

“Grandmother’s coming here?” Rhaenyra had asked in shock. She had visited the Eyrie a few times over the years, enjoying the company of her cousin Jeyne and also loving that she got to visit her grandmother at the same time, but she herself hadn’t left the Vale in quite some time.

“Er...no,” Viserys sighed. “Aunt Daella made it plainly clear that she would never again set foot in the city after...after your mother’s funeral, but she has sailed to Dragonstone.”

“Was she looking for me?” Gael asked, hoping that wasn’t the case, since she hadn’t been back to the island since she left over a moon ago.

“No,” Viserys replied. “She said in her letter that she wished to visit Grandfather’s and Grandmother’s tomb.”

“There are no Targaryens there to greet her, though,” Rhaenyra said. “I shall fly there on Syrax. It will be nice to see her again.”

“You might wish to find out just why she’s coming too,” Alicent commented, and Rhaenyra went still.

“Are you implying that she has some ulterior motive?” she asked peevishly, and the queen just chuckled.

“No,” Alicent replied, “but your grandmother hasn’t left the Eyrie, much less the Vale, in years. Her randomly sailing to Dragonstone is odd, especially when she could have just written to you and asked to be flown.”

“Daella’s terrified of flying,” Saera corrected her, “but you do have a point. This is unusual. I’d like to come along, Rhaenyra. It’s been too long since I last saw Daella.”

“Are you sure that’s wise?” Viserra asked. “You two didn’t exactly...get along.”

“I was a cunt; I’m aware,” Saera said dryly, earning a scowl from Alicent and giggles from her children. “All the more reason to see her.”

“I can take you,” Jon smiled.

“I’ll come along as well,” Laena smiled. “Vhagar will enjoy the opportunity to spread her wings.”

“A splendid idea,” Viserys said jovially. “Be sure to write if you end up staying more than a couple days.”

“I will,” Rhaenyra promised.

The Princess of Dragonstone shook her head as the island came into view, and Syrax began to descend and put the memory from earlier that morning out of her head. Loath as she was to admit it, Alicent was right, and her grandmother’s visit to Dragonstone was unusual. She remembered her visiting the capital a few times when she was younger. She only ever sailed there, so the journeys couldn’t be made often, but she liked visiting them, seeing her only daughter and grandchild.

“Then Mother died,” Rhaenyra thought to herself bitterly.

Her grandmother had taken the death of her only child understandably hard, but it wasn't until much later that Rhaenyra realized she must have blamed her father for it. She'd struggled with such thoughts herself now and then, but she loved him too much to stay angry with him, despite everything that followed the tragedy. Her grandmother had no such qualms, and she hadn't been to the capital in years, but then, neither had she been to Dragonstone.

"The fact that she's randomly visiting my great-grandparents urns is particularly unsettling," she thought to herself, fearful of what that might mean. *"Gods, I hope she isn't sick."*

She swallowed thickly at the thought as Syrax landed, steeling herself for whatever revelations might come of this visit. Vhagar and Vermithor followed behind her, neither dragon nearly as quick as her little lady, and as Rhaenyra descended from her mount's saddle, she smiled up at the sight of them in the distance, knowing that, whatever she discovered, she'd have Laena, Jon, and Saera with her.

"Gods, I miss you," Daella whispered, her throat too tight with emotion to make any more sound than that as she peered down at the urn that held her mother's ashes.

When a Targaryen died, their body was burned, and the ashes were interred in the tombs on Dragonstone. It was a tradition that went back to Old Valyria, and nearly every Targaryen had been interred in the tombs of the ancient keep since they first fled there, even Maegor and Visenya, despite how much her parents had despised them. Her mother's urn was beautiful, just like she had been, a soft enameled blue, the same shade as her eyes. Her father's was bronze, the color of his beloved mount, and no sooner had that thought occurred to her than she heard the Bronze Fury roar and stepped back in shock.

It had been years since she'd heard that sound, yet she knew it at once, and as she turned to leave, wanting to investigate, Rhaenyra stepped inside.

"Rhaenyra?" she asked, looking at her granddaughter in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

"I was about to ask you the same thing," Rhaenyra replied, rushing forward and pulling her in for a tight hug.

