Robert's Rebellion ended with Robert's death and Rhaegar's ascension to kingship. Now almost 17 years later a tourney is held at Riverrun. The first of its kind since the disaster at Harenhall. The world attends and old enemies meet and the game of thrones is played.
EDDARD

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Talking To The Moon

RHAENYS
The candles lit in the room cast the hall in a bright and warm appearance. The sounds drifting through the walls of the hall found the feast in full swing. Sitting and leaned back in her chair I swept my eyes through the hall as I tried to put names to the faces I saw in the room.

On the other side of the table my younger brother was talking to Edmure Tully the heir apparent of Riverrun. The two of us had convinced our parents to allow us to come ahead so as to represent them until they could make it Riverrun. It wouldn’t do for the king to arrive late to his own tourney when he had all but demanded the rest of the kingdom to make an appearance. They had acquiesced. Of course that was the official reason. The real reason for them being early was so they could enjoy some of the festivities without the king and queen of Westeros looking for a betrothal for us at every turn.

On my left was my best friend and aunt Daenerys. Next to her was her mother and my grandmother, the Queen Dowager Rhaella.

With wandering eyes she spotted her uncle. The Red Viper was chatting animatedly with one Willas Tyrell at one of the lower tables, something which no one thought would or could happen seeing as the Martell prince was responsible for the Tyrell heir's fatal injury. My cousins from both her dornish uncles sat near Oberyn, taking in everything going on around them.

Arianne had an amused little smirk on her lips, like she saw something that was amusing to her. Nymeria had the same smile as well. Together, they survived the men with eyes full of promised heat and desire. Tyene did as well, only with demure eyes and a chaste smile. I knew that there would be many men lusting after them in the days to come.

Across the hall at the table opposite her cousins sat Willas's family. Lord Mace Tyrell had stayed at Highgarden (something everyone was relieved to hear and know) but had sent his children and his mother to Riverrun in his stead. Rhaenys had met the legendary Queen of Thorns before and was greatly impressed by her. She was the only woman she could think of that was able to rein in Arianne and the Sand Snakes with just a few biting remarks. The old woman is said to be more witty than she was in her youth with a tongue just as sharp.

The Knight of the Flowers, Loras Tyrell was talking to his brother Ser Garlan who sat with his wife beside him. Their younger sister Margaery was sending demure looks at Aegon whenever his eyes seemed to pass over hers. She would quickly turn her head away at the sight of him, playing the nervous and chaste maiden for all that it was worth.

The tale had been told to me time and time again. Of how during the War of the Usurper, Lord Tyrell had marched his army to Storm's End and laid siege to it. Of course he was never able to break through the fortress that was Storm's End. He did however manage to keep the two younger brothers trapped behind the castle walls as the castle's supply of food declined thereby slowly starving them. This allowed him enough time to send Lord Tarly and the rest of his to lend support to the royal family after he heard of their victory at the Stoney Steps. For their loyalty father rewarded the Tyrells with what they had desired for so long: a chance to see their blood on the iron throne. A betrothal marriage between Aegon and Lord Tyrell's only daughter Margaery Tyrell was drawn.

Lord Jon Arryn and his heir, Ser Harry Hardyng, sat close to the Tyrells though they kept to themselves with the lords of the Vale surrounding them like a protective shield. Ever since the war, the Vale had not been on good terms with the Iron Throne. Lord Arryn had kept himself in the Eyrie
since bending the knee and had only traveled to Riverrun at the insistence of Ser Harry. That was what she had heard anyways.

Another realm that was not on good terms with her family was that of the stormlords and their liege lords, House Baratheon. Well, that wasn't entirely true. The younger generation of lords and ladies who could not remember the war loyally served the Iron Throne. She counted Renly Baratheon to be a good friend of both her and Aegon. But it was his brother, Stannis, and the lords bannermen who were forced to bend the knee after Robert Baratheon died who ruled the Stormlands and offered only cold hospitality to them. And while the younger of the two sat with the Tryells, the elder was sitting with his own lords alongside his daughter.

Catching a flash of yellow moving past my peripheral field of view i turned around to identify the owner of that particular mop of hair. Of course the only golden hairs you'd find in Westeros would most likely be sitting atop the head of a Lannister.

Tyrion Lannister made his way back to his family's place at the feast. Though his family was here Lord Lannister himself was not presen. The head of House Lannister had not come out from the Rock ever since the Rebellion.

Everyone knew why. He had come late to the war, only after hearing crown's victory at the Trident where father had slain Robert Baratheon in single combat. Because of this, he received no reward from my father when he became king but neither was he punished. Of course, that was the official reasoning. She had long since learned from her father and mother that they had punished him by keeping Ser Jaime, his eldest son and the heir he wanted, in the Kingsguard. Something Ser Jaime was very much greatful for. Not the insult to his father but for being allowed to remain in the Kingsguard.

Thinking about the Kingslayer she searched the sea of faces and found him standing guard in silence. His blond hair and green eyes marked his Lannister heritage for all to see.

His gaze met his sister's more than once. A scowl found its way to my face upon sighting the Old Lion's only daughter. While i appreciated both sons of Lord Lannister, the presence of his daughter always soured my mood. In fact, i absolutely loathed the golden-haired bitch known as Cersei Lannister. The woman was disdainful, vindictive, arrogant and cruel. Also the lustful and wanting look she always seemed to send my father's way did nothing to endear her to me. It was common knowledge that Lord Lannister had still hoped for a marriage between her and Father until he was told by King Rhaegar that it was not going to happen. That didn't stop from both the Lion of the Rock and his daughter from trying to get her eldest son betrothed to me.

Tyrion, on the other hand, was a curiosity. She had met him a few rare times when his lord father had allowed him to leave the Rock and follow his sister to court. He was a dwarf and while he had the hair of a Lannister, there was also black in there too. His face wasn't comely either. It looked like it belonged to a brigand instead. And yet, despite of all the ugliness he carried along with his stunted height, he was one of the cleverest men she had known.

Only two of the Great Houses were not here at this feast and while no one cared about the ironmen or House Greyjoy, it was the other House not being here that gave the air a small sense of unease, something that had been there since the end of Robert's Rebellion.

House Stark of Winterfell had raised their banners for the Usurper and fought to overthrow her family as the ruling House of the Seven kingdoms. Nobody knows why but as all was going well for the rebels Lord Eddard Stark, Lord of Winterfell and Warden of the North, suddenly changed his stance on the war and secured Kings Landing for my father. Everyone was at a loss at what he did. People don't just go around securing strongholds for their enemies. Especially one who you had
spent almost a year warring against. Yet till now there's been no verified reason as to Lord Stark's actions. The king didn't provide even when pressed.

House Stark had been the one House which had the most valid reason and right to rebel, followed shortly by House Baratheon, House Arryn and House Tully. The whole rebellion was sparked by my grandfather's decision to burn Rickard Stark while strangling his heir to death. At the end of the war Lord Eddard Stark had gone to Dorne where his sister was being kept at the Tower of Joy. He returned home to the North with his sister's corpse in tow vowing never to set foot south of the Neck again. A vow he is all forced to break since Father has all but commanded every lord to make themselves present themselves at the tournament.

I had heard many people call the people of the North craven and toothless dogs. They would laugh at them at them and say the reason they stopped fighting against the crown was because they had lost their drive to fight after Robert Baratheon, the instigator of the rebellion, died at the Trident against my father. Father said they were merely false rumors and speculations and not to be taken seriously. Being of the new generation Aegon and I were inclined to believe the naysayers. After the second Greyjoy Rebellion however people were forced to review their perception of the Northmen.

It was only two years ago when ironborn were unscrupulously reaving along the coastal shores of the kingdoms and while the rest of the Seven Kingdoms had been reeling from Balon Greyjoy's surprise attacks and was regrouping to attack, the North had struck first. Ships had sailed south and attacked the Iron Islands while its fleet was out at sea. Such was the fury, strength, and speed of the northerners' invasion of the islands that by the time the royal navy had landed on Pyke, the grey direwolf flew over the castle, not the golden kraken. And when the new Lord Paramount of the Iron Islands had bent the knee, they left just as swiftly as they had come. Now only few people still claimed that the northerners were cravens, but not as many as before. I mean who would question the strength of the North when it took only five thousand warriors to beat the ironborn at sea of all places and go on and lay siege to Pyke. All the while being led by the heir of Winterfell. At first there was confusion as to why the heir and not the Warden of the North was the one to have headed the campaign. It came as a surprise to all that while the younger generation were attacking the ironmen, the lords of the North themselves were assisting the Nights Watch against a host of Wildlings that had marched up against order of black brothers with the aim of fighting their way through the Wall. The realization that the North had been fighting on two war fronts and had won against great odds shut up anyone who thought them weak.

Her thoughts were broken when the herald at the door banged his staff against the floor, rattling the stones and the rafters. All eyes turned to him the sound of revelry died down. "The Lord Robb Stark and with him his family of House Stark!" he cried out in a great voice.

The doors to the hall opened and in walked the members of House Stark. To my surprise i did not see Lord Stark with them instead, it was Robb Stark who led the contingent of House Stark. Beside him was woman who could only have been his mother, Lady Catelyn Stark nee Tully. For the most part, the children that followed him could've been Tullys at the first glance by a southerner's eyes. The only exceptions was the youngest girl who was obviously a Stark.

Edmure stood up from his chair. "Sister!" he said happily at the sight of Lady Catelyn. For a moment, I thought that he would run around the table to embrace her. But instead, he seemed to have caught himself and instead turned to his nephew. "Lord Robb, nephew, please partake of my bread and salt and be welcome in my hall."

"I and House Stark accept it gratefully," he replied easily enough. "And it is good to see my mother's family once more." The beard and salt were quickly given to them and they took it.

"Has anyone told you that you look like an old man with that beard hanging off your face, nuncle?"
Robb asked him, after carefully studying the stub of hair. This got a laugh from the younger of men and women in the hall. Even I cracked a smile at that jape. The tension that came with House Stark's arrival seemed to have lightened somewhat.

Edmure stood up from his chair. "Sister!" he said happily at the sight of Lady Catelyn. For a moment, I thought that he would run around the table to embrace her. But instead, he seemed to have caught himself and instead turned to her uncle. "Prince Viserys please partake of my bread and salt and be welcome in my father's hall."

"I and House Stark accept it gratefully," he replied easily enough. "And it is good to see my family once more." The beard and salt were quickly given to them and they took it.

Has anyone told you that you look like an old man with that beard hanging off your face, nuncle?" Aegon asked him, getting a laugh from the younger of men and women in the hall. Even I cracked a smile at that jape.

"I might look like an old man," Lord Edmure began. "But I am a man, whereas you, nephew, look like a babe barely out of swaddling." This time, the elder generation laughed at the jape made and the Stark heir splutter. "But then, you were a babe in swaddling the last I saw you," he added as an afterthought. More joined in the laughter and tension ebbed away almost seamlessly.

"Cat, where is Ned?" Lord Edmure asked his sister. "I thought he would've come."

"He stayed behind at Winterfell," Lady Stark answered. "There must always be a Stark in Winterfell."

When I heard those words, I hid a small sound of disappointment. I had wanted to meet the Lord of Winterfell. Like Lord Tywin, he did not leave his home (the last time that he did was to go to war against the Greyjoys). But unlike the lion, neither I nor Aegon had ever met the wolf. They had been told of him and I had an image in my head of a cold northern lord who waited in the midst of winter with sword in hand from what I had been told. But not once had the royal family gone north or Lord Stark come south again.

I noticed that the youngest Stark boy had gone over to the eldest and tugged on his cape. He whispered his brother's ear. Robb Stark grinned at him, nodded his head once, and stood back up. "My lord uncle," he called out to Edmure. "Would you mind if my family actually did some feasting. Little Rickon's belly is getting a bit impatient?"

"Of course, by all means," Edmure replied. And the the members of House Stark alongside their bannermen who were announced after them moved to take their prepared seats.

As the Northmen settled in, the feast continued and the merriment that had been before their arrival, doubled with the added presence of the lords of houses Umber and Glover. Before the Greatjon i'd never met a man who loved to laugh so much before. And they said Northmen were cold as ice. Clearly we southerners don't know a thing about northerners.

Soon I grew bored again and stood up from the table. The Starks were down at the other end so I would have no problem getting out easily. "Is everything alright, Rhaenys?" Daenerys asked me quietly.

I smiled. "I'm fine, Dany. I'm just retiring for the evening." Even though she was my aunt, Daenerys was still younger than I was and it felt odd to call her Aunt. Thankfully, she didn't have a problem with that. Rather, she insisted on being called Dany (which everyone, except for the king and her mother, did).
I strode away from the table and the hall. As I left, a familiar clanking sound filled her ears. "Uncle," I said to my great uncle, Prince Lewyn Martell.

"Princess," he said in return. "You are returning to your quarters?"

"Yes."

"Shall I lead you?"

I frowned at him. "I do know my way to my quarters, nuncle." I wasn't a child.

He smiled faintly. "Then lead the way."

I did just that. But as they walked through the corridors, I quickly found out that I did not know my way to my quarters. This was not the Red Keep. This was a different castle and so it was built differently. As I walked through the castle, trying to find my way to my rooms and failing, I knew that there was an amused smirk on my uncle's lips and it was getting bigger as every minute passed.

Finally, I found a door that when opened, led to the outside. I took it and found myself to be in the courtyard. The moon was high in the sky, shining down light on an already fire-lit courtyard. I could hear the sounds of the feast coming from the castle. "I do not think that this is the way to your rooms," Lewyn said from behind me.

I turned and scowled at him. "I know that, nuncle. At least from here, I will be able to find my way back." They had come through the courtyard when they first arrived at Riverrun. As I started walking again, another sound emerged to her ears, the sound of singing. "Do you hear that?"

"Yes I do. It seems that some people are more concerned about listening to their own singing than feasting." There was the faintest hint of disapproval in his voice but I wasn't concerned about his opinion.

Whoever was singing had succeeded incompletely enrapturing me with their voice. It was clear and smooth and had this almost enchanting edge to it that had me under its spell.

My legs moved on their own as if beckoned by enchanting voice pouring out such music.

"Princess where are you going that's not where your rooms are? Lewyn whispered. I didn't give an indication that I'd heard him. Seeing as he wasn't going to be able to dissuade me he decided to simply let me lead.

...And they don't know what I know
'Cause when the sun goes down
Someone's talking back.
Yea! They talking back.
And when the stars light on my roof
I sit by myself,
Talking to the moo-oon!
Trying to get to get to you-ou!
And hope you're on the other side
Talking to me too
Oh! Am I a fool?
I sit alone and talking to the moon

Of course it doesn't take a genius to recognise when a song was about ending and I wanted to see the person who owned that sweet voice. And I did. The moment my eyes laid upon the creature I forgot
...'Cause every night
I'm talking to the moo-oon!
Still trying to get to you-ou!
And hope you're on the other side
Talking to me too
Oh! Am I a fool?
I sit alone here talking to the moon.
Ho-ooooooh! Ooooooh!

Even as the last traces of the song faded into the night, I took in his features and structure.

He was lean, that much she could tell, as well as that he had a long face. I was not sure how to
describe his hair. It was the deepest shade of black I've ever seen. Blacker than night But when the
moon came out from the clouds above and shined its light, I saw that his hair had some gray tresses.
Or were they silver. His eyes were so grey I could have sworn they were pools of silver which
reflected a tint of purple under the moonlight. A sword rested in his lap as a sat topless under an oak.
My eyes hungrily devoured his lithe yet muscle bound figure. From behind, I thought I heard my
uncle draw in a surprised breath. I did not know why, but I did know that the boy held a similar
resemblance to the youngest Stark girl.

A twig snapping underfoot brought me back to the world and I realised that the boy was not alone.
He had a companion with him and said companion was currently headed her way making her jump
back in fright. "By the gods!" she breathed as she stared at the creature. From behind her, she heard
her uncle reach for his sword.

It was a dog. No! I shook my head. Not a dog but a wolf. A rather huge one that. It had fur as white
as snow and eyes red as blood. The eyes were so unsettling that I wanted to look away almost
immediately.

"Princess, get behind me," Lewyn all but shouted. I wanted to move but I felt trapped by those eyes.
The wolf would not let me.

"Ghost, to me," a voice came from the smoky darkness. The wolf stepped away and I released the
breath Ihad been holding. It was only then I realized that the sounds of footsteps coming up from
behind the wolf.

I looked up and saw him approaching. My breath hitched. It was the god...boy with the enchanting
voice.

It was only then she realized that he was a boy, practically the same age as Aegon. "My apologies if
Ghost frightened you, my lady," he said quietly. "I had thought that we were alone."

"I-It is fine," I replied, cursing my voice for stuttering like that. I did not know this boy. I had no
cause for sounding like I was smitten.

"I am grateful that you were here my lord."

"...I am not a lord."

"And she is no mere lady," Lewyn said with a harsh tone to his voice. "She is Princess Rhaenys of
House Targaryen."

Most people would've been at least flustered at their blunder. This boy though merely put on an
expression of curiosity even as his eyes bored into hers as if assessing to see if I was the real deal.

Relenting he bowed his head. "Forgive me, your Highness."

"There is nothing to forgive, raise your head," I told him and he did with a smile. My heart skipped a beat.

"Tell me, boy, when did it become fashionable to train bare-chested?" my uncle asked him. For a moment, I did not understand what he meant. Then I saw that the tunic he wore was untucked and unbelted, like he had thrown it on moments before. And with his now sheathed sword having been bare earlier, it was safe to assume that he had been training.

"When I learned what hygiene entailed and didn't want to walk around in a sweaty tunic after every practice,?" he answered/asked my uncle.

"Besides," he began and straightened himself. "'Tis warmer in the Riverlands then I am used to, ser," he answered even though there was not a single drop of sweat to back up his statement.

"And where are you from then, if the Riverlands are warm to you?"

"The North," he answered still smiling.

"Name yourself, boy, you and your father," my uncle commanded.

He didn't look them in the eyes. "My name is Jon Snow. I am Lord Stark's bastard."

"Yes I thought so. You have the Stark look on you."

Those words made me pause. Despite being considered a would-be traitor by many in the south, there were many more who considered of Lord Stark's unwavering sense of honor in the highest regards, except for two spots. One was my friend and was currently sitting in the hall. The other was standing before me and was doing things to me that I didn't want to happen but didn't stop them either way.

"Well then, bastard, correct me if I'm wrong but that is a bloody direwolf, is it not?"

I was startled by my uncles question. I studied the creature standing beside the boy and I tensed when I realized that it was true. The canine matched all the description of the creature under suspicion.

"Aye my lord. Ghost is a direwolf but you don't have anything to fear from him. He will be staying in the groves for the duration of the tournament." the Stark bastard assured.

"Is Lord Stark aware of your decision to bring a dangerous beast to a population sensitive place? What about Lord Tully? Is he aware of the beast's presence on his land?" Uncle Lewyn questioned.

Jon Snow nodded. "Aye, he does. He was who advised me to keep Ghost confined to the groves, ser." Lewyn grudgingly nodded.

"If you are a part of the Starks, why are you not with them at the feast now?" I finally asked him.

"Lady Stark would not insult her family and the royal family by sitting a bastard among them." The amused expression on his face spoke of how ridiculous he thought the Lady's excuse was.

To that, I laughed. "I was not aware that my father had legitimized my uncles bastards."
"The Red Viper's bastards being made legitimized Martells? I'm looking forward to the day that happens." He chuckled at the thought.

