bun that had random hairs pointing every which way. The Vale winds having loosened a few more strands. Her bangs hung loose framing her face asymmetrically. The Right bearing more of the hair than the left. She had a slightly hawkish nose, but it did nothing to take away from her casual beauty. She was no Cersei Lannister or Ashara Dayne, but she wasn't homely by any stretch.

As she dismounted the courtyard went to take a knee, but were quickly stopped when she called out for them to remain standing. As she approached his cousin first Yohn managed to get a good look at her garb. A black hooded cloak adorned her shoulders that hung to her waist. There was also another white hood that poked out from underneath it. She wore white leggings of a material that he wasn't familiar with at first glance, and brown boots rose up over her knee. There were also dark brown leather straps that lashed around her legs. The last and most curious pieces of her ensemble were the two scabbards that hung on her thighs. They were long green rectangles that appeared to be metal with silver canisters resting on them.

As his cousin continued his greeting his eyes turned to the rest of the party. There were two more people that dressed similarly as the princess. A man and a young woman. They both had jet black hair and silver eyes. It was when he was observing them that he noticed the features of the girl. Her eyes had a slight slant to them, and her facial features somehow seemed even softer than the average lady. It gave her a mysterious and exotic feel.

Then his eyes landed on someone he hadn't seen since he rode off to assist his nephew in the Riverlands. The Black Fish looked in as good of health as when he rode out. He watched the man's Tully blue eyes scan the crowd until they landed on him. The normally stoic veneer cracked into a subtle smile and a nod which Yohn reciprocated.

It was then that his vision was filled with the best gift he could ask for. There with a beaming smile on his face was his second son Robar. He had worried about the boy being in the Stormlands with Renly Baratheon, but here he now stood in perfect health. The boy looked resplendent in his steel grey armor. The runes of their house sigil engraved on the breastplate.

The only confusing part of him was the white cloak with black trim that adorned his shoulders that he didn't notice until his son had pulled him into a bone crushing hug. They had just stood there for several moments as father and son. When they had finally broke apart he meant to ask about the cloak, but they were signaled to follow before he could.

It was minutes later that they stood around a large table in the great hall of the Gates of the Moon. The number of lords present would make any of the solars too uncomfortable to actually get anything done. They waited patiently as the servants quickly laid out refreshments for everyone.

While they waited the question of his son's cloak had been answered without him needing to ask. Robar now stood a few paces behind the princess between, whom the Princess Annie had introduced as, Captain Levi Ackerman and Mikasa Jaegar.

When the door to the servants entrance finally shut and they were on their own the princess began, “So, what is the situation as we know it?”
“Your Grace, Lysa Tully has closed off the Eyrie. She has ignored any letters we have sent to try and end this peacefully. The lady still sticks to the claim that her son is trueborn, and that we are traitors.”

“Do we know how many men she has in her ranks?”

“We are not sure of the exact count, Your Grace.” His cousin answered, “We believe now any correspondence we send is being held only by her maester and herself. However, we were initially able to get guards to leave. Her numbers are greatly diminished and the majority of those that remain are sellswords masquerading as Arryn guards whom were bought by Littlefinger.”

Yohn decided to add his own opinion to this matter, “Your Grace, I believe at the most she should have one hundred. To top it off no shipments have been going up the mountain, so their rations should be running low by this point.”

“Very well.” She nodded as she spoke, “Tomorrow morning you all will ascend the mountain. At noon Captain Levi, Mikasa, and I will follow where we will take the Eyrie, remove Lady Lysa from her position, and seat the true heir there.”

Like himself the rest of the table held incredulous looks. The soon to be queen made it sound like taking the Eyrie would be as easy as ascending the stairs to the maester's turret. Thankfully the matter was addressed quickly, but unfortunately it was Harry Hardyng that spoke with a scoff, “If it was that easy don't you think we would have already done it?” He added a, “Your Grace.” at the end, but he couldn't hide the snide way he spoke her title. Yohn himself was barely able to hold in the tired sigh he really wanted to release.

It ultimately was the right thing to say, but completely the wrong execution. That was whom Harrold Hardyng was though. He was a cocky little shit that thought way to highly of himself for being the heir apparent of the Vale. Robert's Rebellion had hit the Arryn's as hard if not harder than it did the Starks. Now, Harrold was literally the last man alive in the Vale with Arryn blood from the main line.

