The Journal of King Joffrey Baratheon, First of his Name

by Hermionechan90

Summary

In the year 1857 AC the journal of the king that solidified the rule of the Baratheon dynasty was found. The surprisingly frank and direct journal entries give Dr. Hedda Barath a rather unique insight in what life was in Westeros 1500 years ago.

With growing unease, I note that the so venerated Maesters at Oldtown have started to adjust the events of my reign in a nearly utopian narration. Gone are the mistakes I made in my reign, gone are the hunger and thirst, the blood and the sickness, only the glory and honorable deaths are left. Nothing of the craveness in my own ranks, instead the only ones that were craven were my enemies. Men and women that stood opposite me are demonized into fantasy. I cannot abide this farce, I simply cannot. So in these last days before the Stranger takes me too I will attempt to give an account of my life, the events that shaped me and my rule.

King Joffrey Baratheon, First of his name, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, Protector of the Realm.

SI-OC, Self-Insert, memories of another life

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Chapter 1

1857 AC, King's Landing, Red Keep

“And we are now entering the royal wing of the Red Keep, traditionally the left side contained the quarters of the Queen or Queens and younger children, while the right side was reserved for the King, his closest staff as well as the chambers of the crown prince once he had reached a suitable age. This custom predates the start of the Baratheon rule in 283 and is most likely a direct result of the Targaryen dynasty’s custom to marry their siblings…”

Hedda only listened with one ear as she passed another group of tourists in the Red Keep. Since the castle had been opened for visitors 15 years’ prior the number of visitors had grown each year. Many were interested how their monarchy had started out and the interest had only increased since they had the specialized exhibitions that concentrated on one aspect of royal living for a year before another topic was chosen. But right now nothing of that mattered, the conservators that had been working on the King’s Chambers for weeks now had discovered a hidden passage with another room and inside that room they had found several documents and books. From the exited call, she had received today at five AM, at least one of the books was a personal journal of a Baratheon King, they hadn’t been able to date it yet but according to her colleague Dr. Jeyne Marsha the font predated anything she specialized in and so was at least 600 to 700 years old. The book they concentrated on right now was in a very fragile state and as one of the only experts in reading long since outdated fonts Hedda would be one of the first to see and hopefully translate it.

“Dr. Barath?” a voice ripped her out of her thoughts.

Hedda looked up and smiled at the young man that was nervously wringing his hands.

“You are Edwin, right? One of Dr. Marsha’s interns.”

“Yes, Dr. Barath. If you would come with me? They already scanned the first fifteen pages for you to translate.”

“Is it possible to view the book itself?”

“Yes, but nobody is allowed to touch it other than the scanning experts. Dr. Marsha said that if they hadn’t moved it into the climate controlled lab instantly after they found it, it would have probably fallen apart within hours of the discovery.”

Hedda felt herself pale, that would have been devastating, “Right, so the scans?”

“Are here, Hedda”, Jeyne Marsha called form somewhere in the back of the room they had just entered.

“Hello, Jeyne!” Hedda said with a smile, “So did you find something else while I flew in?”

“No, just that the signature on the bottom of the first page really does include the name Baratheon and the usual phrase of King of the Andals, etc., we couldn’t date it yet because there are no numbers on the paper.”

Hedda took the first page into her hand and hummed before she smirked, “There are, actually. Until 523 they used to write out the numbers in text instead of just using the numerical system.”

“Huh… so there is a date? That will make things easier. And here I thought we would have to go through the whole royal registry to find the owner of the book. Post-Tully-Frey civil war is so
much easier to identify.”

Hedda snorted, “If you say so. I wouldn’t know what to do with all those Walders and Edwiles around 1200, it is a miracle that you can even distinguish between them.”

Jeyne just smirked and Hedda finally turned her complete attention to the pages in front of her, they were a bit grainy but that was to be expected, hopefully one of the IT crowd could improve the pages in the next few days, such scans were always killer on her eyes.

The first page was surprisingly unadorned, not a single illumination present, which supported Jeyne’s theory that this was a personal journal instead for official memoirs that were intended for the royal library. Her eyes wandered further down to the signature and she paused at the elegant first word… that couldn’t be. Her eyes wandered back up at the top of the page where the date was written in clear ornate letters that were so typical for the time around 300.

“I need pen and paper.” Hedda said impatiently.

She had hardly finished the sentence when Edwin already pressed said utensils into her free hand, the boy was proving to be quite useful.

Absentmindedly she sat down on the next free chair and let her mind translate the words in front of her until on the college block to her right stood, “364 AC, King’s Landing, the King’s Chambers”.

“Jeyne… if that is what I think it is, the journal could be the find of the century.” Hedda said slowly while her eyes traveled down to the signature on the bottom.

“Explain.”

“364. That’s the date the third Baratheon King came into power. Orys Baratheon, first of his name.”

“What does the signature say?” Jeyne asked rushed.

Hedda’s eyes traveled downwards again, really concentrating this time and yes, the word hadn’t changed with reverence she read the whole signature in her mind. It said King Joffrey Baratheon, First of his name, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, Protector of the Realm.

“This is the Journal of King Joffrey.” She finally whispered into the room, “We found the journal of the King that reigned during the Return of the Long Night and cemented the Baratheon rule for the next 1500 years.”

364 AC, King’s Landing, the King’s Chambers

Today with a heavy heart I bid farewell to the woman that has been my companion, my advisor and one of my constants in life since our wedding day 64 years ago, she now rests in the ground and no longer will I find comfort in her. Her presence and counsel always a steady one, through good times and tragic ones. She had just become my wife when the kingdom was on the verge of being lost forever in snow and ice and her example kept the Southern parts of the Kingdom intact while all the able warriors were in the North fighting for humanity’s survival, she stood by my side when the last remains of the Targaryen line threatened to reclaim their former kingdom. She was also present when peace reigned in our lands, when our children learned to walk and run in the
halls of the Red Keep, found spouses of their own. She paced beside me, anxious as our second oldest daughter nearly was taken from us in childbirth. Comforted me when my brother fell at the hand of rebels. It was her that counseled me when hard decisions loomed and it was her soothing hand that made the weight of sovereignty bearable. Her’s and Jon’s, oh how a grieve for them. For they both have been taken from me within the same year and now I stand alone at the head of our kingdom and feel bereft of all my joy and happiness. Only my sense of duty and sheer stubbornness lets me continue day by day, I see the worry of my children in their eyes and actions. They treat me like I will vanish on them any moment now. And maybe that is the fate that awaits me in the weeks and months to come, to slowly lose the last strength of my limbs until the Stranger will finally take me away from this place. It is a thought that balms my heart, because that would mean to be once more united with Jon and Margaery, but I cannot give in, not yet when I still have one last task to fulfill.

With growing unease, I note that the so venerated Maesters at Oldtown have started to adjust the events of my reign in a nearly utopian narration. Gone are the mistakes I made in my reign, gone are the hunger and thirst, the blood and the sickness, only the glory and honorable deaths are left. Nothing of the craveness in my own ranks, instead the only ones that were craven were my enemies. Men and women that stood opposite me are demonized into fantasy. I cannot abide this farce, I simply cannot. So in these last days before the Stranger takes me too I will attempt to give an account of my life, the events that shaped me and my rule. This account will also contain the private details, the hidden ones, thoughts, reasons and reactions, things that would never find their way into the King’s official vita. Things that would raise the hairs of any septon or septa alive. It amuses me that there is talk of awarding me sainthood for the deeds throughout my life. If the High Septon knew what things were happening behind doors since the days of my youth, he would rescind the honor posthaste. Alas he will never know, at least not in my life or even hundred years from now. I intend this account to be hidden away in one of the secret chambers of the keep. Maybe it is a fanciful idea but I imagine some young lad or lass five hundred or more years from now stumbling across the hidden passage and finding my memoires. And if after he or she read it only one more person knows what really happened I will be satisfied.

King Joffrey Baratheon, First of his name, King of the Andals, the Rhoynar, and the First Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, Protector of the Realm.
Chapter 2

1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep Castle

Hedda’s hand shook a bit while she read once again over the first page that she had translated. If the journal really contained what King Joffrey promised on the first page, it would clear up so many questions they had for years and probably bring up at least four times as many new ones. Still, even if the Journal proved to be varnished by King Joffrey’s opinions it would still be an invaluable treasure for medieval historians around the world. She knew of at least seventeen colleagues at Essosi universities that would literally kill to get a look at the journal. Not to mention her own curiosity and personal interest, after all she was of one of the many Baratheon cadet branches. Her many times grandfather had been the bastard son of King Hendrik Baratheon, fifth of his name, that had lived about 200 years ago and in recognition of her ancestor’s contributions to the just established society of science he had been acknowledged and given the name Barath instead of the usual Waters.

“Dr. Barath?”

Hedda looked up and gladly took the offered cup of coffee from Edwin.

“Thank you.”

“Anything else I can do for you?”

“No, not right now but thank you.”

“Okay, we are ordering pentoshi food for dinner, any preferences?”

“Anything deep-fried and with that hot chili sauce they like to use, I’m in need of junk food. Oh and some pita bread and garlic butter, please.”

“Anything for dessert?”

“Something sweet and tart or chocolaty, I don’t care what.” Hedda said with a grin that Edwin reciprocated.

“Alright Doc. Food will be here in about two hours. Happy translating.”

Hedda snorted and turned her attention back to the scans in front of her.

During the early years of my childhood I was sheltered from all kinds of reality by my mother, Queen Cersei Lannister Baratheon. There are not a lot of positive things that can be said of the late Queen’s virtues, but one thing has to be made abundantly clear, she loved her children fiercely. Her children, which included my sister Myrcella, our brother Tommen and me, Joffrey Baratheon, her oldest son and the crown prince of Westeros.

I grew up in chambers that were decorated lavishly with red and gold, lions everywhere and with the Lannister words whispered to me every night. My Queen mother considered herself still a Lannister and would so for the rest of her life. She and my King father never saw eye to eye and if one took the behavior of King Robert into account, it is no wonder that she never took to the Baratheon name.

For the first six years of my life my whole world consisted of my mother, her ladies-in-waiting, servants and my newborn siblings. I cannot remember seeing or interacting with my father before
my sixth name day. According to my uncle, Ser Jaime Lannister of the Kingsguard, he was uninterested in his children as a whole until my, then still blond, hair began to darken. For the sake of completeness I will give an account of my looks, from around my fourth name day until my sixteenth the blonde Lannister locks I wore since my birth turned into a wild dark colored mane. Though unlike my Baratheon father and uncles, my hair kept it’s Lannister curl and a certain golden gleam even when it fell to my lower back in later years. My eyes as well were a mixed Lannister- Baratheon inheritance, I had inherited mostly my mother’s clear green Lannister orbs but with one difference, there was the slightest hint of blue on the edges. Years later my sister would tell me that depending on my mood my eye color would change from green with a hint of blue to a striking turquoise color when I was laughing or especially happy. It may seem trivial information at best but it solved a lot of mysteries about certain gifts I received. My younger siblings and later their children tended to give me turquoise items, and I like to think that this was because when they saw me I was mostly in good spirits. Family was always important to me.

One of my clearest memories of my early childhood was the birth of my sister Myrcella and later on the day Tommen was born. I was allowed to hold both of my younger siblings only hours after they came from my mother. In the moment I first caught sight of them, I knew that I would do anything to prove myself worthy as their older brother, as the eldest it was my duty and right to protect them, a feeling that only returned to me when I was a man grown and held my own children for the first time.

289 AC, King’s Landing, the Queen’s Chambers

The first time Joffrey became consciously aware of himself was two months before his fourth name day. It was late December and he was playing with his wooden knights in his mother’s solar when the first round of memories hit him. He stared confused at the toys in his hands while his mind was whirling at a frightening speed with unfamiliar pictures. Maybe it was a blessing that a body and mind as young as Joffrey’s had no idea what was happening, so he just watched confused as in front of his inner eye information and pictures were settled into various corners of said developing mind, instead of panicking and fighting against it.

“Are you alright, my little love?” a gentle voice asked from beside him.

Joffrey looked up and into the face of a beautiful blonde and very pregnant woman. Reflexively he smiled when he recognized her.

“My Mama.” He mumbled and clumsily stood up to hug her.

His mother laughed and gathered him into her arms, gently rocking him back and forth, even with her stomach somewhat in the way. The rhythmic motion set him at ease and while his mind still ran through hundreds of pictures in a second Joffrey fell asleep in his mother’s arms.

Whatever process had started that day was finished during the night because when he woke up next Joffrey suddenly had memories of a whole different life in his head. Memories but more importantly also the understanding to grasp what they meant. To Joffrey’s great fortune not one of the memories was connected to an emotion and so it was more like watching a movie and being able to pause at a certain passage instead of having to deal with someone else’s life in themselves. The knowledge also didn’t fade like other memories usually did, so there was another advantage the young crown prince learned to appreciate rather quickly.

The memories that he now possessed had once been the ones of Charles Buckwell, an English IT specialist with an obsession for fanfiction and various entertainment genres. The man used all of
his free time to either watch series, read, write or play videogames. He had no partner, didn’t see the need for one, though he had several girlfriends in the past and generally enjoyed touch. Instead he dreamed of immersing himself in the fantasy worlds that occupied most of his waking hours. His latest obsession before the Stranger took him, were the ASOIAF books and the TV series Game of Thrones. His death was just as unspectacular as the rest of his life, he died in a car accident only months before his 33\textsuperscript{rd} name day.

It was a strange experience for Joffrey, one moment he was barely aware of himself and in the next he had such an acute sense of self that it made him self-conscious of everything he did. So he spent the first day cuddled up to his mother and listened as one of her ladies-in-waiting recited tales of old for him. His mother grew concerned the longer he stayed subdued and finally called the Grand Maester. Pycelle, the name popped into his head unbidden the moment the man came through the door, pronounced him under the weather and prescribed some bedrest and a beverage that Joffrey identified tentatively as Thyme tea with honey. The bedrest ensured that he could let his thoughts wander through all the knowledge he now possessed. Including the one about ASOIAF and Game of Thrones. Joffrey cringed at the end of his own person, he would be poisoned at his own wedding if he didn’t change things. Being the product of incest also didn’t sit well with him. Especially because he knew that Jaime Lannister was just as indifferent to his children as Robert Baratheon.

