Bad Moon Arising
by Jon_Stargaryen

Summary

What if Rhaegar won his duel with Robert on the Trident? What if Ned and Rhaegar witnessed Lyanna's death together? What if Jon Snow was born Jaehaerys Targaryen? What if I were a better writer? How might these changes influence Westeros as a whole?
Chapter Summary

Listings for which characters belong to what factions in the political sphere. Listings may change.

House Targaryen

Rhaegar: Regretful King.

- Everyone wants from him, few wish to give. His future is haunted by his past. His efforts to maintain the Realm are met with major resistance from the rebel faction, mainly headed by Jon Arryn.

Elia Martell: Queen and Rhaegar's wife. Only sister to Doran and Oberyn Martell.

- Married to Rhaegar before Lyanna Stark and shamed by his infidelity. Their marriage is strained. A rumor claims she was once in love with Arthur Dayne.

Rhaenys: Eldest child of Rhaegar and Elia.

- Adventurous and bold, having grown up travelling the realm with her uncle. Currently resides at court assisting her father and mother with preparations for Aegon's nameday, Arys Oakheart(KG) is her Sworn Shield and her ladies, include Nymeria Sand and recently Arianne of Dorne. Spent the last three years in Dorne.

Aegon the Heir: Only son of Rhaegar and Elia, and heir to the Iron Throne.

- Handsome, charming, and beloved by most of court. The distant manner of Rhaegar has created a gulf between father and son. Has been in King’s Landing for two years, residing in Dorne for six years before that and Highgarden for two years before that. Has a great hunger to prove himself, especially in battle, making him somewhat hawkish. Secretly desires Sansa, much to her dismay

Jaehaerys the Spare: Only child of Rhaegar and Lyanna.

- Handsome, charming, and charismatic, if somewhat sullen. Lost nearly seven years with his manservant Martyn Flowers, bastard of Garth Tyrell, while his father was visiting Winterfell. Was a Ward of Winterfell for five years before his disappearance, only leaving behind two notes for his father and Lord Stark.


- Her appearance is exactly as it is in the series, though she is not as naive. Knowing exactly the purpose of her stay in King’s Landing, she is hopeful that her cousin will appear out of the mist like a knight from the songs. Has befriended Rhaenys, during her brief stays in King’s Landing.
Prince Oberyn Martell: Part of Rhaenys' entourage in the Capitol.

- He took the position at court at the behest of his siblings, Doran and Elia, mainly due to the history of snakes in King's Landing. Has a less than amiable relationship with Jaehaerys.
- Ellaria Sand: Paramour to Oberyn, mother of the youngest four Sand Snakes.
- Obara Sand: His bastard daughter, part of Rhaenys' retinue and personal guard.
- Nymeria Sand: His bastard daughter, traveling with the Rhaenys for her protection. She is rumored to be Rhaenys' lover, though these claims have yet to be authenticated.
- Sarella Sand: His bastard daughter, spying on the Citadel in Oldtown.
- Tyene Sand: His bastard daughter, travels the realm disguised as septa.
- Ser Daemon Sand: His squire, the Bastard of Godsgrace. Bastard son to Ser Ryion Algyrion

The Small Council/Court

Lord Jon Connington: Hand of the King.

- Chief among Rhaegar's supporters at court. Has an unhealthy hatred for Jaehaerys, Elia, and his wife Cersei née Lannister.

Cersei Lannister: Wife to Jon Connington.

- Shoulders much of the weight of running the household. Is under severe financial restrictions, due to her relations to a covert rebel faction, during Robert's Rebellion. Her spending is monitored closely by Varys though her other activities are not reported.
- Ambrose: Son of Jon and Cersei. All Connington.

Gerold Storm: Chief steward to the Connington household in King’s Landing.

Ser Arthur Dayne: Lord Commander of the Kingsguard. Former Sworn Shield to Jaehaerys, by his own request. Somewhat of a father figure to Jaehaerys Targaryen.

The Kingsguard

- Ser Barristan Selmy
- Ser Richard Horpe
- Ser Balon Swann
- Ser Robar Royce
- Ser Arys Oakheart Rhaenys' Sworn Shield
- Ser Oswell Whent Sworn Shield to Aegon

Lord Monford Velaryon: Master of Ships.

- He is the Lord of the Tides and Master of Driftmark. Enlisted to help build the royal fleet up into the premiere naval force in the Seven Kingdoms, though he has been stymied by the king’s shifting priorities and unrest in the realm.
- Montys Velaryon: Son of Monford Valeryon.

- A boy of eight and page to Rhaegar.

Kevan Lannister: Master of Coin.
• 'Offered' the position after Robert's Rebellion was concluded and Tywin Lannister's execution. He is an unofficial hostage of the crown. Along with his youngest sons and wife. Hated in court, due to the sacking of King's Landing.

**Dorna Swyft:** Unofficial hostage of the Crown. Hated in court, due to her marriage into the Lannister family.

**Martyn Lannister:** Hostage of the Crown. Hated in court, due to the sacking of King's Landing.

**Willem Lannister:** Hostage of the Crown. Hated in court, due to the sacking of King's Landing.

**Lord Randyll Tarly:** Master of Laws. Lord of Horn Hill.

• One of Rhaegar’s chief backers at court, secretly pushing for Maergary Tyrell as a match for Aegon. A stern man with a firm belief in absolute justice. Acts as Chief Justice in place of a High Reave.

**Melessa Florent:** Wife to Randyll and mother of his five children.

**Samwell Tarly:** First born son. A man of the Night’s Watch.

**Talla Tarly:** Eldest daughter of Randyll Tarly and Melessa Florent.

• Lady-in-Waiting to Princess Daenerys.

**Rhalla Tarly:** Middle daughter to of Randyll Tarly and Melessa Florent.

**Ellana Tarly:** Youngest daughter of Randyll Tarly and Melessa Florent.

**Dickon Tarly:** Youngest son of of Randyll Tarly and Melessa Florent.

• Heir to Horn Hill after Sam's "decision" to take the black.

**Gormon Tyrell:** Grand Maester

• Uncle to Lord Mace Tyrell, chosen by the Citadel after Pycell was sent to the wall to serve for the rest of his days.

**Ser Alliser Thorne:** Captain of the Guard at the Red Keep.

**Ser Jacelyn Bywater:** Lord Commander of the City Watch.

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**Nights Watch**

**Jeor Mormont:** Lord Commander.

• Took the oath to relinquish his claim on his ancestral home, gifting it to his son and heir, along with his ancestral sword Long Claw

**Benjen Stark:** First Ranger of the Nights Watch
• Took the black due to unmentioned guilt over what his inaction did to the realm.

Jaime Lannister: Ranger

• Serves under Benjen Stark at Castle Black. Sent to the Wall for regicide, though it was mainly so that King Rhaegar could avoid killing a man who did the realm a service.

Stannis Baratheon: Steward

• Sent to the Wall as punishment for continued rebellion in the face of defeat. Has a strong disdain for anything Targaryen or Stark, including Benjen.

Theon Greyjoy: Ranger

• Sentenced to the Wall after the Greyjoy rebellion, with all of the males in his family dead and his sister serving as ward to House Stark, his line will end with him. Deemed too young to kill and too dangerous to live, The Wall was his only alternative.

Order of the Dragon

Sellsword company, created only four years before the start of this story.

Their blason is, two white dragons facing one another, tails entwined, breathing while fire into the center, on a field of black.

Troops: 30,000– (mainly former slaves and commoners)

Ships: 400 longships and 100 drommons, all throughout Essos.

Bases of operation:

• The Demon's Haunt- Pentos. A large compound hosting 4,000. Autonomy in selecting contracts, unless called for duty. Mainly serve in the southern hemisphere.
• Dragon's Mouth- Coast of Andalos. Large compound, rebuilt from a decayed fort, repurposed to house 4,000 men, subsisting off the surrounding lands. Reserve force.
• Moon Dance- Braavos. Series of buildings, devoted to housing the main fighting force of the group. Made of veteran warriors, including their leader, known as The Demon of the East to most. Mainly serve in the northern hemisphere.
• The Teat- Flatlands south of Pentos. Derives its name from its name from its purpose as a training facility. At any given time, it hosts more than 30,000, though only 15,000 ready for battle at best.
Chapter 2

Battle of the Trident

The smell of death lingers in the air, piss and shit and blood, staining every surface around him as the battle rages on.

The Crown Prince looks out over the field of assembled warriors, looking for the one life that will end this. He spots the golden surcoat adorned with the black stag, marking his destination. He rides outward and onward, carving a bloody path through his assembled enemies, making his way to The Stag.

Upon his arrival both men dismount their horses, forgoing a mounted battle in the bed of the Trident. They circle one another as Robert insults him, slandering his name as a kidnapper and a rapist, as Rhaegar makes several attempts to reason with him, until finally her realizes that there is no peace to be had. The Stag has come for his pound of flesh, and he is intent on carving it from the Crown Prince.

The battle ensues.

A dance of steel and water and mud, neither fighter giving in to defeat as their collective armies gather to witness the spectacle. The Stag is stronger, though the Prince is faster, whirling his blade in deadly arcs as the Robert attempts to batter his sword with brute force.

Days seem to go by, and neither man is willing to yield, neither will give quarter for in battle that means death. Suddenly, a stray slash hits its mark, wounding Baratheon deeply. The slash is clearly not deep enough, for Baratheon renews his attack with new vigor, more than once causing Rhaegar to stumble.

Backing away, fighting to regain his footing as he slips on the wet stones of the Trident. Capitalizing on his mistake, Robert surges forward, hammer poised to strike as Rhaegar has only a second to raise his sword.

At full force Robert runs into his opponents sword, ending his own life.

Still the battle rages on around them as Rhaegar despairs. This should have been the end. He scouts the field looking for Stark, hoping his good-brother can see reason in ending this folly. He comes upon him accidently, immediately pleading with him, dropping his sword and throwing himself at his mercy. He explains about Lyanna and the Knight of the Laughing Tree and his father's bounty on her head.

As his story stretches onward, his good-brother begins to drop his sword. Hope dawns in the world as Eddard grips his forearm in agreement to his strategy.

Rhaegar unceremoniously flopped into his chair, slouching behind the large oaken desk in his solar. At present, he was occupied lamenting the failures of his predecessors.

"I kept the realms together where my father would see it destroyed, he thought, I slew the raging stag in single combat, I protected my family and sired the Promised Prince, so why do these demons still plague me. He seethed quietly, looking over the accounts that Varys had gathered.

Battle reports from the free cities, ledgers from the finances of Astapor, Yunkai and Quarth, and the gossip of the finest and lowest pleasure houses in Essos all pointed to one grim truth: the resurgence of the Blackfyre line."
He ran a hand through his platinum hair, contemplating the idea of abdicating the throne. He glances to the corner where a Egg, his son and heir, has been standing since the beginning of this meeting, learning what it means to be King. Your only son, a harsh voice whispered into his skull, sounding suspiciously like Lyanna. It is always Lyanna that reminds him of his failures, as a man and as a father.

He had been tasked with one duty by her. She gave up her life in service to his selfish wants, and all she asked in return was to protect their son, protect their boy. Unfortunately he failed in that regard as well, allowing him to be swallowed up by the northern wilderness.

To make matters worse, he began to rage against the North: taxing their people heavily, threatening war and even demanding a honored guest from House Stark. He took young Sansa from her father, from her home, and absconded with yet another Stark daughter.

He is jarred from his thoughts by the Master of Whispers, stepping forward to command the King's attention. Taking the silent prompt, Rhaegar straightens his back, staring down the spymaster. "How accurate would you say these reports are?"