"Your Highness, you wished to retire for the evening," Lewyn reminded me from behind.

The smile vanished from Jon Snow's lips and he bowed his head. "I bid you good night, Princess." I did not say anything in return, forcing myself to give him a curt nod. He turned and walked away, the direwolf following behind him. Both sh my uncle and I kept on walking. The last I saw of him was him taking off the tunic, no doubt to continue training.

My heart returned to normal and I could breathe easily again when he was no longer in sight. What had happened just then? I had met many suitors and would-be lovers. Some I had considered, some I had rejected outright, and some were better off as friends (whether they liked it or not). But what happened to me in meeting that bastard was nothing like I had felt before. It was like I had not lived before seeing his face or hearing his voice (which sounded like a caress against the ear to me).

As I returned to my rooms and made myself ready for sleep, I remembered that warning Father and mother had told Aegon and I, something I had always thought was supposed to be a way to scare them at night into being good. How wrong I was!

"Never meet a Stark under moonlight. They will take your heart away." Mother had said.
The Riverlands' forests were a tranquil place full of the sounds of birds chirping and networks of rivers running throughout the kingdom like sinews on a human body. The colourful and warm environment was a stark contrast to the grey and white and cold atmosphere of the North he was accustomed to.

Yes he's traveled across the Narrow Sea where the cities were hotter and unless you lived there you would come out looking like an overcooked pigeon pie streaming with too much oil. Though he was of the North; born and raised and had only known its varying cold climates Jon Snow had never minded the heat that greeted him the first time he set foot in Pentos.

In fact, for a Northerner he loved the heat. Basked in it even. His favourite pastime, with the exception of a few activities, was to sit very close to hearth in his room and stare into the flames for long periods of time while the cold northern winds beat against his back.

At the moment he was making his way to the large party of Northerners camped outside Riverrun's walls. From what he'd heard, the number of people who had decided to come to the Tourney were more than Riverrun's staff had anticipated and there had been an issue with room allocation. Luckily for the hosts though, the guests had come prepared with camping equipments. The Northmen were the last party to arrive and had had no choice but to camp outside.

He had arrived later than he expected and had come upon an almost empty camp. He had quickly learnt from one of the soldiers left to guard the camp that the first feast was already underway and the lords and ladies of noble birth had all left to attend. He only had to identify himself before the guard hastily and almost reverently directed a serving wench to show him to his tent. It seemed that their father had sent Robb a raven of his return to Westeros and trek to Riverrun. Robb had ensured that a tent had been prepared for him beforehand.

After setting and putting his things in order he made his way to the feast but of course with his shitty luck he just had to run into Lady Stark of all people. "I'll not insult Lord Tully's guests by sitting a bastard amongst them." Or so she had said. Jon didn't let his displeasure show and allowed her to have her way.

Lady Stark had informed him that Lord Edmure had permitted the Stark direwolves into the castle but were to be allowed free reign only in the groves of the castle. And that was where he had spent the entirety of the feast. Training and playing with the direwolves till he was tired and had retired to bed.

It was while he was sleeping that Robb barged into his tent like he owned the place; which he did, considering he had the tent set up in the first place.

"Go away, Robb. It's too early."

"I agree. You didn't waste your time finding a woman to fuck though." Robb commented while looking down at my sleeping form. Without opening my eyes to see him i was sure he had an amused expression on his face. My mind quickly grasped his words. Jon blinked. What woman was Robb...

Ow...Now he remembered. Upon his return to the camp he had run into the wench that had earlier directed him to his tent. He struck a conversation with her and before he knew he was between
her legs thrusting away. Opening his eyes, he found himself entangled with said woman's sleeping body.

"In my defense she was terribly good company as compared to my other option."

"And what was your other option?"

"Myself."

Robb frowned at his brother's answer.

"If you were bored you could have come to the feast. I didn't see you there. Why?"

Lady Stark didn't tell Robb about their little chat. Jon mused. Of course she wouldn't. She knows how Robb would react to that.

"Your lady mother didn't tell you? We had the most interesting conversation last night."

Robb's frown deepened. "You talked to Mother. She didn't say anything about meeting you last night and what has that got to do with you not attending the feast last night?"

Jon snorted. "Don't pretend to be an idiot, Robb. I was on my way to the feast. I met your mother and then I wasn't on my way to the feast anymore. You're smart Lord Robb. I have every confidence that you can deduce what occurred between her and I." He said with a hint of sarcasm and mild amusement.

Robb's face flashed in anger and then it was gone as quickly as it came. It wasn't Jon he was angry at though. Robb never agreed with his mother's treatment of Jon and voiced his opinion on countless occasions. Lady Stark had yet to change her ways.

"Mother is not the master of the castle to decide who enters the feast and who doesn't. Besides since when did you start to care for Mother's opinion anyway." Robb crossed his arms over his chest.

"There were people near us, Robb. I may not like your mother but she still is the Lady Stark. Let it be known that I'll never embarrass the Lady of Winterfell in view of public eye much less southron folk. Besides her reasons though terribly weak were also true to an extent. Who knows how these southron lords and ladies will react to a bastard sitting in their midst. Plus married to Father she may be, but she's still a Tully in blood if not in name any longer. Not that Lord Edmure or Lord Tully will give a shit about what name she carries."

Robb sighed and run his hands through his auburn coloured hair in exasperation. Like he always did when it related to his mother and half-brother's interactions with the other. Jon felt sorry for him. Did every heir have to deal with what Robb did. Tenuous relationships between family? Probably not. Jon doubted every lord out there acknowledged their bastards existence much less brought them home and raise alongside his trueborn children.

"The Red Viper brought his bastards to the feast. All eight of them and no one said a thing." Robb pointed out.

Jon gave a wry smile. "I heard something like that. He really brought all eight?"

"Yes. They're all very beautiful. The older ones are sinfully so. It should be a crime to carry beauty around the way they do." Robb said while reminiscing about the previous night's feast.

Jon chuckled. "If I didn't know better I'd say you wouldn't mind if you were betrothed to one of
"I wouldn't mind but unfortunately for me I'm heir to Winterfell. I'm expected to marry a woman befitting my station. That's why sometimes I envy you, Jon. You can do whatever you like and no one can say shit."

Jon laughed at his brother's scowl. "I may do as I please brother but even I am limited with my freedom. I'm not just any bastard but the Lord of Winterfell's bastard. My actions reflect on my lord."

"That hasn't stopped you from whoring though." Robb clicked his tongue.

"Correction. I don't do whores. I can perfectly find a good lay without having to pay for it."

The serving wench laying beside Jon stirred and as she woke. Jon watched as her eyes opened to Jon grinning down at her.

"How was last night, my lady? I hope I delivered on my promise." He said while wiggling his brows at her. She looked abashed and blushed.

"Yes, my lord. And more." She shied away from his gaze. In the process her eyes landed on Robb who stood in the corner with crossed legs. The woman gasped and ducked under the bed cover to shield her naked body from Robb's eyes.

"My lord." She squeaked.

Robb looked amused. "Good morning to you too." He said before turning to his brother.

"Get yourself in order, brother. I don't want to keep your presence from the children much longer than I have to. Arya will be furious you didn't go see her as soon as you arrived. I'll see you later."

And with that Robb exited the tent. "Finally. I was beginning to worry I would have go around camp in this state." Jon said as he pulled his bed companion into him. He immediately began to ground himself against her.

"Lord Snow" she gasped as Jon reached over and grabbed her teats. They hadn't bothered to dress up after their nightly activities. "I have duties to perform. My ladies won't be happy with me if I'm late to my duties."

A moan escaped her lips even as Jon rubbed her between her legs. "Your body seems to be cooperating with me though." He was right for the woman was grinding against his intruding hand. "Besides I know dear Alys really well. She'll forgive you this once if you tell her you were with me." He removed his hands from her protesting snatch and brought them to his lips. The wench blushed as she witnessed his actions. Cute. Jon grinned. Even after last night she was still capable of blushing at his less than decent actions.

"Tasty. I wonder if there's more where that came from." He said with an amorous smile. The wench gulped. She knew she wasn't going anywhere until after he had had his fill of her. With that he dived under the bed cover for his morning feast.

SANSA

It was the morning after the first feast of the King's Tourney, as people took to calling it, and Sansa had never felt better. The feast itself was not the reason she was feeling good this morning but rather the meeting of new people that came with the feast.
She had always wanted to meet other lords and ladies of high birth like herself but her duties since
she insisted her mother allowed her to aid in the running of Winterfell has been occupying most of
her time.

The only other ladies she knew were her own sister, who was adamant about not being referred to as
one, and the ladies of Bear Island. They were her friends and she liked them very much but oh...
there was so much she wanted to talk about, but apart from a some womanly things they seemed to
enjoy as much as her, the daughters of the Lady of Bear Island shared few interests with Sansa Stark.
Not to forget that they were also older an some the things they said made her blush like the maid she
was.

Of course there was also Alys Karstark and Sansa loved her like a second sister but the girl could be
quite wilful when she wanted to so much that she reminded Sansa of her real sister. Alys liked almost
everything Sansa did.

They would talk about dresses, songs, at times even food. They would giggle and exchange stories
of the latest rumors which were circulating and move on to talk about boys. That is until Sansa
discovered that her friend fancied her brother. Suddenly talking about boys shifted to talking about
Robb and sometimes even Jon. Sansa was not comfortable with discussing her in such topics of
conversation.

Meeting other lords and ladies was an eye opener for Sansa. Particularly the ones from the South.
They just like everything she was taught a lady should be. Feminine. Courteous. All smiles.
Optimistic. The more she interacted with them the more she found out that the things Jon had told her
he’d heard about the South were all true. Under all the femininity, smiles and courtesies the lords and
ladies were also arrogant, prideful, self-centered and had a general lack of respect for those beneath
their station and led prominent than their Houses.

And she would have been blind to all of these had she been the girl she was at one and ten
namedays. It was Jon who tore apart her fantasy and view of the world and how it works. He didn't
rip out her silly notions and daydreams cruelly. No he had done it gently, apologizing all through his
explanation of society. Particularly the one those of noble birth lived in.

She had never hated her half-brother like her lady mother did. Like Arya always thought she did.
True. She had never treated him like a sibling either and had always been cordial like she was to any
person of lower birth. Just like her mother had taught her. She thought bitterly.

Once, a long time ago, she had loved Jon like she did Robb. When it was only her, Robb, Jon and
baby Arya who was a swaddling at the time. Bran and Rickon hadn't arrived yet. She would play
and chase Jon and Robb whenever she could. Following them around Winterfell like some sidekick.
Those were joyous and simpler times.

Then she learnt that Jon was not truly her brother and that he was a bastard. That had confused her
greatly. She lived six years knowing and calling Jon brother and now she was being told he wasn't.
That was a bit too complex of a thought for her six year old mind. Her mother told her the
significance of a bastard and how they were to be treated. She had at the time started learning the
duties and conduct of a lady.

Her mother's approval meant everything to her and for that she had shunned her bastard brother's
presence since. She stopped going to him for comfort whenever she was scared at night and always
correct others when they referred to him as her brother. "Half-brother" she would say to them.

And it would have continued on like that had a certain conversation not happened two years ago.
It all started when Arya tripped on her new silken gown that was shipped from Myr causing the rather delicate dress to tear down her thigh. She had raved at her sister but instead of apologizing Arya only told her off.

They argued and shouted at each other. It got to the point where insults were dished around and something Arya had said cause tears to well up in Sansa's eyes.

"Of course you'll cry. You always cry. Are you even a wolf. I've always doubted that you're a Stark of Winterfell with you being so weak and all that red. Are you sure you are not the bastard instead of Jon?" Those words struck her harder than anything. Sansa didn't have anything to say back. So she ran.

Somehow she ended up in the godswood without intending to. With no one around to witness it, she cried and bawled her eyes out ignoring the feast going on in her father's halls.

It was in this position that Jon found her. He was do quiet in approaching her that she did not notice him until he spoke. "You were here after all."

She jumped out in fright and wheeled around to face. "Jon!" She exclaimed.

He cocked his head with a smile. "Yes?"

She took a moment to gather myself. He stood there patiently waiting for me to calm myself. Standing tall with practiced poise, she turned her nose up at the bastard.

"What do you want, please?"

"What do I want?" Jon looked at her without talking for a while as if thinking over his words carefully.

"I guess I want to see if you were okay. You were crying." It wasn't a question and I knew that if tried to deny it I would have sounded foolish. So i didn't.

"How did you know to find me here?"

"I saw you leave the hall for outside. The only place you sought comfort in whenever you ran was the godswood. If my memories serve me right that is."

At first Sansa was confused.

That was until she realized he was talking about when she was just an infant. Her memories of back then were a bit muddy but she could remember bits and pieces.

One particular memory that stuck was one where she had been bawling her eyes out after her infant mind had misunderstood something her mother had said. She had ran into the godswood and had intended to stay there forever.

She of course changed her stand when her big brother Jon had brought her lemon cakes ad an offering after which he explained what her mother had meant. She had been happy to follow him after he offered to piggyback her back to the keep.

She bit her lip in memory of the particular event.

"I talked to Arya about what happened." Jon said. Sansa gazed down at that. She knew what was going to happen. He was going to tell her how wrong she was and defend Arya like he did every
Arya got into trouble. It wasn't a secret that Arya Stark was Jon Snow's favourite Stark sibling. The reverse went for Arya.

"Arya was wrong to have said the things she did and for that she will apologize. This I promise you."

Sansa was caught off by his words. She stared at him as if he'd grown a second head.

"What? Is there something on my face?" He asked.

"Why are you not defending her. You always defend Arya. Even when she's wrong." She almost shouted and he smiled.

"Because this time she was way out of line and hurt you in the process. I don't have only one sister you know."

"What do you mean by..."

"Take a walk with me Lady Sansa."

He walked past her and began trekking into the godswood.

She wanted to object but the words wouldn't leave my throat. She watched him walk a fair until she hesitantly followed after him.

On that walk she and Jon talked and talked. It was the first time in six years she had spoken more than one sentence to him in a sitting.

Jon talked to Sansa about Arya. Her character and about her thoughts and her views of the would at large. Her dreams and passions and why she had said dreams and passions. Sansa realized that she never really knew her sister.

They talked about the world. She told Jon about her dreams and he gently tore them down. He told her about the world and forced her eyes open to the truth. The world doesn't work like it does in the stories. People were not as they were painted in the songs. Jonquil and Florian was a tragedy and not a happy ending as her mind had made it out to be.

They talked about her lessons with Maester Luwin and also Septa Mordane.

At the end of the trek they came to stop at a scenery that had her breath caught in her throat. It was as if they had stepped into spring. The leaves in that part of the godswood were the colour blood. A bright scarlet glow painted the clearing. It was also clearly warmer. The sudden change in temperature surprised her. That was until she noticed the hot spring in the middle of the godswood. Her eyes widened in awe even as admired the beauty of the godswood.

"Happy two and ten namedays, Lady Sansa. I'm guessing you've never been here before." He concluded.

Sansa shook her head. They stayed quiet for some minutes.

"Sister."

"What's that?" Jon raised a brow.

"You are supposed to be calling me sister not Lady Sansa. You're my brother after all." She spoke so quietly.
Jon was quiet for some seconds. Then he spoke.

"Aye. That I should but would you have me?"

She didn't hesitate to nod. "Yes"

She cried after that admission. She cried and apologized to Jon for her treatment of him. He held her in his arms as she wet his shirt with her tears.

Her relationship with Jon changed after that. She would greet him with a genuine smile every morning and even engage with him in idle chat. Jon was a plethora of knowledge and it was always good to nitpick his thoughts on various topics. She stopped calling him half-brother and corrected anyone who referred to him as such.

Her new relationship with Jon caused how she related with others to change as well. Her arguments with Arya didn't stop. They reduced however and there were times they found certain topics to talk about.

Everyone was surprised by her sudden change in character and her relationship with Jon. Father was surprised but didn't question her. He was simply too happy about the change to ask any questions. Robb did ask her though. About her change in character where Jon was concerned.

"Do I need a reason to talk to Jon. He's my brother. Shouldn't that be enough reason?"

A maid entered the tent and she shared with Arya, who was still asleep in her night shift. She had too much fun last night. Sansa mused.

"Sorry my lady but your lady mother requests you and Lady Arya to break fast with her. Your brothers have also been informed likewise." The maid said.

Sansa nodded. "Whose tent are we to meet up in."

"Lord Robb's, my lady."

"Ver well. Tell Lady Stark we'll be there once we are done bathing."

"Will do, Lady Sansa. By your leave."

The maid left the Stark sisters alone.

"Now to wake Arya." Sansa sighed s she approached her sleeping sister.

"Let's hope she doesn't kick me this time."
ELYA
She should have asked for a guide to direct her but she had declined when the offer had been brought to her. She had momentarily forgotten that this was not the Red Keep and the winding corridors of Riverrun were foreign to her. She should have asked for directions the first three times she stumbled into the wrong room. Or that time she turned around a corner only to run into a wall. Who puts a wall instead of a path around a bend?! She mentally raged.

I hope I don't make a fool of myself again. She thought as she approached a door. She smiled when she saw the goldcloaks guarding the door. At an event like the one at Riverrun the only the goldcloaks would be guarding could only be one thing.

"Lady Elya" the two goldcloaks bowed to her. Elya gave a curt nod. She didn't know their names but she did recognize their faces from the many times she's been to and from the Redkeep. "Are the princesses in?" She asked.

"Yes my lady. She's been expecting you."

With a nod from her they bared the way and pushed the door open for her. Thanking the guards she stepped into the room where the princess Rhaenys had commandeered to be the sewing room. Immediately she stepped in, the first thing she heard was, "Oh look, everyone! It's the barbarian's bastard!" come out of Tya Lannister, the eldest of Lady Cersei Lannister's children and who looked just like her mother. She sat amongst her own handmaidens. The whole room was like that, ladies from each kingdom watching one another.

"Well if it isn't the lion bitch's cub. You're probably in that time of the month so i can forgive you that slight, Lady Tya." Elya said with a sagely nod. Giggling broke out amongst the group.

Lady Tya's Visage twisted in rage ready to explode but she was cut off before that could happen.

"Elya, where were you?" the princess Rhaenys asked her. She sat near the center, with princess Daenerys beside her and her cousins close by.
"I apologize, Princess. I was held up." The look in her eyes showed that she knew what she had meant. Elya blushed in embarrassment that she had been caught.

"Pardon princess but I got what you asked for." The serving maid spoke holding up a jug of arbor gold in hand.

"Good. You may start pouring us drinks."

"Yes, your Highness." She walked slowly around the room, going to each and every one of the ladies in the room.

"I would've thought that the Warden of the North would grace the King's tourney with his presence." Arianne started before sipping on her wine.

"Apparently Lord Stark doesn't think much of a king's summons." Nymeria commented.

"What would a barbarian know of a king's summons anyway." Lady Tya scoffed.

"The king didn't make any summons Lady Arianne, Lady Sand. I believe you're confusing a request for a summons." Sansa Stark stated while looking at the dornish women before turning to Lady Tya.
"Lady Tya you seem to be forgetting that Lord Stark is the King's vassal. Insulting a Warden of one of the seven kingdoms is insulting the king." Elya said before Sansa could defend her father. Sansa looked surprised by Elya coming to her aid.

Tya seemed like she might argue but kept her mouth shut upon seeing the look Rhaenys shot at her.