It was probably a good thing that Joffrey’s own personality hadn’t established itself yet in the body when he had received this boon of the gods, fighting oneself wasn’t what he thought would be pleasant or healthy. No, instead there was now only Joffrey, with a pool of information about a whole other world, two interpretations of his own world’s future, the thought processes of an adult and all the emotions of a toddler child who wanted hugs and kisses and the attention of his doting mother.

The Queen. His loving mother.

Cersei Lannister may be one of the reasons why one day there would be war in Westeros but right now she was his whole world. Kind and patient and always fulfilling any wish a little boy of nearly four could have. Joffrey was spoilt, there was no denying it, both with affection and wordily goods, nothing was too good for him. For now that was acceptable, he was still only a toddler and some allowances could be made but he knew that as soon as he grew out of the toddler stage he would have to start working on the more physical aspects of his medieval education, like learning how to wield a sword. At least he was young enough that nobody would be curious why he couldn’t remember how to use a sword or had a complete personality shift. The Joffrey of the books and TV series never learned how to properly fight and that was one difference the current Joffrey already was set on. There would be war in his future, he needed to learn now while he still had time. There were some of the best fighters of whole Westeros in the Kingsguard and the Red Keep, one of them should be able to teach him how to keep himself alive and lead people into battle. Joffrey wasn’t kidding himself that he would be able to avoid this, not as the crown prince.

So for the moment Joffrey enjoyed the last of his childhood, he made sure he ate as balanced as possible and that he was outside at least once a day, playing between the various rose bushes and trees that were planted in the Red Keep’s main garden, always in the sight of the Kingsguard and his mother's watchful gaze.

The longer Joffrey watched the members of the Kingsguard the more he came to dismiss most of them as potential teachers. Mandon Moore was too compassionless and probably wouldn’t be able to explain to Joffrey what he was doing wrong, Boros Blount was a coward and Joffrey even suspected him of being incompetent, there was something cruel in Meryn Trant and Preston Greenfield was not much better. The only two options Joffrey saw were Barristan Selmy and his
father-uncle Jaime Lannister. It shouldn’t have surprised him so much that most in the Kingsguard were unsuitable to their tasks. Once he was King he would have to find a way to get rid of the useless ones.

Living in the Red Keep was… both totally normal to Joffrey and not. Having an idea about how running water and flushing toilets work and then suddenly not being able to use them took some adjustment, on the other hand his instincts told him that the privies and chamber pots were a completely normal part of everyday life. And they were, though he had to admit that he avoided the chamber pots as much as possible, preferring to get up and using the outhouse that was adjourning to his mother’s rooms.

As befitting his age, Joffrey still lived in one of the adjourning rooms that his mother possessed, not the nursery because that was occupied by a newborn Myrcella. She had arrived on the 25th of March in 290 and was a tiny thing. Joffrey had been allowed to hold her with the help of his mother and he hadn’t expected to feel such a fierce love for his tiny little sister. She had done no wrong and her fate would be death if he didn’t interfere. With this new resolution in mind My Joffrey began to beg his father-uncle and Ser Barristan Selmy for sword training.
1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep Castle

“This… this is really interesting.” Jeyne said thoughtfully after she swallowed the last bit of her curry dish and gestured at the passage about Cersei Lannister Baratheon, “There hasn’t been an account about what TRULY goes on in the royal family since the love letters between King Rickon III and Lady Eileen Blackwood were found in 1842 and made public with the permission of her Grace, the Queen.”

Hedda nodded thoughtfully, very relaxed after loading up on fatty food and lemon water, “I’m rather astonished myself that King Joffrey speaks so unfavorably of both his mother and father. I mean we knew from accounts that Robert Baratheon was a man whore and had fathered at least two dozen bastards in his life but normally highborn children were brought up to respect and never question their parents and the king… especially the king.”

“No always, though. There have been instances in history in which children have found their parents too weak and overthrew them… but you are right they always worded it less drastic in the historic accounts. The latest of such occurrences was sixty years ago when the late King married a Mooton and ignored any input from the then Queen Dowager Alysanne Martell Baratheon. Until her death thirty years ago there was no contact and even now the relations between the Martells and the main royal line are strained at best.” Jeyne said thoughtfully.

Hedda hummed, she never paid very much attention to the current events surrounding their royal family, preferring to explore what had happened long in the past. So she turned their conversation back to the original topic, “Maybe we will learn more about King Joffrey’s reasons in later passages. Now his relationship with his siblings was clearly very favorable as often as he brings them up… That might actually explain why the Princess Myrcella had such an atypical match made for her, if he was close to her might have allowed her to marry for love instead of political reasons. Her husband was only third in line of succession at the time of the marriage and didn’t stand to inherit anything of note, so historians have been puzzling about the reasons of King Joffrey for marrying his sister off like that. Some even said it was so that Myrcella’s children would be removed from the succession and prevent a similar uprising as the Blackfyre Rebellion… personally in never thought that made much sense, Prince Tommen who had a much better claim had a, then, typical match made for him.”

“Who did she marry?” Jeyne asked with a raised eyebrow.

“I will show you once I have finished translating the first dozen or so chapters and then we can try to reconstruct the timeline. I called my office, and my assistant back home is digitalizing all my notes about the period around King Joffrey’s reign for additional information. Has Dr. Karstark called you back?” Hedda answered distractedly.

“He is still at the excavation at the Fist of the First Men and will only be able to join us in a week at the earliest. Drs. Redwyne and Erenford will be here in the morning.”

Hedda grimaced at the thought of Jocelyn Erenford.

“Erenford? She is sloppy.”

“Yes. I don’t like it either but she was present when I called Dr. Redwyne and couldn’t be persuaded away.”
During these early years, several teachers come to my mind on which I look back fondly and whose teachings greatly influenced my outlook on life and the kingdom. Maester Arwick who was responsible for educating me in Westeros' noble houses, my letters and the simplest of maths. Daven Lannister, a member of the cadet branch that settled in Lannisport, can be credited for many of my policies later in life for he taught me the economics of trade, how to balance a checkbook and more advanced mathematics. Finally, the man who I owe my survival in the treacherous waters of Westerosi politics for over sixty years was no other than Lord Jon Arryn, Lord Paramount of the Vale and the Hand of the King during my father’s rule. Jon Arryn taught me more about how our society worked and how one balanced various allegiances in one year than my father ever knew in his whole life.

290 King’s Landing, Red Keep

As it turned out children as young as four weren’t allowed to learn how to swing a sword yet. Joffrey should have expected that, four year olds simply didn’t have the strength or attention span to concentrate. So when it became abundantly clear that his physical education had to wait he turned his attention to the academics. Or well as much as academics were taught in medieval Westeros. Convincing his mother that he wanted to learn how to read and write was a chore on itself. Cersei, being of the opinion that he was a prince and that he could learn how to read later on in life, was more than reluctant to grant his wish. Only the threat of throwing a tantrum finally made her agree and send for a Maester from Oldtown to educate the crown prince. Joffrey would have been satisfied with learning how to read from a septa but he wouldn’t waste this opportunity.

Maester Arwick was a relatively young man for his office and very eager to prove himself. So when Joffrey began to ask questions about the Order in between inquiries about this or that topic he answered eagerly and without censure. Yes, the Maesters really did serve each house in Westeros and yes they all could call on each other for help or to discuss problems. It made abundantly clear how powerful and well connected the Maesters of the Citadel were. He would have to be very careful with anything he did against them or he could find himself being slipped poison one day.

So for the next two years he spend about three hours a day with Maester Arwick and learned how to read and write the Common Tongue as well as basic additions and subtractions of numbers but also how to recognize most of the noble Houses of Westeros by banner, name and words. He learned about the history of House Baratheon and Lannister as well as the Targaryen rule and later on when he proved himself as knowledgeable enough in everything Westeros Maester Arwick had additional reading materials sent from the Citadel about Essos and the other lands that were known to the Maesters in Oldtown.

Occupied with his new lessons and memorizing as much as possible Joffrey didn’t notice the first few times his mother compared their hair colors. Only around the fourth or fifth time it happened he finally realized what she was doing when she combed her fingers through his hair and put one of her own strands beside his head.

His hair was becoming darker.

That was… unexpected. From both the books and the series he knew that Joffrey then had been as blonde as one could get and there had been no darkening of his hair color. So he started to pay attention to the myrish floor-length mirror his mother kept in her main solar. The change was slow
but undeniable, over the next two years his hair color changed from light blonde to dark blonde with several dark brown nearly black strands in his mop of curls. Joffrey knew that color. It had been the same color Charles had worn as a child and from his memories the hair would only continue to darken until it was dark brown in color. Though one major difference to the other man was his bone structure. While his hair and to a certain extend his eyes, which were developing a subtle ring of blue color on the outer edge, were changing, his body wasn’t and with any luck Joffrey would inherit the very sharp cheekbones that both his mother and father-uncle possessed.

And yes, he was STILL calling Jaime Lannister father-uncle in his mind. Because the dark hair wasn’t coming from Robert, it was coming from somewhere else but Joffrey was quite certain that there wasn’t one drop of Baratheon blood in his veins.

His mother’s reaction to his change of hair color was… well she clearly wasn’t happy about it. She wasn’t suddenly ignoring or neglecting him but… there were times when she couldn’t look at him. It wasn’t bad per se for Joffrey because he knew her reasons and he was also somewhat forewarned about her character from the books but any other child would probably get a complex from Cersei’s behavior.

To distract himself, his body was that of a very easily upset child after all, he began to explore more of the Red Keep and so crossed the path of Robert more than once. With surprising consequences.

292 AC, King’s Landing, Maegor’s Holdfast, servant hallway

“Boy!!!” a loud voice echoed through the hallway Joffrey had chosen to check out today.

Wide eyed he turned around to be confronted by Robert Baratheon followed by Ser Barristan Selmy and Ser Borros Blount.

Joffrey bit his lip before he asked tentatively, “Yes, King father?”

“What are you doing? Shouldn’t you be with your mother?”

Joffrey looked guilty to the side before answering, “I’m exploring?”

Robert stared at him than burst into laughter, “Nosy brat, are you? Well come on, the hallway isn’t very interesting. There are better places to explore. And stop adding King in front of father.”

Joffrey made his eyes widen and smiled brightly up at the man that was considered his father. He saw the slight softening of Robert’s expression and inwardly laughed in triumph, he had been practicing this eager expression for weeks and it had already proven its worth with several servants, that it also influenced the king was the icing on top.

That afternoon Joffrey was allowed to accompany the king to the training fields for the first time. His mother had been very firm about Joffrey staying inside Maegor’s Holdfast and the gardens along it since the day of his birth. He watched fascinated as Robert fought with various members of the Red Keep guard and Ser Barristan himself, he was surprisingly quick for such a heavy man.

“Can I learn that too?” Joffrey finally asked once they stopped for a short break.

Robert looked up at that, clearly delighted and turned to Ser Barristan, “He is old enough to begin with sword training, right?”

Ser Barristan nodded, “Six years is a fine age to start learning the sword, your Grace. The Master at Arms surely has practice weapons in the right size for the Prince.”
Robert nodded eagerly and so they made their way into the armory where Joffrey was equipped with a wooden training sword fitting for his age and size and a belt to carry it on his waist when he wasn’t using it. The experienced knights and fighters instructed him to get used to the weight and how to run with it in the way.

To say that Cersei was less than impressed with Joffrey starting sword lessons was an understatement. He could hear her screeching about it two rooms down, through stone walls. In the end she couldn’t do anything about it. Not with Robert and Joffrey both wanting him to learn. It was also the first time Joffrey was confronted with Cersei Lannister the spoilt child instead of Cersei Lannister the Queen and mother. She slighted him for a week before she allowed him back into her solar and arms. For a boy of seven that is a hard blow, at that age a child is still very dependent on its mother and her affection. So to be so in obvious disfavor with Cersei, even when he had the memories of an adult, was very disconcerting for Joffrey. In Cersei’s defense at the first indication of Joffrey bursting into tears in front of her chambers, she nearly fell in her hast to open the door and comfort him. Still, that was a lesson that Joffrey truly committed to memory in regards to his mother. Even if she didn’t do it for long, she was not above emotionally punishing her own child if something didn’t go her way.

Probably to offset Robert’s influence on Joffrey, Cersei let another tutor come, this time from Lannisport for additional education besides Maester Arwick. Daven Lannister, a very intelligent man of the Lannister cadet branch, was paid to teach him High Valyrian, advanced mathematics and most importantly in Joffrey’s eyes economics and how trade worked in Westeros.
Chapter 4

1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

“Jon Arryn… right he was one of the commanders during Robert’s Rebellion and later the Hand of the King. I remember him from one of those mural relieves in the Eyre. Apparently, it was commissioned by his young wife after his death.” Jeyne said suddenly.

“Hhhm?” Hedda muttered halfheartedly, most of her concentration was still on the text in front of her.

“Remember when Director Sullivan tried to get additional artifacts for the Targaryen dynasty-exhibition from Lord Arryn? He sent me and Michael up to their ancestral seat where his son was vacationing while he tried to convince the current Lord that those three swords and two necklaces were absolutely essential for the success of the exhibition? We waited three days for the go ahead. Until then the steward saw it as his duty to impart even the minutest details of the Eyre’s history on us… even though neither of us specialized in the medieval style in which the Eyre is held even today. In his defense though, he made it interesting. There were several anecdotes about the main line Arryn’s history that were rather bloody … in any case Lord Jon Arryn was one of the longest living Lords of his time and he saw five Kings sit on the Iron Throne during his life.”

Hedda looked up at that, “Seriously?”

“Four Targaryens and Robert Baratheon who he put himself on the throne. The Eyre steward called him the true ruler during Robert’s reign and I’m inclined to believe him by now.” Jeyne continued idly.

Hedda hummed thoughtfully, also in favor of that theory. Hedda’s expertise was in decoding and translating old manuscripts, mostly Maester texts, marriage certificates and small bibles, but in documents that old there was often some hints of the political situation at that time and so Hedda had learned to read between the lines rather quickly.

As any child of noble birth my arms training started early. I was around six name days when I was first introduced to wooden practice swords. The Master-at-arms Ser Menwin Staedmon was my primary tutor for the most basic fighting stances in various weapons ranging from the sword and other bladed arms to the spear and the war hammer my father favored. I was even taught how to handle obscure devices like the whip, spiked chains and nunchaku that were the preferred choice of weapon further east in the world. Projectile weapons like the bow, crossbow and various sling types were taught to me by another man, named Wyllis Waters, a highborn bastard of a Crownland Lord that had made it to Master-at-arms and counted to the most skilled bowmen the kingdom had seen up until then.