The princess raised a brow at him in a manner that said they weren't done, but she moved on as if the boy hadn't spoken at all. “As I said you will depart at first light. By nightfall on the morrow I want this settled.”

Yohn still wasn't convinced that they could do it on their own. He had too many questions. How were they going to beat them up the mountain? How were they going to subdue all the sellswords with just three of them. The list went on and on in his head, but when he met the eyes of his son he received a subtle nod as if to say that they knew exactly what they were doing and he could relax. He looked around the table at the other faces. They didn't seemed convinced either, but the prospect of not having to suffer the casualties of hundreds just to take the castle seemed to sate them.

Princess Annie took their continued silence as approval before she moved on, “Good. Now, onto other matters of import.” She turned her gaze across the entire table making sure to meet the eyes of every lord and lady around the table, “My husband and I want the Vale secured as soon as possible. The new lord of the Vale will, of course, be Ser Harrold Hardyng. I brought with me papers signed by my husband officially changing your name to Arryn.”

“Thank you, Your Grace.” Yohn couldn't resist the snort at how the boy's tone had suddenly changed to be much more respectful.

“Don't thank me yet.” The princess responded her tone taking an authoritative air, “You haven't
heard the stipulations.”

“Stipulations?” Harrold's tone once again changed and his cheeks started to shift to a dark pink tinge. No doubt the boy was beginning to become angered that what technically should be his by rights was now being offered with conditions attached.

The princess just stared at the new young lord with an indifferent look for a few seconds before responding with one word, “Precisely.” Her tone was even and delivered with all the authority she had. Her Grace didn't wait for a response either before turning her eyes on his cousin, “Lord Nestor, I believe you have a daughter?”

“Myranda, Your Grace.”

The princess nodded her head at the answer, “Have her sent for. We will wait till she arrives before we continue.”

Nestor quickly summoned one of the guards and sent the man to retrieve Myranda. As they waited small conversations struck up around the table. For the most part it was just standard prattle people spoke of, so Yohn tuned it out as he just continued to observe the princess.

She had decided to take this quick break to unburden herself of her cloak. As the garment was removed he saw that she wore a type of jacket he had never seen before. It was black like the cloak and long sleeved. On both shoulders were sigils consisting of a white dragon wing over blue on a shield of grey. The strangest thing about the garment was that it only covered half of her torso. It did however, give him a view of the hooded tunic below. At first glance it looked to be made out of cotton, there was no where to button it, and there seemed to be some type of pouch that rested over her stomach.

He was knocked from his observations when the door opened revealing Myranda. The young lady wasted no time crossing the room to her father's side, and as the separate conversations broke down the princess began, “Lady Myranda, I presume?”

“Yes, Your Grace.” she responded as she dropped into a perfect curtsey.

“I'm sure you were wondering why I requested your presence. There is a lot changing in the Vale right now, and His Grace, my husband, would like to see it settled before we move on.” Myranda nodded her understanding before the princess continued. “From what I have learned the best way to settle things quickly is through marriages. That being said since your father has served honorably as the High Steward of the Vale I would like to offer you the option to marry Ser Harrold and become the new Lady Arryn and Lady of the Vale.”

“I thank you for the honor, Your Grace, and on behalf of myself and my family I will gladly accept.” Myranda was grinning ear to ear.

It quickly died with the princess' next words, “I'm glad you accepted, but like Ser Harrold's your position also comes with stipulations.” The room hung with suspense as the princess paused to take a drink before beginning again. “It quickly came to our attention that Ser Harrold was more than enthusiastic to... share his love so to speak. If I'm not mistaken his dalliances have already resulted in two daughters. The second on on the way before the first was even born.”