"She is right Lady Tya. Lord Stark has done a fine job keeping the North in order for the king ever since he became its Warden. Even grandmother says so." A doe eyed brunette beauty with extremely comely features spoke with a smile in Sansa's direction. Sansa smiled in appreciation. There was surprise to in her eyes.

She was probably not expecting any of the ladies here to come to her defense. Elya noted.

"About the North's sudden interest in trade activities, what caused such a change?" the princess Daenerys asked the only northerner in the room.

"My brother is to take credit for our economic growth." the auburn haired girl said.

"And how did Lord Robb do this?" Tyene Sand inquired.

"Oh! Not Robb. I'm talking about Jon. My other older brother." Sansa corrected.

This made the other ladies blink in confusion. Even Elya. So far as she knew Eddard Stark had only one child who would qualify as being older than Sansa Stark and that would be Robb Stark. So who the hell was she talking...

"You are talking about Jon Snow?" Rhaenys stated/asked.

All heads turned to the princess.

"The bastard?" One of the ladies from the Westerlands said in surprise.

Elya noticed the slight twitch in the redheads brow at the mention of 'bastard'.

The Stark wasn't fond of people calling her half-brother a bastard. Jon Snow was loved.

"Yes. Ever since Jon was given the reigns of the Winterfell's trade business have had an increase in our income."

"Your father gave such an honour to a bastard instead of his heir?" Nymeria said in surprise.

There was a mixture reactions from among the ladies. Some had looks mirroring that of Nymeria Sand. Others were shocked and others had looks of disbelief.

"I have heard the rumor of that but I always counted it as just that. Rumors. But you are saying it to be true?" Daenerys was curious.

"Yes princess." Sansa nodded.

"It seems that Lord Stark is eager to enact another Daemon and Daeron scenario." Lady Tya commented with a sneer.

"That is never going to happen. For one Jon is of Stark blood not Targaryen. Positions of power are of no great importance to him. Plus he loves the family and we in turn love him. I'm not sure the same could be said for Daemon Blackfyre."
Had it not been the matter-of-fact tone with which she uttered such words, one could have accused Sansa Stark of saying that the royal family were power hungry and in presence of the two Targaryen princesses no less. Sansa Stark was either foolish or very brave. Elya noted.

"Careful with such words Lady Sansa. They could be judged as treason." Arianne Martell said with a baleful look.

"The Northmen have always been treasonous. They did raise up in rebellion with the Ursurper." Lady Tya smirked.

"And they were justified in their rebellion. King Rhaegar said so himself. My father did murder Rickard and Brandon Stark."

It was a surprise when princese Daenerys came in support of the Northmen.

"Besides you are not one to talk Lady Tya. Your grandfather sat on his ass the entire time that war went on. Lord Lannister to me was the most treasonous when he didn't answer his king's summons." Rhaenys shut down any attempt by Lady Tya for a rebuttal.

Oh dear! It seems that the day just didn't agree with the Lannister girl at all. The room was quiet for a moment after that.

"So tell me Lady Sansa why isn't your sister here with us?" Arianne mused from where she lounged on a divan, almost looking cat-like. "I didn't think Lady Stark would try to keep her from currying favor with the princesses." Rhaenys sent an amused look at her cousin at those words before looking at Sansa for an answer.

The Stark girl sighed. " Arya insisted on taking Lady and Nymeria around around the castle, so they could take in all the new scents." Her hands tightened for a moment before relaxing again, a movement that they all saw but said nothing.

"In any case, Arya thought that this was going to be an actual needlework session"

"Oh? Would that be so bad?" Margaery Tyrell cocked her head to the side.

"Arya hates needlework with a passion and will do absolutely anything get out of any session. She would rather be around the Pack than anywhere near needlework. I believe that they consider her to be an honorary member already."

"The Pack?" repeated Elya with a puzzled look.

"The Pack is a group of sons of bannermen who were sent to foster at Winterfell at some point in the past. They became friends with my brothers and began calling themselves 'The Pack' as if they were some sort of fraternity. It sort of stuck as they grew older." Sansa explained.

Lady Tya sniggered into her cup. "What qualifies as sons of noblemen in the North?"

Anger flashed for a moment in Lady Sansa's eyes. "There's Daryn Hornwood, Cley Cerwyn, Roderick Dustin, Domeric Bolton, Smalljon Umber, Jack Mormont, Roger Ryswell, Harrion Karstark, Torrhen Wull, Morgan Liddle, and Asher Forrester to name a few."

"I know none of those names, so they must not be so important. I suspect not, as they are nothing but savages who freeze in that cold hell they call a home," Lady Tya said with a dismissive sniff.

"I could say the same about the lords of the Westerlands, since they're nothing but grubby and dirty
miners who dig in the muds that they call home." Lady Sansa retorted.

While Lady Tya sputtered in outrage, Tyene grinned like an amused cat. "You can't bully this wolf cub, Lady Tya. You lions are not the only ones whose teeth are sharp it seems." Her remark earned giggles from the Dornish ladies as well the ones from the Crownlands.

"Tell us Lady Sansa how is the North like?" Elya asked with curiosity. She had never been to the North before. She was curious.

"Curious about your father's homeland, bastard. That is understandable." Lady Tya mock-sympathized.

Elya's nose flared in anger. She would have exploded in anger had Sansa Stark not spoken up.

"Bastard? I was under the impression that the king legitimized Lady Elya into a Dayne eighteen years ago."

"Once a bastard always a bastard." Lady Tya waved her off.

"So the king is a fool for calling Lady Elya a Dayne is what you are saying, Lady Tya?" Margaery Tyrell raised a brow.

The Lannister looked like she might argue with that reasoning but was interrupted by Princess Rhaenys.

"I'm sure that was not what Lady Tya meant. It is beneath her to insult the king isn't that right, my lady?"

The Lannister nodded with a gulp.

Elya smiled. The Lannister woman girl always grated on her nerves. Being called a bastard didn't bother her like some people thought. She tolerated being referred to as such.

She was born Elya Sand to the Lady Ashara Dayne of Starfall. Due to her mother being close friends Queen Elia, Elya Sand was legitimized and became Elya Dayne. It also didn't hurt that her uncle was a member of the Kingsguard and also the best swordsarm in the whole of Westeros.

Growing up she never knew who her father was and till now still didn't but there were rumors flying around.

It went that her mother and Lord Eddard Stark hit it off at the Tourney of Harrenhal and it was implied that they might have been more than a little friendly with each other by the end of the festivities.

There were also rumors that before returning to the North when the Urserper's War ended, the newly installed Lord Stark made a detour to Starfall. Elya had heard talks amongst the maids at Starfall he was spotted holding two babies in hand. She was one of those babies it was said.

Lord Stark returned to the North with his bastard son and Lady Ashara Dayne with her bastard daughter remained at Starfall.

Elya was curious about the stories and had wanted to confront her mother about the truth of it all but she never pushed when it became apparent that her mother was uncomfortable with the topic. So she stopped asking hoping that her mother would one day open up to her when she was ready to.
WHAM!

WHAM!

The ladies there, with the exception of a few, jumped back in surprise. The door to the room rattled in place as it was pounded upon. "What in the seven hells?" one of the Reach ladies asked in a near panicked voice.

However, both Rhaenys and Daenerys as well as Elya were unconcerned.

The door suddenly opened to reveal a man with a half-ruined face, his mouth always twisted into a half-smile. Stepping into the room her didn't even acknowledge the presence of the ladies in room an spoke directly to Princess Daenerys.

"Princess, your mother wants you."

"Thank you, Sandor," Daenerys said as she stood up from her seat and walked over to the door. She passed the man without any fear. The door closed with a loud slam!

"What in the seven hells was that!?" one of the ladies of the Riverlands demanded, her voice near hysterical and her wide eyes still staring at the door. "Was it a demon?"
"That was Queen Rhaella's and Princess Daenerys's sworn shield," Arianne said with an amused smirk, one that she shared with Tya. "I believe he's called the Hound."
"Actually, his name is Sandor of House Clegane," the Lannister of the two replied. "He's from the Westerlands."
"Why would the queen mother and the princess have a sworn shield when they have the Kingsguard?" one of the Reach ladies asked. "They don't need another knight."

"The Hound isn't a knight," Elya spoke, making everyone in the room turn their heads to her. "And he'll be insulted if you call him such."

"As for the Queen Dowager forgoing the Kingsguard for a sworn shield, I believe no sane woman would bet her life in the hands of people who stood by and watched as she got molested by her own husband when it was said people's duty to protect her from harm. I know I for one wouldn't."
Margaery Tyrell declared completely disregarding the presence of Ser Lewyn Martell.

Eyes flickered to the Kingsguard standing protectively behind Rhaenys even as he tried to maintain a stoic facade. Keyword is 'tried'.

"How about we turn our attention away from that ugly person and turn our attention to a far more interesting subject?" the Princess of Dorne suggested with a naughty smirk on her lips.

"Like what?" one of the Tyrell cousins' asked, an innocent expression on her lips.

"The handsome men who have attended this tourney," the dornish princess mused with a mischievous smirk. "There are an abundance of them here. I saw one such man covered in such lovely muscles and tall too! I thought he might've been a giant."

Lady Lannister frowned at those words. "The Mountain isn't here at this tourney," she remarked. Elya knew enough about Ser Gregor Clegane that she was glad to hear those words. As course and rude as he was, she preferred the Hound to the Mountain that rides.

"It might've been Smalljon Umber," Sana Stark offered. "Did he have a sigil of a screaming giant anywhere on him?"
"I do not know, I did not look," Arianne replied.

"Smalljon?" one of the Dornish ladies asked. "Who is he small to?"

"His father, the Greatjon," Lady Sansa answered. "He's over seven feet tall."

"By the Seven," a good number of the ladies there said in awe.

"A brute from the North is nothing really to look at, except for the first time," one of the Crownlands' ladies said. "But the Knight of Flowers is here. He's such a handsome man!" She practically swooned at that, making Elya roll her eyes.

"Well, I'd say that Ser Daemon Sand is far more handsome," one of the Dornish said in defense.

"A bastard is more handsome than the Knight of Flowers?" a Tyrell said with a scoff. "You must be joking."

"Of course she is joking and you are too," Tya said scornfully. "Everyone knows that my uncle is the best man here."

"Which one?" asked a Riverlands' lady, put off by her arrogant attitude. "Would it be the Imp or the Kingslayer?" Laughter abounded as the face of lady Lannister turned as red as her sigil.

"I know that he is no knight like my other brothers, but I do know that Willas is handsome too," Margaery said, choosing to speak of her eldest brother instead of the favored one (of which the Tyrells made attempt to hide but could not), which said something of her character. Having met her eldest brother, Elya knew she spoke true. She also knew that Willas was kind and could poke gentle fun at his own injury (yet it was not without its own sadness).

But one of the Westerlands ladies, a Lannister of Lannisport, scoffed at that. "Handsome or not, he's a cripple. He'd be nothing if he wasn't the heir."

It also said something of their character when both Margaery and Arianne leapt to their feet and turned furious eyes onto the Lannister of Lannisport. The Reach and Dorne united in common cause. Rhaenys face twisted in rage but only for a moment.

"Get out." She simply said to the Westerland lady.

"What?"

"I said get out before I make the guards throw you out like waste product you are."

The lady was confused by the order from her princess. She still hadn't comprehend the implications of her words yet.

Elya decided to assist her out.

"Lord Doran Marell is the King's brother-in-law and Princess Rhaenys' uncle. You do remember that at least don't you?"

The Lady's eyes widened in horror when it finally dawned on her.

"Princess I am..."

"Don't make me repeat myself a third time."
The lady nodded and quietly left the room.

Arianne and Margaery both were satisfied by the turn of events. Rhaenys also calmed down somewhat.

"I just had the most wonderful idea to make this tourney much more interesting for us ladies," Arianne said with a wicked little smile.

"What is it?" Tyene asked her.

"How about we play the Woman's game?"

"The Woman's game?" repeated of the Riverlands ladies, possibly a Blackwood. "What is that? I've never heard of it."

"Oh, it's a great game played in the south," Arianne said with a light laugh. "Think of it as the chance to crown a man here as our Queen of Love and Beauty, or in his case, King of Valor and Chivalry."

"How is it played?" A Westerlands lady asked, leaning forward with interest.

"Among us ladies here, we choose a man from the people who have come," Margaery told her. "And then we all try to win that man's favor. At the end of the tourney, the one whom he chooses wins."

"But what if he doesn't win the tourney?"

To that, the ladies of the Deep South laughed. "It would not matter," Arianne told her. "All that would matter is if he chose you or not."

"Oh," she said understandingly. "So who do we choose?"

"How about your brother, Princess Arianne?" suggested Margaery with a smile that all but shined. "I'm sure he would not mind."

"You would have me step out of the game after suggesting it?" the Dornish Princess asked with a feigned look of shock. "How devious of you, my lady," she said to the Rose of Highgarden. But then the look faded.

"Besides, Quentyn is not exactly on the best terms with us right now after coming back from Yronwood."

"What happened?" Rhaenys asked.

"He made a comment that was completely uncalled for. It's nothing," she said with a wave of her hand. "Now, does anyone have any suggestions?"

"Why not the Knight of Flowers?" suggested Tya.

That had some people agreeing; some, but not all. "I don't see anything with wrong with Ser Harry from the Vale," said another lady, probably from the Vale itself.

"He's not a ser, he's just a squire," a Frey (the Seven only knows which one. There were already far too many) said with a disdainful sniff. "And not even a good one at that."

"And who would you suggest? One of your family members?" she replied.
"Why shouldn't I?" asked the Frey challengingly.

"Because it's a game we wish to play," Arianne said with a smirk. While the Frey girl spluttered, she turned to look at her royal cousin. "How about you, coz?" she asked. "Who do you think we should play for?"

"Well...there's always Ser Daemon Sand," Rhaenys offered weakly. It seemed like she wasn't really interested in the game. Throughout the entire session she's seemed out of it. Only coming back to earth here and there.

"Come now, coz. If you had to pick a man, who would it be?" Tyene pressed.

"Certainly not any of the ones you all suggested," she said with no weakness in her voice, looking at the entire room. "Every time I have played the game, they, along with many knights from the southern kingdoms, have been named over and over again. It gets boring after a while. We need to choose someone new, someone who's never played the game before."

"Ooh," said Arianne with a knowing smirk. "Some Northern lord has caught your eye, has he? You think we should play for him, is that it?"

"Robb Stark is certainly handsome, he looks just like his uncle Edmure," Margaery said, making her cousins giggle.

"I do say that there was one such man among the northern group who was quite handsome," a Bracken lady remarked. "He was pale of skin but it was lovely. And his eyes were like two full moons staring back at me. I never did get his name."

"That's probably Domeric Bolton," Sansa told her. "He, Jack Mormont, and Asher Forrester are usually thick as thieves in the Pack, yet you never would've thought it at first glance."

"Why's that?" one of the Fowler twins asked, only for her to smile mysteriously.

"Well, coz?" Arianne asked Rhaenys. "Have the men named caught your attention?"

"Actually, coz, I already had someone in mind," she replied.

"Who would it be?" asked Sansa probably curious as to who among her northerner camp was lucky to have caught the princess' eyes.

"Your brother." Rhaenys answered.

A mysterious smirk appeared on Stark girl's face. "Good choice. I'm sure that Robb will like all the ladies here showing their affection and trying to win his favor. It might make some of the other men jealous." The entire room filled with giggling at the thought.

"I wasn't talking about Robb Stark."

The smirk vanished and was replaced with a look of concern. "Rhaenys, Bran and Rickon are practically babes compared to you. Tell me you're not considering robbing the cradle for the game."

"I'm not," Rhaenys said, "for I wasn't thinking of them either."

"Then who...?" Her voice fell silent but her eyes grew wide. "You cannot be serious."
"I am."

"Out of every lord who's come south, you want us to play for him?"

"Why shouldn't we?" she asked Sansa Stark watching her carefully. "Give me a good reason we shouldn't." Sansa Stark opened her mouth but no words came out. As this went on, a satisfied and smug expression appeared on the princess's face. "You can't think of one, can you? Not without making yourself sound like a hypocrite."

"Who are you talking about?" Tya asked.

"My half-brother, Jon Snow," answered Stark.

All eyes turned to the princess. "A bastard?" said Lady Tya. "You would have us play for a bastard?"

The princess turned her gaze on the Lannister. "Aside from his being a bastard, what exactly is wrong with him? Have you even met him?"

"No, of course not," Tya said with a dismissive sniff. "I have, last night outside in the courtyard. If I had not seen Robb Stark entered and introduced, I would've thought that Jon Snow was Eddard Stark's trueborn son."

"So he was handsome?" Arianne asked. Elya saw the interested gleam in her eyes.

"Yes, he was. I also think he was not aware of it." Her eyes found every lady in the room. "Do not be put off by his status. Think of it as a challenge instead. It would not be the same as trying to win the affection and favor of a southern knight, would it?"

They all began to make sounds of knowing acknowledgement. "You're right, your Highness. It would be different," one of the Tyrells said in acknowledgement. "He probably wouldn't think it would happen to him."

"True. And I personally think he would be flattered and honored," Tya added. "A bastard such as himself would never have such highborn ladies pay attention to him."

"So we are in agreement," the princess declared. "We shall play for Lord Stark's son. Let the best of us win." She raised her goblet in a drinking salute, only to stop when she saw what was left. Still, she drank it with the others.

Sitting closest to Sansa Stark, Elya caught the words as the Stark girl muttered under her breath.

"Jon huh? They've got their cut out for them." She muttered before draining her cup of wine.

"Hm! Lady Stark believes her brother is going to be difficult it seems." Elya mused. "We'll see."
ARYA
She knew. The moment Nymeria and Lady bounded off from their mistresses in the manner they did, she knew he was there. Though she had yet to set her eyes on him she was already aware of him.

So just like her direwolf she ran, ignoring her sister's look of bewilderment and cries for her to stop. She didn't stop. She kept running, taking the path the direwolves took. She ran until she didn't. It was not necessary anymore. She could see him now.

They were in public but she didn't care. People were staring fearfully at the wolves but she wasn't afraid. Not of the direwolves. And definitely not Jon Snow.

She jumped straight into his welcoming arms, almost knocking him off his feet. He caught her, just like she knew he would. Like he always did.

She buried her face in his neck even as she hugged him. The hug was so fierce you would have thought she was trying to choke the life out of him. He hugged her back just as fiercely. That's one thing she will always like about Jon. He never treated her like some fragile object like everyone did. For that she will always love him for it.

"Four months. You were supposed to be away for four months. Where were you?" She mumbled into his neck.

"I ran into some trouble on the way. Sorry" Jon apologized.

Arya's eyes widened. Bringing her eyes to his eyes, she searched his face.

"You're not hurt, are you?"

"Why are you asking? Jealous?"

A kick to the shin was his answer. Arya glared. "You should be grateful that I am even worried about your considering you left me for five fucking months."

"Language, milady. What would your lady mother say if she heard you right now?" Jon laughed at her choice of words.

Another thing she loved about Jon. He never berated her nor did he ever use harsh words with her whenever she did anything ill-fitting of her station. Oh he would advise her and try to correct her mistakes but he never did it in a manner that made it sound like she was stupid or and idiot.

She was still hugging him when Sansa finally caught up to them.

"Jon?" The older Stark daughter gasped in surprise.

Arya felt Jon's body shift a bit. He didn't speak. Nevertheless she knew what he was communicating to her. She knew Jon better than anyone else did. The same went for him when it came to her. It wasn't a secret that he was her favourite sibling. Scratch that. He was her most favourite person in the entire world. And vice versa.