These two men were responsible for building the foundation on which I continued to rely on for the rest of my life. Early on I had seen the consequences of what idleness and gluttony could do to a warrior. Since the start of his reign King Robert had gained at least seven stone and with only sporadic weapon practice much of his fighting skills had diminished. Not that he wasn’t still dangerous if given some kind of weapon, but the Robert Baratheon that had conquered a kingdom with his war hammer was long gone by then. So instead of taking my father as a role model I strived to be like Ser Barristan Selmy, the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard and someone who at over sixty years of age had still been one of the most dangerous men in Westeros. His example encouraged me to hold onto daily weapon practice even at my most occupied, and I hold this practice accountable for the long and healthy life I was blessed with.
292 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep, the Queen’s Solar

Joffrey’s arms training began with half an hour of sword practice in the morning, after lunch and before dinner each day for the first six months before it was increased in the years following. At first it barely took away from his leisure time but soon with his education growing more advanced and subjects like dance, courtly behavior and customs being added, the time Joffrey spent running around in the gardens or sitting by his mother’s side shrank. Seeing his family time diminished like this, the prince made it a point to visit his mother at least once a day and relate to her the happenings in his life, that also afforded him a glimpse on his younger siblings. Myrcella with her nearly three and Tommen with his two years were beginning to explore the Queen’s apartments and Joffrey loved to follow them around, watching their every step. His mother seemed to forgive him for taking up martial training and spending time with Robert the moment she watched him with his younger siblings.

“You like to play with your younger siblings, don’t you my little lion.” Cersei crooned from her position on her favored chair, a glass of wine in her hands.

“They are my younger siblings, until they can do it themselves I will protect them, always.” Joffrey answered back honestly.

Cersei smiled at that and gestured him to come to her. When he stood before her she placed a gentle kiss on his forehead, “I know you will, my little lion prince.”

Another change the sword training brought was Joffrey’s move to his own rooms. Apparently, he was now considered old enough to live alone and start his own household separate from that of his mother and younger siblings. His rooms consisted out of a bedroom, two solars and rooms for personal servants and several guards and companions. For now the guards and servants consisted out of both his mother’s and father’s retinue but in the coming years he was expected to choose his own staff and fill the empty rooms with noble sons who would serve as companions and later as his advisers during his reign, as such the positions were highly coveted by the noble families and within a day of the announcement that Prince Joffrey was beginning his own household he received several letters of applications.

To cover the costs and wages of the staff he had just gained, Joffrey was handed the control over several of the lands and properties that had been in his name since birth. Not him personally of course, for he was still too young for this responsibility, and so a Baratheon steward, named Victaron Crabb and his assistants took over the care of Joffrey’s properties. It would be their task for the next ten or so years to make sure that the prince's purse was always full enough to cover the costs of his household and other pursuits.

Crabb turned out to be a solemn man in his thirties that watched with reluctant approval when Joffrey asked to see the ledgers where all the revenues and costs were listed. As far as Joffrey had been able to find out through the servants Crabb was the younger brother of the current Lord Crabb, a third son that never stood to inherit anything and who had also shown no promise with the sword. So his father had found him a position in the royal Baratheon household early on as a scribe and later custodian of the many royal holdings.

The part of his newly found independence that Joffrey probably enjoyed the most was the fact that he could finally organize his schedule to his own specifications. There was no overbearing Queen that could veto his plans because she thought he was too young or to good to do this or that. Said lessons were now also becoming increasingly complex which suited Joffrey just fine, he was sick of learning things by rote.

One thing that Joffrey hadn’t expected was that courtly behavior also included music lessons, he was taught to sing and play at least one instrument. Because of Robert's still ongoing feud with a
long dead Rhaegar Targaryen the harp was out, so Joffrey started to learn how to play the lute, until one day a Braavosian merchant brought something called the pianoforte to the keep. Joffrey recognized it as a rudimental piano and once it was tuned by the daughter of the merchant it became a permanent fixture in his new rooms. The presence of the musical instrument had astonished and confused Joffrey for some time until her remembered that Braavos was comparable to an early Renaissance Venice, so the invention of the instrument wasn't inconceivable.  

The teacher for his new instrument arrived several months later and taught Joffrey some basic melodies before his own knowledge was exhausted. One good thing of the Braavosian music teacher’s presence was that Joffrey came into contact with the first tentative attempts at sheet music. A concept that made spreading various plays for various instruments easier. While no virtuoso or truly interested in music, Joffrey found the task of producing music a pleasant one, most songs and melodies were very simple and easy to replicate once he had heard them a few times. It also gave him additional time to spend with his younger siblings because his mother and her ladies-in-waiting became a regular fixture at his bi-weekly practice.  

293 AC, King’s Landing, Reed Keep, the Apartments of the Crown Prince

“Prince Joffrey? You have visitors.” a tentative servant said from the balcony door.

Joffrey looked up, his eyes widened and a brilliant smile lit up his whole face.

“Uncle Renly!!!” he called and put his book aside to run to his uncle and hug him.

Said young man laughed deeply and swung him up into his arms for a quick cuddle, that Joffrey protested only half-heartedly.

“Hello there, young prince.” the Baratheon said amused, his eyes wandering to the book Joffrey had left on the balcony bench, “Is there a reason why you squander such a perfectly nice day with book work?”

“Maester Arwick will test my knowledge tomorrow on the second Blackfyre Rebellion.” he said with a small pout.

Renly nodded commiserating, “Well, I am sure that you can push your assessment back a day if you tell him that your uncle arrived and kidnapped you.”

“You think so?” Joffrey asked with all the doubt of a seven-year-old.

“Why don’t we ask him. But before that I want to introduce you to somebody. Joffrey this is Loras Tyrell, my squire, he has been with me for a year now.”

Joffrey turned his attention to the brown-haired boy, maybe ten or eleven years of age, he had a beautiful face and expressive golden eyes that peered up at him.

“It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Loras of House Tyrell.” Joffrey chirped, just as he had been taught.

He squirmed a bit until his uncle let him down and he could stretch out his hand to shake Loras’. The Tyrell boy’s face lit up at the gesture and he grinned at Joffrey.

“The pleasure is mine, prince Joffrey.” He answered well-bred but there was a genuine excitement in his eyes that couldn’t be faked.

“Where are we going, uncle?” Joffrey then asked Renly.
Renly grinned at that, “Now that would be telling.”

Knowing of the books it had at first surprised Joffrey how well he got on with Renly after their introduction during his fifth name day. His young uncle turned out to be lively and full of stories and already had a rather vast knowledge of customs, dance and other noble pursuits that he happily imparted on his nephew.

It was Renly who first introduced him to other noble children in and around King’s Landing, and it was him who guided Joffrey through his first social gatherings outside the royal court with advice and several impromptu rescues when the prince was stumped for words or actions. Not that the encounters would have resulted in any kind of social repercussions, other than momentary embarrassment. Joffrey was still considered a child after all and certain mistakes were to be expected. These social gatherings that he was participating in, often ended in playtime for the children in various gardens and were the equivalent of a modern birthday party. As the crown prince Joffrey was the popular kid that was invited to all of them and everyone was vying for his attention.

After the first few events these parties quickly lost the appeal to Joffrey and he grew exhausted of the invitations, because as the crown prince he couldn't just stop coming he instead restricted his attendances to once every two months to keep the nobles happy. He had his personal scribe, a young man of eighteen named Marwin Hogg, keep track of exactly how often he was attending which house to avoid favoring anyone.

That was another lesson he learned from his uncle, Renly made certain that Joffrey knew how to make polite excuses and soothe over problems with a few words, something that he would have never learned from his parents who were simply incapable of said social skill or unwilling to learn.

It confused Joffrey how the cruel version of himself had detested the man so, he always looked forward to Renly’s visits. The Lord Paramount of the Stormlands was accomplished in many skills that young lords of Westeros were expected to master in their lives and more importantly experienced in how to navigate the political minefield at court. After the first time his uncle had to rescue him from a rather uncomfortable situation with a courtier Renly kept a close eye on Joffrey until he had imparted several vital political lessons onto him, for which Joffrey was immensely grateful for. These lessons about the royal court and politics quickly spread over into other fields as well.
1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

Hedda circled the names in her translation for further research. There was so little known about the actual education a prince and other noble children went through in that time that it certainly would gather interest with other historians. That his uncle played an important part in his upbringing was a bit more comprehensible, a family member would have been more easily entrusted with the care and education of the future king than a complete stranger.

“The first results are in.” Jeyne sing-songed from the door.

“And?”

“The pages are around 1500 years old, the machine is still calibrating the exact date but the authenticity of the Journal as a medieval document has been proven… oh you probably should put your phone on mute, someone leaked to the press that you are the primary translator of the new found artifact.”

Hedda groaned but did what she was told. Just great she would probably need a new phone number after this was over.

My first attempt at governing anything of note happened in the year 293 AC. A conversation with a close friend, Ser Loras Tyrell, then still squire under my uncle Lord Renly, ensured that I developed an interest in breeding horses. As one of the pursuits that was deemed acceptable for a young lord or prince, my uncle encouraged my interest and introduced me via raven to Ser Loras elder brother, Lord Willas Tyrell, the future Lord Paramount of the Reach. A few letters into our acquaintance and I had gained knowledgeable men in horsecraft almost by accident (those who know of my uncle's rather jovial and persistent nature will know that there is NO such thing as a happy accident when Renly Baratheon is involved) and only weeks later I had been persuaded into converting a stronghold held in my name into a horse breeding facility. Of course, after the aptly named Oak Valley Hall and the surrounding lands had been prepared for its new use, a visit was in order. And so I encountered the one bane of my existence that would follow me for the rest
of my life. The truly atrocious roads of Westeros.

293 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

Joffrey stared at the giant black war horse that was the latest of his father’s rather extravagant and somewhat useless gifts. Robert had clearly been delighted at being informed that Joffrey was making good progress in his weapons training and was proofing himself to be ambidextrous. Which was bullshit, Joffrey just knew that if he learned how to use his off arm nearly as well as his preferred one, he would hopefully be able to catch his future opponents of guard if he switched hands. He trained twice as hard for that particular skill and all his trainers were aware of it.

The horse, while a beautiful animal, was still a bit too advanced for the seven-year-old crown prince and the gruff old stable master was right in stopping Joffrey from riding him until he was more experienced (and less breakable). By now Joffrey knew the dour man that was responsible for the Red Keep’s stables rather well. Janos had been initially responsible for teaching him how to ride and was one of Joffrey's strictest taskmasters to date, the man loved horses and certainly knew what he was doing and so Joffrey acquiesced graciously to his decision.

“It is a shame but Janos is experienced in such matters and I would prefer to avoid a fall of my own making.” Joffrey explained to Loras while they watched as one of the more experienced stable hands ran the stallion through his paces.

Loras nodded, “It is a magnificent beast but your safety is paramount, my prince. What do you intend to do with it until you have the right size to ride it?”

“Do?” Joffrey asked confused.

“Do you not intend to breed him? He is such a magnificent creature; it would be a shame to lose his lineage.”

“I hadn’t thought of that… and once again I show my ignorance in an entirely new topic. You must be growing exasperated with me, Loras.”

Loras laughed a bit at that, “You are seven years of age, my prince. There are men of noble birth two or three times your age with only a fraction of your knowledge. I only know a little about this kind of endeavor myself and that is because my eldest brother Willas is an avid breeder of various creatures and tends to impart knowledge onto his younger siblings whenever possible. Come, let us search for Lord Renly, he surely has some advice concerning the topic.”

Renly did, and after several exchanged letters with Loras’ brother Willas, Joffrey accidently wandered into the hobby of horse breeding himself. The breeding business also facilitated Joffrey’s first longer journey away from King’s Landing. He rode accompanied by his uncle and Loras and twice the amount of guards that was normal for a travel party, even one of a prince, but both his mother and father had insisted on this precaution on his very first journey outside their vicinity.

Traveling in medieval Westeros was… slow. Theoretically he had known that the King’s Road was one of the few actual streets in Westeros but the reality of actually traveling on the dirt track barely big enough for two horses to ride side by side was less than glamorous. Joffrey could practically see the mud pit it would turn into if it rained for several days in a row.

“Is the road like this everywhere?” Joffrey finally asked on the second day of their journey.

Beside him Renly laughed, “No my dear nephew, they are even worse sections in other parts of Westeros. There are routes in the Stormlands that are so rarely traveled on that they have trees and
hedges sprouting on them and those have to be removed before a journey can be continued.”

“Gods.” Joffrey murmured horrified.

Setting up a horse ranch was surprisingly easy for a prince with an uncle like Renly. Before Joffrey and his companions had even reached his property, the castellan and the hired smallfolk had already taken care of most of the tasks that were needed to turn part of the wooden land around the castle into appropriate paddocks and built several additional stables inside the walls. The qualified staff, that would breed the various horses and take care of their health, travelled in Joffrey's company and had come with recommendations from Lord Willas own breeding facilities. They were former apprentices and assistants of the men that had been working for the Tyrell heir for the last five years and were not complete idiots according to Janos, who was notoriously hard to impress. Additionally as a gift from breeder to budding breeder Lord Willas had sent along two young broodmares of his best stock. In the weeks before their departure from King’s Landing, Joffrey’s new breeding stable master, Rainon, and his colleagues bought more than twenty mares of good lineage that would become the foundation of the breeding endeavor. With that additional entourage, their travel pace was unfortunately slower than anticipated, the journey that would have normally taken four days by horse took them well over ten days and at the end of it Joffrey was more than sick of the slow pace and grateful when Oak Valley Hall finally came into view.

The former Targaryen castle was made from white stone and had seven towers with decently thick walls surrounding it. The Lord’s Tower had been renamed into the Prince’s Tower and would serve Joffrey and his household from now on when he visited. On his way inside Joffrey realized how truly understaffed the castle was when he counted the guards along the battlements and the small crowd that had lined up in front of the main hall. Not that this was really that surprising, after all the castle had been unused since before Robert was crowned king and mostly served as a concentration point for all the revenues of the surrounding lands before they were sent on to King’s Landing.

The current castellan was in his late fifties and had served under several Targaryen kings before he continued his tasks under Robert. The man was loyal without a doubt but when Joffrey had seen the age of the knight that was overseeing Oak Valley hall he had realized that the man would not be able to fulfill his tasks for many more years. So Joffrey had brought somebody along to assist the old castellan and take over as castellan once the old one had died.