Varys, for his part, seems to be genuinely frightened of this new foe. "Nothing is definitive about this new group Your Grace." He responds, his normal titter replaced by a stern whisper. "They move quickly; one day they are in the Dothraki Sea, challenging the Great Khal Drogo to single combat, the next they show up in Yunkai or Meereen, killing slavers and sacking cities." He shifted his weight, taking another step forward. "They hit hard and fast, leaving many bodies and recruiting many more. Slaves, freedmen and women, to them it matters not." At that, Varys made a full stop his eyes flitting to each man in the room; first Connington, then Lord Commander Dayne, towards Aegon then back to Rhaegar.

"Was there something else?" He asks, dreading the possible answers, noticing the eunuchs reluctance to voice them.

"Only rumors of the most baseless nature sire." He says, dipping his head. Rhaegar waves a hand printing the man to continue. "They claim their leader rides a dragon, dark as night. That he leads a fleet of one-hundred dromonds and nearly two-hundred longships of brandishes a blade of valyrian steel," He stopped, allowing the inhabitants of the room to absorb his words. "and a sword as pale as mothers milk, giving off an ethereal glow." He said, turning his attention to Arthur, the man himself shifting forward as he grasps the hilt of Dawn. "Like I said, baseless rumors."

Rhaegar gestured to the spymaster, giving him leave to exit, but as the man reached the door he remembered what was not said. "What name do we name our enemy?"

"Varys stopped abruptly, turning with wide eyes. "The more tamed tales are of a man naming himself Daemon Blackfyre. Enlisting the aid of the Golden Company and other smaller groups is his doing."

He paused, becoming visibly paler. "The other man has no name. He is simply known as The Demon, cutting a bloody swath through Essos mounted on a dragon, killing some of the most fearsome warriors and taking all that they have." With that, the Master of Whispers rushed out of the silent room, closing the door behind him, leaving a thudding echo in his wake.

The room remained silent for several moments, the only sound to be heard is the breaking of the wind on the stone of the keep. Rhaegar is content to let it continue, using the absence of sound to reflect on what he had heard, to digest it and make use of the information they had heard.

"We must call the Lords Paramount." Aegon stepped from the corner, fists clenched to his side as his knuckles visibly blanched. "We must react to this new threat, before this Blackfyre scum sails to our home and it is too late." There is the brash rage that inhabits all boys within him.
Before Rhaegar can admonish his son, Jon steps forward to take hold of his shoulder. "Calm yourself boy. Would you go to war over rumors and a possible enemy?" His Hand asks of his heir, gripping his shoulder firmly.

Aegon jerks away from his hold, moving closer to the oaken desk. "We have a name. Daemon Blackfyre!"

It must be Ser Arthur's turn to interject, for he steps forward to do just that. "A name is not an enemy. A name is a symbol to rally for." He says, breaking his usual stoic silence.

"A symbol for men like the Golden Company and the Windblown and the Second Sons to rally around. A symbol for another rebellion." His son fumes, refusing to listen to reason.

Connington sighs, bringing his hand to his forehead before carding his fingers through his hair. "Unsubstantiated claims and rumors, gathered from pleasure houses and gutters." He says gruffly, clearly becoming annoyed with this line of discussion.

Aegon looks to his father, clearly begging for support. Realizing that he has come up short, he steps into a bow before Rhaegar, glaring at his King and father. "With your leave Your Grace?" He asks, though it is more of a growl. Ser Arthur and Jon look upon the exchange, holding their breath and waiting for the fallout. Rhaegar merely nods, ignoring the slight. "Father. Ser Arthur. Lord Connington?" And like that, Aegon files out of the King's Solar, leaving the three small council members to their own devices.

"War is a natural inclination for the young." Connington said, stepping back into a high backed chair, slumping down into the cushion. "We were once that way Your Grace." He said.

Rhaegar sighed, looking over Jon's battered form. "You should retire for the evening. We will reconvene on the morrow." He suggested, trying to ease some of the burden from his friend.

To his surprise, Jon laughed gruffly. "And what shall I do with my newfound free time?"

"You can always visit your wife." Arthur chimes, earning a snort from Connington.

"Oh Cersei is very lovely, and witty and protective of our boys." Connington say, clearly missing the looks on both his friends faces. "And those are her only redeeming qualities."

Rhaegar flinched away from him, wondering how someone could devote so much contempt to the spouse. Certainly there was never any great love between himself and Elia, though there was always a certain friendship between them.

"Either way, I need to think." He said, rising from his seat. "Both of you, out." He began to usher them out of the room, corralling them towards the door.

When both men were securely on the other side of the door, Rhaegar walked back to his desk, sitting in his chair once more.

He slid the lowest drawer from the right side of the desk, pulling free a small wooden sword, remembering better days, when he had two sons.
Jaehaerys sets foot in Westeros for the first time in years and he's already clearing out the rubbish.
Also think of 'Frost' as 'Long Claw', the exact same sword without the pommel or the back story.

The Sack of King's Landing, Fall of The Lions

*Fresh from the Battle of the Trident, the Dragon Prince rode hard for King's Landing, the combined might of of the North, the Riverlands and the Vale added to his host. Their differences and shared past fractured them, though their goal was legion: depose King Aerys Targaryen. The coalition rode through the city gates with all haste, only to find that the populace had been put to the torch by the invading Lannister forces. All throughout the city, men were slaughtered, women were raped and children were left underfoot. Each Lord Paramount allocated men from their retinue to quell the Westermen's savagery, using force if necessary. The horrors only continue as they march down River Row, witnessing more carnage as they draw closer to the Keep. When the rust colored walls are in sight, most noticeable are the Crimson banners of House Lannister, a golden lion roaring into the wind.*

They ride through the gates and into the yard, abandoning their mints and hurrying into the Main Hall to assess the damage. Upon arriving in the throne room, the coalition party comes across the body of Aerys II Targaryen, sprawled on the floor before the throne. Above the assemble nobility is Ser Jaime Lannister, sitting atop the throne of dragons passed.

Rhaegar orders him to dismount the steps, proclaiming him to be an oath breaker and a Kingslayer, revoking his white cloak and sentencing him to serve on The Wall, trading his White Cloak for a Black Cloak. The assembled westerners, including Lord Tywin Lannister, protest to this punishment, going so far as to openly attack the hastily formed coalition.

The ensuing battle bathes the floors of the throne room in blood, claiming the lives of many warriors on either side. None claiming more kills than the monstrous Mountain, killing five brave northmen who bravely battle with Lord Stark, before becoming completely still allowing Lord Eddard Stark to take his head without a fight.

With the conflict done and Lord Tywin disposed of, the remaining western host is imprisoned, including Jaime Lannister, having been stripped of all lands and titles. After deliberating the most practical way to end the warring in different areas of the realm, King Rhaegar sets off with Lord Stark to fulfill his oath, heading for the Tower of Joy. Heading for his wives and children.

*They hung back from the wingless brother, flying over the small sea, darting in and out of the fog as the brother had asked.*
*It had been nearly a three days since they had eaten and the Sister was growing impatient and hungry. He looked down into the water, spotting a large prey to close to the surface, ripe for the*
taking. He nudged the Sister, diving toward the sea as she followed closely behind. As one, they fly close to the surface snatching the large bounty from the sea, hauling it to a nearby rock island. The beast begins to wail and cry, until the Sister buries her teeth in its throat. As one, they begin to roast he beast, bringing its flesh to cook evenly, before biting into the meat, savoring the taste of salt once more.

Jaehaerys snaps to attention, the waves crashing against the hull The Howl, lulling him into a sense of tranquility. He looks ahead, taking in the sight of the snow littered coastline as Rams Gate comes into view, marking the easternmost shore of his uncle's domain. He glances about his galley, taking in the fog that acts as their cloak, masking their presence as they float just beyond the realm of his father, nearly in range for smaller boats to row ashore.

"Where were you?" A voice chimes behind him, nearly stopping his heart. He cocks his head to the side to see his first mate, Martyn Flowers of Highgarden, sitting against the railing of the foredeck. "When you were just inside of their minds. Where did you go?" He expounded, taking Jae's silence as confusion.

He takes a moment to contain his quickening heart, licking his lip and sampling the metallic taste of blood. "A whale swimming too close to the surface." He responded, taking the handkerchief offered to him, rubbing the green and gold fabric against his lip. "I plucked it from the sea and roasted it on a nearby rock formation." He explained between dabs.

Martyn sighs, bringing forth his mother hen, causing Jae to cringe in preparation. "You were gone for too long." He said stepping closer, placing a bowl of stew at his feet. "You don't get sustenance when they feed Your Grace." He continues, ignoring Jaehaerys' scowl at his use of the honorific. "Never mind that. I was meaning to discuss your journey once more." He says, for what feels like the hundredth time, for it possibly is.

"We've had this conversation Martyn." He groans. "Too many men will draw undue attention, even a retinue of fifty."

Martyn sighs into his hand. "Then ten- no, six?!" He shouts, earning another groan from Jae. "Seven is a lucky number, and the extra hands can help in handling any issues that might arise."

"Fuck!" He relents, noting the smile on Martyn's face, celebrating his victory, though Jaehaerys is also pleased at the compromise, having started at one-hundred. "I need Karlon to approve the coin for the extra horse and provisions?"

Martyn smiled to himself. "Oh, that was approve from the beginning for one hundred men." He explained smugly. Jaehaerys found it odd that the skinflint of a quartermaster would approve such an expense without his direct input, but the thought was quickly abandoned.

That his first mate had already taken steps to assist this undertaking, showed that his apprehension was gone. Technically speaking, they might both be fugitives, due to their means of departure from Westeros. *Father wanted me home, I wanted otherwise, I got my way in the end,* he thought as he stood from his perch, setting about selecting his companions.

He selected a large dothraki man named Rhade, who had been with them since he slew Khal Drogo, along with several of his more progressive kinsmen. He the chose two brothers, Lothor and Theo Stone, both graceful of build, quick with a sword and born in cold climates. Having selected his melee unit, he called upon Willem and Robett Rivers and The Mute, for their long distance support.
He gave instructions for each man, having them prepare their weapon of choice, along with a crossbow and fifty bolts for good measure. In terms of armor, each man would wear light chain mail and thick boiled leather, packing upper-body armor and a helm.

He knew the archers would not pack helms or plate, especially The Mute, for it makes them slow to draw and obscures vision. Rhade would refuse the armor, citing his pride as a Dothraki, likely deciding to wear the leathers and furs.

Jae walked to the skiff that would take them ashore, depositing his armor and their rations, pulling at the valyrian steel blade at his side, the irony of checking *Frost* for frost not lost on him. He gripped his second bundle, not opening it to reveal his most prized possession. He placed both instruments into the boat, gingerly.

Turning back to see Martyn, wringing his hands to exhaustion, he smile. "All will be fine brother. I just have business to take care of with Lord Stark." He said, as men began to pile into the skiff.

Martyn, to his surprise, stepped forward to embrace him tightly. "Stay safe, my friend." Was all the man said as Jae stepped backwards, taking his place of the small boat. As they descended into the water, he gives his first mate a small nod.

Once they hit the water, they row in silence, traversing the mouth of the *Broken Branch*, slipping passed the lesser port of *Ramsgate*. They disembark near the edge of *Hornwood Forest*, purchasing seven garrons from a nearby stable owing fealty to House Hornwood, and in turn House Stark.

Their group rides upward northwest, in the direction of the *White Knife*, where barges and small bridges may be stationed to allow them passage across, into the territory of his ancestors. They ride at a moderate pace, total silence engulfing them as they make headway on their journey, only stopping to eat and hunt.

On their second day of riding, their group is dragged from their silent trek by a terrified scream.

It does not take long for the source of this distress to be identified, as two young women, brown of hair, emerge from the sparsely wooded area surrounding the domains of House Bolton. It takes a only a moment for the reasoning behind their behavior to emerge from the snow behind them.