Listening to his body she released him from her embrace but didn't entirely let him off. She still clung to his arm like a lifeline.
"Lady Sansa."

Jon bowed to the redheaded Stark.

"It's a pleasure to look upon your lovely face after going without it lighting up my day for five solid months."

Sansa shook her head, clearing the shocked look from her face before composing herself. With a practiced smile on her face she curtsied.

"Likewise, my lord. Your presence was missed greatly. You put a dour in our daily lives running off like that. Please do try not to stay away for so long"

The two looked at each other for a few seconds...

"Oh bugger that you two." Arya scowled from Jon's side.

Jon and Sansa burst out laughing. Sansa quickly embraced Jon in a loving hug. With his left arm held prisoner by Arya, Jon could reciprocate with his right.

"You've both gotten more beautiful these past few months. And taller too which is a surprise. I knew you, Sansa, would ultimately take after your mother but I wasn't expecting Arya to get any taller. What gods is younger sister praying to now, hm?"

"Stupid. It's only natural that I grow taller. I've not finished growing afterall." Arya punched him in the arm while adding a 'stupid' for effects.

"Jon?" Someone gasped from behind causing the trio to turn around.

Bran stood there with a surprised expression which quickly turned into a grin. Rickon on the other hand was all joy even as he sprinted gleefully towards them and almost knocked Jon off-balance with his enthusiasm. Jon hugged him back.

"Jon! Where's Ghost?" He asked as Bran made his way toward them.

Jon ruffled his hair in response “Hello to you too you little monster. Ghost is out causing trouble in the woods near the edge of the forest groves here at Riverrun, you’ll see him later.” He answered as he hugged Bran as well.

"Where have you been? We've been worried sick." Bran said after he pulled back from the embrace.

"Run into a bit of trouble out there. I'll tell you all about it at an appropriate time." He added, when he saw Rickon's eye light up, to avoid being bombarded with questions on the spot.

"Jeyne. It's good to see you again." He said to the brunette childhood playmate and friend to Sansa.

The girl was caught off-guard by the sincere tone Jon spoken words.

"It's lovely to have you back with us, Jon." Jeyne responded with a smile and a blush adorning her cheeks.

It was a secret to absolutely nobody that Jeyne had a crush on her brother, Unfortunately, she was sure that Jon didn’t share the same feelings. Sansa had tried to talk her best friend down, in the hopes that she wouldn’t get her feelings hurt and she hoped she'd taken some of the things she’d said into consideration.
“C’mon then!” Arya exclaimed as she walked off pulling Jon along. She had yet to let him out of her grasp. The rest of them huffed and eventually catching up with her.

The direwolves, now including Rickon’s all-black and wild Shaggydog and Bran’s late-named Summer, followed them all the while nipping at Jon’s heels in an attempt to get their dose of affection from him. Jon was amused but humored them nevertheless.

Jory already looked fed up with Arya’s antics as he cursed under his breath, Jon laughed and clapped the older man on the back.

“Never get used to her do ya?” Jon said to Jory as they slowly entered a group of stalls, merchants already grasping for customers attention.

“No you do not.” Jory replied with a huff, Arya turned to the two of them and stuck her tongue out at them.

Their group eventually made it into the heart of the market, the different sounds, the multitude of coloured stalls and banners, the variety of smells permeating the air from the food stalls, Sansa was in heaven. Arya snorted.

“There’s a lot of people.” She heard Bran say as they stood there, trying to work out where to start.

Jory spoke up “More reason to stay close and not run off then.” He said as he looked mainly at Arya and Rickon.

Arya narrowed her eyes “Why are you looking at us?” She asked, Rickon nodded in agreement and crossed his arms.

"Yeah! Why?"

Jory raised an eyebrow at that “You know why, septa Mordane and maester Lewin are always telling me to find you when you run off from your lessons.” He stated matter-of-factly.

Arya rolled her eyes “Fine. We’ll be good.” She said as she looked up at Jory, glaring at him from underneath her eyelashes. Sansa for one didn’t believe a word her sister had just said, neither did Jon.

“Little liar.” He said as he smirked down at her, Arya grinned in response.

“Right, where first?” She spoke up since they were just stood there ignoring everything around them.

With Bran’s suggestion of starting from the first stall and made their way around the market. They all ended up picking something up for themselves, she’d bought herself a small silver necklace in the shape of a snowflake. Jeyne bought herself a small roll of blue silk for embroidering.

Arya for some reason, had bought a small leather belt with silver fittings, a belt was something she’d never seen her sister wear. Sansa was a little bit suspect when Arya turned and winked at Jon with a grin on her face.

Bran bought a nice collar for Summer and Rickon had bought a little wooden wolf sculpture that was painted black so it looked a bit like his direwolf Shaggydog, he also got some sweets for himself which surprised nobody.

Jon had looked at the stalls but bought nothing for himself, he mainly kept an eye out along with Jory and their guards. By the time they were finished, it was just nearing lunch time and time for them to head back to camp to eat, the quicker they ate lunch the quicker they could return to see the rest of
the grounds.

Bran had already seen a few knights in the practice yard that he wanted to watch and the rest of them
had agreed to watch with him when they returned.

“Lady Sansa!” She heard somebody shout as they made their way back to the northern camp. She
frowned as she turned around, it wasn’t the voice of somebody she knew. Maybe Sansa knew as it
was her that was being called.

As they stopped and turned around, she noticed a man approaching them with a smile on his
handsome face, he was accompanied by what looked like a guard. Sansa blushed when she replied
“Yes?” She said as she looked at the mysterious man.

“Lady Sansa, it’s a pleasure to meet you.” The mysterious man said as he took Sansa's hand and
kissed the back of it.

“I fear you have me at a disadvantage my lord, I am unaware of your name...” Her sister said as she
admired the man’s deep blue eyes and dimples as he grinned.

There was something off about his smile as he looked at the rest of her group, especially when he
looked above her head and locked eyes with somebody behind her.

He looked back at her and cleared his throat “Lord Hardyng my lady, Harrold Hardyng, but you can
call me Harry. That’s just for the special ladies like yourself.” He said as the smile on his face grew.

Arya rolled her eyes at him.

She heard Jon huff “Special lady? You’ve literally just met her.” He said in a rather unimpressed
tone.

Harrold looked up at Jon with his smile still in place, this time though it seemed to have an edge to it
“And you are my good man?” He asked.

Jon cleared his throat “Well, since your being so rude and didn’t even acknowledge anybody else, let
me introduce to you Lord Bran Stark, this is Lord Rickon Stark and this,” he said as he touched their
sister’s shoulder “this is Arya Stark, but you can call her Lady Arya. That’s only for the special men
in her life.” Jon said. “And me, I’m Jon, Jon Snow. I’d shake your hand but I’d rather not.” He
finished.

She held back a laugh and Jory cough to cover up what she believed to be a chuckle.

The smile on Lord Hardyng’s face morphed into an ugly smirk “Snow? Interesting...” He seemed to
say to himself.

“Not really.” Jon replied in a bored tone

“Jon...” Sansa said when she realized that this exchange had a chance of getting out of hand and the
situation could turn ugly.

“You're a brave bastard speaking to a Lord that way aren't you. I could make life very difficult for
you.” Lord Hardyng seemed to growl out.

The situation was lost and she wasn't really sure who to blame for it.

“Go for it, should be a lot more interesting than this conversation.” Jon answered in an amused tone,
Arya was making a bad attempt at covering up her smile.

“Whatever bastard.” Lord Hardyng answered. That always seemed to be the only thing people used against Jon and ever since he turned nine ten namedays old it had little to no effect on him. Jon’s answer to the snobby lord was a prime example of that.

“That all you got Harry ? Very disappointing from somebody who claimed he’d make my life difficult.” He replied. He seemed to be toying with the man now.

Ever since Jon turned ten namedays he’d been sharper with his words, very quick on the reply. He’d also become cheekier as well, it was clear that somebody had been a bad influence on her brother. That was what happened when a usually quiet and reserved boy suddenly started hanging around in taverns and the most rowdy of men.

She loved Jon even more after he let his himself go. She knew Sansa did too.

Sansa didn’t tell her mother or septa Mordane that she rather liked the new Jon, she found him amusing now, he seemed to have a certain charm to himself as well.

No wonder Jeyne had taken a fancy.

Lord Hardyng seemed to have had enough of them as he scoffed at Jon “I don’t have time for this.” He seemed to say to himself than anybody else “Maybe I'll see you later Lady Sansa.” He said as he put on a clear fake smile.

She put on her own perfectly practiced smile as she replied “Maybe we will Lord Hardyng.”

Lord Hardyng smiled at that “Maybe without any unwanted guests as well.” He said as he looked at Jon.

“Maybe you will Harry, but just a little word of warning for you,” He said as he ushered the lord to come to him. Lord Hardyng gritted his teeth but moved towards Jon anyway.

Jon cupped his mouth, leant in and whispered in Lord Hardyng’s ear, just loud enough so that everyone could hear.

“If you hurt her in any way, you’ll regret it. Anything you do to her, I’ll do to you......anything.” He warned, the last word he dragged out for effect. His tone sent a shiver down her spine and clearly down the spine of the Lord as well. She even saw him visibly gulp.

"I recently found at in Lys that I am quite somewhat impartial to male bonding than I originally thought I was."

At this everyone gawked at Jon.

"What the hell!” Bran sputtered. He understood what Jon just said. She too did. They had heard talks about such things while listening in on people's conversations around Winterfell.

“C’mon.” Lord Hardyng said to his guard as they turned around and walked off without a single look back.

"See you around sweet Harry. Be sure to look for me later. I wouldn't mind your computer company much.” Jon waved them off. There was a mischievous glint in his eyes.

That was when Arya realized his ploy. She laughed loudly even as Harrold and his crew left their
Sansa shook her head after coming to a similar conclusion.

“You’re always causing trouble Jon.” Sansa said but smiled at him to show him that she wasn’t really upset with him.

Jon smiled back at her and smiled “I try.” He replied, their group chuckled in response, with the exception of Rickon of course. He was still just a child and had absolutely no idea of what had transpired.

“C’mon guys, I’m hungry.” Rickon perked up as he dragged Jory by the arm towards camp.

“You’re always hungry, ya tubby wolf.” Jon replied as they walked on.

“Rich coming from you Jon.” Bran said, grinning at his older brother.

Jon shrugged “I have no idea what you’re talking about.” He answered as everybody chuckled.

“Thanks Jon.” Sansa quietly said to him when they finally got back to camp.

He furrowed his brow as he looked at her “What for?” he asked.

She shrugged her shoulders “Just looking out for me back there.” She answered.

Her brother wrapped his arm around her shoulder, she sank into his embrace. She was never allowed to be like this with Jon whenever her mother or her septa were around.

“What kind of brother would I be if I wasn’t overly protective of my sister eh?” He said with a smirk. She chuckled in response.”Just don’t scare all the boys away. I wil still need to get married.”

"Fine.” Jon pouted.

She looked up at him “Still though, thank you.” She said.

Jon looked down at her and squeezed her shoulder “You’re welcome.” He replied as they entered camp.

Daenerys
She sat reclined in her seat sipping from a goblet of wine. Her mother sat beside her. The older woman was enjoying a selection of fruits that Riverrun had to offer. Currently the Queen Dowager had some grapes in her mouth as she chewed on them.

"These grapes are better than the ones we get at the Red Keep." Aegon commented before he gobbled up another set of grape fruits.

"Lord Edmure does know how to treat his guests." Rhaenys spoke.

"Before today I had never had tasted so many varieties of fruits before." She added as an afterthought.

"They’re from Yi Ti I hear." Daenerys spoke.

"How did you know that?” Elya asked from her place beside Rhaenys.
"Isn't it obvious? She was told by some serving wench." Aegon said with a grin.

"Probably struck a conversation with them after that." Rhaenys chuckled.

"You know, Dany I still don't understand how you can be so comfortable and dare I say at home among the commonfolk." Elya cocked her head to the side.

"The commonfolk are plain and transparent. They, despite what highborns think of them, are a bit honest when it comes royalty. There is just so much two-timing and double talking that I can take from most of lords and ladies." Daenerys said before downing her wine.

"Why? Did something happen?" Her mother had a concerned look in her eyes.

"Other than many a lords and ladies looking to curry favour with the royal princesses?" Rhaenys chuckled.

"I'm not sure what was pathetic. Their not so subtle attempt at flirtation or the unimpressive honeyed words." Daenerys snorted.

This had Aegon laughing.

"Does my plight amuse you, nephew? Ah well! We'll see how amused you'll be when my brother and king finds a wife for."

At this the Crown Prince scowled. To the rest of the kingdom the prince was an amiable and dutiful son but those who were close to him knew just how much Aegon cherished his freedom. The thought of being tied down in marriage was appealing as sunlight was to a bat.

"If you keep that scowl on for too long it might get stuck on your face." his grandmother admonished.

"Now I've never met a man who was thrilled to be married to a woman he didn't choose himself. They did their duty nevertheless and you, Aegon VI Targaryen, will also do as expected of you. And you will not be meeting your betrothed with anything but a welcome face. Now lose the scowl."

Rhaenys and Daenerys grinned at their brother's and nephew's scolding even as he scowled some more before finally relenting and dropping the not so pleasant expression.

"I hope that at least whatever woman Father finds me is comely enough." He sighed.

"Pray that he doesn't decide on a Frey then." Elya scrunched her nose as if in disgust.

"Why? Do they have pig noses?" Aegon jested.

Elya shook her head.

"No. It's not like they are ugly or anything just... They are just not what I'll call comely." She struggled with her words.

"Isn't that what you call 'ugly'?" Daenerys quipped.

"I wasn't aware Lord Frey came" Rhaenys raised a brow.

"He didn't but some his children and grandchildren are here or so I heard." Rhaella commented.

"Apparently to build relations with other noble houses. I swear I've never a weasel's face on a man before. If I didn't know better I'd say they were a crossbreed of weasel and man." Elya wriggled her
Rhaenys giggled at her friend's words.

"Then let's hope father doesn't pair me with a Frey then." Aegon chuckled.

"What I said to Aegon about duty earlier. It also applies to you girls as well." the oldest woman in the room reminded.

This had both Rhaenys and Daenerys groan. It was Aegon's time to smirk.

"Seven knows you have put it off for far too long. Should the time you will do your duty also. Am I clear?"

"Yes, mother." Daenerys grumbled.

The Queen Dowager looked at Rhaenys then.

"I didn't hear a 'Yes, grandmother' from you, Rhaenys."

"Yes, grandmother" the princess muttered.

Let it be said that Princess Rhaenys loves her freedom just as much as her brother did his own.

Looking satisfied the Queen Dowager relaxed in her seat before turning to Elya.

"You too my dear. We will find a suitable man for you. If my son doesn't I will do so myself."

Elya eyes widened in surprise.

"I'm forever grateful for what your family has done for me and mine, your grace."

The former queen nodded. Daenerys smiled. Her mother was not as close to Elya as the rest of the family bar Viserys were. Nevertheless the king's mother recognized her importance to the family. For that the silver-haired princess was appreciative.

"Tell me something, Elya," Rhaella said, getting her attention. "Who is the man my daughter and granddaughter and their friends will be playing for this tournament?"

"Your Grace?" she said, surprised even more than before.

"Come now, girl. I have ears and I have eyes. There's no need to hide it from me."

"They're playing for Ser Daemon Sand, probably," Elia Sand told her. "It is a good choice, if I do say so."

"No one asked you, Aegon," Rhaenys said, her voice cracking like a whip. Her outburst causing brows to raise. "And it's only the Dornish ladies who were hoping to play for Ser Daemon. Their hope to make him the man to play for will not happen."

"Then who is it?" Rhaella asked, bringing their attention back to her.

"It is Lord Stark's son." Rhaenys stated nonchalantly.

"Ah! Lord Robb is who you're playing for. Not a bad choice. He is very comely I have to admit." Aegon nodded his agreement.

Daenerys winced. Almost. Rhaenys wasn't fooling Daenerys with the non-caring way she answered the question.
Rhaella knew of the game. This Daenerys knew because her knowledge of it came from her mother. Daenerys had met ladies who had been proud that their brothers had been chosen and would announce it for all to hear. The former queen must have seen her almost-wince because she asked "You are not glad that Lord Stark's son has been selected, Dany?"

"No it's not that I'm not happy with the choice. I'm actually curious about how this will end." Daenerys answered.

"Then why the queer expression? Hm?"

"What my dear niece forgot to add was that we are not playing for Robb Stark but rather his brother. His bastard brother Jon Snow."

"Snow?" Aegon sputtered.

"Why the hell are you playing for a bastard?" He was bewildered.

Daenerys couldn't blame him. It was unheard of for highborn ladies to be playing for a bastard.

"Is there any particularly any reason after you're playing that we are playing for a bastard and a northern at that?" he asked still confused.

"Rhaenys was the one who suggested it," Elya said. "She said it would be different from when the game was last played, giving it a sense of freshness."

"And why would she say that?" This time he all but demanded, the protective older brother coming into play here.

"How should I know? I'm not privy to all of her secrets and thoughts." Elya defended.

At this all turned to the lady in question.

"What?" Rhaenys asked pretending to be ignorant of the conversation going on around her.

"Don't pretend like you don't know what I'm talking about. Why did you convince the other ladies to play for a bastard?" Aegon frowned.

"I wanted something different from the usual. Something spontaneous and unpredictable. It seems that It worked, don't you think so?" The older Targaryen sibling smirked.

"Really?" Aegon's tone was dry.

Daenerys giggled. "To be frank I find the idea quite thrilling. Like Lady Tya said, 'he should feel honored that many highborn ladies and even princesses will be showing him this much attention.' She tried her best imitate the Lannister girl.

"I can imagine that haughty girl saying that." Rhaella snorted. They all laughed.

"If you and the ladies are so willing to play for a bastard of all things then I'm assuming he's at least comely enough to sate their annoyance at having to play for him." Rhaella commented.

"Actually I have yet to set eyes on this Jon Snow but I trust Rhaenys not fool me into chasing after a troll. She assured us that he was comely." Daenerys admitted.

"You have no idea." Rhaenys said wistfully. There was a faraway look in her eyes as she (Daenerys presumed) reminisced on she and Jon Snow's first meeting.
Hm! Intriguing. The silver-haired princess noted. There a certain gleam in the raven-haired princess’ eyes. Shw couldn't place a finger on it.

"Be careful with the way you approach and interact with him. He may be a bastard but he is not just any bastard but the Lord of Winterfell's own. Our family and the Stark's have a...tenuous relationship at best. There is bad blood." Rhaella didn’t need to remind them about that.

Daenerys stiffened at the reminder of that it was her family's actions that had caused the tensions with the Starks.

"Oh Rhaegar! Why?" She mentally sighed before noticing some expression pas over her mother's face.

"Rhaenys dear, In your sewing sessions with the ladies this morning what was your take on the Stark girl's relationship with her half-brother?" the Queen Dowager asked.

Rhaenys raised a brow but answered nevertheless.

"I wouldn't know but I don't think she was offended with the thought of us playing for his bastard brother like some ladies would have. She sounded defensive now that I of it." She said thoughtfully.

"When we all agreed to play for him, Lady Sansa whispered under her breath and I quote, "Jon huh? They've got their cut out for them"). Elya offered.

Rhaella was satisfied with the answers.

"Good. That means she knows her half-brother well and is protective of him. That denotes at least a good rapport with him. Let's assume the rest of the family feel the same."