Daella returned it happily, feeling her heart sing at being so close to her only grandchild. "You didn't need to come all this way, Rhaenyra."

"It's a very short flight," Rhaenyra scoffed, "and we both knew you weren't going to come to the capital."

"I...the last time I was there, I felt like I couldn't breathe, and not because of the smell," Daella replied.

"Mother's funeral was agonizing for us all," Rhaenyra whispered.

"It wasn't just that," Daella sighed. "The city, the keep, they both remind me so much of all that I've lost. There's a reason Mother spent so much time here by the end. With all of us moved away, Aemon gone, and the...challenges between Baelon and Rhaenys, the city became as suffocating for her, as it is for me. This place is different."

"I've always preferred it too," Rhaenyra smiled.

"Now, did I hear Vermithor just now?" Daella asked.

"You did," Rhaenyra replied. "He and Vhagar are both here. Jon and Laena accompanied me...as did Saera."

Daella stiffened at that and asked, "Saera?"

"She wishes to see you, and when we learned that you were here, she decided to come with us," Rhaenyra replied. "She's...different than you might remember her."

"I'll believe that if I see it," Daella said flatly, sighing as she realized that she had no way out of seeing her sister if she'd truly come.

"Did you eat, or did you come straight here?" Rhaenyra asked. "I ordered the cooks to prepare what they could on so little notice."

"I...am hungry," Daella admitted, "and I can return here later. You must tell me all about how you've been since you last wrote to me. Has Viserys come any closer to settling on a match for you?"

"No," Rhaenyra scowled, "but we can discuss that later. How is my cousin?"

"Jeyne is quite well," Daella smiled, "and she's taken to ruling the Vale like it is the most natural thing in the world. They're all in good hands."

"You must be proud," Rhaenyra smiled. "You practically raised her."

"She's grown into a fine woman, and she'll be a great lady," Daella replied, looking pensive.

"What's wrong?" Rhaenyra asked, noticing her mood.

"She doesn't wish to wed," Daella replied, "and I fear for the family's future if she doesn't."

"Why wouldn't she wed?" Rhaenyra asked.

"Because she cares not the slightest bit for men," Daella thought to herself. "She values her independence and doesn't wish to have a husband rule her and rule the Vale through her."

"I can see her point there, but surely she could find some man who would just be happy to laze around enjoying castle life while she ruled," Rhaenyra replied.

"It's not a risk I've managed to convince her to take yet," Daella sighed, "still, it is the only issue with her rule so far."

"Well, we'll just have to pray that she finds someone who she can love and trust," Rhaenyra sighed.

"She has, but alas, Jessamyn can't provide her with what she needs," Daella thought to herself as the pair of them made their way to the hall.

"Great-Aunt Daella," Jon smiled as he spotted her, standing up to greet her. "You're looking well."

“As are you,” Daella chuckled, pointedly not looking at Saera, who remained seated and stared at her curiously. “Gods, you’ve gotten so tall.”

“Hasn’t he?” Saera grinned. “I swear he’s as tall as Aemon now.”

“I wouldn’t know,” Daella replied flatly. “From where I stand, everyone looks like they have giant’s blood.”

Rhaenyra snorted at that and said, “At least I know who to blame.”

Daella smiled at her granddaughter for that, but she remained tense and wary, something that Laena didn’t fail to notice as she joined them.

“Princess Daella,” she nodded respectfully, “how was your journey here?”

“Rough,” Daella winced, “though the waters around here often are.”

“I’d happily fly you back when you wish to return,” Jon offered. “I’m sure that Vermithor would appreciate seeing you again.”

“That would be very nice, thank you,” Daella replied, and Saera’s eyes widened.

“Really?” she asked.

“I’ve lived in the Eyrie for a very long time, Saera,” Daella muttered. “I had to get over my issue with heights at some point.”

“Well, that will be fun,” Rhaenyra smiled. “Perhaps I could go along and visit Jeyne.”

Daella was about to respond when the servants came in, bringing bread that had already clearly been baking and butter. She felt her stomach rumble at the sight and sat down across from Saera, who looked at her awkwardly. Wondering just why her most difficult sister wanted to speak to her at all, she dug into the first course of the makeshift feast that would follow.