A small contingent of men, no more than five and ten in total, sweep from the snow chasing the women with poorly made steel and spears, five archers with bows slung to their backs taking up the rear. The riders stop short a dozen yards away, as the women rush into their ranks, sobbing and babbling about protection and being hunted and the fear of rape.

Jaehaerys turns his horse to the side, shielding the women from their would-be captors, throwing out the sign for the archers to ready themselves, followed by a clenched fist telling the melee much the same. He turns to look for the leader of this party, scanning the faces of their new guests, eventually deciding on the man in the assorted red leathers, a pink cloak clasped with a red brooch, a garish red helm adorning his head. "Well met my lord." He says, by way of greeting.

The man says nothing for a moment, allowing the silence to elongate before responding. "I am Ramsay of House Bolton. The women you are harboring are my property, and I would see them returned." On cue, the women begin to shriek and wail clutching at the warriors around them for aide, until Rhade barks something in his guttural mother tongue.

Jae's eyes never leave Ramsay. "As fate would have it, we are headed to Winterfell. When we arrive I-"
"That is none of my concern." The Bolton cut him off. "We were just on a hunt, and those little doves were our prey. So hand them over." He says once more, his voice asserting authority he does not have.

Jae, being the calm voice of reason merely declines, sliding his unseen hand to his crossbow. "I'm afraid I must decline."

Without warning, Ramsay lifts his arm, signaling his bowmen, who make to shrug off their bows only to find four of their ranks with arrows in various parts of their torsos. Two more arrows find spearmen to embrace, dropping them from their saddles. The last Bowman, having finally notched an arrow, receives an arrow to the skull for his trouble, his own arrow finding the horse of one of his own companions, leaving only seven riders.

With the numbers now more reasonable, and the enemy now skittish and panicked, Jaehaerys and his melee sweep forward to engage. Waste not want not, he thinks to himself as unsheathes Frost, cutting through the unhorsed foe like warm butter, the valyrian steel cleaving through metal and bone and brain.

His next opponent fared no better, trading a handful of slashes and thrusts before being gutted, falling to the ground and slipping from Jae's sword. He scans the melee looking for the red helmed man, Ramsay of House Bolton, seeing him retreating in the general direction of the Dreadfort. He makes to pursue, cleaving through a man that thinks to stop him, as he chases his prey. The man is moving fast, almost out of range of arrows, until one such instrument catches the flank of his horse. Jae looks back toward his men, now collecting the horses of the fallen, when he spots The Mute, saluting him in recognition of his ability. The man nods, putting away his bow and quiver.

Jaehaerys rides down the Bolton, finding his leg crushed beneath his horse, the man still sputtering curses. "Lord Ramsay." He says, mock concern seeping into his voice. "You seem to have fallen on hard times?" He dismounts his horse, reaching with his mind, forcing it to stay. He steps closer as Ramsay reaches for his sword, kicking it from his hand.

Ramsay sighs in defeat, or pain, it is never made clear. "Go on." He says calmly, which is strange for all of the bluster and pride he had exuded moments ago. "Finish it."

Jaehaerys nods. "I, Jaehaerys Targaryen, Prince of the Blood, in the name of King Rhaegar Targaryen do sentence you to die!" The words are spoken. The strike is true. The head leaves the body.

Jae rides in the direction of his men, coming upon the newly saddled women as well as eleven additional mounts. "Is it done?" The Mute asks, gesturing his head to Ramsay's corpse.

Jaehaerys nods, leading the men onward toward the White Knife, leaving the bodies for the crows.

"Where are you taking us?" The braver of the two women asks, glaring at Jaehaerys as if he had tried to hunt her like a dog.

To that, he simply turns forward and smiles. "Home." He thinks about it for a moment, finding the single word confusing for someone he had just met. "My home. To Winterfell."
Reunions

Chapter Summary

I intend to add a history portion later. I just wanted to get this out.

He sat in his father's solar, spiced wine in hand as he read the meticulously worded parchment once more, hoping against all rationale that if only he read hard enough, the words may shift into better news.

Unfortunately not.

The declaration of Ramsay Snow's death was written in a very formal manner. There were no declarations of vengeance, no platitudes on the Bastard of Bolton's untimely demise in the line of duty.

The words were simple and precise, giving only what facts were deemed absolutely necessary, as though he were reporting on inadequate grain stores as opposed to his departed son. The formality and abject detachment in Roose Bolton's letter bothered Robb on a deeply personal level, initially. When he raised the question, Maester Luwin informed him that Lord Bolton had always been a harsh and pragmatic man, even providing sample letters from harsh events, including the death of his wife and son. Both messages, like the most recent, were clinical and detailed, lacking the accompanying emotion that such tragedy deemed appropriate.

As he read the missive once more, he took note of anything that he might have missed before, hoping to avoid another situation like this. He looked to the broken seal, pink wax with a flawed man embossed in the shape of an X, reading the casing once more: Lord Stark of Winterfell, Warden of the North.

He then began to read once more in earnest:

While out surveying the borders between Hornwood lands and those belonging to House Bolton, my natural son, Ramsay Snow was assaulted and murdered, along with a party of four and ten Bolton men. Upon his discovery, only two dead horses were found, as well as signs of a battle, including crossbow bolts and arrows from a long bow. There were also slash marks, cutting through steel plate, and boiled leather.

Also curious, is the departure of two scullery wenches from my employ, discovered near the time of this incident. It may be unrelated, though their involvement cannot be ruled out.

This has brought me to the conclusion that these were no common brigands. More information will be sent as developments are made.

Robb set down his wine goblet, careful not to spill the contents. He pinched the bridge of his nose, lamenting the order of his birth, forcing him to take control while father was visiting Last Hearth.
His thoughts are suddenly interrupted by the thumping of boots on stone, moving hurriedly toward the Lord's Solar. Without preamble, the door burst open, producing a boy of nine, if a day. The patch of messy reddish hair, so much like his own, flecked with melting snow and ice, his blue eyes frantic. Next to him stood a girl, gangly and long, her dark brown hair and grey eyes marking her as a Stark of Winterfell.

Robb sighed in false-frustration, attempting to hide his relief at their interruption. "Bran, Arya?" He said, wiping a hand down his face, partially to avoid seeming amused. "you must knock before you enter, you kn-"

"There's an unknown group of riders approaching the gate!" His sister shouted over his admonishment, prompting him to rise from his seat, bumping the desk and spilling the contents of his goblet.

"Hells!" He hissed, touching the wasted spirits with a finger and licking it. "Call for someone to clean this up. I'll head outside." He said, giving no time for argument as he rushed from the solar to the entrance of the first keep, taking the stairs three at a time.

Arriving in the yard, he looked to the battlements seeing the archers readying to aim.

He stopped the first man he saw, ushering him to the side. "What is happening?" He asked, shaking the man to get his attention. "Who approaches?"

The man shrugged. "Don't know milord. Some banners with two white dragons kissin' with the' tails crossed, on black." He explained as Robb released him.

_That makes no sense_, he though, _dragon banners this far north would be rare enough, but two white dragons_. There were few enough dragon banners in the Seven Kingdoms, that a banner of this nature would be easy to place, though oddly none came to mind.

A memory floated to the surface, of a sullen boy of Stark blood drawing in the snow: _two white dragons on a field of black, their tails entwined as they breathed white fire into the center._

He ran to the top of the battlement, stepping between the crenels, despite protests from the castle garrison. Below the castle walls, he spotted seven mounted men in a wedge formation, two women riding within their protective arrow. At the rear of the formation was the black flag, just as described by the man below, though he only gave it a passing glance.

His focus was immediately drawn to the man leading the small host, his long dark hair framing his long face, visible even from atop the walls. If he got a closer look, he would wager that eyes of beaten steel would stare back at him, much like his father's.

Robb merely shook his head, chuckling harshly to himself. "Arrogant shit." He grumbled to the fool tat would travel the entire North with only seven men and two women, common-born by their looks. "Open the gates." He said, walking to the stairs leading from the courtyard to the castle walls, noticing after a few steps that his men merely stood there. "open the East Gate!" He shouted, making it abundantly clear that his orders were to be followed.

He walked into the yard just as the horses were reigned in before him. He raised a brow at his cousin, wondering why after nearly a decade, his first stop would be Winterfell. "Targaryen?" He said, inflecting all that need be said in that one name.

Not to be outdone, Jaehaerys merely replied just as tartly. "Stark?" A small smile blooming on his face, marred by a hideous beard.
He swung from his saddle, dropping to the snow with all of the grace of a dancer, handing his reigns to an approaching stable hand, not breaking his stride as he crushed Robb into a hug. Robb instinctively gripped him back. "Why so long brother?" He breathed into Jaehaerys' hair.

His cousin let out an emotional chuckle, squeezing tighter. "The world's a big place, brother."

The held on until the sound of boots shuffling in the snow drew their attention to the First Keep behind him. Robb turned to see Bran and Arya had entered the yard, along with mother and a confused Rickon, clutching at her skirts. He heard a small whimper, turning to see Jaehaerys waving to his family, eyes filled with unshed tears. "Hello." He says, his voice full of glee and longing.

The moment comes crashing around them as Jaehaerys begins to scan the grounds, confusion written on his face. "Where is Sansa?" He inquires, the confusion slowly falling from his face, replaced by a smile. "Probably at her needlework?" He says, chuckling lightly, until he registers the look on Robb's face. "What happened to her?" He said, his tone shifting drastically, sensing the situation.

Robb put out a hand to calm him, remembering their time as children, when it was just the four of them: he, Sansa, Jaehaerys and Martyn. "We should go inside." He said softly.

Jae jerked from his touch, a look of bewilderment in his eyes. "Where is she?!" He shouted, propriety forgotten.

Robb began to work through possible ways to diffuse the situation that was his cousin, when his mother spoke. "Rhaegar took her." She said, her voice stone. "Your father took her." She rephrased, and Jae began to sway.

"W-why would he-" He turned to Robb once more. "I don't-" And realization dawned on his face. "We should go inside." He said, moving to one of his companions, removing a pair of large saddlebags with an unmistakable jingling sound. He then gestured for the two women to come forward.

They sheepishly followed his command, stepping forward in their black cloaks, covering common gowns of pink. _Bolton pink_, he thought, _like the flesh just beneath the skin._

"So now these two scullery women need a place to work and live?" He said, rubbing his temples with his thumbs. Jae nodded, as though he were not asking too much. "And you're certain that the bastard meant to murder them?" He asked, though he knew the answer. He also knew the truth.

There had been stories for years; women chased through the wood to be hunted like animals, eaten by dogs and even raped bloody in the snow. All of the claims came from smallfolk, with not much proof, and only their word and missing kin. Snow was living under the protection of his father, and thus close to untouchable.

"He called them his property, Robb?" He said, clearly bothered by this. "If money is your concern, I have some coin to start them off." He pulls a coin purse from his cloak, pushing it next to the two large saddlebags, already on the table. "This should be enough for them to afford a decent sized hut, maybe even a large one." He said, pleadingly.

Robb scratched his chin, weighing his options, even though the ultimate choice would be father's, who was do back any day now. "I will see what work we can find them." He saw Jae's face lighten, holding a hand up to crush his spirit. "The final choice belongs to father. He is due back shortly." Jae's face fell at the mention of his uncle, Lord Eddard Stark.

"I couldn't go with him." He said, sounding more a boy than an explorer of the east. "He was always
so cold. To me. To egg. To mother Elia." He continued, his voice fluctuating with each word. "I didn't know." Tears began to well up once more, as the regret swirled inside of him. "I told him I wanted to stay, but he wouldn't hear me." He looked to Robb, searching for validation. "What was I to do?"

Robb was decidedly pleased that this reunion was happening in his father's solar. Others might think less of Jae for crying, but Robb knew the truth of strength; it takes a brave man to admit his fault and failures.