Joffrey unseated from his gelding and made his way over to who he assumed to be the castellan. The man could barely hold himself upright without help so when he made motions to kneel in front of Joffrey, he quickly interfered.

“Please, there is no need for that. Ser Daven Lancaster, I presume.” Joffrey said, halting the old man before he could sink to the ground.

“Yes, my prince.” The old man rasped out, clearly thankful for the gesture.

The people around him though dutifully sank into the expected kneeling position while the castellan just bowed his head slightly forward. After an appropriate amount of time had passed Joffrey gestured them to rise again and looked expectedly at the castellan.

“Welcome to Oak Valley Hall, my prince. The castle is yours.” the man rasped out the traditional words.

“I thank you, Ser Lancaster.” Joffrey answered politely before he turned the man’s attention to his companions, “May I introduce Lord Renly Baratheon, the Lord Paramount of the Stormlands and
his squire Loras Tyrell.”

“My Lords.”

“Ser Lancaster, a pleasure.” Renly murmured, polite smile on his lips, while Loras only wordlessly bowed his head, befitting his station as squire.

They shared the traditional bread and salt before the welcoming feast and Joffrey kept the conversations to polite and inconsequential topics for the evening to get a feeling for the people that ran one of his properties.

On the next morning, after Joffrey had inspected the just built structures and conferred with the Rainon about their suitability, he made his way to castellan Lancaster to introduce him to Ser Edmure Wendwater, who Joffrey intended as his successor. The blatant relief on Ser Lancaster’s face when Joffrey introduced him made the prince hopeful that there wouldn’t be any problems between the two men.

Ser Wendwater had been, strangely enough, a recommendation of Janos who had, in his own way, been very approving of Joffrey’s newest interest. According to the gruff stable master the twenty-five-year-old knight and fourth son of Lord Wendwater wasn't a wuss (read: upstanding) and not half bad with the horses (a compliment that Janos had paid only one other man as far as Joffrey was aware and that was Ser Barristan Selmy, a rather exceptional rider even in his advanced age). As the son of a noble and knight he also had the required education to run a household and set up guard schedules with little help or oversight. Still, even with Janos rather glowing recommendation Joffrey had taken the time to get to know the knight in his father’s retinue before offering him the position as future castellan.

In the following days Joffrey watched with little input as the horse masters settled into their new home and began to convey what items and craftsmen would be needed in the future for the breeding endeavor to make profits. Ser Edmure had continued to grow paler with each additional word on his list. Joffrey was less worried about the numbers, Lord Willas had warned him early on that establishing a breeding facility would eat a lot of money in the first few years before it became profitable, and that such an endeavor had to be done right or it wouldn’t be worth the hassle.

Having seen his mother’s wardrobe costs, it amused him to realize that four of her more ostentatious garments were enough to pay the estimated costs of Oak Valley Hall for a year.

The last week that Joffrey spent in Oak Valley Hall was used to introduce him to hunting small game for the very first time. Renly, who had a rather elaborate grooming routine when at court, had no problems with soiling himself through fresh earth, blood and guts while hunting. He also took the time to show Joffrey how to gut the rabbits and pheasants they (read: Renly) caught as cleanly as possible, apparently another skill a young lord should be capable of.

“I will leave the big game to your father, Robert will want to teach you himself once you have reached an age at which you can join him on one of his hunts.” Renly said with a smile before they returned to the castle with their spoils.

All in all it had been a rather pleasant day in the woods and Joffrey decided that while hunting would probably never be one of his favorite activities he certainly could come to enjoy it if the
right company was present.
Chapter 6

294 AC, Crownlands, Oak Valley Hall

Joffrey stretched his arms over his head before he made his way out of his rooms to search for his uncle and Loras. It had been a year since they had helped him set up the breeding operation and now that the first foals had been born he had invited them back to see the progress that had been made.

Ser Edmure Wendwater, the castellan-in-training of Joffrey’s Oak Valley Hall, was waiting in front of his door, about to knock. From the letters Joffrey had received from the old castellan during the last year, the young Wendwater had been a good choice for the castle and would ensure that it would run smoothly during Joffrey’s long absences.

“Ser Wendwater, good morrow.” Joffrey greeted the older man.

“My prince, to you as well, I hope you had a restful sleep.”

“My sleep was undisturbed, Ser. I have to admit that I am looking forward to inspect the changes that have been made. I have, of course, been kept informed through your and Ser Lancaster’s letters but I am eager to see the results myself.”

Ser Wendwater relaxed at that, “As you wish, my prince.”

“Has my uncle risen yet, or his squire Loras Tyrell?”

“No yet, as far as I am aware. Do you wish to send someone?”

“No. Let them sleep, they have been travelling nearly constantly since Storm’s End. Is there anything that requires your attention right now?”

“No my prince, I am at your disposal for the rest of the day.”

“Then would you care to accompany me around the castle until the morning meal is served?”

“It would be my pleasure, my prince.” Ser Wendwater answered, clearly delighted.

They spent nearly an hour walking through the structure, from the new stables up to the oldest tower and discussed all the changes and the expanded household as well as the expenditures. Ser Edmure had watched carefully as he handed over the ledgers with the final sums he had spent in the last year. It was more than Joffrey had initially authorized but the prince only nodded.

“You were correct in hiring additional hands and guards for the Hall. The expenditure was clearly necessary for his horse breeding facility to become profitable in a few years. I will authorize the additional sums and more so that you won’t have to contact me every month when small repairs have to be paid for. Do not misunderstand me, Ser Edmure. I expect every sum to be accounted for but you have proven yourself reliable and fast thinking so a certain amount of trust is reasonable in my opinion.”

“Thank you, my prince.”

When Joffrey finally arrived on the balcony the breakfast was already laid out for him, Renly and Loras, said companions had already arrived and were lounging on their seats, faces turned in direction of the morning sun.
“Good morrow, uncle Renly, Loras.” He greeted, in an excellent mood now that he had inspected most of the castle.

“Good morrow, nephew. Slept in?” Renly asked amused.

“No, I have been inspecting the castle and consulted with Ser Wendwater about future investments and the state of the structures. After breakfast I intend to seek out the stable master.”

“Always so dutiful.” Renly said with an indulgent smile, “Is there some room for Loras and me in your day.”

“Always uncle.” Joffrey answered with a laugh before getting more serious, “I hope you had a chance to recover from your journey, you barely had time to rest in King’s Landing.”

Loras and Renly looked at each other and then with indulgent smiles at Joffrey.

“Do not fret Joffrey, both Loras and I are well and we did understand your impatience to leave King’s Landing. The smell during that time of year is rather intense.”

Joffrey grimaced and nodded, that had been one reason to leave the city, the other had been his mother’s insistent whining about her younger brother, the imp, coming to the capital. His father had looked rather wistful when Joffrey had informed them of his departure but Lord Arryn had prevented any kind of thoughts of leaving. He was rather good at getting the King to do things… well as long as it didn’t concern money, there Robert became stubborn.

“I am thinking about making visits to Oak Valley Hall a yearly occasion. Not only is the air far better than in the capital, there are also no courtiers and lords with young daughters to accost me at every turn.” Joffrey confided in his companions.

Loras was now laughing, “Ah, the drawbacks of being the crown prince. Say, does your father have a bride in mind for you?”

“I certainly hope not! I have just turned eight years old.” Joffrey answered with a squawk, “Why are you asking?”

“I do have a sister and several cousins who wonder.” Loras answered amused.

Joffrey looked pained, “I know that I must marry one day, but I still consider myself a child. Please not right now, ask me again in ten years?”

Renly snorted at that, looking both amused and compassionate, he had after all, a rather similar problem as the Lord Paramount of the Stormlands.

Loras just grinned unrepentant, “I will, if you give me some hints what you search for in a bride.”

Joffrey sighed, knowing what Loras was getting at, “Tell your sister I want somebody with a brain, that is political astute enough to survive the viper nest that is King’s Landing. I categorically refuse to have a marriage like my parents do, I want a partner who will support and assist me in ruling and will share the burden, it doesn’t have to be love at first sight but I certainly want to get along with the woman I’m going to raise a family with… I think I don’t need to add the pretty to this, do I?”

Loras grinned at the last part and then nodded thoughtfully at the first few sentences, “My sister is very pretty and smart too. She is being taught by our grandmother.”

“The Queen of Thornes?” Joffrey asked in surprise that Margaery was already receiving lessons
before he nodded slowly, “Your grandmother does have a certain reputation…” then he sighed, 
“Look Loras, I can’t promise you anything right now. My father is the king and if he decides that I marry this or that hightborn lady I will do my duty… if he lets me choose on my own I will certainly consider your sister but it is hard to decide who to spend the rest of my life with when I have never met them.”

“We could probably arrange a meeting…” Renly said thoughtfully.

“Uncle, be very careful. If anyone in King’s Landing gets wind of that they will do their utter most to thwart your plans. My mother most of all.”

Renly and Loras looked at each other before nodding grimly at Joffrey.

“We will leave the possibility of a meeting for now. May I still pass on your words to my sister?”

“You may. To your sister and grandmother only, though. As I have heard rumors about your grandmother, I have also heard rumors about your father.”

Loras grimaced and nodded.

Two days after Joffrey’s arrival he let the local stonemason from the village that also belonged Joffrey come to the Keep. He was really getting sick of those bad roads between King’s Landing and Oak Valley Hall. It was time that he stole the intellectual property from the Romans and put that knowledge about paving Charles parents’ driveway to good use. Joffrey made sure he was very clear in his specifications when asked the local experts about road building options and to his surprise there was a rather easy, if a bit expensive solution to his problem.

Surprisingly cement and concrete were not new concepts to Westeros, it just wasn’t popular, all the rich clients preferred buildings made from stone and the small folk were much too poor to be able to afford concrete. What it was used for in Westeros was as a form of more expensive mortar if the client insisted on the most durable building way. There were several mines all over the continent that mined volcanic ash and the processing and mixing of the cement was mostly done on sight. The original recipe had been an invention of an alchemist several decades ago who had been experimenting with various elements to create precious stones. After it became clear that the invention would never be very profitable they sold the recipe to various mining endeavors.

Once the method and building materials had been determined, Joffrey ordered fifty barrels of the Westerosi cement mixture from the closest mine in the Crownlands. The first barrels arrived within days, the mine being less than a day trip away and with such a massive order came certain perks. Once the concrete had the right consistency for bricks Joffrey had the small folk hired for his project pour it into premade molds twice as wide and long as normal bricks and about four fingers thick. These concrete bricks, once dried were then laid on a bearing layer of sand and gravel with drainage ditches on either side. The ditch on the right side was constructed bigger because the road was slightly angled to the right to prevent water from pooling on the street, the angle was so minimal that it couldn’t be perceived without standing still for a long time. To grout the pavement another cement mortar mix was used and then the sides were fixated with large stones that were mostly hammered or buried into the ground and sat a bit below the pavement height to not obstruct the water run-off. The drainage ditch had several small water channels running off it that ran between various fields that Joffrey had ordered to be built between the paddocks. The farm hands were to test a form of field-rotation with feed and human produce in the coming years on those fields.

Joffrey stared at the fourteen feet wide and thirty feet long piece of concrete street that was twice
and a half, nearly three times the size of the King’s Road and nodded slowly. The street was level (the slight slant wasn’t noticeable at a quick glance) and about two fingers higher than the surrounding ground so that the water would run into the ditch and it was easy to walk on and the bricks made it a nearly perfect flat surface.

The stone mason and brick layer that were responsible for Joffrey’s little experiment watched anxiously from the side as the prince inspected their work and only relaxed when a small smile spread over his face and he nodded in their direction. For something they had never done before it was very well made.

“Keep expanding the road along the paths that we marked out until you run out of cement, then have an eye on it, ask the villagers how the road is to travel on. I want to know if there are any kinds of flaws in the concept before I order more of them to be build.” Joffrey said absentminded, thinking about the money these streets would cost, not to mention the time put into their creation and upkeep, it would probably take centuries to cover the whole continent.

“Yes, my prince.” The stone mason murmured while the brick layer just nodded his head frantically up and down.

The people in the village beside the castle were very much in awe and fear of him. He was their future king so it was kind of expected. At least they didn’t freeze when he addressed them… well mostly.

When he returned from his inspection Renly looked amused at him, “Why spend so much money on a road that you will use only a few times a year?”

“It is a test uncle. If this road still stands in ten years despite daily usage of the small folk and various riders I will begin to implement them around King’s Landing.”

“All this because you can’t stand muddy roads?”

Joffrey’s lips twitched, “It is part of it.” He finally admitted and his uncle was once more laughing.

“Oh well, it is your money nephew.”
Chapter 7

1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

Jeyne put down the pages Hedda had already translated and stared at her, “I have never seen so many different names in a medieval document. Normally they all begin and end with I…”

Hedda grinned from her place in front of her Mac, “I know! And look some of this names shine up in The Lineages and Histories of Westeros. Here is Renly Baratheon and on the Tyrell page there is Loras Tyrell and his siblings…”

She said while she scrolled through the digitalized version of the who is who book that was still regularly consulted by the blood purists of the noble houses. By now it had to be the 1900th or more edition of the book that had been started by Grand Maester Malleon nearly 1700 years ago and was updated at least once a year, sometimes twice depending on the birth and death rates.

“I’m still cracking up about the bit how he called the bad roads of Westeros the bane of his existence.” Jeyne admitted.

“We have accounts of before Joffrey’s reign that the roads often turned into mud traps during rain and were regularly swallowed by nature when not used enough. I can imagine that that made an impression on a young city boy like Joffrey.” Hedda answered dryly.

“That name though… Oak Valley Hall. Isn’t there a horse ranch a bit over an hour away with the same name?”

“You think it’s the same institution that was founded by King Joffrey?”

They looked at each other and then Hedda opened her laptop to google it on the Internet.

“Look at those pictures, that’s definitely a medieval structure… It says here that the horse ranch has been in royal possession for at least 900 years and is partially used as residence for various royal family members.”

“Think they would be interested in the document once it is translated?”

“Definitely. Maybe we will even get an invitation to look at the castle itself. Private property of the royals is so hard to get onto.” Hedda bemoaned.

There were several documents in the possession of various royal members that she would never get to view because they were on private property and the owners were unwilling to let anyone into their libraries.

Jeyne made another notation for a follow up of the document, by now they had already two pages full and they weren’t even nine pages into the journal.