She broke off at this point once again meeting everyone's eyes, “I don't believe I have to tell you how that made my husband feel and in what light he holds the potential new Lord of the Vale considering the way he was raised.” Towards the end her eyes had settled on Harry and if it was possible her look would have sent the poor boy straight to the Seven Hells.
“With that in mind both children will be immediately named Arryn and raised in the Eyrie. Their mothers will be given chambers in the castle as well, as we both believe a child shouldn't be separated from their mother. From this moment on the only woman that Ser Harrold will have any intimate relations with will be Lady Myranda.” Yohn watched as Harry’s face once again twisted into anger, and the boy was on the edge of an outburst when the princess quickly shut him down, “Do not test us on this, Lord Arryn. If you do, you will fail, and you'll be at the wall so fast your head will be spinning. On top of that if you haven't had a son by that time my husband and I will name a different family to be the Lords of the Vale and Wardens of the East. Do... I... make... myself... clear?”

Harry opened his mouth as if he was going to argue, but wisely shut it before giving the subtlest of nods. “Excellent-Your Grace?” The princess had began to move on before Lord Redfort's voice cut in.

“Forgive me, Your Grace, but this could be a dangerous precedent.” Princess Annie raised an inquisitive brow, so Redfort pushed on quickly, “Those same actions were what caused the Blackfyre rebellions to begin with. This could create succession crisis’s all over the Seven Kingdoms with bastard's trying to steal their trueborn sibling’s inheritances.” A chorus of “Ayes,” backed up his point.

“And whose fault is that?” The Princess asked quickly silencing the voices and regaining control of the room. The silence continued on as she gazed at everyone. “No one wants to answer? Fine I'll do it for you. You all are, and every room like this one that fills with lords thinking they can do whatever they want. You men think you can waggle your cocks in front of any maiden you choose. When they fall pregnant you wash your hands of them. Then, you all have the nerve to berate these children as lesser than you. You give them names meant to be an insult. You treat them as less than dirt and say they are sinful.”

Yohn watched as passion continued to raise in the princess' voice as she continued and there was a fire fit in her eyes that begged for someone to try and argue with her. “And your all so humble and forgiving Seven can forgive everyone for everything except for children born out of wedlock. An action they had literally no control over. Believe me I know first hand. I had to listen to that damned septa at Winterfell try to get between myself and Jon. The foul things that came from the mouth of a woman that was supposed to be teaching humility and forgiveness were unbelievable.”

“This is not a precedent, My Lords and Ladies, this is a warning. After today any highborn that wants to test us will feel the pain when we get done with them. You better pray to your Seven that no more Snows, Rivers, Waters, Hills, Pykes, Stones, or Flowers are born. Those parents will be in for a rude awakening.”

“Now, moving on. Ser Harrold will marry Lady Myranda in two days time in the Eyrie. I want men sent to retrieve his daughters along with their mothers, and have them brought up to the castle. Where they will be raised as proper members of House Arryn.” Her eyes quickly shifted between Harry and Myranda, “Do you both agree, or do I need to find a different family to take up the position?”

Myranda was quick to assent where as Harry just gave a reluctant nod.

“Good.” The princess shifted back into a relaxed state as fast as she had angered quickly reeling in her emotions. When she spoke next she had returned to a neutral tone. “The last thing we have to discuss are some of your debts. After his execution one of our informants were able to locate Baelish's records in King’s Landing, and in them it was discovered that he had bought the debt of a few lords present today. I am not going to name names as that is a private matter. There is no
telling what plans that man had for you all in the future, but that type of man didn't strike me as altruistic. He was most likely going to blackmail you to aid him in whatever scheme he had planned. Granted, it is all rather moot now. However, the debts still exist, and now they belong to the crown. After conversing with my husband we have decided to temporarily suspend your payments. They will resume once we have control of King's Landing and the capitol is settled. This gives you all some time to build your funds back up, so it won't be as much of a burden.”

Yohn looked around at everyone present and couldn't help wondering whom amongst the nobility would be foolish enough to ever do business with a charlatan like Baelish. He didn't have a chance to delve too deep into it before the princess spoke again. “With everything settled we are done here. Everyone rest and prepare. On the morrow we take a castle.”

The next morning after breaking his fast Yohn made his way into the yard where a line of mules were being outfitted for the climb up the mountain. Ravens had been sent the night before to inform Stone and Snow to have relief animals prepared for their ascent.