He put forth a hand, squeezing his cousin's shoulder. "I can only tell you what to do going forward." He said, unsure himself of what the correct course was.

Jaehaerys Targaryen looked into his eyes, a passion and rage burning deep within him as he voiced his next declaration. "I already know what I shall do next." He said, his chest rising and falling in fury. "I will intend to bring Sansa back North, even if it kills me." His face was a mask of rage and vitriol, mostly aimed at his father.

Robb stared for a few moments, almost frightened to respond, but forced to all the same. "How do you plan to accomplish this?" He asked. "How do you get Sansa out of the Capitol unharmed?"

With a wolffish smile that marked them as kin, Jaehaerys merely responded. "With Fire and Blood, dear brother."

Even later into the evening and into the next morning, Robb would swear that he heard a roar from beyond the walls. Like a true dragon.
"Have we wasted enough time for your liking, my lord?" The Kingslayer inquired as the forest began to clear ahead. "Eight and ten days and not a single wildling or black brother in sight." He continued caustically.

The First Ranger merely sighed. "Ser Jaime, we all know what our mission is." Benjen Stark affirmed, his voice biting. "We find the missing brothers and, if need be, we investigate their deaths."

Obviously not reading the situation, Ser Jaime continued. "Perhaps they merely deserted north of The Wall?" He suggested. "I wouldn't blame them." He breathed out heavily, expelling a thick mist. "Have you seen the women in the North; lean and untamed." He chuckled harshly. "Fierce little creatures. I wouldn't mind burrowing into that den for the winter."

Benjen sighed wearily, clearly uncomfortable with the direction of this conversation. "I guess some men take their vows more serious than others." He responded curtly.

Ser Jaime chuckled at the rebuke. "And what of you Greyjoy?" He said, cocking his head towards him Theon. "How much coin have you wasted in Mole's Town?" He said, cantering closer to Theon. He clenched a fist. "I personally prefer a woman with more fight in them."

He knew that they would eventually drag him into the conversation, though he hoped it would take a while longer. "A bit too much fight for my tastes." He said, rubbing the leathers at his chest, feeling a twinge of pain from a scar long since healed. "I prefer my women willing--and less murderous."

Theon disliked speaking of his adventures to Mole's Town in front of the First Ranger, who also acted as his warden, for all intents and purposes. As the last male of House Greyjoy, Kings of the Iron Islands Lord Reavers of Pyke, he represented a threat to the peace of the realm. After his father rebelled against The Iron Throne, declaring himself King of the Iron Isles, plunging an already deeply fractured realm into further bloodshed, it was decided that House Greyjoy must be made an example. After losing most of his sons, all of his brothers and his castle, King Balon Greyjoy was forced to watch his last two children be taken away, before losing his head as a result of his foolhardy actions. His last son and heir, forced to take the oath of the Night's Watch, his only daughter, taken in as a ward of the Crown, a hostage really.

Having already taken the oath himself, Lord Eddard Stark's younger brother, Benjen Stark was chosen to act as an unofficial warden of the last Greyjoy. Over the years, his attempts to escape bore little fruit, costing him more freedom each time. Eventually he resigned himself to his fate, accepting the fate that his family laid out before him, going so far as to cooperate with his fellow black brothers, earning bits and pieces of his freedom back in the process.

Eventually, he stopped seeing Benjen Stark as his captor, his perspective on the First Ranger changing as he took his lessons to heart. Benjen taught him the bow, how to hunt and track, and most importantly how to survive. For all that Benjen Stark meant to keep him at The Wall, he meant to keep him alive as well.

The continued arguing ahead breaks Theon from his musings, Benjen and Jaime still going back and forth.

"You heard the Lord Commander's orders." Benjen continued, his voice cold as the northern wind. "We have yet to find any clue as to where the missing Rangers have gone." He fumed. "Or the wildlings for that matter."
Ser Jaime groaned in his saddle, urging his destrier closer to Benjen's garron, looking more a commander with his superior stallion. I guess no one told him the only sensible horse to ride in the far north is a garron, Greyjoy thought, lamenting the wasted coin. Of course a destrier was a fine horse, meant for wars and tourneys. Unfortunately, north of the wall was neither; a mount needed endurance, as opposed to speed and power.

Reaching his destination, the Kingslayer continued his argument. "I'm just pointing out that it would be best if we turned back." He said, attempting to sway the First Ranger. "Or at the very least, let us rest for the night." He huffed. "It's nearly nightfall. You can barely see the sun."

Theon had barely noticed the position of the sun, the small light fading slowly over the horizon, his mind occupied elsewhere. He looked around, assessing the terrain in regards to lodgings for the night, noticing a strange pattern in the snow.

"My lord!" He shouted to the still distracted First Ranger. "Look to the ground." He said, moving to dismount his garron.

He ran a had through one of the large bumps in the snow, finding the substance substance soft to the touch. Nearly two days with no snowfall, yet this patch is perfectly fresh, he thought, running a hand through the snow nearby, finding it frozen and stiff.

He rose from his crouch, dusting his hand on his breeches as the sun dipped a little lower on the horizon. "This snow here has be moved recently." He said, pointing to the long lump he'd just finished sorting. "The snow of here is still hard the touch, while over here, where the bump is, 's soft. Like newly fallen snow." He said, gesturing to the different samples. "Be willing to bet it's the same everywhere else." He gestured to the multitude of similar mounds, strewn about the field.

Benjen looked about, the sun making its last stand at the edge of the world. "It doesn't bode well." He said simply. "Probably a trap laid by the wildlings. Either way we need to move out." He said, much to the relief of the other rangers. "Careful to avoid the mounds. We report back to Lord Commander Mor--"

The sound of shifting snow cut through whatever Benjen meant to say, causing their small host to stir nervously. The sun had dipped below the horizon, stealing the light from the frozen wasteland, blinding the black brothers.

The first scream came.

Near the back of their formation, a piecing howl could be heard, mingling with the rough thrash and crunch of trampled snow. All around them dark figures began to multiply, bring with them the screams of his fellow Watchers.

Theon made to spur his garron to aid, though his actions were halted by the emerging figure from the pile of snow he had disrupted earlier. The pale creature leapt for his mount, attempting to bring Theon down to its level. In a panic, he ripped his leg from his stirrup connecting with the face of the creature, sending it to the ground, weighing a head less than before for its troubles.

He quickly dismounted his garron, searching for Benjen. Frantic, he thought to himself what to do in a situation like this, coming to a simple conclusion. "Light!" He shouted, competing with the sound of combat and the whipping of the wind. "We need light! Light your torches!" He shouted, freeing his sword to slash at another enemy emerging from the ground. His sword struck clean and true, cleaving neck from shoulder, sending its head tumbling in the snow. His victory was short lived, crashing around him as the headless man continued his assault.
We cannot win like this, Theon thought frantically, as he hacked through flesh and bone, creating smaller killers.

"To me!" He heard from across the field.

Theon turned slightly, taking in the sight of Ser Jaime Lannister and Benjen Stark, swords wrapped tightly in their sheaths as they beat back the enemy, creating a hole. The other black brothers began to swarm, using their sheathed swords, shields and packs as weapons to bash their way through the horde, seeking unity.

He reached the embrace of his brothers as a wall closed around him, allowing him time to recuperate. He retched. How is this possible, he thought, his mind frantic. I killed it. Twice.

His eyes flowed past his brothers, acting as a barrier while he righted himself. They darted from place to place, noting the half a dozen or so black splotches in the snow. Brothers that had fallen. He retched.

"Theon!" He heard vaguely from afar. It sounded like Benjen. He didn't know.

"Greyjoy! Move your ass!" He heard, more clearly voice by Jaime.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, gripping him roughly. He almost responded, until he felt it. The cold.

He craned his neck, taking in the sight of a singular hand on his shoulder. Just a hand; no face, no chest, no legs. Just a hand.

He tore the hand from his shoulder, tossing it into the sea of darkness around their barricade. Taking up his shield and sword, he joined his brothers, attacking with renewed vigor.

They fought for what felt like days, switching in and out when necessary, attempting to hack the ghoulish nightmares into submission. For each brother they lost, it seemed the enemy gained four comrades.

So trapped in this perpetual cycle of death, attempting to survive, the soul shattering screech from above was reduced to a light whisper. The shadow eclipsing the moon alerted them to an even greater danger looming above.

He watched with trepidation as the large winged creature landed, melting the dense snow covering the ground beneath it before it even opened its mouth, revealing craggy terrain in the pale light of the moon.

The air around the seemed to grow steadily warmer as the gigantic beast milled about in the snow, seemingly taking little notice of the skirmish nearby. The creature was majestic, black as night all over, with the exception of several patches of crimson highlighting the skin along its spine and wings.

"Rangers!" He heard Benjen shout, directing the attention of all others to him. "We need that beast to set fire to this horde." He said.

He must be fucking insane, Theon thought. If I'm to die, it'll be between the thighs of a woman.

He didn't have to voice his skepticism, for Ser Jaime, always the diligent soldier, did so for him. "So we can all get roasted?" He said, still hacking at the horde. "No thank you." He finished, slicing the arm from another creature.
Never one to give up, Benjen retorted. "Unless your sword is yielding real gains or you have another solution, you will follow my orders!" He shouted. Whether out of anger or need, Theon knew not. "We lock our shields and cover ourselves in our cloaks, then Theon will shoot the dragon." He said, rushing to finish, attempting to cut off any protest Theon could put forth. "Then we hit the snow and hope for the best." He finished.

"This is nonsense!" Ser Jaime responded halfheartedly.

"I am open to suggestions." Ben returned, receiving no alternatives. "Alright! Shields!" He shouted, holding back the hordes with his men, allowing Theon time to prepare. "Theon!" He shouted. "Aim true. Two shots, if need be."

Theon slung his bow free, pulling two arrows from his quiver. He place one in the snow, aiming the other at the dragon, pulling the string taut. He loosed the first, hitting the beast in the belly, barely rousing gigantic lizard.

"Again!" Shouted the First Ranger, beating back an overreaching hand.

Theon straightens his back. He takes a breath. He raises his bow, the center at shoulder height. Bringing the arrow to his cheek, he releases his breath with the arrow. The eye.

His aim is not true as expected, though it is close enough, glancing off of the scales near the brow. The dragon stirs, the glancing blow clearly enough to irritate it.

The beast, for the first time since its entrance, acknowledges the struggle to its flank, blowing a puff of fire into the harsh wind, taking down an entire row of their foes.

"Down!" Benjen shouted, causing the brothers to fall, covering themselves with their shields, cloaks and leathers, hoping for the best.

Darkness. For a long moment they felt was the heavy, cold press of the creatures above them, clawing at their furs and leathers and shields. They held their position.

After a long while, the cold darkness began to feel like a tomb. They waited. Waited for a spark, a flame that might never come. His arms grew weary. His limbs ached. I died a ranger. I died doing my duty.

And now his watch has ended. His grip loosened, letting the cold air wash through the small gap created by the oncoming horde.

The heat is almost unbearable, only tolerable due to the snow at his back. He can feel his cloak smoldering, the heat nearly turning his shield to kindling. He felt reinvigorated, his grip on his shield tightening as the weight on their party began to heat. And now we wait.

And wait they did. Even after the heat died down, they waited, still feeling movement above them. They waited. Hearing the crunch of dense steps in the snow, fading further with each heartbeat, they keep their place.

"You know--" the voice of Ser Jaime rose from the pile. "I once slew a dragon." He paused, likely waiting for Benjen's rebuke. "Mayhap I give it another try?" He continued.

"If you would like to Jaime, I won't stop you." The voice of Benjen Stark rang clearly but quietly. "Please, show us how to slay a dragon."

There was a brief burst of hushed laughter, the men attempting not to piss themselves, ignoring the
fact that they had heard no sound from above.

"Slowly." Was all Ben whispered, shifting his shield upward, beckoning the men to follow.