"Um grandmother what is this about?" Aegon asked.

"The girls will be amicable with the bastard using the game as cover while you my dear boy will get to know Lord Stark's heir."

Her tone suggested she was not asking but rather ordering them to task.

It took a while before the true meaning of her words sunk in.

"You want us to try repair relationships with the Starks." Daenerys spoke in realization.

"Yes. With the way things are between the king and Lord Stark I'm afraid as long as those two stay as King and Warden respectively the Crown's relations with the North will always be strenuous. However that does not have to extend to younger generation of Targaryens and Starks." Rhaella confirmed.

"Yes it will be really beneficial for the Crown to not be enemies with the largest of the Seven kingdoms. Very well grandmother I will do my duty." Aegon vowed.

Daenerys nodded her agreement.

"Elya dear, you as well." The former looked straight into the former bastard's eyes.

"What?" The black haired Dayne blinked.

"She's not a Targaryen." Aegon pointed out.
"No she isn't but.. there are rumors. I don't if there is any truth to them but if there is then she is our only connection to the Starks." The Queen Dowager spoke while staring straight at the girl in question.

"Mother those are just rumors meant to insult both Lord Stark and more so the Lady Ashara." Rhaenys frowned as she stepped next to Elya and grasped her hand protectively.

Daenerys smiled at that. She also stepped forward with the utmost intention of defending the girl she'd grown to love as part of her circle of close friends. A look from Elya stopped her in her tracks.

The Dayne smiled appreciatively at Rhaenys who smiled back. Turning to the Queen Dowager she spoke, "Your Grace I don't know if those rumors are true or false. My mother has not spoken a word of who my father really is. She's neither refuted nor has she agreed with the gossips. She's always uncomfortable whenever I hint at the topic so I stop whenever I see the signs."

Elya took a breath and continued.

"However the royal family has done so much for me and asked so little in return. I owe for the person I am today." She gave a grateful bow.

Looking each and every Targaryen present in the eye, she smiled.

"The Crown's relations with the North is not favorable to the Targaryen rule and this is due to no fault of the northerners and their liege Lord. If knowledge of who my father is will help in closing the rift between your two families then please Your Graces allow me to repay you for all you've done for me."

The room was quiet after she was done speaking.

"Elya you don't need to repay us for anything. You're family. This is what family does." Rhaenys was the first to break the silence.

Elya shook her head. "I know but this is something I must do besides...this way I can get truth of my father." She spoke the last words quietly as if speaking to herself.

Daenerys eyes widened. Grinning at the black haired Dayne she said, "You devious little creature since you can't force your mother to tell who your father is, you're going to leave the questioning to my mother, the Queen Dowager."

"Aunt Ashara wouldn't be able to say no then." Rhaenys laughed at the realization.

Aegon shook his head and grinned.

"I'm surrounded by cunning women." He complimented.

"Well then I think we'll commission this as 'Operation Kiss Ass'." The queen mother announced with smile. Her choice of words caused the youngsters to burst into laughter.
Sorry guys but I kinda accidentally deleted my story...thankfully I had a backup of all the chapters I had typed so far...so uhm! I've reposted the entire thing all over again plus the scheduled chapter 8.

Jon

Lunch with his family was always a happy and amusing affair for him. From Arya and Rickon competing to see who was the best at throwing berry tarts while Sansa tried to get them to stop even as he and Robb gave pointers to them respectively with Bran discretely aiding his younger brother.

It was even more amusing when the Lady Stark tried to excuse him from the family lunch only for him to come up with perfectly reasonable excuses for him to stay.

Of course a Stark family meeting wasn't a family meeting at all if Lady Stark didn't throw one or two insult the bastard's way. And Jon was only complacent to her insults when done in public view. And that is outside Winterfell. Everyone in Winterfell knew that the Lady of Winterfell didn't like Jon Snow. The same could be said for the bastard of Winterfell himself and he let it be known. Verbally.

And so it was common practice for the Stark children to witness their mother and half-brother trading thinly veiled insults at the dinner table.

After a quick lunch inside camp, him and his siblings made their way towards the practice yards to watch some of the knight's spar, Bran’s idea more than anybody else's.

He knew his younger brother was all into that sort of thing so he humoured him, Arya and Rickon sounded interested in the idea and agreed with their brother that it would be fun. Sansa was the biggest surprise and even shocked Arya when she said she'd like to watch as well.

“Do you think we’ll see any knights of the Kingsguard there?” Bran asked to nobody in particular as he walked towards one of the many training yards scattered around the grounds, a clear bounce in his step.

“I hope so, we didn’t get to see any of them really spar when they visited those moons ago.” Arya answered as she swung Rickon’s arm back and forth as they held hands.

“Maybe Jon can spar with one of them.” Rickon exclaimed like the idea had just this moment come to him.

Arya gasped and smiled “Oh yes, that would be really fun to see.” She said as she looked at him hopefully.

He chuckled “Not a chance, I'm going there to watch not tire myself out.” He answered as the practice yard in question slowly came into view.

Arya scrunched her face up at him “Why!?” She said with an edge of anger, like the idea of him only wanting to watch was such a nonsensical idea.
“Cos I want to, that’s why.” He replied as he grinned at her.

“That’s not an answer.” She replied back, a little scowl on her face that made it hard for him to keep a straight face.

“Well it’s the answer you’re getting, take it or leave it ya little brat.” He answered as he ruffled her hair. She scowled at him more as she fixed her hair.

Jory nudged him in the side as they got closer to the yard “Uncle Rodrik told me he’d be sparring in one of the yards earlier today, we might see him here.” He explained.

“I suppose he needs to wake those old bones up for the melee, he wouldn’t want to disappoint the Greatjon now would he?” He said as Jory grinned back at him.

He chuckled “I’ll tell him you said that shall I?” He replied.

“Make sure you speak up when you do, they say that’s one of the first things to go when you get to that age.” He answered back, Jory just shook his head and poorly suppressed the beaming smile on his face.

“Oh bloody hell.” Jory said all of a sudden as Bran, Arya and Rickon ran towards the edge of the yard, standing on one of the wooden beams of the fence that surrounded it to get a better view of the fighters.

Jory jogged off and caught up to them leaving Jon with Sansa, Jeyne and a few of the house guards. “You’re really good in the yard Jon, I would have liked to see for myself. It’s okay if you don’t want to though.” Sansa spoke up from his side, he turned at her and saw Jeyne nodding in agreement.

He winced at this. The way she said it, was as if he had hurt her by denying to participate in the practice yard. He knew this tactic. He thought it to her. She has tried to use it on him many times. It worked only half of those times.

He smirked at her “Maybe I’ll reconsider if we see our friend Harry there. That’s if he’d like a spar at all, I’m not sure he likes me after our last catch up.” He said as they approached the edge of yard, meeting back up with the rest of their group.

Sansa and Jeyne chuckled at his response. They reached the fence that Arya, Bran and Rickon were leaning against and Jon whistled as he took in the sheer size of the yard, they hadn’t cut any corners.

Before he could really take in his surroundings, Bran pointed in the distance and caught his attention “Look Jon! Ser Jaime of the Kingsguard. I hear he’s competing in the grand melee.” Bran explained.

He’d heard a few stories about the man along with the rest of his family. A man with very little interest in politics, the complete opposite of his brother Tyrion. Very close with his twin sister Cersei.

He looked back at Bran and smiled “I reckon you could take him.” He said to the boy as he ruffled his hair.

Bran looked up at him with a scrunched-up face and a smile “Don’t be silly, that’s a member of the Kingsguard, the best of the best, there’s nobody better.” He explained.

He huffed “Don’t let Lord Umber hear you say that, he might actually eat ya.” He said as Rickon giggled, the rest of them following suit.

“What’s got you lot tickled?” A woman’s voice spoke up from behind them, he turned around and
instantly met the brown eyes of a short and rather buxom young woman, she was accompanied by a
couple of guards. She smirked when she caught him looking at her chest for a second.

Bloody hard to miss those melons.

“Large tracts of land.” He replied without a second thought, Jory coughing and turning away.

The small woman quirked an eyebrow but smiled anyway “Oh yeah? And what would that mean
Ser…” She said, fishing for a name.

He shook his head “No Ser, just Jon, Jon Snow. I was just talking about this large tract of land
they’d used for the yard l, Lady…” He said, attempting to weasel himself out of a corner.

The woman seemed to know exactly what Jon was talking about but gave him respite as she slowly
eyed him up and down “Lady Myranda, Myranda Royce. It’s very lovely to meet you Jon.” She
replied, he nodded at her and smiled at her as he turned to the rest of the group, Sansa had her
eyebrow raised up as she looked at him.

“I’ve actually come here to speak to Lady Sansa.” Lady Myranda said as she looked at his sister.

“Oh?” She replied, seemingly caught off guard.

“Yes, I came to apologise. I heard there was a small incident this morning involving Lord Hardyng
or Harry the Arse as we like to call him. Lord Arryn found out and asked me to apologise on that
idiot's behalf.” She explained.

“Oh, that's okay, no harm was done. I think my brother scared him away anyway.” Sansa replied as
she looked from Myranda to him and then back to Myranda with a smile.

Myranda looked back at him “Tall, dark, handsome and he protects the innocent. Is there anything
you can't do?” She asked him, the grin she gave him was borderline flirty.

He smirked back at the flirty woman “I’m positively awful at embroidery.” He replied.

She let out a light giggle as she looked up at him “Those are some lovely curls you’ve got there Jon.”
She said as she licked her bottom lip.

He chuckled as he looked back at her “They're not for sale.” He answered as he winked at her.

“What the hell is happening?” Arya blurted.

Jon ignored his sister. As much Arya liked to believe that she was well informed on the intimate
interaction between man and woman, she was fairly ignorant on a certain topics.

Topics he wouldn't mind sharing but that would make both Lady and Lord Stark and not to forget
Robb glare murder at him.

Bran looked on confused “I’m not sure…” He slowly said. Jon looked away from them all, leant on
top of the fence with his arms folded and looked on towards the yard in the hopes of avoiding their
looks.

“Maybe I’ll see you all again soon, Lady Sansa.” He heard Myranda say, amusement lacing every
word. He looked over his shoulder and saw her walking away, clearly exaggerating the sway in her
hips. He looked back towards the yard before he got caught looking again.

Jory clapped him on the back as he looked towards the sparring men with him “If Robb was here,
he’d be destroying you right now.” He said as he grinned at him.

He huffed “I think Robb would be too busy sucking someone in particular’s face off to be bothered about what I’m up to.” He replied as he made eye contact with Ser Jaime, the first glance from the man could have been a random occurrence but the second one definitely wasn’t.

I wonder what that’s about.

The Lannister knight looked away from him before Jon broke eye contact, he was always going to win that battle, and to be honest, he needed to if he was to compete with his father, the great Lord Tywin when they met.

Jory seemed to have noticed the Kingsguard knight looking at him as well “Looks like Lady Myranda has competition when it comes to garnering your attention.” He said as he nodded towards Ser Jaime who had decided to look their way for a third time.

“If he’s tryin’ to be subtle, he’s doing a shit job of it.” he replied as he winked at the white knight.

Ser Jaime to his credit, smirked back at him and carried on drilling a few men who were with him.

“Why does Ser Jaime keep staring at you?” Arya asked him with a furrowed brow. As soon as the words came out of her mouth, everybody looked in the direction of the white knight.

He looked at Arya and shrugged his shoulders “Not a clue, maybe he wants to see if my hair is for sale as well.” He replied.

“I don’t think Ser Jaime needs to, he already has beautiful golden hair himself.” Sansa replied as she looked on. He looked at her with a smirk which fell from his face when he saw her eyes widen. He looked where Sansa was looking and noticed Ser Jaime approaching them.

Here we go. Looks like he’ll be finding out what he wanted.

“Lady Sansa, what a surprise to see such beauty blessing this yard.” Ser Jaime said as he made his approach. He sneaked a look and noticed a bloom of pink slowly appear on his sister’s cheek’s. He also caught the smirk from the Lannister knight in response.

A smirk he’d definitely seen before. One belonging to someone with complete and absolute confidence in himself and his abilities.

A smirk he usually put on his own face.

Jon watched as Ser Jaime held his hand out to Jory and the man shook it, a small grin on the northerner’s face.

“Ser Jaime, good to see you again.” He said.

Again? There’s probably a story to it. Jon mused.

Jaime nodded “Same to you.” He said as his eyes slowly drifted towards Jon.

He held his hand out towards Jon “And you must be this Jon Snow Lord Umber has been harping on about.” He said with a shit eating grin.

Godmnit. Jon mentally cursed. Of course that was how Ser Jaime would know about some backwater northern bastard.

The Greatjon was going around telling anyone who would listen about his great exploits. And since
this whole festivities was basically a competition he would boast about all the best swordsarm the North has. Jon always came up in those boasts.

He grasped the man’s gloved hand in his own and gave him a strong shake “Ser Jaime, it’s a pleasure to meet you.” He replied. He looked to his left and caught Bran staring at the member of the Kingsguard in front of him.

Ser Jaime noticed the young lad looking at him and smiled back “Lord Bran, I imagine you’re still interested in being a knight?” He said as Bran nodded his head in excitement.

"You two know each other? Jon asked with a raised brow.

Ser Jaime nodded."I had the pleasure of interacting with the young lord yesternight where he presented his interest in knighthood. We talked a little on the subject.”

Turning back to Bran he smiled.

“Good, make sure to pay close attention then while me and your brother spar, you should pick up a thing or two.” He replied with smirk. He looked back at him and Jon just quirked an eyebrow at him.

“It won't look good when your beaten by this one here will it now, Ser Jaime.” He said as he placed a hand on Rickon’s shoulder. He felt instantly amused when he saw the excitement in his little brother’s eye’s when he looked up at him. Didn't the boy understand the concept of fear anymore?

“Oh, I think we all know who I was talking about. Who knows, you might learn something yourself.” Ser Jaime replied, grinning like a fool.

"A bastard is not permitted to bear steel against a hightborn unless certain events deem it permissible. Like the tourney for instance." Jon quoted.

"I'm revoking that law." Ser Jaime said without hesitation before adding, "Or perhaps it is not the law that is holding you back. Craven much?” He ended with a smirk that irked the Stark bastard.

Did Ser Jaime genuinely underestimate him or is he playing a game?

“Oh Jon, you have to!” Bran exclaimed.

He looked at Bran “Do I?” He replied.

“Of course you do, stupid” Arya answered for Bran, smirking at the corner she’d backed him into.

He rolled his eyes and sighed, there was no point arguing with Arya, ’tis be easier just sparring with the man and getting it over and done with.

“Fine." He answered as Arya’s smile grew. “Lead the way Ser Jaime.” He said as he vaulted over the fence. He took his sword’s off his back and handed them to Jory to look after.

“Good luck.” Jory said as he clapped him on the back, he smiled at the man in response.

"Are you sure about this. You don't have to you know. Don't let him pressure you." Sansa said with a worrying look as she stared at Ser Jaime's retreating back.

"He's one of the best in the Seven Kingdoms." She added.

Okay. Now he definitely had to kick ass the pompous Lannister's ass. His beautiful sister was starting to doubt him. Couldn't let that happen. No siree.
“I won't be long.” He answered, kissed her forehead and turned around and walked towards the group of men Ser Jaime was stood with.

“Who’s this?” A man with shoulder length copper hair said to Ser Jaime as he nodded in Jon’s direction.

Ser Jaime looked over his shoulder at him as he approached “That’s my new sparring partner for the rest of this session. Jon, meet Ser Addam, Addam, this is Jon Snow, Lord Stark’s bastard.” He explained.

Jon could see the curled-up upper lip as Ser Jaime introduced him as a bastard.

He is trying to irk me. Jon noticed.

“Nice to meet you lad,” Ser Addam said as he shook his hand “though I’m not sure why he’s chosen to pick on you.” He japed as he smiled at Ser Jaime.

“I'm not picking on anyone, I just wanted to test my metal against some northern blood.” He explained as a young boy ran to them and handed a tourney blade to him and the white knight.

“Why not ask Lord Umber or even Lord Ser Jorah. There's even Lord Cerwyn you can play? I imagine they would have been well up for it.” Jon asked as he tested the weight of the blade. He would have asked for another sword and used two but he didn’t want to give too much away to the Lannister knight.

Ser Jaime snorted “No thanks, that mad fucker Umber scares me sometimes.” He explained.

It made sense but he felt like there was another reason he was singled out. He looked around and noticed a small crowd building around the yard. He sighed. As much he loved to blow his horns like any average man would, Jon Snow was never too fond of too much attention.

His eye’s narrowed when he saw Harry the Arse smirking in his direction.

Was this that cunt's idea? Were him and Ser Jaime pally?

“C’mon then, let’s see what you’re made of.” Ser Jaime said as he clapped him on the back and walked past him into the middle of the yard. A few fighters stopped to witness them.

“YOU CAN DO IT JON!” He heard Arya shout from the other side of the yard, he noticed a few people turn and look at her. Sansa stood next to her with a concerned yet proud look on her face.He smiled and waved at her.

“C’mon Jon, you can't let you sister down.” Ser Jaime said as he got into a stance. Disappointing his sister wasn’t a possibility in his eyes.

"You're on."

He knew Ser Jaime was the cream of the crop, regarded as one of the best swords in the realm.

He looked into Jaime’s eye’s, in full focus mode now. He saw the smirk on the man’s face twitch but only slightly. If he blinked, he would have missed it.

“First to yield loses?” He said as the Lannister knight nodded.

They circled each other first, trying to work out each other’s movements, eyeing an opening to capitalise on. He wasn’t gonna lunge in straight away, this wasn't some whale from White Harbour,
this was Jaime Lannister of the Kingsguard.

“Interesting stance you’ve got there, who trained you?” Ser Jaime asked as he twirled his sword to readjust according to Jon’s movements.He smirked, he’d just found an opening and the bastard had just handed it to him on a silver platter.

"Ser Rodrick Cassel, master-at-arms at Winterfell." Jon simply answered.

"I remember him. He proved his worth during the Ursurper's War." The Kingsguard nodded in recognition.

"Well let's see how well Ser Rodrick has t..." He tried to say but was cut off by Jon’s swift advancement.

The Golden Lion as some people liked to call Ser Jaime was fast, much faster than some of his sparring partners in the northern camp. His defence was good as Jon focused his strikes higher and higher, giving the knight no time to riposte Jon’s quick and if Ser Jaime’s frown was anything to go by, incredibly unorthodox striking pattern. It was like some savage dance or something.

That’s probably because there wasn’t a pattern to begin with. Much of his knowledge in weapon combat was taught to him by Ser Rodrick. He learnt as much as he could from the old man but Jon was a man who loved to learn new things.

During his journeys across the Narrow Sea he came across many styles of armed and even unarmed combat. And of course Jon being Jon deigned to study as much of the styles as he could.

He even documented them and gave them to master-at-arms for approval.

His style of fighting was not one but a number of combat styles merged together. In order words, there was no order to his discipline. Only Chaos.

He backed off from his strikes as Ser Jaime regrouped. Jon grinned and held his sword loosely, lulling the man into a false sense of security before rushing him again, Ser Jaime getting his blade up just in time to block the swift overhanded strike but not quick enough to block heavy swinging kick to the outside of his left knee, right on the joint.

The man’s greaves absorbed some of the hit, but it was clear by the way Ser Jaime favoured his right leg as he repositioned that he’d caused the man some grief.