A universal truth of life is that once you have experienced excellence you will never again be content with mediocrity. The same saying can be transferred to servants and household stewards. In my life I was rather fortunate to be surrounded by more people of the excellent variety then the mediocre ones, but that has to do with my practice of educating servants and stewards in the behaviors and attentiveness I have come to expect from them. The starting point of this practice was, as so many things in my life, an experience at Oak Valley Hall. Before I made said castle my primary retreat from the strains of King’s Landing, it had been empty of any real lord for over
twenty years. The castellan and inhabitants had been reduced to a skeletal workforce early on and they soon had learned to handle the daily tasks with ruthless efficiency and often cross-trained in other functions to get the required tasks done. Such a person of this rather delightful human breed was the cook of Oak Valley Hall. A formidable spinster that had ruled the workforce for decades with an iron fist and seemed to be able to do the impossible with limited supplies and hands. Gunilda or the Battle Axe, as the peasants in the region have come to teasingly call her, was a woman approaching her fourth decade in the world when we were first introduced, and within three days of our stay she had taken over my household. Not that I was aware of that fact until a year later when I saw her scold my then still official Lannister steward that I had received from my mother about this or that mishap like an unruly child. I have to admit that I was rather intrigued by the phenomenon and continued to monitor the situation at hand more out of amusement than any great plan for my future servants. That is... until one day an opportunity wandered into my courtyard in the form of a rather desperate woman searching for work for herself and her two sisters.

294 AC, Crownlands, Oak Valley Hall

Some days after he had first watched Gunilda at work, a commotion in the courtyard diverted Joffrey’s attention from his book about Essos.

“Anything milord, small tasks, collecting wood…” the woman spoke desperately and with a rather strong small folk accent.

“As I said woman, we don’t have any space!” Ser Edmure said firmly, though not unkindly, there was pity in his gaze.

Joffrey, curious by now walked up to the two, the woman, though at a closer look she could be hardly more than fifteen or sixteen years, was clothed in typical small folk wear and smelled rather strongly. He didn’t think she was ugly but it was rather hard to tell under all that grime, her black hair was held back in typical peasant fashion with a head scarf with were several strands peeking out.

“What seems to be the problem?” Joffrey asked when he was only a few steps away.

“My Prince! Did we disturb you?” Ser Edmure asked anxiously, he knew that Joffrey did not appreciate being interrupted when he was reading.

Joffrey shook his head and just raised an eyebrow at the future-castellan, the woman was clearly frozen in fear and didn’t dare to look up.

“Massey here is searching for work, my prince. She and her sisters have been thrown out of their house after their uncle took over the tannery… unfortunately every position in the castle has already been filled.”

Joffrey turned to Massey and asked considering, “How old are your sisters?”

“Twelve and eleven milord… I… I mean, your Grace.”

“Say my prince, I am not the King. Your abilities?”

“Cooking and cleaning, my prince. And we helped our father in the tannery. Making belts and other things…” she stuttered out in a high voice, she was so nervous that she was nearly in tears.

Joffrey thought about the servants back in King’s Landing that he suspected of being informants for this or that person at court and made a snap decision. If he wanted his staff to be spy free he
would have to take in people that had never encountered Varys, Little Finger or any other noble in King’s Landing. Massey and her sisters were clearly desperate, young enough to be trained and would be beyond grateful to him. A good starting point to make them loyal only to him, as for their training… Joffrey had to suppress a rather evil grin when his thoughts wandered to the Battle Axe, Gunilda would either turn them into frighteningly efficient servants or eat them alive. Either way it was bound to be entertaining for Joffrey.

“Get your sisters, I’m in need of servants and I find the ones in the Red Keep are not to my specifications. You three will learn what kind of behavior and skills I expect here at Oak Valley Hall and then accompany back to King’s Landing.”

The woman in front of him looked both elated and terrified before she stumbled in what she probably thought was a curtesy and gasped out, “Thank you, milord… I mean… my prince.” and then she scurried away.

Joffrey lips twitched, this was going to be interesting, beside him Ser Edmure looked in askance but didn’t quite dare to ask.

“Please ensure that they have a room when they arrive, and tell Gunilda that she has three apprentices to train up to her specifications.”

By the way Ser Edmure paled he already had an encounter with Gunilda himself.

"Oh and do tell the gardener to plant those orange pits that were left over from breakfast in the garden... tell him to plant every kind of seed that is somehow salvageable, I rather like eating fruit and berries directly from the plant."

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The first thing Joffrey had the three sisters learn, was that he insisted on good personal hygiene and that they were expected to clean themselves at least once a day, more often if necessary. Which had called on a rather interesting panic attack in the youngest of the three, Mab. After Joffrey had finally calmed her down and asked why she was sobbing about a bit of water she stuttered out about the dangers of bathing too often. Joffrey had stared at her for a long while before he had burst out into laughter at the sheer stupidity of that statement.

“Who told you that, drivel?” the prince asked, utterly bemused, “It’s the other way around. The cleaner your skin is the less likely an infection will set in if you do cut yourself. What is dangerous is bathing during the winter and going outside with wet hair. That is certainly an invitation for the Stranger but if you just clean your skin with a wet towel and then rub it dry with a clean one nothing will happen.”

All three sisters stared at him, they were clearly not believing him.

“Look at me.” He demanded, “I am clean. I clean myself every day. I take a bath at least once a week, more often if needed. I am not sick and the water has not weakened me to any kind of illness.”

With exasperation Joffrey noted that they were still not buying it. So he decided that he would have to order them, this was for their own good and his sense of smell.

“This is one of the expectations I have for my personal servants, do it or leave my employment today.” he said firmly.

The three sisters looked at each other fearfully before nodding slowly, clearly not willing to risk their newly found work.
This was going to be more exasperating than Joffrey had anticipated.

Fortunately, the lion share of ensuring the three sisters were trained up to Joffrey’s specifications fell to Gunilda, who had no problem with chasing them around the castle to learn various basic skills and techniques before forcing them to learn how to prioritize and interpret wishes of their employer. From the Lannister steward they learned a certain amount of etiquette and how to recognize the various classes, though that education would only start in full once they were back at King’s Landing. In the meantime Joffrey had set himself the goal to hammer discretion into their heads and possibly erase the horrible small folk accent the three had. He didn’t require them to talk like noble ladies but he wanted to at least understand what they were saying when they were addressing him.

Ten days into their employment Joffrey couldn’t stand their tattered dresses any more and ordered three simple brown dresses from the seamstress with two white linen shirts to wear alternatively. The style was not unlike what the servants in King’s Landing wore, only more modest, so distinguish them from other servants Joffrey also added broad belts with his personal coat of arms stamped into the leather and which could be used to attach various pouches or even a knife.

Joffrey’s personal coat of arms came into being during the selection of the brand the animals would receive to be able to identify the breeder. Additional markings, like the birth year and number were branded into the hoof to tell the animals apart but the breeder mark was apparently very important in Westeros. For simplicity’s sake Joffrey just inverted the colors of his father’s house and chose a frontal stag head instead of the whole animal. Within in days of his decision his new personal insignia began to adorn the banners at Oak Valley Hall, as well as incorporated in decorations around the whole castle.

In any case, Massey and sisters made a rather pretty picture in their new dresses, clean from dirt and grime and finally well-fed, with their hair out of their faces in either simple braids or with an Alice band kept back. Thanks to Gunilda’s training they would be adequate at fulfilling any of Joffrey’s needs and knew better than to pass on information to anyone but himself.
Chapter 8

1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

“Oh my Gods!” Jeyne laughed while she read through the page again, “King Joffrey had a sense of humor! Battle Axe.”

“I found the part about the roads far more interesting. If it’s true what he wrote he may have invented the first paved roads in Westeros. There are no records left about when and why they came to be, only that they started to become really popular around the year 400,” Hedda said thoughtfully.

So in a fit of idle curiosity and with a vague idea in the back of my mind the sisters Massey, Maege and Mab were employed and given into the not-so-tender hands of Gunilda. Their training had more far-reaching consequences than I intended but not once did I regret it in my lifetime.

On a more educational note, with me slowly but surely escaping my childhood days, Lord Arryn began to take an active interest in furthering my education and teaching me statecraft. During my life, I encountered few people who could compete with the sheer efficiency my father’s Hand had developed. With the King rather uninterested in stately affairs I soon realized how important Jon Arryn was for the continuing health of the realm. No, that is not quite right. It dawned on me that this man was clearly indispensable for the crown, what a tremendous task it would be to fill his shoes one day, and that this day wasn’t as far away as I wished. At eight name days, mortality was not a foreign concept to me anymore – I was surrounded by it. Servants died and were replaced by new ones, so were the nobles. Accidents happened in a city as massive as King’s Landing and if there was not at least one death in the tourneys my father coveted so, it was labeled a dull affair.

The thought of Lord Arryn – by then already 76 name days old – dying without suitable successors, was rather terrifying and filled me with an urgency and a penchant for safeguards that would save my life more than once. So in an effort to soften the blow that would be dealt to us when Lord Arryn inevitably passed, I paid close attention to what he was passing on to me.

294, King’s Landing, Tower of the Hand

“Enter,” the distinct voice of Lord Arryn spoke.

Joffrey slipped into the solar of the Hand of the King and waited until Lord Arryn looked up from the map spread on the table before him.

“My prince,” the old man said, astonished, before he nodded in greeting.

“Lord Arryn, I do hope that I am not disturbing you?”

“Lord Arryn, I do hope that I am not disturbing you?”

“No, prince Joffrey. Please, what do you wish to speak about?”

Joffrey smiled slowly, making sure to look bashful, “I… master Daven has been instructing me in matters of law these past two weeks and while he is a man well-versed in theory I was wondering if I could join you and observe your actions as Hand of the King.”

Lord Arryn looked at him for a long moment before a warm expression wandered over his
weathered face.

“A marvelous idea, prince Joffrey. I fear I do not have the time for a lesson today, there are several appointments that I cannot push back, but it should certainly be possible to meet up two or three times a week to discuss the duties of the Hand of the King. Once I am certain that you grasp the knowledge, we can move on to observing court and Small Council sessions. May I ask what sparked your interest in states craft, my prince?”

“A conversation with my uncle, Lord Arryn. Lord Renly spoke in vague manners about the responsibilities as Lord Paramount and I realized that what he was talking about was not covered in any of my lessons. If I am to rule these lands one day I need to know the ins and outs of it long before I take the throne.”

“My prince, that is very forward-looking of you but you are barely eight name days old.”

“Mayhaps, but from what I have observed in the last few years my lessons and responsibilities will only increase, so the more I learn early on, the less likely it will be that I am overwhelmed later.”

“Sound reasoning, then I will clear a section of my schedule in three days hence.”

“I thank you kindly, Lord Arryn,” Joffrey said with a nod before he returned to his rooms.

Lessons with Jon Arryn meant not only learning about the various laws the Westerosi had to follow and how to render a judgement. Joffrey received a crash course in diplomacy and how to solve problems between vassals, set up marriages, circumvent various grabs for power of this or that lord, and manage the relationship with institutions like the Citadel and the Most Devout – how to keep them amiable and out of the crown’s hair.

It was no wonder that Littlefinger was able to steal money and put the crown in debt even under the eyes of a brilliant man like Jon Arryn. The Lord Paramount of the Vale was doing the job of nearly ten or more people and simply didn’t have the time to go over things in detail. And then he still had his own lands to govern, though at least there he had several competent men in place.

Lord Jon, as Joffrey began to call him, had very exacting standards but also what seemed to be an endless amount of patience. He was good at explaining concepts and didn’t mind to repeat them until Joffrey had a grip on the topic. It was no wonder that Robert and Ned Stark held the man in such high regard.

294 AC, King’s Landing, the Queen’s solar

“My Queen, Prince Joffrey is here to call on you.”

“Let him in,” his mother said, voice clearly delighted.

“Mother,” Joffrey greeted with a soft smile before he kissed her hand and then allowed himself to kiss her cheek as well.

Cersei’s whole face lit up at the gesture, like she always did when he felt like showing his affection for her after adhering to custom, and patted the seat beside her.

“You are in a rather good mood, Joffrey.”
“I have finally caught up with all the letters and missives that had accumulated during my stay at Oak Valley Hall and I have taken the day off. Would you care for my company today?”

Cersei laughed, utterly delighted by the prospect. “Tell me, what have you done on that estate of yours?”

Joffrey kept talks about business vague, he knew that his mother was easily bored of that and instead talked about the horses that had been born there, the enjoyable atmosphere and his decision to make a visit to Oak Valley Hall a yearly occasion.

Cersei sighed at that. “If it weren’t so far away I would love to accompany you but with Tommen and Myrcella…”

“Maybe when they are older. How have my younger siblings been?” Joffrey skillfully changed the topic.

“In good health. Myrcella has begun lessons and etiquette training and the septa has told me that she is very bright.”

Joffrey laughed and turned his attention to his sweet little sister who was playing dolls in one corner, with one of his mother’s handmaidens.

“Do you think she would like it if I practice reading with her?”

“I’m sure she would, my love,” Cersei said indulgently.

In her eyes, Joffrey could do no wrong and if he went against something she wanted it was somebody else’s fault. Joffrey slowly began to understand how the book-Joffrey had been able to turn in such a monster – he was nothing but a spoilt brat who had never learned the consequences of his actions. That there were consequences at all.

“Tommen as well, once he is the right age,” Joffrey mused before he turned his attention back to his mother. “But tell me, what has happened in the months I was gone?”

Cersei’s expression became sly before she began to share the gossip Joffrey had missed while he was at Oak Valley Hall. One good thing about his mother’s thirst for power was that she kept a constant eye on the other noble families in King’s Landing.

294 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

Joffrey’s head was ringing and his left arm was pretty numb.

“You alright there Joff?” Robert boomed laughingly from above him.

“Ugh… that hurt.” the prince finally said once he was sure that he wouldn’t throw up, and picked himself of the ground with sheer force of will.

Robert chuckled once more, but sheathed his training sword and came closer, probably to check that he didn’t do any real damage to his heir.

“You are a scrawny little runt and take more after your mother’s side in body but you have the stubbornness of a real Baratheon in you,” Robert rumbled once he had checked that none of
Joffrey’s bones were broken.

Joffrey snorted and wiggled his fingers to get the feeling back there. “Well I don’t think I can hold a shield for the rest of the day.”