As the surface came into view, the moon shining high in the sky, bathing the surface in translucent light. The ground around them was devoid of snow, exposing the rough, craggy ground for yards around. Though all of this paled in comparison to the massive creature staring at the assembly of men, it's blood red, reptilian eyes trained on Benjen.

For his part, the younger brother of the Warden of The North did not seem particularly frightened. He held out a hand, halting the men as he stared down the beast, trying to keep them alive for as long as he could.

"I think it likes you Ben." Ser Jaime said, the laughter in his voice clear.

It abated as the beast growled, moving its head forward, sniffing their commanding officer. Moving its head away, looking at Benjen once more before shaking its head, turning to the side.

Without so much as another glance to their party, the dragon loped off into the snow, leaving them behind to assess the damage.

They were eight men less; two experience rangers along with six green boys. The bodies were gone. No blood. No bone. No ash. The men took stock of their supplies, finding that most had lost at least half of their cloaks.

Oddly enough, several of the horses were still on the outskirts of the field, having been left alone by the dragon. To his count, they were only three mounts shy of a full cavalry, and Ser Jaime found himself one destrier lighter.

Without any notion of normalcy, Theon asked the million dragon question. "So what do we do now?"

Benjen ran a hand through his long, thick mane. "We head back. Like we planned." He said, turning to assess the field around them. "We report what we saw, and what we didn't see."

And with that pearl of wisdom, the rangers mounted their garrons, moving southward to tell their tale of grumpkins and snarks.
An Oath to Keep

Chapter Summary

Not confident about this chapter but life's about risks, right?

The Warden of The North trudged forward at the head of his retinue, the harsh winds beating against the grey direwolf banner, creating an audible crackle with each resurgence. On the horizon, the silhouette of Winterfell could barely be recognized in the darkness of the early morn, the high curtain walls casting a slight shadow darker than its surroundings. He fought the urge to whip his mount into a lather, his heart quickening as an outline of the Great Keep jutting skyward beyond the curtain walls became visible.

Traversing the unkempt northern wilderness between Last Hearth and Winterfell had taken longer than expected, the sudden influx of torrential winds and heavy snowdrifts playing a large role. A journey that should have taken a fortnight was extended to nearly a full moons turn, their mounts fighting admirably through rivers of snow and ice, the wind beating at their weary bodies.

For what felt like ages, Ned had yearned for home, and now, with his prize in sight, he found himself too weak to relish his triumph. He continued forward, meticulous and slow, ensuring that he did not overwork his mount. The North Gate is but yards away, he thought, no sense in killing the poor beast now.

Upon reaching the high curtain walls of Winterfell, the portcullis to the North Gate had already been raised for their arrival. This was not a strange occurrence under normal circumstances, when the Lord of Winterfell arrived close to schedule. Oddly enough, Ned's party had arrived nearly a fortnight behind schedule; that in conjunction with the barely visible terrain outside of the walls, it would be nearly impossible to spot his party approaching.

The sight that greeted his men as they passed beneath the archway was both shocking and surreal. In the yard stood the entire household of Winterfell, crowded in a semicircle around his wife and children, accompanied by a tall lean man with dark brown hair reaching the small of his back. Ned was certain he had seen the man before, though with his back turned he could not be sure. He reached out a hand to muss Arya's hair, an all too familiar gesture, before accepting an embrace from Bran, followed by a similar gesture from Robb.

When he stepped toward Rickon, the boy of four years shrunk behind his mother, clutching her skirts. To his surprise, Catelyn merely clutched their youngest son, moving forward to embrace the stranger, coaxing Rickon to do the same.

"Father!" He is broken from his reverie by the voice of his daughter.

His vision hones in on Arya, darting through the ankle deep snow of the outer yard, making her way towards his party, Brandon not far behind. He swing a leg from his stirrups, dismounting his steed and handing the reigns to Alyn as his children crash into him, nearly knocking the Warden of The North into the snows.

He picks the up bodily, taking one in each arm and swinging them about twice over, before
depositing them in the snows, laughing heartily as the rest of his family approach. Standing shoulder to shoulder with Robb, what can only be described as Brandon at Robb's age, strides forward.

For a moment, Ned finds himself unsteady on his feet, before reason begins to take hold and he begins to take note of minor differences. The closeness of his eyes and thickness of his brows are all wrong, his brows too thin, his eyes too sharp. His lips are too full to be Brandon's. His chest and shoulders are not broad enough to be Brandon's.

He looks a Stark, just not that Stark. He has their hair. The orbs staring back at him are of the same beaten steel, like the northern skies before a winter snow. His face is long, though not as guarded.

"Nuncle?" The man rasped out, voice thick with emotion.

Suddenly, recognition dawned on him; where he'd seen these features before. When my child was taken from me, he thought cursing the name Rhaegar Targaryen inwardly. "Jaehaerys?" He said, not waiting for confirmation, crushing the boy in his grip.

For a long moment, no words passed between the pair as they just stood there, absorbing one another's presence. Ned was aware of the warm bodies milling about them, though he could not find the strength to care.

Jaehaerys sobbed into his cloak, taking in a long sharp breath. "I'm so sorry nuncle." He said, his voice marred with pain. "It's all my fault. But I promise, I'll make it right." He said, snorting deeply as Ned squeezed tighter. "I'll get Sansa back, I swear it." He said, rubbing his face deeper into Ned's cloak.

"It's alright son." Ned said, rubbing his back in circular motions to calm him. "Come inside, and we can have words." He pulled away, looking his sister's boy in the eye. "You will gain nothing with Rash actions."

Jaehaerys rubbed at his eyes, looking over his shoulder, toward a handful of garrons, loaded down with several packs. "I was just saying goodbye nuncle." He said, running a hand through his long mass of curls. "Robb has agreed to escort me outside of the North Gate," he said, gesturing in the direction of the Northern Wolfswood. "I'll make my way from there, to King's Landing."

Ned looked upon his face in confusion, looking to Robb for clarification and receiving a minor shoulder shrug for his troubles.

"His men left three days ago, but he insisted on waiting just a bit longer for your return." Was Robb's reply. "I offered to send a retinue with him to White Harbor," he said, shaking his head at Jaehaerys' stubbornness. "but he insisted on going out into the field beyond the North Gate."

Jaehaerys sighed audibly, turning to face Robb. "I told you already." He said, looking around before continuing. "He wouldn't fit within the castle, and he might cause some damage if he tried."

Without explaining who this he was, or how going north to get to the south would work, Jaehaerys mounted his garron, gesturing for Robb to do the same. "Lord Stark?" He said, Robb mounting his own horse a ways away. "I would like you to see this as well." He continued, extending his hand as a fresh mount was brought forward. "I wish to put your mind at ease, in regards to Lady Sansa's safety."

He raised a brow to this, wondering what he could find in the northern wilderness that could reassure him of his daughters safety. On a leap of faith, he gripped the reins of the new horse, securing his foot in the stirrup before mounting the large black beast, jostling the saddle a few time to be certain it
Satisfied that everyone was mounted and prepared to depart, Jaehaerys gave his packs a final check, tightening straps and securing items. Finding everything in its proper place, he signaled for their party to head out.

The party of seven moved out. Among their ranks were Robb, Jory, Ser Rodrik, Alyn, Bran and himself. Including Jaehaerys himself, they were only seven strong, certainly not enough to defend against roving bandits or wildlings.

For a long moment after passing beneath the portcullis, their party trotted slowly in silence, the whistle of the wind more vocal than a single man. This ended as Alyn spoke his first words to Jaehaerys in nearly a decade.

Near the rear of the small formation, the voice of Alyn struggled against the wind. "So, what's in the box?" He asked, calling attention to a box beneath the Prince's arm, lightly stained and made of oak, from the look of it.

His Grace looked back, following Alyn's line of sight, pursing his lips slightly, a spot of pink creeping to his cheeks. "It's a gift for the Lady Sansa." He said.

This produced a light chuckle from his right, Robb fighting the grin creeping to his face. "Something to remind her of home." The heir to Winterfell explained, whimsically. "He spent half the morning in the glass gardens before you arrived." Robb mocked, pretending to swoon in his saddle.

Jaehaerys turned to him, his expression obscured by a mass of black curls. "Leave it, Stark." He grumbled, slightly lower than the wind so that Ned barely heard.

Robb was clearly in no mood to leave well enough alone, evident by his continued assault. "Are you planning to win a tourney in her honor, then throw her onto your horse and ride for the Neck." He said jovially. "It would be a nice twist on-"

"Shhh!" Jaehaerys hisses, holding up a hand to halt their progression. "We're here." He continues, his cryptic words doing nothing to alleviate their confusion.

Eddard looked out over the vast expanse, noting nothing out of the ordinary, other than a group of fools chasing grumpkins through the snow. He looked over his shoulder, judging the confusion written on each face in their tight knit group.

He sighed, the cool air leaving a trail where his breath hit frost. "There is nothing there." He said, trotting slightly closer to his nephew. "Just snow and-"

"No!" He heard from behind.

He, Robb and Jaehaerys all turned to look upon Bran, his outburst drawing all eyes to him.

"There is something out there." He said, pointing to a mass of snow near a large patch of greenery.

The mound moved, revealing another patch of grass, steaming in the cool northern air as the figure began to change shape, growing taller and wider, spreading its massive wings. Wings? Ned thought as the enormous beast surged forward.

As the unknown creature moved closer to their party, it's speed phenomenal, Jaehaerys merely trotted forward a few paces to meet the beast. Feeling the burning of his nerves beneath his skin, Ned reached for Ice, barely sliding his blade an inch from his scabbard before the beast was on Lya's boy.
He made to move forward, though he was kept at bay by a single hand.

"Stay there uncle." Jaehaerys call over his shoulder, looking to the assembled men. "She will not harm me." He said, turning to the creature and extending a hand. To the surprise of all in attendance, the large leathery beast nuzzled against Jaehaerys, nearly unhorsing the boy.

His mount skittered sideways to avoid falling over, as Jaehaerys stroked the beast's muzzle, like a pet. "Did you miss me girl?" He said softly, cooing over an animal larger than the Great Keep of Winterfell. "I missed you." He crooned. "I could've used you against that big, bad Ramsay Snow."

At that, his eyes shifted to Robb, who mouthed the word 'later', before tuning back to the strange interaction before them.

There Jaehaerys stood, petting what could only be a dragon, scales of snowy white with flecks of blue, like winter roses scattered in the snow. It's massive blue, reptilian eyes darted behind the Prince, assessing the field.

"Easy girl." He said, drawing its-- her-- attention back to himself. "They are family." He said, calming the beast.

The dragon slumped into the snow, steam rising off of its-- her-- body. Jaehaerys took the opportunity to return to their party, ignoring the looks of shock and horror on each face. "I've gotten her to calm down. From here, I'll ride down to the Neck to meet her brother." He said, dismounting his garron. "From there, it's a straight shot to King's Landing." He began to untie his packs, dropping his belongings to the ground.

"Did you say brother?" Bran piped in, seemingly the only other person not perturbed by recent developments.

Jaehaerys looked to the boy warily. "Yes." He said, pointing over his shoulder, untying another sack. "This is Moon Dancer." He said as his pack dropped to the snow, spilling its contents into the snow.

In a large, thick satchel made of hard boiled leather, several swords were placed in small, flexible slots. The array before them was spectacular; a short sword, two bastard swords, a long sword and a blade he could not particularly name, though it looked dangerous, it's curved edge made for slashing. What he found queer about the array was that, save one, all of the blades bore the familiar dark, waving pattern of valyrian steel. Even more strange, the bastard blade as white as snow, the guard and pommel fashioned out of valyrian steel, depicting a metallic flame.

A whiste from Ser Rodrik breaks them from their reverie, Jaehaerys carefully sliding the blades back into his pack. "Quite an arsenal you've got there boy?" The aged knight observes.