“I thought we were sparring, not brawling.” Ser Jaime said as he swung low and attempted to strike out with his free hand, a steel gauntlet whooshing past Jon’s face as he easily avoided the man’s obvious attempt at getting one back on him.

“I thought you were teaching me some new things, not whining like a little bitch.” Jon grunted narrowly dodging a strike to his head.

His face showed amusement as the man shook his head and desperately fought the smile appearing on his own face.

They exchanged strikes back and forth, he allowed the knight to put him on the defensive, giving him the time to learn his patterns and habits. The strikes were not so easy to read and block anymore. The Kingsguard was adapting to the bastard's own speed.

Nevertheless Jaime’s offense was clearly affected by the kick to his knee, taking away the ability to plant his feet properly and thus, taking away a lot of the man’s power. Jon face showed satisfaction
but didn't grin nor did he smile.

As much he was enjoying the spar, this was a Kingsguard he was up against. The best in the Realm they were. Lose a bit of focus and he'll lose the fight. Arya would be disappointed.

He saw Ser Jaime’s knee buckle under his weight when he kicked him but he didn’t realise he’d left lasting damage.

"Shouldn't you be taking care of that bad knee, ser? The quicker you take care of it the better your chances of being able to participate in the melee. Don't want to disgrace the king now do we?"

This time the tiniest of grin flashed on Jon's face. Jaime’s eyes narrowed. They widened and shined with revelation.

Quicker than Jon thought was possible for one with a bad knee Ser surged forward while his sword flashed forward and slammed Jon in the nose. Luckily it was the side with which he was hit. If it had been live steel and the blade edge was what had been used he would be missing a nose by now.

The Knight then started a series of relentless strikes so quick and with force that Jon could barely react to them.

Looking at the knight in surprise the northerner decided it was in everyone's best interest for this spar to end, so Ser Jaime could rest his knee and he, the bastard of Winterfell, could get away from the slowly increasing crowd.

What he planned wasn’t very fair but so what, nothing was fair in love and war. Besides they establish any rules of engagement.

He gripped his sword in two hands and leaned back as Ser Jaime lunged, the knight over extended and became slightly off balanced, Jon riposted the strike and instantly put the knight back on the defensive.

He looked into Ser Jaime’s eyes as he fluidly struck left to right, he smirked as he remembered a strategy a certain someone used against him sometime ago.

There are certain habits that are infectious. Particular actions by people will cause others to automatically replicate it. For example, when one person in a room full people start to laugh almost the entire room will explode in laughter.

In the same way when someone looks over your shoulder you will probably ignore him... at first but after a couple looks afterwards you might be tempted to turn in order to find out what in the name of the old gods and the new he was staring at.

And that was exactly what Ser Jaime fell for. It wasn't quite honorable but...heh! It got the job done.

It gave Jon the opening to plant a foot behind Jaime’s left leg and force the man against it, tripping him backwards and landing in the hard dirt of the yard with a rattle of his armour. He bolted towards him and placed a knee against the man’s plated chest, keeping him glued to the ground. He brought his sword down and let it rest against Ser Jaime’s neck as he smirked down at the man’s shocked face.

“Do you yield, Ser Jaime?” He asked as everyone started whispering.

Jaime stared up at him in shock. Not quite believing that he was bested by what he assumed as a boy so green he probably piss grass.
The growing whispers from the crowd who just witnessed a Kingsguard get bested by a perceived northern savage boy was what brought the Lannister knight to reality. He still had the shocked look though albeit it was almost gone. Almost.

"By Aerys' cock say the bloody words so we can be done with this whole affair." Jon cursed.

"I yield." Ser Jaime instantly answered.

He got off the knight and held a hand out to help the man to his feet which he took instantly.

"You tricked me into taking my off you." Jaime said. It wasn't a question.

"So there is a brain behind that golden face. I'm impressed. I heard your father and brother were the brains in the family." Jon smirked.

"I do get by." Jaime said while massaging his injured knee.

"Better let a maester check that joint out. It can get really bad. Speaking from experience that is." Jon nodded sagely.

"You tricked me. Such dishonorable tactics from a Stark. What would your father say?" Jaime taunted.

Jon’s smirk grew wider. "He'd say to stop being a whiny bitch just because you had your ass handed to you by a boy besides I'm not a Stark. You shouldn't have expected me to fight like one."

He clapped the man on the shoulder. "Don't be a sore loser Ser Jaime. First to yield loses. Wasn't that what we agreed on. There were no other rules apart from that, was there?"

With that said he walked off the field to rejoin his siblings on the sidelines.

Arya hugged him and grinned. "I knew you could take him."

"I beat him with that distraction thing you used on me that one time." He said and ruffled her hair causing her to giggle.

"And he fell for that?"

"Most people would."

He turned to Bran who was looking up at him with stars in his eyes. Rickon was speaking so quickly with excitement that anyone could hardly make heads or tail of what he was saying. Jeyne looked at him as if he were a god.

"Do you approve my lady?" He asked and brought Sansa's hand to his lips.

The girl blushed and nodded. She was dumb from shock but cut her some slack. Her brother just beat a Kingsguard... granted it was only a spar but still.

"Well you kids said you wanted explore the castle further. So where to next?" He raised a brow at his younger siblings.

"Well I heard that Riverrun had this giant..." Bran began talking and went back into full lecture mode even as the Stark family plus bastard walked away with a crowd of onlookers gawking after their retreating backs.
"Jon Snow. What an interesting brat?" Jaime watched the Starks leave the practice yard with their bastard brother.

"Mayhaps the princess was right to have taken an interest in you." He mentally commented.
The King's Arrival

Chapter Notes

It's been a while since an update and it maybe a while also after this chapter. I've got end of semester exams coming up. I pray all goes well for me. Ciao!

MARGAERY
Margaery was excited. Prince Aegon had accepted an invitation to grace her with his company today. It was quite nerve wracking approaching him in the practice yard with all those men around him, particularly the northern lords. Whoever said northern men were brutes was not far off the mark, but Margaery did her duty, and it paid off in spades.

When she told her Grandmother of the meeting, her Grandmother was ecstatic, telling her that she was destined to be queen, and Margaery could not help but agree. Her Father had pushed the Tyrell name into a pit of shame where other Houses, even the lesser ones could look down on their family. That would not persist if Margaery was to be queen.

Margaery made sure that she looked her best today, having her handmaidens dress her hair in a Targaryan-styled braid, wearing a green floral dress that showed off her body which the Prince would appreciate. He certainly was not afraid to admire her beauty, the memories of the dance they shared the previous night springing to her mind.

The Prince admiring her figure and flirting with her had her cheeks heating up again and this time she wasn't wholly playing the mummer's act. She could not help it, the Prince was undoubtedly handsome and smart unlike most Lords she was used to. It was hard not to think of him with lust in her mind when her thoughts inevitably turned to him.

Margaery had arrived early to Riverrun's gardens, her Grandmother already seated in her regular spot, there was food and drinks laid out, where their household and other highborns from various Houses were eating.

Margaery walked over to her Grandmother, she had not noticed Garlan and her father sitting with her, as their figures were behind a large bush. She greeted her family and sat, waiting for the Prince to arrive before she began to eat. She had invited him so it was her duty to see to his needs, and she certainly was eager to see to his needs.

Her Grandmother took her away from her thoughts, “Margaery, darling, you look splendid,” she then reached over and smacked her son over the shoulder, “Doesn’t your daughter look splendid, Mace?” Margaery let out a light giggle.

Her father had been busy concentrating on his food, when his mother interrupted. Margaery’s father spoke, “You look delightful sweet Margaery. The will be stupid not to think so.”

Olenna reached over and smacked her son again, “Do not call the Prince stupid!”. Mace let out an exasperated “Mother…” Margaery shared a look with Garlan, both of them smiling slightly.

Olenna then spoke again, “Shoo, both of you, I need to speak with my Granddaughter alone.” Margaery’s father quickly picked up his plate and strode off, Garlan leaned over to give his sister a
quick kiss on the cheek before he too departed.

Grandmother reached out to grab Margaery’s hand, before speaking softly, “Do not be nervous Marg, my sources have only been saying good things about the Prince.”

Margaery smiled softly, happy that her Grandmother was concerned for her well-being. “The Prince is kind Grandmother; I am not as much nervous as….aprehensive?”

Olenna pinched her eyebrows, “as you should be with that idiot father of yours.” To which Margaery smiled coyly, silently agreed. Olenna continued, “You must entice the Prince today Marg, make him lust for you, then he will be under your influence. But do not make it look as if you are desperate for his attention like some sex starved eunuch who suddenly grew a cock. The younger Tyrell chuckled, bemused by her Grandmother's humor-filled advice

Margaery did not think that the Prince would ever be under anyone’s influence but his own. He spoke with a tone that belied him as a man of strong will, but she did not speak her mind, she would listen to her Grandmother but do as she saw fit.

“I will do my duty for House Tyrell, Grandmother,” Margaery said simply, diplomatically. Her Grandmother squeezed her hand in understanding, before nodding her head in the other direction.

Margaery turned and looked and saw the Prince arriving, he had Ser Jonothor of the Kingsguard accompanying him. He was walking and speaking with Garlan, Loras and her Father. Her father looked to be dominating the conversation unfortunately.

Her Grandmother gripped her hand again to get her attention, then urged her on, “Go, save the boy from your father.” Margaery smiled, then hurried off hoping her Father had not caused any offence.

As she approached she could see the Prince’s eyebrows pinched together, and her brothers looking irritated. That was not good.

Margaery stepped next to her father, greeting the Prince with a curtsey. She then spoke, “So what were we talking about?” hoping to find some way to assuage the situation.

Garlan spoke, his voice short and stilted, “Father was just reminding the Prince of the actions of House Tyrell during the rebellion, and that he should keep this in mind when he decided on marriage prospects.”

Halfway through the sentence Margaery already knew that this meeting would be for naught. Her father had lost them the prince all uner two minutes of meeting him. Margaery could punch her father for his stupidity. Before Margaery could even think of a reply, the Prince cut through the tension.

He stepped close to Margaery. “I am quite hungry, my lady. Having the dinner with you in mind, I skipped breakfast. If I may?” he said gesturing towards the table lined with an assortment of palate from the Reach.

Margaery could kiss him for the topic change. Well, she hoped she would kiss him later anyway, but Margaery’s training kicked in and she immediately took the Prince’s arm, “Of course, my Prince, all of the food from here was brought from our home. It is the best in the realm.”

Margaery led the Prince to the pile of food, where he picked up a plate and piled more food on it then she had ever seen. When the Prince caught her look, he laughed at her shocked expression.

"Yes. It is all for me. I have worked up a lot of sweat this morning alone and I have yet to break fast even.” as he said that, he realized that he also had a guard following him, and spoke to Ser Barristan.
“You may take a break Ser. I do not think I shall be poisoned if the lady is trying to influence the crown to purchase more food from the Reach.” He spoke to Ser Barristan, but side eyed Margaery when he spoke of her. His words caused her to blush. The double meaning of his words was poorly hidden, not like he trying to.

Ser Barristan bowed his head to the Prince, then went over to collect some food for himself.

That was then Loras approached the two of them, “Marg why don’t you show the Prince the gardens? I am sure he has not had time to see them?” The Prince looked confused for a moment, looking down at his food, but then Loras presented a picnic basket and blanket he must have specifically asked for.

Loras had planned this, and it helped because it would afford her and the prince some privacy. So she pushed, “That sounds like a great idea!” she turned in the direction of the Prince, using her eyes to plead with him, “Please, I really enjoy the peace and quiet of the secluded section of Riverrun’s gardens.”

The Prince did not seem as opposed to the idea as she thought, he must have just been wanting to eat first. That made her silently amused.

The Prince shrugged, then said, "That sounds fine."

He then took the basket from Loras wrapping the food he had picked up into some napkins and began placing them in the basket.

He did the same for the food Margaery had picked out, he then reached across the table and grabbed two goblets, and a bottle of wine, giving her a subtle wink. He then placed the basket on his left arm and held out his right elbow.

Margaery took it without hesitation and smiled. Yes. She was the Rose of Highgarden and she was going to do her best to make the Prince fall for her. She always did her duty...but this time for pleasure as well.

JON

The air in these parts were different from the the ones back home. Home was where he had first met his man-half. That place, home, was colder than this place. And whiter with the white earth that was always so cold and moist.

The creature he was tracking was close. He could see it. He moved to the right as it turned to the left. It would be disadvantageous if it saw him. Yes he could probably catch it even if it saw him and ran. A surprise attack just made it easier. Less effort to exert that way.

He had always been quiet even the moment he first saw the light of the world. Even when he played with his more rowdy and wilder siblings he almost never made a sound. Even the gentle sister was much noisier than him.

For that reason alone the poor creature did not even notice his presence when he was a breath away. The taste of iron warmed his tongue when his jaws clamped down on the rabbit's throat......

"...Jon! Jon!” Someone shouted directly in his ears. He nearly jumped out of his skin but the annoyed look on his brother's face calmed him down.

"What?” He asked.

"Were you even listening to any of the things I just said?” Robb raised a brow.
"No...I think."

"Where were you anyway?"

"Ghost was stalking a rabbit. I kinda got lost in there."

"Lord Reed warned us about that, Jon. Don't wander in your direwolf. You might get lost and forget yourself."

"Really, you are lecturing me on skinchanging?" Jon was amused.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Robb challenged.

"I don't know. I mean, I for one didn't get stuck in a squirrel when I was trying to warg into a bird." Jon grinned.

"Gods! That was a mistake and you know it. How was I supposed to know that squirrel was going to get in the way?" the heir to Winterfell defended.

Jon laughed at his brother's flabbergasted face. Robb shook his head.

"Anyway, how did you do that?" He asked.

"Do what?" Jon questioned.

"Usually when one wargs they leave their bodies behind. You were inside Ghost but you were still aware of your body, at least enough to continue walking and also hear me when I called out loud enough."

"Oh! That. I've been working with Bran on how to partially warg."

"Partially warg?" Robb blinked.

"Yes. Don't you sometimes feel like your sense of smell suddenly becomes strong? And sometimes for a very quick flash you glimpse something through Greywinds eyes. And yet you don't actually leave your body?"

"Yes. That is particularly due to our bond with our direwolves. Lord Reed mentioned that. It is natural."

"Yes. It is but all those times it happened involuntary. We were not in control of it."

"Wait...so you and Bran have been trying to do that? Deliberately this time round." The redhead heir eyed shined in realization.

"Yes. Bran caught on rather quickly enough. I'm there but I've got to perfect a few kinks." Jon admitted.

"Bran is a prodigy at this whole skinchanging stuff. Don't beat yourself up on that. I'm quite hurt that you didn't bring me on board with your experiments. I would have loved to explore with you." Robb said with a bit of sad undertone.

"Robb Stark, what would people say if they heard of your desire to explore with your own brother." Jon gave a sly smile.

"My...they would think me filthy. Wouldn't that make for a long affair. The whole realm would be
talking of it." Robb decided to play along.

"I don't think the Targaryans would mind. What with their tendencies to bed their siblings."

"True but I've never heard of a Targaryan brother-on-brother before." Robb pointed out.

"Probably not." Jon agreed.

"Where are you taking me anyway?" he asked.

"The Pack is meeting and you have yet to meet them upon your return."

"Lead the way then." Jon said with a mock bow before following after his half-brother. Robb led him around the castle ground to a clearing where he saw a number of men mostly his age hyddled in a group. He recognized them as fellow northern men.

"Look who we have here. If it isn't The White Wolf of Winterfell himself." A young man of two and twenty was the first to notice his and Robb's presence.

"It's quite lovely to see your smug face after the past few months, Harrion. You've not been missed at all." Jon greeted cheerfully. The men snickered at his words. The man known as Harrion Karstark merely huffed.

"In all seriousness though what happened? You were gone past the expected time." Daryn Homewood asked with a frown.

"And I told them not to worry about you. I said that something had probably caught your attention and you had decided to stay back a bit." Torrhen, son of Theo Wull, interjected.

"Well did you? Did you get sidetracked?" Roger Ryswell queried the bastard. Jon took a seat close to a pale-skinned young man with eerie looking pale coloured eyes. The man was entertaining the group with the sounds from his harp. It was melodious.

"Yes, I did get a bit distracted on the way back but the most important thing is that I'm here, right?" Jon said with a bit of emphasis on the last word.

"So far as the Sealord of Braavos doesn't sail all the way here claiming that his daughter or grand-daughter or even his niece has been impregnated by a mysterious roguish Northman." Daryn agreed.

"Sorry to disappoint you, dear Daryn but I do not make a habit nailing my own imagination. I was of the perception that Smalljon was the one who fancied the lasses in his dreams." Jon quipped earning a round of laughter.

"Well I'll have you know that I'm fucking real lasses now." the Smalljon countered. A few brows were raised.

"Humph! Probably some whore in one of Last Hearth's brothels." a lean but muscular man sitting on the left of Harrion scoffed. His name was Roderick Dustin, heir to Barrowton.

"Actually the woman the Smaljon has been bedding is a scullery maid at the Umber's Keep. Her name is Mary I believe." The pale eyed youth sitting beside Jon commented.

Eyes widened in surprise. Jon turned to the pale eyed man. "Stop shitting me. Are you sure it is her, Dom?" he asked. The heir to The Dreadfort nodded.

Cley Cerwyn whistled. He was clearly impressed. "Mary. Isn't she that brown eyed beauty that
helped us to sneak some of your father's secret stash of dornish red about a year ago?"

The Smalljon had a silly grin on his. His chest puffed out clearly with pride. "Yep. That's her. She was playing hard-to-get but she couldn't resist my charms for very long." he was all but preening now.

"I remember that girl now. After we left Last Hearth, She visited me in my dreams for some nights thereof. Quite the figure she got that." Asher Forrester.

"So Robb, I noticed you enjoying the attention from the princess of Dorne last night. Any betrothals yet?" Jack Mormont quipped changing the flow of the conversation.

"Aye. I saw the way you two were dancing yesterday. You were not very subtle in your grinding." Morgan Liddle commented a leering look on his face.

"She started the whole grinding thing. I just went along with it. Any man who has the fortune of being betrothed to that woman better be ready for the excess passion she will pour into them. I don't think any single man will be enough for her." Robb said with a shake of his head.

"Besides, Robb has someone else in mind for a betrothal." Domeric Bolton commented offhandedly.

"When are you going to ask for Alys' hand?" Harrion asked. It wasn't a secret that Robb Stark was smitten with Alys Kastark, Harrion’s little sister. The two had been caught in less than unflattering positions. Of course as much they weren't trying to hide the nature of their relationship, it wasn't known to all. So Harrion asking Robb such a question wasn't really surprising. It was his little sister they were talking about afterall.

"You'll know when I do." Robb shrugged. He didn't bother to refute the suspicion of him wanting to marry Alys.

"So apart from the horny women from Dorne any woman catch your attention, Dom." Jon asked the man next to him.

Domeric hummed a tune for a bit. "I believe the Rose of Highgarden was quite a sight for my eyes. I can think of a few things I could do with those supple lips of hers." He smirked.

That earned a grin and laughter from the guys.

"I know right. She seemed so innocent though. You could practically see it in her eyes." Jack pointed.

"Margaery Tyrell is anything but innocent. I know a dangerous woman when I see one." Cley shook his head.

"Dangerous? What do you mean dangerous?" Jack asked with an incredulous.

"I don't profess to be a good judge of character but I think what Cley is saying is that the look of innocence is probably a front she puts on for the public. Women like those are not as...fragile as they look." Roderick explained.