“I guess I couldn’t expect anything else,” Saera thought to herself a little later as she made her way through the halls of Dragonstone. *“I was worse to her than I was to any of them, even Vaegon.”*

As they were growing up, Daella was always the most timid of her siblings, even including Gael. She seemed to be afraid of everything, was incredibly shy, and could be driven to tears by the slightest criticism. For a spoiled and, she had to admit, bitchy princess like Saera, that made her the object of jokes more often than not, and she used to prank her horribly. The worst of those was when she managed to sneak an apple core covered in docile bees into the older girl’s chamber pot, but they generally weren’t quite that cruel. She knew that Daella was often terrified of her, though, and, with the benefit of years and the wisdom they’d given her, she knew that she went too far too often. She’d tried to apologize during their meal, but Daella kept her attention focused purely on the others through most of it.

“This is best done in private, anyway,” she thought to herself, instructing the guard she found outside her door to announce her.

Daella opened the door and glared at her, saying, "I'm surprised you bothered coming to the door. You used to prefer the secret passages."

"I could still, if you prefer," Saera snarked, unable to help herself.

"What do you want, Saera?" Daella sighed wearily, and Saera did as well.

"To talk...and to apologize," Saera replied, and Daella simply cocked an eyebrow at her.

"You can do that?" she asked dryly, and Saera chuckled.

"I can do many things," the princess replied. "Are you going to let me in or not?"

"I'm finished with my prayers anyway," Daella muttered, stepping back and letting her in.

Saera fought the urge to roll her eyes at the symbols of the Seven arranged on the wall by the wall. Daella was always the most devout of them after Maegelle and probably would have followed their elder sister's example and become a septa if their mother hadn't nearly begged her to seriously consider wedding Rodrik Arryn.

"I won't be bragging about what I've done in White Harbor to her," she thought to herself as she poured a couple cups of wine for them and handed one to her. "I was a cunt."

"Mother used to say you were spirited," Daella replied. "Alyssa used to ask if, by that, she meant you were possessed by them."

Saera snorted at that. "I was immature and liked getting a rise out of people, and you always responded more entertainingly than anyone else, but I shouldn't have made such sport of you, and for that I am sorry."

"Are you feeling alright?" Daella asked, sipping her wine and sitting down.

"Is it so difficult to believe that I might actually feel remorse for terrifying you as a girl?" Saera asked.

"In a word, yes," Daella scowled. "I was terrified of Alyssa, the wild and boisterous thing that she is, but you were just cruel. Do you have any idea what it's like to have a bee sting you...there?"

"That one was particularly wretched of me," Saera winced, looking down.

"I ran out of my chambers with my skirt bunched up above my bottom, screaming in horror and pain," Daella snarled. "I wanted to die when the servants saw me like that. It took Mother hours to calm me down."

"Even back then I realized I went too far with that one," Saera admitted. "I am sorry, Daella. If I can make it up to you at all..."

"Where was this when Mother was dying?" Daella spat. "She wanted to see you, you know?"

"Jaehaerys had made it very clear that I wasn't to return," Saera hissed.

“Father would have made an exception if you’d bothered to ask,” Daella scowled. “He wanted to see you in the end too.”

“That was never going to happen,” Saera muttered before sighing. “I’ll tell you now that no good will come of us discussing him.”

“What changed?” Daella asked. “The last I heard, you were the same bitter, spoiled bitch you’d always been.”

“Well, you’re hardly the spineless little twit you were as a girl,” Saera pointed out. “Can you even imagine speaking to me like this back then? You’d have sooner climbed into Balerion’s mouth. If you can change, can’t I?”

“I know what changed me, though,” Daella replied. “I would know what brought this out in you.”

“Jon, really,” Saera replied.

“Jon?” Daella asked.

“And the rest of them,” Saera continued. “I understand you’re likely not fond of him, but Viserys’ court is so much less stifling than Jaehaerys’ was. Even with it split in two between Rhaenyra’s faction and the Hightowers, it’s still infinitely more welcoming.”

“Father was welcoming,” Daella scoffed. “You just spit in his face over and over again until he finally snapped.”