Uncomfortable under the gazes of the assembled northmen, Jaehaerys threw the pack over his shoulder. "I've a need for variety." He said, walking to the dragon, sprawled on the ground. "You can never be too certain, in a fight." He shouted over his shoulder, causing the dragon to lift its massive head.

Jaehaerys went into action, moving about the massive creature, tying his bags to the spikes along the dragon's spine. The beast did not seem to mind, barely shifting an inch as Jaehaerys went about his work.

Satisfied with the state of his mount, Jaehaerys returned to their party as though he had not tied his belongings to a dragon, stepping past Ned and Robb, aiming his focus to Bran.

"How did you know she was there?" He asked. The meaning of the question was lost on him,
though he might have been in shock, due to the massive mythical creature before him.

Bran seemed flustered by the question, suddenly becoming very interested in his saddle horn, thumb nails scratching the wood. "I saw her move." He said, his voice almost a whisper in the harsh wind.

Jaehaerys smile lightly. "No." He said, scrunching his nose in confusion. "You didn't. I only told her to move after you noticed her." He said, edging closer to Bran's mount, staring up at the boy. "She blends with the snow, which is why I brought her, and not her brother."

Bran looked down to him, his face pensive. "You said you 'told her to move'" Bran returned, smiling at his cousin. "You said no words." He continued, tilting his head in a wolfish gesture, a crooked smile adorning his face. "How did you tell her, exactly?"

Jaehaerys raised a brow, turning slightly to glance at the assembly around them, listening intently to their exchange. He turned back to Brandon, a look of resignation relaxing his brow as he stepped toward the young boy. Now at the flank of his mount, Jaehaerys reaches upward, mussing the younger Stark's hair. He beckons Bran closer, gesturing for him to lean forward in the saddle. Jaehaerys leans in to his cousin, whispering into his ear, obscuring his words from prying eyes with his hands, cupping the side of the boy's face.

The elder of the two steps away, whatever message he had for Brandon, delivered. For a long moment, Brandon merely sat upon his mount, his face vacant and unassuming. It only lasted for a few moments, a smile blooming on his face, the vacancy falling away just as quickly as it appeared. He nodded.

"I'll mount Moon Dancer and see you back to Winterfell." Jaehaerys began, ignoring the questioning gazes following both Bran and himself. "After you lot are within the castle, I'll head south." He continued, striding towards his dragon, fidgeting with the ties of his thick fur lined cloak.

Closing in on the beast, Jaehaerys ripped off his cloak, gently placing it between two of the crystalline spires protruding from the dragons spine. He stroked the flank of the beast, bringing its attention back to its rider. It nuzzled its large head against the boy, shoving him into the muddy grass, forcing him to take a knee. Continuing to stroke its side, he began to whisper something to the beast, his tone low and soothing.

When he finished he stood, turning to the rest of the party. "I will bring Sansa back to you." He shouted over the wind, his hair blowing from its binds and spreading across his face, obscuring his mouth. "Even if it costs my life." He continued, turning his back to them and mounting the dragon.

Jaehaerys gave them one last look, and Ned thought he saw a sad smile stretch across his face. Without another word, the beast turned away, dashing through the snow, leaving large swaths of greenery in its wake before taking flight. Taking that as his sign, he turned his mount, spurring the beast toward the North Gate, the wind whipping his cloak about as his nephew flew above.

His mind began to clear as he rode through the snow, the biting cold against his face reminding him that life is not a dream. Indeed, the man that stood before him in the yard was Lya's boy. Lya's boy rode above them upon a dragon, white as snow, with shards of blue speckled over its body.

As he rode beneath the portcullis once more, greeting his family and household once again, his eyes instinctively motioned toward the sky, searching for the lone white figure against the grey of the clouds.

His search ended in failure. Looking southward, he could find no evidence that Jaehaerys was ever there.
I'm not too confident about this chapter, but I almost have the next three chapters of this work finished.
I just can't work on three projects simultaneously. In the future I plan to update in short bursts. Like two or three in a single day.
As always, positive feedback is welcome. Negative feedback is even better. Every hurt is a lesson, and every lesson makes you better.

JAENHAYRS

Traversing the skies just above the Blackwater, swiftly maneuvering Night towards the River Gate, the cold bite of the bay is felt on his skin, the foul water speckling droplets upon his bare frame. The mist rising from the bay to greet him reminds him of everything wrong with large populations, as the essence shit, piss and perfume assault his nose, welcoming him to The Crowlands as Duskendale passes beside him.

All around him, the wind ships his hair about his face, generating a snapping sound with each renewed squall. He urges the dragon to slow in preparation for his eminent vault, the darkened sky and dense cloud cover creating a shroud for the mount and rider. Beneath the wings of the massive dragon, the murky waters of the Blackwater Bay are all but opaque, as though layers of drab paint lie just below the surface. His blood runs cold as he imagines what lies beneath the surface, waiting to haul him to the turbid depths.

We've been here before, he thinks, reaching out with his mind as he urges Night closer to the surface.

As a dragon riding sellsail, Jaehaerys has certainly performed similar feats, jumping from a dragon's back into the sea or onto the deck of a ship, using the night sky as a natural cloak for Night's black scales. Though the silver flecks can sometimes cause complications, he taunts the beast as they grow closer to the surface. Predictably, Night lashes out, dipping a wing into the encroaching water, spraying the filth into Jaehaerys' face.

The cool water jars him, breaking him free of his reservations. While Jaehaerys has experienced several leaps into the sea from a dragon's back, he has never become truly comfortable with the idea of throwing himself at the mercy of the sea. Each time, just as he is preparing to jump, his mind floods with all of the ways it could rebound; carnivorous sea life, sharp rocks and his own wardrobe tend to present the greatest challenge.

Wiping the moisture from his eyes, he turns his head slightly, recognizing the fading silhouette of Rosby further inland. With his destination mere moments away, Jaehaerys moves his hand from Night's spike, quickly sliding it down his bare torso to the line tied to his waist, tugging at the binding connecting his midsection to his sealskin satchel. Inside, along with a handsome bag of gold, are his light armor and weapons, as well as several sets of clothing ranging from poor to fine. He then traces the line to his his bag, finding the rope tight and the knot pulled taut.

Releasing the dragons spinal spikes entirely, Jaehaerys takes hold of his effects, readying himself for
his plunge. Slinging a leg over his dragon, part of the rope becomes caught on one of Night's spikes, causing panic to rise within him as the moorings of the River Gate approach, his window rapidly closing. Flip me, he communicates, hoping that Night understands him in time.

Unprepared and awkwardly, the Prince of the Seven Kingdoms tumbles from his makeshift saddle, falling into the Blackwater Bay with a massive plop.

The water begins to fill his lungs immediately, fulfilling his lowest expectations as the foulness of the bay threatens to overwhelm him.

Calming his mind, he reaches out for his satchel in hopes of finding his way toward the surface. Feeling around his middle, he finds the knot leading to the rest of the rope and immediately begins to paddle to the surface, frantically. Breaking the film of the bay, Jaehaerys is immediately met with resistance as his crown comes into contact with a hard surface, causing him to panic once more.

This is short-lived, as he immediately realizes his folly, taking hold of the underside of the docks to guide himself clear of the obstruction above. Pulling himself and his belongings from beneath the dock, Jae hauls himself from the Blackwater Rush before promptly donning his disguise.

From his satchel, he pulls a thick tattered cloak, black breaches, a grey tunic and well worn boots. Hastily slipping into his clothing, Jae begins to take stock of his surroundings, finding the wharf empty this time of night.

Slowly, he ambles through the Mud Gate with his shoulders bent forward, slinging his belongings onto his back as he steps passes the guards manning the portcullis. He trudges across Fishmonger's Square, staying low and sticking to the shadows of the abandoned market as he attempts to ignore the aroma of fish nightmares in the air.

Stepping from the market square, Jaehaerys Targaryen rest his eyes on his ancestral home for the first time in over a decade, breathing in the rank air of the heavily populated cultural hub of Westeros. Unbidden, a feeling of nostalgia begins to invade his being, bringing forth thoughts of his childhood within the Red Keep. Suddenly, he is reliving the day that Ser Arthur gave him his first wooden sword, or the evening that he and Daenerys crept into the washing rooms, bathing Viserys' underthings in dragon peppers. Thoughts of his young aunt always lead to thoughts of his first kiss, if only just a childish peck on the lips.

Shaking his head, the Captain Commander of The Order of the Dragon attempts to clear his mind of thoughts that serve to hinder his progress. I'm no boy of five, he chants to himself. I've no need of family and friends, for I am the dragon, he continues, though he believes little of what he is thinking.

It matters not, for once he steals Sansa away from his father, he can never return to this place.

With his oath to Lord Stark in mind, he resumes his undertaking, moving through the burrows of King's Landing. Relying heavily on memories from his youth, he navigates the back allies and obscure thoroughfares nearest to the slope of Visenya's Hill, just as Ser Arthur had taught him.

Following the curve of Bastard's Bend, he finds the alley mercifully empty, allowing him to move as he pleases, sticking to the shadows. As he emerges from the narrow pathway, stepping into the modest lighting provided by a central lantern near the Street of Steel, he feels a light brushing against his exposed shoulder.

Jaehaerys takes a few steps, attempting to regain his lost balance and compensate for the weight of his satchel, treading into a gelatinous puddle. Turning sharply, the young prince is intent on seeking retribution, though he falters in recognition of their garbs. Shifting from an attacking stance, Jaehaerys
bows before the pair of Gold Cloaks, praying to the Father that they are ignorant to his intentions.

Chancing a glance at their faces, he can easily tell that neither man is more than a nameday or two older than himself, with both of their faces still marred by spots and the light dusting of a beard lining each of their jaws, piecemeal and patchy as they are. It is rather fortuitous that neither is old enough to remember a time when the Red Keep housed two Princes of the Realm, otherwise this might be a different encounter.

"What's all this then?" A voice from somewhere behind him questions. The sound of boots apprises him of the approaching figure, while the clinking of metal informs him that the man is also of the City Watch. Surprisingly enough, it is his voice that provides the most important information of all.

The aged gentleman comes to a halt, standing to the side of their party, forcing then to turn and face him. "Is there an issue here, gentlemen?" He questions, turning his feet to the other two City Watchmen, his armor shifting and jangling in the modest light. Taking the chance to look up into the man's face, Jaehaerys is met with the grizzled face of a childhood protector, conjuring memories of a childhood spent terrorizing the keepers of the Red Keep, be they City Watch or Kingsguard, with Daenerys at his heels.

Making himself as small as possible, Jaehaerys curves his back and bends his knees as he eases away from the pack, slowly. "Aw, 's no bother." He returns, presenting them with his best impression of a commoner. "No harm now foul." He reiterates, continuing on his way until a firm hand takes hold of his shoulder, scratching at every carefully developed habit that wants to lash out.

Glancing beneath his hood, he glares at Ser Alliser Thorne, hoping to force his hand away by sheer force of will. "Please, allow these two men to assist you home as an apology for the inconvenience." The Captain of Guards replies, clearly unable to read his mood.

"I'd be honored." He says, if only to escape the notice of one of the few people who might know his face after a decade, having seen it enough since his birth. "I'm on business in the city." He announces as they make their way from Thorne. "I'm in need of an inn for the night."

Somewhere to his left, one of the men tersely. "Not much chance of that." He responds, gesturing to the street before them. "It'll be impossible to find a bed in an inn with the upcoming tourney." He explains, creating more questions than answers.

"I was unaware of any tourney in King's Landing." He responds in confusion. Surely if there were a tourney on the horizon, he would have seen the tents littering the tourney grounds and the smallfolk flooding the streets, even at this hour.