"She didn't look deceitful to me." Roger intoned.

"That's the point, you dolt." Daryn thumped him on the head.

"I wager Ryswell wouldn't be able to differentiate a shark from a whore if it gobbled down his
cock." Morgan Liddle smirked causing laughter to erupt whiles Roger glared murder at Morgan who pretended not to notice.

"Anyway even if she wasn't cautious worthy of being, I don't think her brothers would allow anyone with impure intentions within ten foot of her." Jon said.

"Ah! The Tyrell brothers. Ser Garlan the Gallant and Ser Loras, the Knight of Flowers." Asher mused. "Do you suppose they're good with the sword as the rumors say?" he added as an afterthought.

"They're not blooded." Torrhen quickly dismissed.

"Dagmer Cleftjaw was a blooded experienced killer and I was not, yet I killed him anyway. Being blooded doesn't give you an automatic win." Jon pointed out.

"Killjoy." the Smalljon muttered like a petulant child.

Afterwards the group of northern men continued on into their conversations. They talked about a lot of things. Most of them useless idle chatter. They talked about the ladies that they had seen or encountered in Riverrun. They talked about things and the happenings across the Narrow Sea. This was Jon's designated area of expertise and he assuaged their curiosity with enthusiasm.

AEGON
"Will our man be attending your court tonight?" Rhaenys asked, making it sound like their previous topic didn't matter.

He restrained the urge to tear at his hair because he refused to give her that satisfaction. They could both play at that game. "I sent a servant with an invitation to all of those of noble birth. If he doesn't accept, I'll just hold the court in the godswood since that's where he always seems to be."

She smiled at him. "Thank you, Aegon. Tell me, what have you heard of Jon Snow?"

"He's sassy and has a mouth on him. That's what Ser Jaime thinks of him but seeing as his view on Snow is biased I'm inclined to not take his opinions wholeheartedly," he said with some thoughts.

"Oh? And in what way is Ser Jaime biased with regards to Jon Snow?" his sister asked.

"It seems our beloved Kingsguard got his ass handed to him Lord Starks bastard."

Rhaenys' eyes widened the size of saucers. "You've got to be joking. Ser Jaime is a Kingsguard. He's one of the best swords in the Realm." She shook her head.

"I would have been inclined to echo your words had the truth of it not come from the horse's own mouth."

At that his sister was at a loss for words.

"After our discussion with Grandmother I tasked Ser Jaime with coming to me with any information he might stumble upon concerning the Starks. It seems that he met Snow alongside the Stark children minus Lord Robb at the practice yard where he thought to feel the bastard out by way clashing swords. Suffice to say Ser Jaime met his match in Jon Snow and was beaten." the Prince explained.

"Wow!" The Princess intoned with an awed expression.
"You seem to have caught sight of an interesting one, sister."

"Do you remember what Father and Mother always said about meeting Starks?" Rhaenys suddenly spoke up.

"Yes." It had been an odd thing to hear and he had hardly thought of it since. Then again, he would make sure to meet one while it was still light outside.

"It happened to me with him. What they say is true."

He heard those words and suddenly understood. She had played the game before, he knew that. But her entire attitude towards this particular game now, it was different. She was focused and determined, actually determined to win the bastard's favor and love. The lost look on her face whenever the bastard's name came up in conversations. It was actually a little frightening to look at. "Perhaps I should cancel tonight's meet" he thought aloud.

Her hand reached and grabbed his arm tight enough for him to yelp in pain. "You will do no such thing," she hissed into his ear, getting so close to him that it would've looked like they were hugging from a stranger's eye.

Her hand started to squeeze tighter. He could feel the loss of feeling in his arm. "I was trying to be considerate!" he told her through the pain. "You were the one who just told me you've found yourself smitten with a northern son. Ned Starks bastard."

"And?" she asked. She didn't squeeze any tighter but her grip did not lighten.

"Well, I had thought that you would take Grandmother's advice and not stir something with the North particularly the Starks."

"I would, little brother, if I was worrying about a trueborn Stark. But I'm not. Like you said, he's a bastard."

The intensity in her eyes never wavered. It was a little terrifying to behold. "I've seen how the other ladies look upon him. They want to devour and leave him to be an empty husk."

"And you don't? You're playing the same game they are, Rhaenys. In addition you seem to be forgetting what Elya said. Despite being baseborn he is loved." The Prince tried to get feeling back into the arm without any success. "Could you let go of my arm now, please? I need it." She didn't answer him but she did let go of his arm and walked away.

He stood in the corridor, working to make sure that he still had the ability of movement in his arm.

He watched his sister leave him there and sighed once she was out of sight. He loved his sister dearly but there were times that her tenacity frightened him. And this had to be the most tenacious he had seen her yet. "All of this over a bastard?" he couldn't help but ask himself as he walked away too. But he couldn't point fingers, not with who he loved. He would look like a hypocrite.

RHAELLA

At first, the morning had gone as normal in Riverrun. Nothing interesting occurred to make the drab morning enjoying. It was around midmorning when a horn from the walls sounded and the guards started running about shouting, "The king is near! The king is near!" As soon as those words were uttered, everyone started rushing around in an almost panic to make sure that the king and queen received the best welcome that Riverrun could provide.
Of course, with the upcoming arrival of the King meant standing out in the courtyard to greet the King, which was where Rhaella and her family found themselves standing. Since they were of the blood, they stood close to the representatives of House Tully, Edmure and the Blackfish Brynden Tully.

Every nobleman and woman who could squeeze themselves into the courtyard was there, most of all the Lords Paramount (with the exception of the Greyjoys).

The gates to the Riverrun opened soon enough and the king's procession rode in. There were no trumpets blowing or heralds banging their staffs on the ground and proclaiming who was coming, as Aerys was prone to do when he was still alive.

First came the remainder of the Kingsguard, Ser Dayne, Ser Whent, and the Lord Commander, Ser Hightower. Such a sight would've made a young maiden's heart to flutter and a young man wish to join them.

Mayhaps had she been younger she might have felt like how all those maidens were feeling now. But after all Rhaella had been forced to endure she no longer saw gallant knights from the songs riding to save the princess from the wicked villain. All she saw now were the men who looked away when her brother ran rampant in his madness and inflicted pain and hell on her person over and over again.

But the man who came next into view washed her free of those memories and filled her heart with love. Rhaegar Targaryen, the First of his name and her firstborn son, rode a black palfrey into Riverrun. Riding beside him was his wife, Elia Targaryen nee Martell, riding a smaller sand steed.

He wore a black jerkin and hose but the sleeves of his tunic were red and the crown of his ancestors graced his brow, something his mother had always thought apt. Elia wore a mantle of black too but the dress beneath was orange, something from Dorne itself. She did not wear a crown but that was normal.

Behind them came the Hand of the King, Lord Jon Arryn. Rhaella remembered him. He was once as a vigorous young man who was eager to achieve glory for his House. But now, he was a serious man who chose to keep his attentions to the realm. There were more who came after them, but they were hardly important.

When the King swung down from his horse, the courtyard knelt before him. The only ones left standing were his own family. He took the hand of his wife to aid her as she climbed down from her steed. Together they turned to face the courtyard. "Rise," Rhaegar commanded. His voice was gentle but still carried through the air.

They all stood and waited. Protocol dictated that the king greeted the host of the castle first before going to others. Lord Hoster was still sick and thus had to remain abed and thus it was left to his son to take up the role of Lord of Riverrun for the meantime. That was why Rhaegar and Elia stepped towards House Tully before their own family. "Lord Edmure," Rhaegar said to Hoster Tully's heir, "we thank you for letting us host these festivities on your lands."

"It is an honor for it to be so, your Grace," Edmure said grandly, sweeping his head low in a bow. "I offer you the salt and bread of my father's table."

"We accept it gladly." Servants began to circulating amongst the newcomers, carrying trays of bread and salt. The first was offered to Rhaegar and Elia, which they accepted.

Once the guest right had been established, Elia spoke. "How fares your father, my lord?" she asked Edmure.
Both the heir and the uncle turned quiet and mournful. It was Ser Brynden who answered, "Hoster is still with us. I have a feeling he will recover quite miraculously and say that he will be damned that he dies before I'm married or something like that." Even though there was amusement in his voice and a similar smile on his lips, Rhaella could tell that those words were partly forced.

Her son and his wife did not comment on his words, instead greeting him personally. "Ser Blackfish," Rhaegar said with warmth in his tone, "It is good to see you again. A part of myself still hopes that you would become one of my seven."

The smile on Brynden's face widened by only a few inches but it became more genuine with those inches. "It was a tempting offer to join the Kingsguard, your Grace. But I don't think Whitefish sounds as good."

The three of them all shared a chuckle. "As droll as ever, Ser Brynden," Elia told him warmly.

Then they moved to their own family and met them with genuine love. "Mother," Rhaegar said, kissing her on the cheek, "You and Dany have been well?"

She returned the gesture with a proper hug. "Of course we are, Rhaegar."

He smiled as he returned the hug but it faltered when he looked at his house and saw that someone was missing. "Where is Viserys?" he asked quietly.

She sighed. He wasn't going to be happy by her answer. "Viserys is in Pentos. He's the guest of one Illyrio Mopatis, a magister."

"I sent him message to return for at least the duration of the tournament. I gave him ample time to travel back." There a slight hint of irritation in his voice.

"He was held back by unforeseen events, brother. There wasn't anything he could do about it. He did send an apology for the inconvenience though." Daenerys intervened, trying to defuse the rising tension. "The young woman loved both her brothers but unfortunately for her Rhaegar and Viserys never saw eye to eye. As a child Viserys had adored his older brother just as much any younger brother would.

Alas after the the Usurper's War Viserys loathed Rhaegar. He blamed Rhaegar for all that had been lost in the war. All the men and women and children that died. Since then he had defied Rhaegar at every turn. Once, his disrespect of Rhaegar had gone too far that high the King had banished him to the Free Cities for a duration of two years. He returned from the pseudo-exile with a Lyseni wife and a daughter on hand, spurning Rhaegar's plans to repair relations with Dorne via a marriage between him and Arianne Martell, the princess of the Red Mountains.

Rhaegar had welcomed him and his new family calmly with a smile but when all was said and the King had retreated to his solar and raged. Despite the complete lack of respect Viserys paid him, Rhaegar adored his niece and was very cordial with his good-sister.

Rhaegar gave Dany a look that said he didn't a word of it. He did not say anything else about it, choosing to look at his sister as a smile bloomed on his lips.

"Daenerys, you are as radiant as ever. I fear the day when you are married, for King's Landing will lose a bright star."

Dany sent a glare at her brother but was quick to cover it up with a smile of her own. As much she didn't like being reminded that a betrothal would be drawn for her, they were in public. It wouldn't do for the King's sister to show open hostility towards even if it was not serious and in the least.
She smiled at her brother and said, "I'm not a star, but a dragon. The stars are the Daynes."

Elia chuckled at that proclamation. "She certainly has the fierceness of a dragon," she told her husband before looking at her own children, "Just like our own."

"Yes, that is true," he agreed as he looked to Aegon and Rhaenys. "I trust you both have been doing your duties well?"

"Yes, Father." Aegon answered for both he and his sister. "Our hosts have been overly gracious, the men friended, and the ladies charmed."

"That is good. And what have you been doing, Rhaenys?" he asked his daughter. That was something that Rhaella loved of her son. While most fathers were content to hear from their sons only, he took the time to listen to his daughter.

"Making sure the ladies from all across the realm don't step on one another's toes, Father. It is a difficult task at times but I bear it as best as I can." Rhaenys answered.

Elia chuckled. "As ever, you are my daughter, Rhaenys." They moved onto the Martells, who stood next in line, and who the queen greeted most enthusiastically. "Oberyn, how wonderful to see you," she said to the Red Viper, hugging him just tightly as Rhaegar had for his mother.

"And it is good to see you too, Elia," Oberyn replied, holding her like she would vanish in just a second. When they broke the hug and he looked at the king, the warmth he had in his eyes cooled considerably. "Your Grace," he said shortly.

"Prince Oberyn," Rhaegar said just as shortly. He looked at Arianne and became a little warmer. "Princess Arianne, you seem to become more beautiful every time I meet you."

The heir to Dorne smiled brightly, though not seductively, at him. "You flatter me, my king." She did not say anything else and Rhaella thought that good. She felt that Arianne was too much like her uncle. It was a good thing that Doran was the Prince of Dorne but she could only hope that someone just as calm would be able to rein Arianne in once she took his place. As of that moment, Rhaella's hopes laid in Quentyn Martell.

Next were the Tyrells. "King Rhaegar," Willas Tyrell said, bowing his head low but still gripping his cane tightly. His siblings stood by him, two of them looking attentive while the third looked slightly bored. Their grandmother stood by Willas's side and watched things carefully.

"Lord Willas, is your leg well?" the king asked him, looking down at the cane and the leg.

"Yes, it is."

The Queen of Thorns snorted. "You already know that, so why bother asking him pointless questions?" she asked Rhaegar, giving him a cross look.

Any man would've been enraged and insulted that an old woman would talk to them like that but it said something when Rhaella's firstborn smiled.

"Lady Olenna, I would say that your sharp wit is missed in King's Landing but you would no doubt call me a liar since you reside in Highgarden."

"We can only hope that your granddaughter has the same wit," Elia said, looking at Margaery, standing next to Ser Garth and his wife. Rhaella did not need to look at Aegon to see the almost invisible frown look on his face. She knew that the Rose of Highgarden was one of the best choice of
candidates to be Aegon's betrothed.

Olenna had nothing to reply with so she just gave a curt nod. Rhaegar and his wife went to the Lannisters next.

"Ser Kevan," the king greeted Tywin's brother. The Lion of the Rock was not there himself since he never left his den nowadays.

"Your Grace," Ser Kevan replied. His wife and sons stood close to him.

But it wasn't he or Cersei and her children that they went to next. Instead, they went to the Imp. "Lord Tyrion, have you been well?" Elia asked the heir to Casterly Rock.

"Unfortunately not, your Grace," he replied in a somber mood. "I have come to realize something most horrible. It seems that either I am getting shorter, or my sister's children are getting taller. And since everyone else has managed to stay the same height, I must conclude I am becoming shorter."

Even though Cersei gave him a look of ill-intent and her firstborn barely looked like she could care, the rest of House Lannister either smiled or outright laughed at his jape. Cersei's son smiled the brightest and Rhaella knew that despite his deformity, he loved his uncle. He was a sweet boy, that one. "I trust that your brother has been welcomed back to the family," Rhaegar said, turning his attention to the Kingsguard who stood in his armor by his family.

Tyrion didn't turn his head to look at Ser Jaime. "He has, your Grace. My brother is always welcomed amongst the lions." There was a look of gratitude on the Kingslayer's face when he heard those words. Even though he was a man reviled for what he had done during the war, Rhaella knew that he had been a boy given an impossible choice and did the best he could. She could still remember the look of surprise on his face when she had thanked him for killing Aerys.

She noticed that her son and his wife had walked to the next group. "Lord Stannis," Rhaegar said to the Usurper's younger brother, who towered over him by a few inches.

"Your Grace," Stannis said in reply. His brother looked as if he wanted to speak but stayed silent. Rhaella could not help but wonder if Stannis had ordered Renly to be silent beforehand. As far as she remembered, the youngest Baratheon brother had never been one much for protocol.

As the king and queen walked towards the last group, the air in the courtyard became quiet and thick with tension.

Rhaegar's eyes scanned them as he came close. "Lady Stark," he said politely, but with less warmth then the others had been given. "Where is your lord husband?"

"Home at Winterfell, your Grace," Lady Catelyn told both him and Elia politely. She held her youngest by his hand. The little boy looked like he would rather be somewhere else then there but he held onto his mother's hand.

Rhaegar's face stiffened but it was Elia who spike, "We had asked him to come to Riverrun."

"You asked, you did not command, Your Grace" she replied."And there must always be a Stark in Winterfell. Lord Stark chose to stay behind that his children should experience a tourney. If that was supposed to be an excuse it was the most unbelievable one Rhaella had ever heard.

"I see," Rhaegar said, turning to look at the rest of the Starks there. "If Lord Stark is not here, then who speaks for the Starks?"
The heir to Winterfell spoke, "I do, your Grace."

He turned his attention to the lad, looking him over like the king he was. "You are Robb Stark, named for Robert Baratheon."

The air became heavy as everyone watched to see what the young Stark would say to that. Particularly the men from the Stormlands. "I am, your Grace." Robb face was a neutral one, showing nothing on it.

Then Rhaegar did something that surprised everyone. He smiled.

"Then your father did you a great service naming you after the man. He was a great warrior. I say this because of your service to the realm when you dealt with the Ironborn threat two years ago. And without your father's help no less. Younger than your father was when he first led a war."

Lord Robb's neutral facade cracked a little at the praise.

"We were merely doing our duty in protecting our lands from Ironborn scum, Your Grace. If anyone is to be praised it should be my brother."

"Ah! Jon Snow, The White Wolf. I didn't get the opportunity to meet him after the battle when you came to me with your reports. He is present in Riverrun I hope." Rhaegar said with a curious undertone.

"Aye, Your Grace."

"Then I am looking forward to meeting Winterfell's White Wolf face to face. We will be introduced."

"Your Grace." Robb gave a curt nod.

Rhaegar then moved on and greeted the rest of the Stark family with smiles. That was until he came upon the youngest daughter. Both he and Elia froze.

"Hello, your Grace," the young girl said, giving them a curtsey. "I'm Arya Stark." Rhaegar and Elia still said nothing, only continued to stare at her. She looked them in the eyes with confusion. "What? Is there something on my face?"

"Arya!" her sister hissed in horror. She looked at her with a scowl.

It was then that Rhaegar found his voice. "Forgive me, Lady Arya," he began to say.

"I'm not a lady," she said with a disgusted look.

"Arya, he's the king!" her sister whispered loudly.

"No, it's quite alright," Rhaegar told them both but keeping his eyes on the younger. "Forgive me, but you have the appearance of your late aunt so much, I was caught off guard by it."

At that the queen mother mentally groaned, "Of all the things to say to the Starks. Really?"

"That's what people who knew her say. Father says tis true so it must be." The little girl shrugged.

"It is." Elia remarked.

"It is a pleasure meeting you 'I'm not a lady'. I hope to see more of you at this tourney." Rhaegar smiled.
"Well you are the king. I imagine you can make that possible." Arya smiled back.

The king and his wife chuckled. Rhaella smiled. Tis not everyday you see someone speak to a king so offhandedly. The queen mother liked the girl.

"It seems the younger generation of Starks are not hostile to the royal family. That was a good beginning to repairing broken relations with them. Robb Stark on the other hand wasn't at all relaxed. He looked tense. Was Ned Stark already turning his heir against the royal family. Not that it will be unjustified but it will make patching things up difficult.

After her son was done exchanging greetings with various lords, he ordered everyone to return to what they were doing prior to his arrival. And just like that the courtyard started filing out.

Most of the Kingsguard followed the king and queen into the castle besides Lord Edmure and Ser Brynden, save two. "Your Grace," the Lord Commander said to Rhaella, standing before her with a bowed head.

"Ser Hightower," she replied coldly. Once, there was a time she would've called him Ser Gerold and thought of him as a fond friend. But that was the past. She didn't even trust him to protect her daughter. "What is it that you want?"

"Only to make sure that you and the princess are well and safe," he replied. But even though he said those words, he looked past her.