“I concur my prince, may I suggest lessons in warfare instead?” Ser Barristan said from the side before he turned to Robert and added, “Your Grace is of course right about prince Joffrey’s body type but you should not forget that he is able to use both hands nearly equally well and already he is faster than most boys three or four years his elder. Once he is a man grown, he will be very dangerous with or without Baratheon body.”

Robert’s face lit up like it always did when the knights or master-at-arms complimented Joffrey’s combat abilities.

Joffrey smiled back and then asked slyly, “will you join us this time in the warfare lessons? We have stopped at the Ghiscari battle tactics.”

Robert grimaced.

“Prince Joffrey has found a way to make the lessons less about theory,” Ser Barristan said wryly.

Joffrey grinned at Robert. “I had a woodcarver create wooden soldiers so that we could use them to recreate famous battles.”

Robert’s expression became amused once more before he nodded. “I suppose…”

“But first I want out of these clothes,” Joffrey said with a grimace while he looked down at his wet leather jerkin.

“Probably a good idea,” Robert mused and looked down at himself.

Before he had destroyed Joffrey with a few ‘gentle’ hits, he had used most of his energy against various knights and yeomen that were stationed in the Red Keep.

Since that encounter with an exploring Joffrey, Robert had started to take interest in him, especially after all those glowing reports about his physical lessons. He now joined Joffrey daily on the practice field and had already lost two stone since then. He still whored and drank more wine than anyone else in King’s Landing but at least he was occupied and not left maudlin in a dark corner with his only moments of entertainment being expensive tourneys. Robert’s change in routine had another unexpected benefit; the tourneys that had been a fixture during Joffrey’s first few years aware had dwindled to maybe two or three times a year. Lord Jon had scented a chance to reduce the Crown’s debt and instantly began to send all the surplus in the treasury on to the Iron Bank. With Lord Arryn practically leaning over Baelish’s shoulder, the man had no choice but to do everything correctly and in the efficient way with which he had distinguished himself in Gulltown.

Joffrey had been privately amused at Baelish’s predicament – it was rather obvious he wasn’t the least bit happy over this change in the status quo. At least to Joffrey.
On my ninth name day, my mother gifted me with one of my most loyal yeomen, Sandor Clegane, better known as the Hound for his fierce nature and unquestioning obedience. He was named my Sworn Sword that day and to his death he fulfilled that position with zealous dedication. While a man of gruff disposition and a rather nasty temper when nettled, it is irrefutable that his gallant and decorous behavior, though perhaps not his words, often outshone that of many anointed knights. Throughout his life, Sandor never strived to attain knighthood, a fact that is owed to the appalling and brutal behavior of his elder brother Ser Gregor Clegane. A beast of eight feet even, who in his youth disfigured Sandor with a grievous injury that burned a third of his face. The Mountain, as he was named in later years, became feared far and wide in Westeros for the rape and murder of Princess Elia Martell Targaryen and the murder of her children during the Sack of King’s Landing at the end of Robert’s Rebellion. To my eternal shame my father afforded the murdered royal members and their grieving family no justice.

I have to confess that during my introduction to my Sworn Sword I felt honest trepidation when I first laid eyes on him, a proven warrior of seven feet who could probably crush me with one hand alone. In later years his hulking shadow became a comfort to me, never far to intercept any attempt on my life.

295 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

Joffrey was just returning from his lessons with Lord Jon when a commotion down the hallway drew his attention. Lord Brune was shouting—a Lord only in the loosest sense of the word, as the Brunes were hedge knights in their second generation and rather full of themselves. The middle-aged head of the house was one of those courtiers who regularly kissed ass whenever Robert was present. Amusingly, Joffrey was confident the King had no idea who Lord Brune was.

“… don’t make you tell you again you stupid thing, and do as I told you!” he shouted… at Massey.

Who was bracing herself against a wall holding her cheek. Joffrey felt something inside of him go still.

“What is going on here?” he bit out coldly. The courtiers and servants who had been half-heartedly watching the scene went quiet.

Lord Brune turned and paled at the sight of Joffrey with his two guards flanking him.

“My prince! Nothing of note. This stupid servant defied my order, I’m disciplining her.”

“How interesting,” Joffrey said slowly, voice nearly benign. He had learned that from his mother and the servants who were familiar with the Queen paled and averted their eyes. “That you, as a guest of his Grace, see it as your right to discipline a servant of the Red Keep. Especially considering that Massey is not just any lowly servant. She belongs to my household.”

Joffrey hadn’t raised his voice but by now even the last whispers had stopped and people were watching the spectacle with breathless anticipation, knowing that somebody had just run afoul the wrong family.

If possible Lord Brune paled even further, and visibly searching for a way to get himself out of trouble. Joffrey snapped his fingers and Massey, by now used to his non-verbal gestures, curtsied in his direction and then scurried away from Lord Brune and came to a halt some steps beside
Joffrey.

Lord Brune was still stuttering justifications but Joffrey had long since stopped paying attention and instead took in the cheek that was slowly swelling and would be blue in the following days.

“Lord Brune,” he finally interrupted the moron.

Said Lord looked green and was sweating by now.

“I do not appreciate the fact that you think you can give orders to one of my personal servants.”

“I… I wasn’t aware, my prince I…”

Joffrey raised an eyebrow in Massey’s direction who inclined her head and said clearly, “I made him aware that I was a personal servant.”

By now she had calmed down and had regained some of her calm.

Joffrey’s eyes wandered back to the now glaring hedge knight.

“She is lying…”

Joffrey’s eyebrow actually rose at the utter gall of the man. “Are you honestly trying to imply that my servants would lie to me. To their crown prince?”

The man was slowly turning beet red now and Joffrey was honestly wondering how many colors Brune would work himself through by the time their conversation ended.

He ignored any backpedaling from the man and continued to speak. “I like it even less when somebody puts their hands on them without consulting me.”

The tension around them was now so thick that Joffrey honestly expected someone, the noble ladies present, to faint from anticipation at any moment.

“How could I have known that she was one of your servants…” Brune was still talking. Why was he still talking?

“Let’s disregard for a moment that she told you. Are you truly incapable of recognizing the stag of the Baratheon house on her belt? Even if Massey had been of one of my uncles’ households, the crest should have made it abundantly clear she was not for you to order around or punish. Be very glad you are a guest under the protection of my father, Lord Brune.”

With that Joffrey turned and left without another word.

Only once he had reached his quarters and sent Massey off to cool her cheek did he calm down enough to realize the implications of his actions. The whole court would know about this incident within an hour, the city by the evening meal. Somebody, and with somebody he meant Varys and Baelish, could see this as an opportunity to either double their efforts to win one of his servants for themselves or use them as leverage against him in some form. He needed to do damage control and quickly.

“Maege?” Joffrey called, mind made up.

He didn’t like it when people were scurrying around him when he was in his own apartments, but having servants at hand was something that he had gotten used to and appreciated by now. So he compromised and had them wait or do tasks in the next room, often with the door ajar so his
orders were followed promptly.

“My prince?” the 13-year-old asked after completing a quick curtsey.

“Go to the Queen’s apartments and announce my visit, please.”

“Yes, my prince,” Maege said before she left.

Spreading gossip by way of his mother’s ladies-in-waiting was always quicker than doing it through the normal servants who actually had to fulfill tasks during the day. At the end of the evening everyone in King’s Landing would be aware how very little the crown prince appreciated people taking liberties with his property, which apparently included his household.

295 AC, King’s Landing, royal garden, Joffrey’s name day celebration

The months went by and suddenly Joffrey was nine name days old and the Red Keep celebrated the occasion with a great feast in the royal garden. A favorite location of both the prince and the Queen. Thankfully Joffrey had been able to stop his mother from inviting foreign entertainers from Essos and expand his name day celebrations into a three-day revelry. Instead he had promised her such a celebration for his 13th name day, the age at which the crown prince was traditionally confirmed in his position as heir to the throne. For now it was a decently-sized feast for King’s Landing with nine courses in his honor.

He received various gifts from the nobles attending but predominantly he was given weapons and horses. The latter was something he actually appreciated while the former were not completely useless either. Between these gifts that had been deemed appropriate for the prince were also various books, two new copies of the Seven-Pointed Star – which he already had eight of, thank you very much – and Sandor Clegane.

Yes. His mother had gifted him with a Sworn Sword. That was probably the compensation for not being able to throw him the feast she thought he deserved. It was most likely also a direct result of hearing rumors about bandits raiding close to Oak Valley Hall. According to Ser Edmure those outlaws hadn’t quite dared to enter his lands yet but it had still left Joffrey in a poor mood and the urge to check on his stud once more was only increasing.

Sandor Clegane was a giant of a man.

Easily seven feet tall and built like a tank with muscles that were bulging under tanned skin and a face that was half destroyed thanks to his older brother. His voice reminded Joffrey of the heavy smokers in Charles’ life. Clegane’s permanent scowl would have been frightening if Joffrey wasn’t aware that the Hound was now his protector and would be most definitely loyal, after all if the Hound had stayed loyal to an ingrate like the book-Joffrey for a very long time, he shouldn’t have any problems at all. The name day celebration was well on its way of turning into a feast of debauchery with all those drunk lord present and the king being at his most lewd, when Joffrey finally called it quits. The Queen had retired an hour earlier when Robert had kissed the first serving wench, returning to Joffrey’s younger siblings. He had stayed a bit longer out of courtesy and to complete one more round around the tables before he too retired, wishing his guests a pleasant evening.

Joffrey had barely left the elevated table his family had sat on when a shadowy figure appeared on his right side. His guards tensed for a moment before they recognized Clegane. The warrior was surprisingly light on his feet for such a massive man.

“Clegane,” Joffrey greeted with a curt nod, “I was just about to collect you. Did you enjoy the feast?”
Clegane grunted and answered with surprising honesty, “the food and wine was alright but the company was poor, bunch of pansies.”

Joffrey surprised himself with snickering. “Where were you seated?”

Clegane shrugged and one of Joffrey’s guards, Hoster Algood answered dryly, “with some of the Queen’s guards and several hedge knights of her retinue.”

Joffrey’s grin widened, he knew who Algood was talking about and was even more amused now, the bunch Clegane was referring to were mostly pretty faces for the Queen to look at than actual protection. His guards at least knew how to fight and Joffrey had established a guard rotation early on, which made it impossible for anyone to skimp out of regular practice. They hadn’t been his choice but for the most part they seemed to be decent at what they were doing.

“Do not worry Clegane, from now on you will be in better company,” Joffrey assured, smiling.

For a long time nothing was said while they made their way across several levels but before they could enter Maegor’s Holdfast one thing occurred to Joffrey.

“Clegane, have your belongings already been transferred to my quarters?”

Clegane grunted, “a handmaiden with a Baratheon crest belt came to me before the feast and oversaw the moving.”

Joffrey nodded absentmindedly at that, it had probably been Massey. Ever since he had publicly protected her she had taken on a lot of the more ‘official’ roles in his household and served as a contact point for servants outside it. For the most part she did good work and made solid decisions even when he wasn’t at hand, the rest she would learn with experience.

“There are some rules that I expect you to obey Clegane. All members in my household are under my protection, if there is a disagreement I expect you to come to me before something is done rashly. I do not condone tardiness or drunkenness while you are on duty, nor do I sanction random acts of violence. Your actions reflect on me as the head of the household and I do not appreciate having my reputation tarnished. But most importantly, keep your mouth shut. Everyone wants to know about my person, I hate it when my privacy is trampled on and there will be unpleasant consequences.”

Clegane nodded once curtly.

“Good, as my Sworn Sword you will accompany me everywhere. You will have free time when I am in my lessons, with my parents, retire to my quarters, or give you the day off. What you do with your free time is your own business but do keep out of significant debt, a Sworn Sword susceptible to bribes is not what I need.”

Another glance at Clegane assured Joffrey that he was listening attentively.

“You are rumored to be one of the most dangerous fighters in Westeros, can I count on you to point out any fighter that proves to be… less than stellar?”

Clegane grunted affirmatively once again before falling quiet.

By now they had reached Joffrey’s apartments, where Massey was waiting, she murmured a short greeting before she took Joffrey’s cloak.

“Clegane, as my Sworn Sword your room is directly across from mine, if you find anything
missing or have questions you can approach Massey. Good night.”

“Good night, prince Joffrey,” Clegane answered before he waited until Joffrey had vanished behind his own door.

**Beta'd by Lyova**
1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

“I’ll be damned,” Hedda breathed out, wide-eyed.

“Huh?”

“You remember that theory of Dr. Clegane that one of his ancestors was a close confidant of King Joffrey and his family? I think I just found proof of that.”

“Seriously? Great, he is going to be smug for months on end,” Jeyne moaned.

“Is he going to come here?”

“He threatened it at least,” her friend grumbled.

She and Dr. Clegane had a bit of a professional rivalry going on that amused Hedda and a large percentage of their colleagues endlessly. There was even a betting pool on when the two would finally give into their attraction and jump each other. Hedda had a hundred bucks on the next three months so she was a bit personally invested in getting her friend hooked up with the ruggedly handsome historian. Dr. Howard Clegane was a reenactor that took his role seriously and had the muscles of a daily practicing knight to show for it.

Hedda yawned and rubbed her eyes, a glance at the clock made her groan.

“When did we pass midnight?”

“An hour and a half ago, Hedda,” Jeyne said dryly. “You were enraptured in your pages I believe. Ready to find a flat surface?”

Hedda just groaned once again. “I didn’t even think about organizing a hotel room, I just hailed a taxi and came straight from the airport.”

Jeyne raised an eyebrow. “Your luggage?”

“Left it with the porter, do you think someone is still here?”

“Oh I’m sure, the Red Keep has 24/7 patrolling with all that Valyrian steel and treasures from various noble houses present, the insurance was very specific about what they expected in the matter of security. Drove the director nuts the first two times, by now he just sighs and lets them do what they want. We can be damn glad we’re subsidized by both the ministry of culture and the royal house.”

Hedda winced. “A lot of money?”

“An obscene amount, Saddie from accounting once showed me what kind of bills such an exhibition racks up in only six months. You wouldn’t believe the electric bill for the climate-controlled showcases or the filter system for harmful gases and particles from the hidden passages. Did you know that we have three different security companies contracted because the Red Keep is so big that not one of them had enough employees to watch all the monitors at the same time? Let’s just say that I’m damn glad I didn’t become an accountant like my father wanted.”

Hedda yawned again and Jeyne rolled her eyes. “Come on, let’s collect your stuff and you can
crash in my guestroom.”