He made his way down the line before seeing his son Robar stood speaking with Robert's baseborn daughter Mya Stone. The poor girl had been raised in the Gates of the Moon for most of her life after her mother had succumbed to a fever. Jon Arryn not wanting any child of his foster son to suffer an overly harsh life had arranged with Nestor for the girl to have a position to earn her keep. The girl had quickly been trained to be a guide for the mountain pass up to the Eyrie. Mya had easily taken to task, and over the years she had made countless trips up and down the Giant's Lance.

He also knew that Mychel Redfort had taken a liking to the girl over his time squiring at the Gates of the Moon. Yohn didn't know how the boy would have reacted to find out that his father had actually been in talks with Nestor for the boy to marry Myranda. That wasn't a worry anymore considering what Princess Annie had declared the night before. Hells, with the changes that the new royal couple were wanting to instill the boy may actually have his chance. He snorted as the thought of poor Mychel trying to convince Mya she needed to wear a proper gown for any reason. He could imagine that the girl would fight tooth and nail to wear breeches to her own wedding if she could get away with it.

Yohn had just been getting ready to speak to his son when a peel of gruff laughter caught his attention. Turning to the keep he watched as the Blackfish exited beside Princess Annie and Captain Levi. His old friend slapping the shorter man on the back as he chuckled. While the dark haired young woman wore the smallest of smiles on her face. With the arrival of Princess Annie all conversation in the yard halted and all eyes turned her direction.

She quickly called for everyone to resume their tasks as she made her way towards them. As if pulled by some other force all the lords and ladies converged on him at once. The princess’ blue-grey eyes scanned everyone present before she gave a nod, “You all know what I expect of you. Just make haste up the mountain and we will have it all under control by the time you arrive at the last ring fort.”

She was answered with a chorus of “ayes” though Yohn could feel the small frown that was pulling on his face. He truly didn't know how they were planning on taking the Eyrie with only three people, but he also knew that it wasn't his place to argue.

The princess nodded once more accepting their answers before the group split back up to their
respective mounts again. Yohn watched as she clapped forearms with Ser Brynden, spoke a few words to Robar, and then she disappeared back into the castle with her two companions. Once the princess had retreated the gates leading to the mountain path creaked open, and with a call from Mya everyone mounted up and began the climb up the Giant's Lance.

As planned they had made it to Snow right around noon. They spent the time eating a quick meal of bread with cheese and cold meats as the soldiers that had been garrisoned in the ring fort prepared their next group of relief mounts. The entire process took roughly twenty minutes and it was as they were mounting back up and moving out again that it began.

The air suddenly filled with loud pops and hisses as six ropes shot over head. Well, they appeared to be ropes at first glance, but the longer Yohn looked and the way the light reflected off them made him realize they were somehow made out of metal. They anchored into the cliff face with loud cracks that were quickly followed by whirls and hisses as Princess Annie, Captain Levi, and the Mikasa girl went flying over their heads.

He could only watch mouth agape as the ropes undid themselves from the mountain, retracted into their belts, and were shot out once more farther up the slope. The process repeating as the three quickly made their ascent. Thankfully, through all of this the mules continued on their task of hauling them, so they could continue to gawk at the impossible sight.

The thinned tree line at this height of the mountain allowed Yohn to keep the princess and her party in his sight. At the distance they were now the three were little more than silhouettes. It was as they passed over Sky that things took a turn he was not expecting.

Two of the three dropped into the ring fort as the third shot up into the air. Yohn had to quickly cover his eyes from the bright yellow light that suddenly burst into existence. It was a couple seconds latter that a loud boom cracked over the mountain side, and when his eyes retook the scene his heart damn near stopped.

There clinging to the side of the mountain climbing up the cliff face was some sort of giant. He heard Mya upfront call out for them to hurry the mules up, but he could take his eyes from the sight. At the distance he couldn't make out much detail, but what he could see made his stomach churn. The creature was massive and was the angry red of muscle mixed with the whitish pink of tendons. It quickly scurried up the cliff face like some kind of twisted spider.

His eyes never left it as it took all of a minute to bridge the distance between Sky and the Eyrie before it left his sight over the castle walls. Moments later the bells of the castle began clanging and the valley echoed their calls.

Yohn had kept his eyes on the Eyrie the rest of the trip up to Sky relying on his mounts knowledge of the terrain to ensure their safety. It was as they reached the ring fort that his eyes caught movement. From where it came he had to guess it was around the High Hall, and thus had to be the moon door. Two silhouettes came falling from the castle with a third not far behind.