Of course Sandor being Sandor was quick to retort.

"They are safe now bugger off." Sandor stepped forward.

"Watch your tongue when you speak to me, Hound. You forget who I am." Ser Gerold narrowed his eyes.

"It is you who should watch the way you speak to my sworn shield, Ser Gerold. The Kingsguard don't need their tongue to swing a sword afterall." Rhaella warned.

Ser Gerold balked at the threat but was quick to compose himself.

"Now if insulting my shield is the only thing came here for then I must take my leave." She said.

"Your Grace, the king and queen request that the royal family attends them once they are settled."

"We will be there," she said shortly. He bowed his head again and left.

"Sandor I do not like Ser Gerold less than you do but please do well to curb your irritation the next time."

He grunted. "I wil try my best, Your Grace."

"Good. Now let's go see my son. A reunion is in order."
Myranda
"Oh fuck!" She moaned, arching her back as his fingers found her nub. With her best friend humping her splayed open cunt against his face, he pulled one hand back from her breasts and pushed two fingers deep inside of her.

"Oh yeah!" she cried as he pumped his fingers into her slick hole while sucking on her sister's nub and flicking his tongue across its tip. He could tell she was getting close and he valiantly resisted the temptation to cum. It would have been fun, though.

"Oh God! I'm cumming!" Mya screamed and he sped up his machinations. "I'm fucking cumming!" She dug her fingers into his scalp while grinding her soggy orifice into his face. Convulsing spasmodically as her orgasm ripped through her body, she flooded his mouth with her steamy nectar and squeezed his head between her thighs. Pulling his drenched fingers from her pulsating hole, he attacked her flow of juices with his tongue, slurping and swallowing as fast as he could.

Collapsing back on the bed, Mya relaxed her thighs as he gasped for air but continued to lick her dripping pussy.

"Enough, Lord Snow," Myranda panted and pulled him from her friend's thighs. Her chest heaved and she gulped air into her lungs. "Fuck me, now," she added, spreading her legs.

"Fuck her from behind," Mya suggested, sounding almost as out of breath as her sister. He glanced over and saw her move towards him. She took hold of his cock. "I want to be able to see you going in," she explained.

"Give me some room, Mya," Myranda said as she tried to turn over with him still lying between her legs. He moved back and she got up on all fours, turning her enticing ass his way. Her cunt was dripping and her crinkled asshole was staring right at me. She wondered if she would be opposed to it if he decided to go for her ass instead of her pussy, as he heard they say it in Dorne.. Hmm. Maybe next time.

Mya didn't waste any time inserting the northman into her flirty hole. The conjoined couple groaned in pleasure.

It didn't take long before he was hammering into her deliciously tight cunt, racing towards his own release.

It was all blur. One minute he was pounding into Myranda from behind. It didn't take long for her head to be buried in Mya's beautiful cunt and then the younger woman was screaming her fourth release of the day. In a blur of limbs Mya was discarded to side with Myranda riding him bouncing in his lap while he was sitting. It didn't take long for her to join her friend to release.

"Jon!" She screamed his name this time, into his shoulder as she rode out her peak atop him, biting him savagely.

She stilled atop him, his manhood still sheathed within her as she caught her breathe, exhausted from their coupling. After a few moments breathe, she dismounted him, leaving him spent on her sheets, panting like a common pup as she settled next to him on the bed.

"I think the king is here." Mya broke the silence. Her breath was a bit calmer than the others.
"How do you know?" Mya panted and curled up around the only male in the room.

"Probably because of the horn." Jon provided.

"I didn't hear any horn." Myranda frowned.

"I myself hardly heard it over all the screaming you were making, Randa. The whole castle must have heard you." Mya grinned.

"Bugger yourself, Mya. You were louder than I was. I'm surprised there aren't any guards barging in right now. You'd think some was being killed in here." Myranda said with an eye roll.

Jo chuckled at their banter.

"And what's so funny? Did we bore you so." Mya raised a brow.

"Quite the opposite actually. In fact I quite appreciate your company." he shook his head.

"And what were do you make of our company, Lord Snow? What is your concession?" Myranda rolled over to rest on his chest and looking up into his eyes.

"That Vale women are are crazy in bed and the one of best cunt-carriers in the realm."

The two women laughed at his words.

"What they forgot to mention was how hot it is in there. Is that a Vale thing or just the two of you? For a moment I thought my cock might just melt off." He admitted causing them to laugh louder.

"I...I wasn't expecting a man of the North to be as fun as you are being, Lord Snow. I heard you all had ice for blood up there." Mya commented.

Jon snorted. Of course they'd think that. Jon has been to the south before, Maidenpool and Lannisport to be specific, due to his trade. He had heard of some of the things that was said about his people.

"And what do you know of northmen, my lady?" He asked.

"I'm not a lady and you know that." Mya said with an eye roll.

"And I'm not a lord. Yet you call me Lord Snow." Jon pointed.

"Almost everybody from the Northern camp was calling you that when we walked through back there. How did you do that anyway?" She asked.

"Do what?" Was what he was probably going to ask before Myranda rolled off the bed.

"Going somewhere?" He asked.

"Yes. My father would want me close if what you say about the king being here is true." She answered even as she pulled her shift and smallclothes back on before going on to put on a dark blue gown. Her green one was ruined when Jon all but tore it off her. Luckily Mya had been carrying an extra gown on her person.

"It's not my fault you couldn't hear the horn over your own cries of pleasure." Mya huffed.

"How could I have not been screaming when I had a nice hard cock buried deep in my very being."
The Vale noble woman winked at Jon.

Mya made to move to assist her mistress and friend with her dress but found her body trapped between a pair of strong arms.

Jon grinned down at her with a predatory gleam in his eyes. Mya gulped.

"Can you please move. I am Myranda's personal maid. I have to attend her." She said after gathering a bit of courage. Jon didn't move.

"My lady, will you be needing your maid in attendance with your meeting with your father?" He asked without taking his eyes off the woman beneath him.

"Truthfully she is not needed for now and as you can see I am almost done dressing myself. Do stay and enjoy yourself a while longer, Mya. You have been working yourself harder for a while now. There. I'm done." Myranda finished buttoning her dress up and turned to face the two lovers still on the bed. An amused smile took her face when she saw Mya's flushed face buried in their northern lover's crotch.

"For someone who was protesting against another round of fucking you sure are into it." The buxom noblewoman teased.

"Hmm..hmm.."

"Mya Stone, what have I said about talking with your mouth full." Myranda mock-chastised.

"Ugh! You can only do that when your mouth is not crammed full of man meat?" Jon provided jokingly.

Myranda laughed. "You are a funny man, Jon Snow. You two enjoy yourself but make no mistake Jon Snow. I will find you at a later time and fuck you so hard your cock will fall off for real this time." She gave him a sultry smile and leaned down giving him a good snogging.

"I'm looking forward to when you decide to fulfill your promise, my lady." Jon grunted. He was not in the right position to form coherent words at the moment.

Myranda chuckled even as she walked out of her room, leaving the two to themselves. Who would have thought that the a northman would be this fun to interact with. Particularly one raised by the famous Warden of the North, Lord Eddard Stark. You would think such a person would be a prude. But then again..."I'm not a Stark." Wasn't that what he had said?

The tourney had not started proper and yet here she was meeting interesting people already. Now what other intersting events is going to play out she wondered. Even as she walked from the door she could the pitiful attempt Mya was making at holding in her moans. Myranda had something to return to.

Elia

It didn't take more than twenty minutes for the royal family to converge to the designated room for the family reunion...minus Viserys of course. Aegon sat to his father's left while Rhaenys took to Elia's right. Soon enough the king's mother and sister also arrived and took their place across from him.

"It's really good to be among family once again." Rhaegar said in the relaxed tone he allowed only
"You mean among trustworthy people. You do know that though we may not be at the capital, we still have to attend court, right?" Elia reminded her husband who only clicked his tongue at the reminder.

Rhaella chuckled at her oldest child's childish act. "Why is it that all those good at being king almost always never wanted to be so in the first place?" Was her rhetorical question.

"Better a king who has talent for ruling yet dislikes it than one who wants to rule yet has no talent for it." Aegon intoned wisely.

"Is that your latest attempt at sounding like a septon? That sounded almost original, brother. Where did you read that from?" Rhaenys mocked.

"Of course it's not." Daenerys snorted. "Uncle Aemon spoke those words when we visited him last at Castle Black."

"Won't you just let it go. I was a child then." Aegon groaned.

"He would have made a great king." Rhaella said of her great-grandfather with a wistful smile.

"Had he taken the throne? Yes I believe he would have." Rhaegar agreed.

"How was Kings Landing when you left?" Rhaenys asked before sipping her cup of arbor gold.

"Not stinking of politics yet there is a stench all the same I presume." Daenerys provided.

"Your father is working with some men from Braavos towards the installation of an improved sewer and drainage system." She said after Rhaegar had given her the go-ahead to reveal that particular information. Rhaegar's intention for the capital's drainage system was not yet public knowledge but he had no problem divulging it to family.

"I thought Braavos was not thrilled with the idea of sharing their technology with the rest of the world." Daenerys said with a raised brow.

"Especially after grandfather insulted them and called the Sealord and his people a bunch foreign sea-smelling cunts." Rhaenys said with a sip of her wine.

"He also threatened to burn them. Or so I heard." Aegon put in his piece.

"Thankfully, the Sealord was a smart man and decided to ignore Aerys' not-so thinly veiled war declaration. He did however cut off all our trading routes and dissolved the trading agreements between our two nations. That was a huge blow to Westeros. We gained a lot from our trade alliance with them." Elia sighed.

She remembered that day when the Sealord came down to Kings Landing with invitation from the king to celebrate the king's nameday, only for Aerys to insult and threaten him when the Sealord did not take to his request of sharing some of Braavos' technology with Westeros. After the Sealord had stated his intention of breaking off trade with Westeros in retaliation to Aerys' threats, he had stormed out of the Realm and immediately put his spoken into action. Rhaegar had seethed and swore at his
father's stupidity. It had taken Elia a while to calm him down.

"And suddenly after twenty years he's working now with you as if nothing happened. That sounds like the songs." Aegon commented.

"But it's not. There's a catch to their agreement to working with us again. I had to agree to a twenty-five percent discount off every and anything consumable sold by us to Braavos for the next ten years." Rhaegar said calmly.

"The f..."

A glare from his mother killed any swear words that were bubbling to come out of Aegon's mouth. Rhaenys had no such reservations.

"That's a fucking rip-off, father. You know that, so why did you agree to such an atrocity." She ground her teeth in irritation.

Rhaegar chose to ignore his daughter's usage of profanity in his presence.

"I'm actually quite lucky to have been able to convince the Sealord to settle for a twenty-five percent discount. He was originally opting for forty." the king revealed.

The royal family was very displeased by the revelation. They could only thank the gods that the Sealord settled for the bargained amount.

"By the way you speak I can safely presume that you met the Sealord in person but how did you manage to get him to meet you if he hates our family so much as to cut all ties with the realm." Daenerys asked.

"The Sealord does not hate our family but merely dislikes us due to your father's treatment of him. Besides Braavos did not truly cut off all ties with Westeros. Only the Crown and anything related to it." Elia cleared.

It was almost invisible but Elia noticed the slight existence of a scowl flash quickly across the younger princess' face. All who knew Daenerys were aware of her disgust at the fact that she shared blood with the Mad King. The disgust only worsened by the fact that she was his daughter no less. That is something she will need to get over or else enemies of the Tagaryen Dynasty will use it as a weapon against the family. Daenerys must get over it and accept who she is. Elia noted all of this and shelved it as a task to be addressed at a later date.

"That means that Braavos still did business with the other kingdoms but not when the Crown was involved." Realization dawned on Aegon.

"It was one of these kingdoms that managed to convince the Sealord to meet you." He added.

Rhaegar nodded at his son's deduction. Elia was proud of Aegon and his ability to see through and understand certain situations. He's always had it and his training in his princely duties under his father had only served to sharpen his mind.

"Which of the Lords Paramount does the Crown owe gratitude to for this." Rhaenys asked with curiosity.

"Lord Stark." Rhaegar said with a sip from his cup of his own cup of arbor gold.

Before he answered Elia already knew of the reaction her husband's answer was going to receive.
Shock. And it showed on everyone's face. Minus the Queen Dowager of course. Rhaegar must have told his mother a while back.

"Surely you jest. Lord Stark hates our family more than anyone else. Every one knows this. I'm sure even the worms that crawl the soils of Westeros are also aware of this fact." Rhaenys was quick to voice her thoughts.

"Much as it pains me to admit but yes, out of all of the Crown's relations with it's subjects the one with the North is the most strained. Much more so after the War of the Usurper. Attempts to mend all scars were rather plainly rebuffed by Lord Stark." Rhaegar sighed.

"Not that such actions were not justifiable but if what you say is true why would he choose to relent now." Rhaenys frowned.

If Rhaegar heard his daughter's prior statement then he chose to ignore it. This was not the first time the daughter had vocalised her disappointment at the father's role in the war that almost tore the realm apart. Both Tagaryen children disagreed their father's actions that more or less set the war into motion. Rhaenys more so than her brother, what's with her being a woman also. No woman would be pleased when their husbands ran away with a younger beauty.

"That's probably because your father finally got his head out of the proverbial "ass" and met the Sealord face to face to plead a negotiation." Rhaella spoke for the first since the particular discussion began. All eyes widened at the queen mother's choice of words.

Now to be fair Queen Rhaella was by no means a prude. Elia would vouch for that but she rarely used crude terms and when she did it was the mildest of such words. That didn't mean that she didn't know the more crude ones. She did and Elia had quite fascinatingly witnessed the king's mother's usage of a rather colourful language in person.

"Not that you told me about how you got Lord Stark to listen but I assume that is what went down, no?" Rhaella raised a brow at her son.

"Yes I, more or less, ambushed him after a particular trip from Pentos almost a year ago. He was preparing to head back to Winterfell after a visiting one of his banners at White Harbour."

"Lord Manderly." Rhaella stated to which her son nodded.

"There I confronted him and requested his help in once more establishing a connection with Braavos. It took some lengthy discussion but Lord Stark eventually aquiesed to my plea. Nevertheless it took him a while to convince the Sealord to meet with me and discuss business." Rhaegar explained.

"And I'm sure that Lord Stark did all this out of the goodness his heart." Danaerys said with a smile.

Eddard Stark was a good man. That was something Elia was sure of. However all that good seemed to be nonexistent when Tagaryens were involved. There was no "out of the goodness of his heart" with Lord Stark where the royal family was concerned.

"I believe what Dany means to say is that the Crown owes more than gratitude to Lord Stark." Rhaenys interpreted with a smirk.

"What did he request in exchange for his assistance, father?" Aegon asked.

Elia caught the king's look and sighed.

"Lord Stark asked for a deductible in the yearly tax the kingdoms paid to the Crown." She spoke for
"How much of a deductible are we talking about here." Rhaenys asked.

Rhaegar was quiet, as if he didn't want to answer the question. Elia took it upon herself to do so.

"Half of the yearly amount."

"That is ridiculous. Who does he think he is asking for such a thing and don't tell me that you..."

"The documents have already been drawn and will take effect immediately after certain terms have been met." Elia interrupted her daughter's outburst with a firm voice. She could already see a protest building up in her eyes but it died down after a her brother shot her a look Elia couldn't understand. As much Elia claimed to know her children, Rhaenys and Aegon knew each other best.

"Father, this...deal with Lord Stark, couldn't have something else been agreed to instead of the one.?

Aegon asked his father, carefully. The boy knew he risked insulting the king, even if it would be unintentional, if he was he not to be careful with his wording.

"No. That was the only thing Lord Stark was going to agree if I was still going to request his assistance. I was however able to insert a certain term into the deal that Lord Stark agreed to. Begrudgingly." Rhaegar answered his son.

"The North would have to pay thrice the amount of yearly tax it normally does at this year's or the next year's end for the agreement to be in effect." Rhaella said.

"Do you know what this means, Aegon?" The king asked his son.

"Lord Stark probably can't scrounge that sum so quickly. It will take time. So he will have to come up with the money by the end of next year. And if we're lucky, not at all. That is brilliant, father." Aegon smiled at his father's ingenuity.

"A full year is also enough time for your father to come up with a counter offer better and more acceptable to us." Rhaella added.

The children nodded in understanding.

"Well let's hope Lord Stark doesn't go around squeezing every copper his kingdom can produce and accumulate the money by this year's ending just to spite you." Rhaenys said with mirth.

He might just do that...just spite Rhaegar. Elia shook her head.

"No way he can make that amount even if he squeezed his kingdom dry. Even Tywin Lannister would not be stupid enough to do that despite the fact that he might be able to gather the required sum. That would put a strain on ongoing activities for Casterly Rock and the Westerlands as a whole however." Aegon pointed out.

"I hear Lord Tywin shits gold." Rhaenys commented offhandedly.

"I doubt Lord Tywin possesses the stamina it requires to "come out" with such an amount so quickly. It would require quite a number of breaks." Danaerys said with a smile.

A round of laughter met her jest.

"Now that that is out of the way, tell me how has things been going in my absence. Truthfully." The king looked from his children to his mother and sister.
Aegon obeyed his father and went into details of everything he has observed and all that he had had to deal with. The matter of the Brackens' and Blackwoods' feud came up and that a fight almost broke out between the two families had Lord Edmure with the help of Aegon not intervened and ended before it could regress any further.

Rhaenys and Danaerys also submitted their account of events before finally the Queen Dowager also submitted hers.

"I may or may not be wrong but I think Lord Stark might be influencing his heir against us." Rhaella said.

"Why would you say that, mother?" Rhaegar wrinkled his brow.

"When you were speaking to the Starks upon your arrival did you not notice how stiff he was. None of his siblings displayed such outward emotions." Rhaella pointed.

"Yes. He looked as if he wanted to be anywhere but before us." Elia commented. She had noticed the tension in the boy's posture all the while they spoke to the Starks. She had simply not commented.

"That was simply a boy finally speaking with his king for the first time. He probably wanted to make an impression and not mess up." Rhaegar waved but Elia could see the doubt he held for his own his words clear as day.

"Mathaps, but isn't it better to be safe than sorry?" Rhaella asked.

Rhaegar was quiet for some seconds.

"I got to speak with Lord Robb during the first feast. He was not in any way hostile to me. Nevertheless grandmother has already spoken to us about the need to still make an attempt to...no...to repair relations with the North. Since the generation that fought in the War of the Usurper are either too scarred or too stubborn to ever think of even forgiving the royal family for its crimes against them, we'll have to settle for the new generation. They are the future of the realm after all." Aegon revealed.

"We'll use the entirety of the tourney to do so and by the end of the entire thing we hope to have befriended at least half of the lords' children." Danaerys added.

"Particularly those from the North. They were the ones most offended by the war." Rhaenys gave her input. There was something in her tone but Elia couldn't quite place it.

"The three of you have thought this through."

It was a statement that Elia made not a question.

"If they hadn't I would have taken and bent them over lap one by one and spanked them until being on their feet became much preferable to sitting." Rhaella joked.

"You couldn't have done that, Mama Rhae. You are too old for that." Rhaenys said with an eye roll.

"That sounds like a challenge, child." Rhaella gave the younger Tagaryen a coy smile.

The family laughed at the exchange.

Conversations continued after the reports. Some mundane. Some serious. All in all, the nest was
happy to be back together though it was quite sad that Viserys was absent. Well, what do they say? Life must still go on, right?

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