The Gold Cloak removes his helm from his head, allowing his mop of brown hair to fall upon his brow. "The whole thing is for the prince's nameday celebration." He answers, carding his fingers through his nest of matted hair, before wiping his hand against his trousers.

The answer takes him by surprise. "Egg's nameday." He whimpers, his voice catching in his throat, raw with emotion and shame as he is reminded of how much he left behind. How could I have forgotten such a thing.

"Did you say something?" The watchman asks, his hand having migrated from his hair to his misaligned facial hair.

Cutting off his companion's question, the other City Watchman extends his hand before the others, barring their path. "There were a few rooms open here earlier." He interjects, gesturing to an inn on the interconnecting street. "You may be able to stay there for the night, though it's a bit high." He
continues, smiling at his partner as if sharing a private joke. "They provide the finest of featherbeds--"
His smile broadens even further as he adjusts his trousers. "And other pleasures."

The pair of Gold Cloaks laugh raucously, leaving Jaehaerys to his devices as they continue down the path before them.

Away from the greater attractions of the city, tucked into the obscure side street of Weasel Alley, the inn is nearly perfect. The inn is squat, sitting at a mere two stories. To either side, a loftier edifice sits against it's neighbor, leaning heavily inward, causing the stone to crack and bend beneath the pressure. Above the door, a wrought-iron marquee, depicting a bird of some kind stands vigil, bolted into the brick beneath the bird themed inlay. On his path within, having decided to take up residence in the inn for the evening, Jaehaerys gleams the wording above the bird on the marquee, learning the name of the Old Geese.

Easing the door open, Jaehaerys' is immediately met with the aroma of rose oil and lavender, detracting from his initial assessment of the space that he now inhabits.

His eyes pan around the room, taking in the minute reception hall before him. To either side of the vestibule, a drapery of the deepest sangria adorns a passage leading further into the establishment. To either side of the of each shroud sits a sconce, within containing a mass of incense that provides a palatable fragrance to the room, further confusing the sellsword and clouding his senses.

Shifting his eyes to the rounded podium before him, Jaehaerys takes in the group of people behind it, stepping further into the room and closing the door behind him. He considers the people before him, gathering as much information from their physical appearance as he can.

At the forefront of the group is a small paunchy man with a pig nose and a balding scalp, adorned in flowing silks of mauve and lavender, far more subdued than those of his beautiful compatriots to either side. To his left stood a woman, tall and voluptuous, garbed in silks of the magenta. Her skin is darker than the deepest chalice of wine, marking her as a Summer Islander, though her eyes are light brown, like molten honey. To the other side is a woman just as tall and buxom as the first, with silks of the same color purple in the same style. The only differences between the two are the eyes and skin, as the latter is wrapped in smooth skin of the finest ivory, with eyes which mimic the calmest sea. Jaehaerys is instantly captivated by the pair of women standing before him, stepping forward in a daze.

A curt clearing of the throat breaks him from his reverie, drawing his attention to the less attractive figure in the center of the kiosk. "Welcome to the Old Geese, how may we help you?" He inquires with a small smile, his words tumbling from his mouth like silk.

Taking another step forward, he is within arms reach of the proprietor of the business. "I would like to procure a room for an extended stay." He replies, slinging his satchel from his shoulder and placing it on the counter.

The host looks him over skeptically, wringing his hands softly as he smiles amicably, attempting to insult his potential guest in a polite way. "My good man, this is a premier establishment." He begins, spreading his hands as he motions to the finery littered about the foyer. "We provide our guests with luxuries beyond their wildest expectations." He continues, flourishing his hands fancifully. "And as you might understand, these services can be quite costly." He carries on, snapping his fingers at the summer islander to his side, who then disappears behind a curtain situated behind them.

She returns a moment later with several sheets of parchment along with a quill and inkwell. The proprietor takes a moment to scrawl out a few quick lines, extending the sheet to him. "I have taken the liberty of prescribing several alternatives that someone of your station might find more." he cuts
himself off, wrinkling his brows as he searches for another polite insult. "Cost effective." He amends, having made a common word into an incendiary statement.

Leaning against the counter, Jaehaerys looks into the man's eyes, glaring cold steel into his brow. "And what is meant by 'cost effective'?” He inquires, tugging at the binds of his satchel. "What are you inferring?” He questions, pulling the first of many Valyrian steel weapons from his bag, producing Khal Drogo's arakh followed by his own hand and a half sword.

The innkeeper's eyes appraise the weapons, knowing that either one could finance the rebuilding of his inn a hundred times over. "My good man, I would gladly take your weapons as payment if-"

"Are you daft?” Jaehaerys rebukes, abruptly interrupting the innkeeper. "I was making way for my coin purse.” He retort, placing his Valyrian steel breastplate onto the counter, unequivocally bragging about his wealth. "Now, what is the price of your best room, with all services included?” He asks, pulling free his purse from his satchel and tossing it into the air several times, allowing the compacted clinking of a full purse to fill the room.

Caught in his folly for a moment, the proprietor of the establishment is speechless. "Well-” He begins, swallowing heavily. "I-" He sputters.

"For our grandest room, with all amenities, the price is five and ten stags per night." The lighter of the two women responds, shifting slightly as her employer takes hold of his senses, having clearly been prompted discreetly by his assistant.

"Precisely!” He shouts, clearing his throat in an attempt to regain his composure. "Five and ten stags per day, allows you the free rein of everything my establishment has to offer.” He reiterates, gesturing to either side of him.

Untying his coin purse, Jaehaerys makes the decision to stay in the inn, hoping that a brothel is overt enough to avoid prying eyes, as he is likely one of many surprising things one could hope to find within. He pulls free a pair of gold dragons, placing one of them onto the counter. "I plan on lodging here for a fortnight." He announces. "I intended to offer some form of gratuity." He mocks, pulling free an additional two dragons as he carefully places his weapons into his satchel once more. "But I was recently given a piece of advice about cost effective living.” He concludes, noting the melancholic smile that adorns the man's face, as the two women attempt to cover their smiles. "So, who will escort me to my chambers?” He inquires, prompting the man to snap the fingers of his right hand.

The summer islander steps forward, gesturing for Jaehaerys to step forward and follow her through the drapery behind the counter. "This is where we house our important clientele.” She explains, stepping through the threshold, holding the portal open for her guest, revealing a narrow winding stairway, leading to an upper and a lower level.

He steps through behind her, following her up the staircase and into a slightly wider corridor, stretching to either side of them. Again, she leads him to the right, walking determinedly to the end of the corridor where a massive oaken door stands, the outside embossed with contours and graceful etchings of gesture drawn women. "This is where you shall stay.” She explains the obvious, inserting the key into the lock and twisting it. "While here, you have your pick of any of the women that our establishment offers.” She continues as she gently nudges the door open, displaying a darkened room. She steps within before him, stalking into the darkness and leaving him without, with only the light from the outer candelabras to illuminate his way.

Without warning, lights begin to flicker within, creating a magnificent ocean of wine colored upholstery. Stepping within, Jaehaerys takes stock of his private room, noting the massive featherbed
in the center of the floor in addition to a private bath and hand washing area. Most surprising is the nude summer islander before him, having discarded her gown some time between the door and the lights.

"So you are for sale?" He jests, stepping further into the room, wrapping his arm around her middle. She shakes her head in denial. "No." She pronounces, contrary to her current state of undress. "I am a fringe benefit for those who pay for the private room." She corrects. "As is my colleague below." She says, running her hand against his manhood. "Only six men have ever claimed me in five years as a pleasure girl." She continues, biting the soft flesh of his ear. "You will be seven." She drops to her knees, unlacing his breeches.

Tossing his satchel onto the bed, Jaehaerys leans his body backwards, throwing the door closed as he makes the concours decision to resume his preparations for his grand scheme on the morrow.
Hello

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learn a bit more about what Jaehaerys/Jon knows. We also get a little more on the J+D relationship dynamic. Also Ser Barristan learns that he did not kill the last Blackfyre. If you read the books and you don't believe in the Faegon theory, this might sting a bit. Hopefully you stay on with us, but I cannot blame you if you don't.

P.s. If you are reading this chapter without reading the updated version of Chapter 7, I hope you go back and take a look.

DAENERYS

The night air cooler than expected, the thin nightdress enveloping her body doing little to beat back the chill as she rests upon the modest settee in the heart of the library.

The moon overshadows the Red Keep, casting a harsh shadow over the space, exacerbated by the stacks of books left abandoned by earlier parishioners, creating a strange scene against the floor. From time to time, the shadows seem to move and sway like living beings, though she has already parished that thought as a trick of the light.

She turns the page in her book, *Letters of Love From Great Heroes to Their Ladies*, sampling the inspiring words within, relaxing after her latest conversation with Rhaegar.

The words left behind by great warriors, men forged in battle like hardened steel, seemed a perfect juxtaposition of their nature; their words were often more tender than those of poets who have only seen beauty, completely devoid of any of the darkness of warfare. To a degree, it seems like the darkness creates a smaller, more concentrated and pure version of the light, exemplifying what is beautiful and kind in the world.

She is nearly twenty pages into the massive tome before the first drop falls, marring the page with her brackish tears. Though the ink has long since dried, she frets over the possible damage she might have done to the classical work.

The eruption of tears only leads to more melancholy thought, drawing her memory to the bitter discussion she shared with her eldest brother only hours prior, forcing tears to from her eyes in streams and rivers. Dany closes the work before her, unable to focus on the world within any longer. If he believes I can be sold to solidify some lord's loyalty, she seethes silently, scraping her chair against the cool stone of the floor, producing a sound that is nearly identical to sensation building within her chest.

Hoisting the voluminous publication limply in her arms, she begins the trek to the book shelf, struggling to keep the work aloft. As she reaches the shelf, finding it level with her chest, she attempts to lift the volume to it's place, lamenting her small stature and delicate frame. Bending at the knees and bearing the weight with her shoulder, she manages to place the edge of the book on the
Wrenching her hand free, she prances away from the intruder, attempting to secure a safe distance to study her assailant. Though the interloper is wearing a hood, his close-cropped beard and massive shoulders mark him as a man. Tall and lean, he has a warriors body, much like that of Rhaegar and Arthur Dayne, denoting a lifetime of hard work.

"There is a sworn knight of the Kingsguard beyond the door." She threatens, praying that her lack of confidence is not evident in her voice. "If I scream, he will storm the room and cut you down."

Holding his hands in the air, indicating his surrender, the intruder slowly reaches toward the opening of his cloak. "I am going to unbuckle my sword belt." He explains, reaching with his cloak with a single hand, struggling to unbuckle his belt. If she wasn't so frightened, she might have found the action humorous.

Ripping his belt from his waist, he places his weapon on the floor, kicking it towards her as the scabbard makes a hissing sound against the stone, before easing back into a standing position and placing both hands above his head once more. Moving swiftly, Daenerys scramble to the floor, snatching up the weapon and taking hold of the grip, slipping the blade from its sheath to reveal the unmistakable pattern of valyrian steel, leveling the point toward the intruder's throat.

"You won't be needing that, Silverwing." He pronounces, bringing a shiver to Dany's spine. Reaching toward his hood, slowly drawing the covering away from his hair, revealing a long, beautiful face, framing eyes of beaten steel. His long black mane is drawn away from his face, disappearing behind his broad, rounded shoulders, like the Blackwater Rush beneath the night sky. Adorning himself in a cloak of the darkest black, the fabric stretching the length of his lofty frame, fabricating the living shadow before her. "I have not come to hurt you." He soothes, stepping forward to comfort her.

Gone is her constant companion and protector. Gone is the small boy who would lead her on grand adventures about the keep. Gone is the boy who offered his lips when Arianne teased her about her inexperience. In his place is a man. "Then why have you come?" She croaks, her voice a bit more hoarse than she intended, the tears rolling down her face heavier than before.