“Thanks Jeyne.”

295 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

During his first few weeks at the Red Keep, Clegane took the time to familiarize himself with Joffrey’s schedule and the castle. He always seemed to know where his charge was at any given hour, even when Joffrey decided on a spontaneous change in his plans. The prince suspected a collaboration between his sworn sword and Massey, the two seemed to get along just fine the few times he saw them in the same room.

Starting on the second week in the Red Keep Clegane began to test the guards Joffrey had been given two years ago, as promised. Within three days he had taken over their training and was running the 24 guards in Joffrey’s household into the ground.

“Guard up, you lazy son of a bitch!” Clegane bellowed. “You are protecting the crown prince not the second son of some Lord in Lys, act like it!”

Joffrey had to bite his lip to not start snickering at the expression of the guard in front of Clegane. The prince was sitting under the roofed dais that overlooked the practice field, and was working his way through the assigned book from Maester Arwick while keeping an ear on the men practicing. Clegane had such a mouth on him.

Well into the first month of his sworn sword being part of his household Joffrey had next to no knowledge of what he was truly thinking about him – the Hound had one of the best poker faces he had ever encountered. Rarely did Joffrey find an expression other than blank sullenness on his face, and by now Joffrey had become used to that. The half-destroyed face was becoming familiar, with Clegane always lurking in the corner of Joffrey’s eye, and had lost a lot of its scare value. That didn’t mean Joffrey appreciated the fact that he had no idea what Clegane was thinking when he wasn’t asking directly. At least the Hound didn’t seem to find it necessary to lie to him or sugarcoat an answer, so if he was in need of an accurate description of a situation or person, Joffrey tended to ask Clegane first before anyone else.

And then there were times he would like to launch Clegane to the moon.

Such an occasion was three days after Joffrey’s name day and was the first time the sworn sword witnessed Joffrey’s regular arms training. He kept to the side of the training field but was clearly on hand to interfere should something go awry. Ser Barristan once more drove him into the ground but that was nothing new.

What did surprise Joffrey was when the Hound voluntarily spoke on the way back to the prince’s quarters. “You are a decent fighter for your age… didn’t expect that from a boy prettier than most girls.”

Joffrey felt flattered at the first half and then had the urge to strangle Clegane for the second. He damn well knew he was prettier than most of the noble daughters at court, but Seven Hells, he had seen some of his Lannister cousins throughout the years and those couldn’t boast with a lot of masculinity in their child years either. In any case he didn’t appreciate it when somebody called attention to that fact.

Instead of an answer he restricted himself to a rather childish kick to Clegane’s shin that elicited a raised eyebrow but nothing else. And Joffrey was definitely not pouting, he was just nursing his wounded male ego.
It was somewhat astonishing how quickly Clegane became a part of Joffrey’s household and somebody the prince trusted to protect him when he wasn’t paying attention. Only weeks into his employment it felt as if the Hound had always been there. The guards began to defer to him until it was as if he had always been fighting alongside and leading them.

A few months later, during Joffrey’s yearly visit to Oak Hall Valley, Clegane proved that the trust in him wasn’t misplaced. Their traveling party, this time consisting only out of Joffrey’s household, was maybe a day’s journey away from the castle and already on Joffrey’s land when brigands attacked them on a heavily wooded stretch of the road. While most of the guards had to recover from the suddenness of the attack, Clegane had already decapitated two men who charged directly at Joffrey.

Clegane’s dark muttering and insults could be heard over half of the battlefield while he grabbed the reins of Joffrey’s gelding Autumn and pulled him closer to Stranger’s side, fending off those daring bandits who tried to charge the Hound and Joffrey, even after seeing the fate of their comrades. The fight took less than a quarter of an hours in total and then it was over. Most of the brigands, a group of maybe forty men on foot, were on the ground, either dead or dying and the handful who escaped wouldn’t be able to trouble the royal party.

“How many of ours died?” Joffrey asked tonelessly.

He was still staring at the dead bandits on the ground, after all the violence he had already seen in his life he shouldn’t be so shocked about what had just happened. Maybe it was because they were charging at him, trying to kill and rob him, not somebody else. He realized he could have died today if Clegane hadn’t acted so swiftly.

Beside him his Sworn Sword grunted and pulled on Autumn’s reins to lead the prince in the middle of the baggage train. Only once Joffrey had dismounted and four of his guards had stationed themselves around him did Clegane leave to inquire about the casualties.

The target of the attack was clearly the heavy baggage carts in the middle of the train, and it had spectacularly failed because once his guards had recovered from the shock, they had rode most of the brigands down. On their side, three of Joffrey’s guards, six footmen and two Lannister maidservants had died, and there were nine more servants and guards who were slightly injured. None of the bandits had been able to make off with any of Joffrey’s name day horses or did they find an opportunity to grab any of their chests.

All in all, they had been lucky. For a definition of lucky, anyway. Joffrey had their own dead prepared for the remaining journey to Oak Valley Hall, where they would be buried, before sending a small hunting party out to find the last of the brigands. Clegane oversaw the looting of the attackers so that nobody pocketed anything before Joffrey could decide what would happen with it. Then the outlaws were promptly thrown into a ditch some feet away from the street. The wildlife and the elements would take care of their remains within a few weeks. Joffrey couldn’t quite bring himself to care about it – he may have the memories of a world with a rather different moral code but he was a child of Westeros.

The rest of the journey was a somber one, they arrived at the castle just before nightfall, and on the next day their dead were in the ground. Joffrey set part of the loot aside, three of the victims had still family who would receive a share, before distributing the rest among his household. The lion’s share of course went to Clegane and the guards but even the lowest servant and footboy received a few coppers. People mourned for maybe a day and then life went on.

Joffrey himself was so encumbered with work that he couldn’t dwell further on the deaths. In the
last few months the first of their yearlings had been sold to various houses and private buyers. The best had been kept back for future breeding purposes and for Joffrey’s own riding pleasure. His breeders were also very happy about the additional animals he had brought along and that Stranger, Clegane’s giant beast of an animal, had been won as stud horse for their mares. It had not taken Joffrey very long to convince his Sworn Sword that this was a good idea, especially after he had seen the amount of money he would gain for every successfully bred mare in Joffrey’s stud.

The surroundings of Oak Valley Hall had changed once more – alongside the new paved road that ran from the castle to the village and beyond, there were more huts inside the village. The smallfolk from around the area, but especially craftsmen had moved closer to the castle in hopes of finding work and increasing their income. As far as Joffrey could see, they were needed, and quite a few parts of the castle’s original buildings were being repaired or newly painted.

Ser Edmure, who had become castellan in truth when Ser Lancaster had passed a fortnight ago, showed Joffrey with no small pride the numbers in his ledgers. They were not breaking even yet but it wasn’t far off either, and in a year or two the horse stud would finally turn a profit.

Several days later Joffrey finally had the conversation that he wished to have for a few months now, ever since he remembered about the rabbit’s fast breeding habits and how efficient they were in their feed consumption. They also produced a not inconsiderable amount of fur if they were bred on a certain scale. With winter only a few years away he wanted to have at least a handful of people on hand who knew what they were doing, and could then scale up the production on short notice. Joffrey also found that he liked the taste of the meat, especially with gravy, berry jam, and dumplings.

“That will be nigh impossible, sometimes even my lads can’t sniff out the little buggers… I mean the rabbits,” The kennel master said carefully, aware that nobility didn’t like to be told no.

“I am aware of that. That is why I task you to hunt down several rabbits of both sexes and bring them back alive. I am curious if they are breedable like farm animals and horses.”

“Rabbits, my prince?” the man asked, honestly confused.

“Are you deaf or what?” Clegane growled. “Your prince told you to breed rabbits, so you will breed rabbits or may the Gods have mercy on your soul for I shall not.”

Joffrey snickered for a moment before he took the bite out of Clegane’s threat. “Peace Clegane, this is really not a task for a kennel master,” and to said kennel master he said, “find somebody who is not completely inept with animals, preferably somebody who grew up on a farm or similar, and let them try their luck breeding the animals in the castle. I will reward them should they succeed.”
Chapter 11

1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

The doorbell stopped Hedda from her determined and somewhat desperate search of something edible in Jeyne’s kitchen. Said friend was still grumbling something unintelligible, clutching at her mug of black Yi Ti tea instead of coffee, because that was the only thing that Hedda had found on her quest for nourishment. Jeyne had proven to be completely useless this early in the morning and from her unintelligible mutterings, she concluded that her friend had forgotten to go shopping… for weeks if the state of her larder and fridge was any indication.

Sighing, Hedda stopped her search and made her way to the door, because Jeyne didn’t look like she would move from her chair anytime soon.

“Edwin,” she greeted Jeyne’s assistant surprised. “Good morning, what are you doing here?”

Wordlessly he held up a brown bag and a paper cup holder with what smelled like coffee.

“I am here to appease the dragon,” he said solemnly.

Hedda’s lips twitched because that was an apt description of an uncaffeinated Jeyne. Already she could hear the beast in the kitchen roar for her tribute.

“I take this happens often?” Hedda asked dryly, stepping aside to let the man in.

“Only during big discoveries or projects… so every other month,” Edwin said mildly. “I’m also here to drive you to the Red Keep.”

“I applaud you for your courage and forethought,” Hedda laughed.

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When they finally had made it back to the museum, a call from the porter informed them that Doctors Erenford and Redwyne had arrived and were asking for them.

“Just great,” Hedda murmured, swallowing the last of her coffee to fortify herself against the Barbie-doll of their field.

Jocelyn Erenford was of one of the many side branches of the Erenford family of the Riverlands and came from old money. Unfortunately, old money didn’t always mean genteel manners these days, and Jocelyn was such an example. She was a bleach-blonde blue-eyed bimbo with a frankly disgusting amount of plastic surgery and a grating voice that made Hedda want to claw her ears off. She also had absolutely no sense of when she was spouting nonsense. Hedda honestly had no idea how she had gotten her qualifications. One thing though she had to admire Jocelyn for, she always seemed to know what kind of projects would attract the attention of the media, and she somehow always found her way onto the front-page photo.

“Dr. Barath, Dr. Marsha!” the jovial voice of Tywin Redwyne sounded from their left.

Hedda turned around and smiled at the man – Dr. Redwyne was a bearded red-head in his late forties and was considered a bit eccentric in their field because of certain hypotheses, but the articles he published in various scientific journals were always based on proven facts and reputable sources. He also was rather fun during End of the Year celebrations; his mother was a Mormont of the Mormonts of Bear Island, and he regularly told stories and explained old
traditions of the North and Beyond-the-Wall. His primary field was medieval furniture and
tapestries oddly enough, with a side interest in castle architecture and medieval trade.

“Dr. Redwyne,” she greeted back with a smile before she nodded and said tightly, “Dr. Erenford.”

“Dr. Barath,” the stupid bint simpered, “I hear you are the primary translator? However did you receive the job?”

“Probably because she is the best medieval translator this side of the Narrow Sea?” Jeyne said with a snort. “Are you coming? Hedda was just about to continue. She already translated several pages.”

“Really?” Dr. Redwyne said, delighted. “Anything interesting?”

Jeyne laughed and said, “like you wouldn’t believe.”

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“Ha! Oh the old codgers at the Citadel won’t like that. They won’t like that at all,” Tywin Redwyne laughed gleefully.

“Hhm?” Hedda asked half-interested. She was reading her auxiliary materials and the references her assistant had sent her.

“The sentence about the so honored Maesters of Oldtown changing history to suit a certain political faction,” Redwyne explained.

“We know that, everyone knows that,” Jeyne said with an eye roll.

“Yes, but now we have proof that even 1500 years ago the people knew. Seven Hells, the King knew and didn’t condone it. Neutral observer of history and protector of knowledge for centuries, as if!”

“Admit it, Tywin. You are still cross with them because they didn’t recognize your theory about Harrenhal.”

Tywin harrumphed and pulled a grimace before muttering, “I still think that there is a possibility…”

“Look,” Hedda said soothingly, “you are basing that theory on several accounts about the time around King Joffrey. If your assumptions are true, there had to be a pretty big scandal involved. With any luck we will find clues in the next few pages.”

Tywin looked for a moment as if he wanted to reply before he simply closed his mouth and nodded.

At the age of ten name days, I received permission from my father to learn about navigating the sea and commanding ships under my other uncle for a few months. Lord Stannis Baratheon of Dragonstone was a dour man with no sense of humor or charisma, and while he was a lawful and dutiful man, he didn’t seem to grasp the concept of mercy or moderation. But what my uncle lacked in social skills he more than made up for with his military prowess. As a son of the former Lord Paramount of the Stormlands, Lord Stannis was an accomplished warrior, though his skills on the battlefield though were eclipsed by his skills as a commander and ship captain. Lord Stannis Baratheon seemed to have the uncanny ability to know what his enemy would do and how far he could push his troops to counter that. During the time I spent in his care I learned everything from the ground up, for the first two weeks I shared duties with his cabin boy to get a
feel of his ship, the Fury, and to learn how to tell apart the different lines and ropes. There were no shortcuts with Stannis and I had to put more effort into my education than ever before in my life. At the time it felt like it was the hardest year of my life, but I never forgot a single lesson he taught me.

295 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

“You will have to take on new guards soon, my prince,” Clegane said out of the blue after weapons practice. “Your household is currently fifty strong and that without additional servants for transportation. To have only eight knights and fourteen sergeant-class guards is dangerous business, especially for a prince. At least add an additional twelve yeomen with long-range weapons to your retinue, preferably men well-versed in the crossbow.”

Joffrey looked up, still breathing hard from all the running he had done today.

“I know… it is just that I can’t be certain of the men in King’s Landing. You have seen how quickly people here take bribes.”

“Then get guards someplace else,” Clegane grunted.

Joffrey looked at him dryly. “And how? I can’t just ride in the next big city and hire some sellswords.”

“Maybe not, but you are the prince. There should be enough second and third sons that would give an arm to be close to you.”

Joffrey lifted his head at this, thoughtful. “I have never seen anything other than the crownlands. For a noble I am too young for a Lord’s progress like uncle Renly did but… I’m the crown prince. There should be reason enough to tour the seven kingdoms.”

“Maybe not Dorne,” Clegane grunted.

Joffrey snorted. “Definitely not. If I’m lucky I’d survive maybe three days past their borders and then die in an unfortunate accident. No, but if I visit the northern parts of Westeros and in a few years tour the South… hmm. I have to contemplate this.”