The third quickly caught up to the second, and Yohn heard the same pop and hiss as before when a rope shot out into the mountain slowing their descent. The first silhouette's identity was revealed as they fell closer. The blue gown flapping around her body due to the wind was almost as loud as the easily recognized screech that flew from her lungs. Yohn couldn't say he truly felt anything as the form of Lysa Arryn blurred past him to her inevitable death that awaited her on the rocks below.
Whirls and hisses pulled his attention back to the two above him whom turned out to be Captain Levi with a shaking Robert Stone in his grasp as they made their descent to the waiting group. The captain's feet had barely made contact with the ground before Ser Brynden was by his side. “What in Seven-Hells was that?” He asked as he held out his arms for his great nephew.

The shorter made made no complaints handing the shaking boy off with a “tch,” but quickly added, “Careful, the boy pissed himself.” Shaking his sleeves out as he did so, “As for that,” gesturing his head towards the cliff side, “When we made our way to the great hall and she saw that it was us. She must have decided that death was better than to face the consequences.” Levi blew out a sigh, “As you can guess she tried to bring the boy with her.”

Ser Brynden turned his head over to the cliff face as a sad look pulled on his features as he mumbled, “Oh, Lysa.”

Yohn himself couldn't help but shake his head at it all. All this had been for the sake of one man's ego and him believing he could take everything for himself. It all really boiled down to his envy of his betters. The thoughts were shook away when Levi cleared his throat. “It was all finished up above, so lets make our way. Oh, and have these men join us. The servants will need help cleaning up the castle. Most of them are malnourished and will struggle without aid.”

Yohn watched as the shorter man tapped his hand against the strange can that was on his scabbards. The metal gave an echo causing Levi to huff in irritation before turning to the stair ladder that lead up to the castle. He didn't turn back to them at all as he began to ascend.

The group all looked to each other as if trying to figure out what to do about it all. The silence was broken when Lady Waynwood appeared between himself and Ser Brynden gesturing at the shaking boy. “I'll take the boy up in the basket with myself. You all hurry up above. We don't want Her Highness waiting.”

Yohn nodded his answer wordlessly before making his way to the stairs and began his own ascent.

It was almost a half hour later that they had all finished making their way up to the castle. They were met by a teary eyed maester whom quickly took Robert from Lady Waynwood to abscond off to the boys chambers. The lords and ladies made their way through the Eyrie to the great hall as the soldiers that followed them up peeled off to assist the servants with cleaning up after the battle. Most of the castle seemed untouched, but the closer they got to the great hall the more they saw the remnants of the massacre that had taken place.

Whatever type of blades those three used were the worse he had ever seen. There were barely any corpses left intact. Limbs laid distantly from bodies, heads were randomly thrown about resting in their own pools of blood, and in some cases torsos were completely bisected. The most foreboding part of it wasn't the gore itself. It was how clean the cuts were. Yohn didn't think even Valyrian steel could cut that smoothly.

He was pulled out of his thoughts as they entered the High Hall and his eyes landed upon the princess. Once again he had to forcefully remind himself that she was not an Arryn. The sight she made sitting upon the Weirwood Throne just screamed out its rightness to his mind. He shook the errant thought away as he watched the rest of his company stream into the room.

The room was deathly quiet as everyone just stared up at the princess before it was broken by
Maester Coleman returning. The princess' eyes turned to the man, “Is the boy okay?”

“Yes, Your Grace. He is in shock, so I gave him a little dream wine to calm his nerves and put him to sleep.”

The princess nodded before turning her attention back to the group of lords and ladies. “The child now known as Robert Stone will be allowed to retain the Baelish lands in the fingers given that he is the last of his blood. The Vale is now in the hands of the rightful heir Lord Harrold Arryn. So, let us rejoice this day. Tomorrow, we have a wedding, and then it is time for the Knights of the Vale to join the war.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!!!

NEXT: HARRANHAL

and as promised here is the link to The Dragon Cub:
https://archiveofourown.org/works/20365015/chapters/48293053

End Notes

Thanks for stopping by.

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