Jaehaerys strides forward, taking hold of her face, reminding her that the sword has slipped in her carelessness. "You're crying, Silver." He croons, kissing her cheek just beneath her eye, spurring her emotions in an unexpected direction.

Thrusting the weapon between them once more, she holds the blade between them insecurely, as she attempts to sort out her thoughts. "Where were you?" She growls, finding solace and strength in her fury. Might these be my words one day, she reminds herself, nearly shrieking at the suggestion of her upcoming betrothal, instead focusing her fury on the task before her.

Her nephew glances around awkwardly, considering the piles of literature strewn about their space, deciding on a substantial mound of misplaced texts. "Does the Grand Maester still adhere to Pycelle's old system?" He questions, ignoring her inquiry as he canters to the stack he'd just been observing, gesturing slightly to other similar erections about the room. Taking hold of the book at the top of his stack, he grabs hold of the tome just beneath it, pulling it free and holding it up towards the moonlight. "A Dance of Dragons: The True History?" He recites, turning back to her with furrowed brows. "How pretentious." He sneers, stepping forward and opening the volume, skimming its contents as he approaches her once more. "As if any of grey rats could fathom the civil war." He concludes, closing the book once more, thumbing the shelves to the other side of the room.
"Where. Were. You." Dany questions once more, feeling her heart rising within her breast as her growl subsides. "I will scream, and Ser Barristan and the gold cloaks without will storm the room and arrest you." She threatens, boring a hole into his back with her eyes. "Then you can explain to your father."

Jaehaerys sighs, pushing the book into place on the shelf, even after a decade away from home. To her surprise, her unarmed arse of a nephew begins to chuckle. "Not quite as timid as you once were, are you Silverwing?" He replies.

"Never call me that again!" She bellows, her voice carrying much more than she might have liked. He turns abruptly, likely taken aback by her brusque reprisal, judging by the aggrieved expression. "I am to be sold, like chattel." She continues, scoffing in antithesis of her subdued nature. Her nephew's frown deepens, the pain becoming more pronounced around his beautiful grey eyes. Good, she tells herself, suffer for the consequences you have wrought. "The main contenders for my body include Willas Tyrell, Lord Renly and Edmure Tully." She let's out a harsh chuckle, releasing all of the fury she had for Rhaegar upon his progeny, increasing in volume with each word. "Though Rhaegar will wed his heir to Lady Margaery, so that likely takes Willas Tyrell out of contention for my hand, so I will be given to a man who rebelled against my father." Her voice grows more boisterous, as her laughter becomes harsher. "All because he only has one son left to him, and no other marriageable kin."

Her tears are running rampant now, obscuring her vision in the vast darkness of the library, making it impossible to register the large figure enfolding her into his embrace. He swats his blade aside, as though the spell forged edge could not cleave through flesh and bone in one quick swipe. "I'm so sorry Silv-" He breaks off, taking care with his words. "Dany, I'm sorry." He replies as she melts into his body, breathing in the scent of pine and rose oil. He grips her shoulders, holding her at a distance and forcing her to look into his eyes. "I promise to right my wrongs." He shakes her lightly, as if it emphasized his point. "With you. With Sansa. With mother. I swear it." He vows, lifting his calloused hands to her face, brushing away her tears as he presses his lips to her crown.

She slips into his embrace once more, pressing her head to his chest, taking in the soft thudding of his heart within his chest. He begins to stroke her hair, humming against her skull and lulling her mind to ease, pushing her suspicions deeper into her mind. Suddenly, his words begin to take root, prompting her to question him further. "How did you know Sansa was here?" She whispers into his chest, before lifting her head to lock eyes with him. To his credit, Jaehaerys gave nothing away. "You came here from the North. That's the only other place that you might stop before traveling here." She accuses, taking note of the slight downturn of his lip. "We received no raven from Lord Stark?" She frowns, considering her nephew, who apparently found humor in this.

"I travel quite a bit faster than a raven." He returns cryptically. "Especially during winter." He continues vaguely, looking about the room to avoid her gaze. "Now, what can you tell me about where Lady Sansa is being kept?" He demands, his expression instantly becoming more serious, focusing on her once more.

Dany sighs, imagining Jaehaerys storming the maiden vault and ending his life in a hail of daggers. "She has free rein of the Red Keep, including Maegor's Holdfast." She informs him, taking note of the hope in his eyes. "She has been living within the Maidenvault, along with Princess Arianne and Obara, Nymeria and Tyene Sand." She continues, recognizing the metamorphosis of resignation from hope. "There is a sizable guard posting on the entrance and Prince Oberyn's daughters are skilled in poisons and arms. It is a fools errand."

Much like the Jaehaerys of old, he laughs away her concerns. "Then a fool I shall be, for that is what I plan to do." He returns with a confident smile. "I shall return my lady cousin to her family, stealing
her away from this pit of vipers." He continues, faltering slightly. "If that is her wish." He whispers sheepishly. "Is she treated well?" He questions with trepidation.

She grimaces, unable to answer his question properly. "She is treated well by the Queen and Lady Connington, though the dornish shun her." She replies, hesitant to create further enmity between the Northern and Dornish factions. "Your father has taken an interest in her." She informs him, registering the tightness in his muscles. "I mean to say he requests her presence often, though nothing untoward has happened." She amends, trampling any flames she might have stoked. "What do you intend to do?" She inquires, attempting to change the subject.

He shakes his head. "I plan to stay for Egg's tourney, but beyond that I have no other plans in Westeros for now." He shrugs nonchalantly, dragging his fingertips up her spine. "I'll head back to Essos after I've taken Sansa back to-"

"So you intend to leave again after I've just gotten you back!" She shouts, only noticing the panic in his eyes after it is too late. His arms slip from her small form, leaving her wanting for warmth. Behind her, the doors burst open, revealing the armored form of Ser Barristan along with several of their household guard. "Princess, are you harmed!" The white knight inquires, his eyes spanning the room for possible threats.

She nods her head profusely, stepping closer to Ser Barristan and his party of guards, hoping to obscure his vision. "I was absorbed in my reading and got carried away." She lies frantically, corralling the armored men into the doorway, ushering them from the room. "I shall be along shortly, Ser." She explains, closing the doors on them.

Looking back, she finds her nephew exactly where he had been before, as though he had never slipped behind the bookshelves. "I cannot explain all that I know to you Dany, but dark things are stirring in Essos." He explains as he sheaths his blade, before running his fingers along the shelf where he has just place A Dance of Dragons: The True History. "Our house may not survive if I fail to stop the undertaking that is upon us, before it lands on our shores." He continues ambiguously, taking another book from the shelf. "We are not as powerful as we once were, and father likely knows this and is preparing for the future in his own way, binding the other house's power to our own." He finishes, flipping through the the book that he has just taken from the shelf.

The more he explains, the further confused she becomes. "To what end?" She questions. "What is coming?" Dany rephrases, feeling like a small child, begging her brother for sweets.

Placing the text on the table, Jaehaerys turns to her, leaving the book open and turned nearly to the final page. "The next rebellion." He returns, his face a mask of stone. "Can I trust you to be the intermediary between myself and Sansa." He asks, his eyes begging.

She is met with a sudden epiphany, forcing the words from her mouth like water down a stream. "The tourney!" She shouts, causing Jaehaerys to lurch backward. "The entire household will be in attendance for Aegon's nameday, including Rhaegar and the entire Kingsguard, besides the bridge keeper." She continues, her mind moving swiftly and frantically, attempting to translate her thoughts to words. "She can feign illness and stay in the Maidenvault during the merriment. You can take her then." She nearly shouts, unaware of the rising inflection in her voice. "The armed presence in the castle would be lax, due to the need for security in the tourney grounds, and Sansa doesn't warrant her own member of the Kingsguard." Bouncing on her heels, Dany feels absolutely liberated, as though this were just another jape or prank at Viserys' expense.

"That plan wouldn't work." Jaehaerys replies, moving about the room with a stack of texts, placing them where he believes they should go from memories of their childhood.
Offended, she puffs out her cheeks. "And just why not?!" She questions, glaring at him in a silent dare to berate her plan.

Placing the last of his books on the shelf, he turns to her, dancing around the table that has maneuvered between them. "Because I intend to enter the tourney and win. Then I'll confront father." He responds, placing a chaste kiss to her lips before slipping into the shadows once more as the door crashes open once more, revealing Ser Barristan and his companions.

"I heard you shout, Princess." He announces for the second and last time this evening. "Is there something wrong?"

She examines the men, thinking of a possible reason as to why she might have cried out. "Nothing is wrong, Ser." She lies, glancing about the room, her eyes flickering from mountain to mountain. "Though I do have need of assistance replacing these books." She replies, gesturing to the constructions of literature strewn about the room.

With little complaint, the armored men remove their helms and gauntlets as they enter the library proper, placing them on the tables nearest to them. "Certainly." Ser Barristan returns, coming forward to receive his instructions. "Though, I am ashamed to say it, I have not spent much time in the library lately." He smiles, striding to one of the tables deeper into the room, where a flock of books lay slumped against the windows.

The other men follow suit soon after, aiding their princess in the organization of her favorite area of the Red Keep.

From the corner of her eye, near the entrance of the literary sanctuary, a dark blur darts from the room as the her protectors assist in the tidying of the room. This beggars the question as to how he entered the library in the first place, as the guards have manned the door since she first entered, sweeping the entire room for any other occupants before allowing her to be alone.

Shrugging away her suspicions, Dany strides to the nearest table, intent on assisting the menfolk in their cleaning effort.

Coming to the table where Jaehaerys set the book he was skimming when the last spoke, she finds the book beneath a small wooden sculpture of a three-headed dragon. Picking the small sculpture from the table, she examines the piece, taking note of the expert craftsmanship, making the beast seem almost alive. She runs a finger over the entire surface, finding it smooth to the touch, except for the bottom, where the motto of her house is scrawled into the base carelessly.

She places the sculpture down as she picks the book from the table, making to close the work, when a small smudge on the page jumps out at her in the dim light. Examining it further, she sees that it is not a smudge but a word, written in fine artist's charcoal.

Where the line reads: Selmy ending the War of the Nine Penny Kings by singlehandedly slaying Maelys the Monstrous, bringing an end to the Blackfyre line, a portion has been inserted, using a line drawn into the margins, changing the statement to; Selmy ending the War of the Nine Penny Kings by singlehandedly slaying Maelys the Monstrous, bringing an end to the male Blackfyre line. Beneath is the statement in the same hand, written: but what of the females.

"Ser Barristan?" She calls, drawing the attention of the Kingsguard member.

The aged knight looks to her in concern, ceasing his activities to attend to his charge. "Is there something wrong, Princess Daenerys?" He question, looking her over for any signs of injury.
She shakes her head, pushing the book into his arm and pointing out the discrepancy. "Not with me, though I am afraid this almanac has suffered quite the injury." She japes, giving a small smile which he returns. "Do you know what it means?" She asks, gesturing to the writing within once more.

Ser Barristan takes a look at the text, his brow creasing in consternation as he scans the words once more, placing the volume onto the table. He stands, hunched over the book for several moments, before snapping upward, his posture rigid and feral as he releases a volley of curses, shocking all in attendance.

The aged knight begins to scramble around the room, searching for something, though giving no indication as to what, until he yanks a sheet of parchment from beneath a stack of books, sending them tumbling to the ground. He releases another swear word.

Stuffing the parchment between the pages of the volume, the Kingsguard dart to the exit, his footsteps making it a nice distance away before he realizes he has left his charge. He sprints back to the door, his breath hasty and labored as he gestures to the contingent of household guards. "Escort the princess back to her chamber, now!" He shouts. "I must speak with his grace immediately." He concludes, rushing from the threshold, book in hand as he runs to Rhaegar, though she does not fully understand why, she is certain that it has something to do with all that Jaehaerys has told her.

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