It wasn’t a bad idea. It would also give Joffrey a chance to visit the Starks without Lord Jon dying. He was rather curious about the family by now. Not only because of the books but also because of all the stories Robert had told him about Ned and the Vale knights.

Two weeks after this conversation Lord Stannis arrived at King’s Landing. Joffrey hadn’t seen his other uncle for years, often missing him because of his travel or because Stannis had the habit of not lingering in the capital for longer than he had to.

He encountered his uncle on the way to the Small Council chamber. Lord Jon had agreed to Joffrey sitting in on them every few months to get a feeling for the political game played there.

“Lord Stannis… uncle,” Joffrey greeted after a moment of surprise. “Good day to you. I wasn’t aware that you were able to attend this meeting.”

Stannis’ dour look wandered to Joffrey and he nodded curtly back. “Nephew,” he said, and added as explanation, “there has been word of Westerosi being forced into slavery along the coastline.”

Joffrey’s pleasant smile vanished at that news, even though he appreciated Stannis’ straight to the
point approach. “Which? East or West?”

“Both,” Stannis bit out, clearly insulted at the mere idea of that happening in his domain.

Joffrey just nodded and kept silent, not versed with the patrol routes and actions the royal navy took in such cases – he had nothing to add to the conversation. Another deficiency, now that he thought of it. Joffrey sent a covert glance at Stannis while they made their way to the Small Council chamber, as far he was aware there was no man more proficient in matters of sea-faring war than the Master of Ships, there had to be a way to learn from Stannis.

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Convincing Robert to let him learn under Stannis for a few months had been hard. Harder than Joffrey had expected, after all Stannis was Robert’s brother even with their clearly incompatible characters. Later on it occurred Joffrey that it wasn’t so much a slight against Stannis as his preferred mode of transportation. Robert had watched his own parents drown just in sight of Storm’s End years ago and ever since preferred travel by land. It would not be inconceivable that he was worried about losing Joffrey to the same fate, especially now he was finally building a relationship with his oldest son and they were spending more time together. But the same newfound affection was likely what made Robert consent, in the end.

Stannis, when informed, had agreed to the fostering on one condition. Joffrey had to leave most of his household at King’s Landing. So, the only people that ended up accompanying him were Clegane and Maege. Joffrey had contemplated about taking Massey with him instead, but the 18-year-old had grown into her leader position and would be able to keep his reduced household in line. Joffrey, as soon as he had received permission, had decided to dissolve most of his household and let the servants rejoin his parents’ retinues. There was little sense in keeping on servants when he had no use for them, and it also provided Joffrey an excuse to replace servants he wasn’t quite sure of without much suspicion.

So with Joffrey out of the capital he sent Massey, Mab and his twenty-two personal guards to Oak Valley Hall. Ser Edmure could use the additional help, especially with about a dozen of Stranger’s progenies soon to be born and the warhorse himself on the stud.

By now he was quite sure of the men who were protecting him, but Joffrey was not so careless to give Varys or Littlefinger the chance of subverting somebody in his retinue while he was out of reach. He gave Massey the task to start looking for additional people around Oak Valley Hall to fill the positions that would be open once he returned. Only to look though, in most cases. He gave her leave to select the positions of the common servants, footmen and washer women, which would only begin their employment once he had returned.

For the more specialized and prestigious roles in his household he sought the advice of the one man who outwitted the rest of Joffrey’s family with ease.

Beta'd by Lyova
Chapter 12

1857 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

With another expert in medieval history present, the assembly of other sources became quicker, and Hedda wasn’t interrupted every ten minutes to help understand this or that abbreviation in the citation notes. Dr. Redwyne was also kind enough to begin with the assembly of the timeline along the long magnetic wall on the left side. It would hopefully ease both the translation and interpretation of the Journal. Until now everything had sounded believable but Hedda knew from countless documents and letters and inventory lists that what had really happened was always a thing of perception for the individual.

Whilst I spent the following months on sea, learning the seafaring craft that my Baratheon uncle had made his own, another uncle, this time a Lannister, handled a task of utmost importance for my own person. He was sieving through the throngs of people suitable for various positions in my household. The court, I had learned rather quickly, was an ever-turning maelstrom that would pull you under within moments if you stopped paying attention for just a fraction of a second. Courtiers also, no matter how loyal, craved knowledge of the ongoings of their royal family. Spies were not a rarity and I came to thoroughly despise the invasion of my privacy in my early years in the Red Keep. With my absence, this was a prime opportunity for busybodies to convert and bribe members of my household. To prevent this, I released most of the staff I had held until now, and tasked Massey with finding replacements in Oak Valley Hall and its surroundings. The more prestigious positions I left to a man whose wit was rarely surpassed in these days. My uncle, Tyrion Lannister. Or as many called him so callously, the imp.

295 AC, King’s Landing, Red Keep

Joffrey found the younger of his two uncles where he expected him to be. In his rooms with two whores.

Tyrion Lannister was probably the smartest person Joffrey had ever encountered in this life, also the most cynical. Though that was not so surprising, considering the circumstances of his birth.

For years, Cersei had done her best to keep Joffrey from ever crossing paths with Tyrion until Ser Jaime finally found an afternoon on which the Queen was distracted, and he abducted Joffrey from his lessons to introduce him to his younger brother.

It had been a rather pleasant if vulgar afternoon while the Lannister brothers regaled him with stories and small adventures. Joffrey learned more about the politics in the Westerlands from several of Tyrion’s snide comments than in the months Master Devan had discussed the lands of his Lannister grandfather. That afternoon had followed a few similar encounters, more often than not facilitated by Jaime, who clearly knew the schedule of the Queen by heart, and quite a few times Joffrey encountered whores who were just leaving.

That didn’t mean that he was indifferent to the sight of his uncle, half naked with two naked whores. Joffrey hastily avoided looking at the bed and cleared his throat to announce his presence.

“May I have a word, uncle?”

“Nephew…” Tyrion drawled out, clearly not happy about the interruption before he sighed and turned to the girls. “Well, you heard the prince, off with you.”

The women giggled and sauntered naked across the room where their clothes were before leaving
with lascivious grins at both Tyrion and a somewhat uncomfortable Joffrey.

Once the door had closed behind them Tyrion’s amused expression dropped and he raised an eyebrow in Joffrey’s direction.

“Well?”

“I need advice,” Joffrey admitted.

Now Tyrion sat up and looked serious at Joffrey. “What kind of advice?”

“I convinced father to let me foster with uncle Stannis for a few months.”

Tyrion choked at that. “You did what? Are you out of your mind boy? Stannis has his seat on Dragonstone, a cold dreary and miserable place in the middle of the sea. And you want to foster there?”

“I rather doubt that we will be long at the castle, uncle is obvious in his disdain for it. I imagine we will be on sea for most of the time, which is fortunate because it’s the sea and the royal navy that I wish to know.”

“Can’t you learn this from the Maesters?” Tyrion complained.

Joffrey just raised an eyebrow at the statement and waited.

Tyrion sighed. “Yes, yes. Hands on and all of that tripe that you tall people prefer.”

Joffrey snorted. “You know just as well that I have no objection to a good read. The problem with the books is that I found them not always quite accurate. I would rather learn about this topic only once. Also, I have nary seen my uncle since the day we have been introduced. I would like to know his mettle.”

Tyrion swallowed wrongly and sprayed his watered wine over the stone floor while he gave into helpless mirth. “He reflects his seat rather well, nephew. Just as dreary and miserable, not an ounce of humor in his body. I guarantee you, you will not enjoy your stay.”

“That may be so, but he is also one of the most competent commanders my father has. He has always accomplished what he had been tasked with, no matter how impossible it seemed.”

“Only with the Targaryens he failed,” Tyrion said wryly.

Joffrey rolled his eyes. “I do not know what father was thinking to punish Lord Stannis for the simple fact the Targaryens had already left the island before he and the fleet arrived. It does not make sense.”

Tyrion looked at him and sighed deeply. “Sometimes I truly wonder how a man like your father and a woman like your mother achieved you.”

“Uncle, careful there. We are still in the Red Keep.”

Tyrion sent him a glance before he gestured at the room at large. “Why do you think I insist on these lodgings here instead of the ones closer to Maegor’s Holdfast, as is my right as the Queen’s brother? Certainly not because of the side entrance for the whores. Although that was a rather pleasant coincidence. No, this is one of the rooms that has no little holes for anyone to spy on me and the walls are thick enough that nobody will hear us, not even if they listen at the door.”
Joffrey nodded at that tidbit of information and gladly took the glass of lemon water his uncle handed him.

“So if you are determined to go through with this fostering, what do you need my assistance for?”

“Uncle insists on only one guard and servant while in his care."

“You don’t like that?”

“I couldn’t care less, but it gives me the opportunity to release most of my retinue back into my parents’ employment without raising eyebrows.”

“Ah… spies?”

Joffrey sighed. “Mother’s, Varys’, Littlefinger’s… and I suspect various other nobles as well.”

Tyrion hummed and toasted Joffrey’s clever move.

“I take it you will keep those three little bees that always buzz around you?”

“Massey and her sisters, yes. The Hound and the guards as well. Maege – the second oldest – and the Hound will accompany me, and I plan to send the rest to Oak Valley Hall. Away from the influence of certain characters.”

“Very wise, nephew.”

“My problem is now the following. Once I return from uncle Stannis’ care, I will be expected to have a household, a full one this time. I am closing in on my tenth year after all.”

“What was the retinue size of a crown prince again?” Tyrion asked, honestly interested.

“At least twenty and a hundred.”

Tyrion whistled. “That’s a lot of people… and a lot of potential spies.”

Joffrey nodded and pulled out the list he had put together.

“Massey will start searching for suitable smallfolk for the base positions but I am in need of competent, efficient and loyal people of education.”

Tyrion whistled. “Competent, efficient and loyal… a tall order in this day and age.” He finished his wine and then stretched a hand out, “the list, if you will.”

Wordlessly Joffrey handed it over and Tyrion regarded it for a moment, the prince had underlined the positions that needed somebody of a certain education and standing.

**Household**

*Steward 1 (Massey - servants and further training)*

- Assistant (Maege and Mab, possible third)

*Steward 2 (capable of numbers and letters, responsible for ordering supplies, planning the travel route)*

- Assistant (numbers and letters)
Treasurer (travel purse of the prince, note the expenses, pay the household, sending letters)

- Assistant (numbers and letters)
- Assistant (numbers and letters)

Marshal (horses and travelling carts)

- Stable hands

Septon

Joffrey’s handmaidens (Maege and Mab – are training under Massey)

- Female servants (serve food, repair mundane fabric, daily tasks) 7
- Washer women (wash clothes and fabrics) 7
- Footmen (setting up tents, packing, running errands- orders from Massey, serve food) 10

Keeper of the Wardrobe (numbers and letters, fabric care and basic arithmetic skills)

- Assistant (numbers and letters)
- Seamstress
  - Apprentice

Chandler (candles, torches)

Ewer (bathing utensils and filling the baths)

- Assistant
- Assistant

Kitchen

- Head Cook
- Cook
- Cook
- Apprentice
- Apprentice
- Keeper of the pantry (read & write)
- Butler (responsible for wine, mead, beer)
- Keeper of the Cutlery
- Naperer (dish linen)

Guards

- Knights (guards, currently 8) – at least 12
- Sergeants (guards, currently 14) – at least 20
- Archers/Crossbow men (10-20)

Master huntsman

- 2 Hunters

Falconer (of noble lineage)

“You certainly put some thought in this list… I may have some people in mind for several these positions. How long do you plan to stay with Stannis?” Tyrion mused.
“At least a couple of months but I cannot tell you for certain. I will write before I return though.”

The dwarf nodded absentmindedly before shooing him away. “Well then, run along nephew and enjoy your last days of leisure.”

Joffrey snorted again before genuinely smiling. “Thank you. I would not know who else to ask on this short notice.”

“It is fine, we are family after all… oh and Joffrey?”

“Yes?”

“Not a word to your mother about what you walked in on.”

Joffrey rolled his eyes. “As if I would invite unnecessary drama like that.”

Tyrion quipped. “I thank the Gods every day you take more after your uncle Jaime and me than our sweet sister,” he said, before taking another sip of his wine.

“Have a good day, uncle Tyrion,” Joffrey said while he left his uncle’s rooms, tactfully ignoring the unflattering mutters about his mother.

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Joffrey was thankful for having bidden his family farewell inside the Red Keep the night before instead of dragging three fourths of the castle’s population out of bed before dawn. Stannis had insisted on leaving at first daylight and not a quarter of an hour later, so the festivities in his honor had been moved accordingly.

“Lord Stannis, my thanks for allowing me to accompany you,” Joffrey greeted his uncle politely before turning to the man beside him. “Ser Davos,” he nodded in the Onion Knight’s direction.

“I do my duty, when it is asked of me,” his uncle muttered before he visibly pulled himself together and nodded at Joffrey. “Good morrow.”

“Good morrow to you as well. I hope that I won’t inconvenience you too much but I find that I have much to learn about the Kingdom and that includes our Navy.”

“So it was your idea?” Stannis muttered darkly.

Joffrey just nodded.

“Don’t expect me to coddle you, boy. You wanted to experience working on a ship, so you will start out like any other.”

“Yes, uncle,” Joffrey agreed calmly.

The next fourteen days were hell on Joffrey’s newly ten-year-old body while he shared the duties of Stannis’ cabin boy, Macos, a boy of fourteen. He was running from one end of the ship to the other, learning about sails, lines and ropes. Devan Seaworth, Stannis’ page and only a year younger than Joffrey often sat in on the lessons in sailing lore as well. Ser Davos’ son was a head shorter than Joffrey, who had grown nearly six inches since his last birthday and was rather tall for a ten-year-old, though not very broad in his shoulders yet.
Clegane and Maege stayed mostly out of the way of the crew, though Clegane never was farther than several feet away from Joffrey, and had shed most of his armor for lighter leather.

“Seven Hells, I’m not going to drown in that gods-forsaken sea because I was too pigheaded to put away my armor,” Clegane grumbled when one of the sailors dared to ask.

Maege on the other hand helped the ship’s cook and mostly repaired worn clothes. Not trusting the sailors that didn’t see a woman for months on end, Joffrey made Maege sleep in the cabin he shared with Clegane. It was a tight fit, hanging up three hammocks in what was barely bigger than a Red Keep closet, but no one complained.

**Beta’d by Lyova**

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