“Yes, because I’m the only one who ever ended up on his bad side,” Saera replied sarcastically. “Viserra and Gael found him just unforgiving, and in the end, he nearly drove Mother away too, stealing from Rhaenys as he did.”

“Father did that because of you!” Daella shouted, making her flinch back. “You, Viserra, Gael, even me. If we hadn’t been so weak in our own ways, he might well have let Rhaenys inherit the throne after him, and my little girl...”

She trailed off then, sobbing, and before Saera even realized what she was doing, she’d wrapped her arms around her. Daella shoved her away, but she pulled her back in, holding the shorter woman as she wept and trembled in her arms.

“I hate him,” Daella sobbed.

“Who? Jaehaerys?” Saera asked, confused.

“No, you... Viserys,” Daella muttered, wiggling out of her arms and downing the rest of her wine. As she poured more, she muttered, “I hate that I do, and I pray for forgiveness every day for it, but I hate him. If that fool had just named Rhaenyra his heir when she was born...”

“I understand being angry with Viserys for pushing your daughter as he did, but that goes back to Jaehaerys, and blaming us for his actions is ludicrous,” Saera argued. “He was the purportedly great, wise king, and his decision to choose Baelon over Rhaenys had as much to do with not wanting Corlys to be king as fearing that a woman couldn’t handle power. The irony is he now wants the man’s son to Rhaenyra’s consort.”

“What?” Daella asked. “But she and Jon...”

“They’re in love and want to wed, but Viserys fears insulting the Velaryons any more than they already have been,” Saera explained. “Jaehaerys’ actions continue to trouble us all.”

“So you just refuse to call him Father at all, huh?” Daella scowled, and Saera returned the look.

“I despise him more intensely than you could possibly hate his successor,” she replied. “It’s why I didn’t want to discuss him. We have enough disagreement between us.”

“Gods, those poor things,” Daella sighed, sitting down heavily. “Why can none of us ever be happy?”

“Baelon and Alyssa were for a long while,” Saera replied. “Aemon and Jocelyn were too. The rest of us were fucked from the start.”

“I heard that Viserra is living in the Red Keep again,” Daella murmured.

“Gael too, and her daughter Elaena,” Saera replied, and Daella looked at her in surprise. “As I say, the court is more welcoming than it used to be. Do you think you’ll ever be able to forgive him?”

“Do you think you’ll ever forgive Father?” Daella asked, and Saera just scowled.

“What about me?” she whispered.

“That...I might be able to work on, provided this new you is real and not some kind of scheme,” Daella replied reluctantly.

“You must admit that some of the things I did were amusing,” Saera said, earning an incredulous look from her sister. “Not the things done to you, obviously.”

“Even I laughed when you dyed the Kingsguard’s cloaks pink,” Daella admitted.

“Ser Ryam was so angry,” Saera laughed, and she smiled despite herself.

“So how bad are things in the capital?” Daella asked. “Rhaenyra hasn’t even hinted at there being much trouble outside her lingering feud with the queen.”

“That complicates everything,” Saera sighed. “Viserys insists on keeping Rhaenyra as his heir...”

“Well, he bloody should,” Daella muttered. “It’s the least he owes Aemma after...”

“And it’s by Jaehaerys’ precedent that he can,” Saera chuckled. “If the old king could pick who he liked as his heir, why can’t the young one? There are plenty who disagree, of course, and wedding Rhaenyra to Laenor will do her no favors.”

“Why?” Daella asked. “House Velaryon is wealthy and powerful, and Corlys’ fleet alone...”

“Laenor cares not for women,” Saera replied, and Daella just buried her head in her hands.

“What did we do to anger the gods so?” she asked.

"I don't think the gods care one way or the other," Saera muttered. "Our problems are our own doing, for the most part."

"Surprisingly wise of you, though I don't necessarily agree with the first part," Daella said. "Has Viserys made up his mind about Laenor outright?"

"He's hoping that Rhaenyra will see things his way," Saera replied, "which gives us time. Before you ask, he and at least the Grand Maester have heard the rumors of Laenor's nature, but they don't think that it will be too much of a problem."

"They do how men work, right?" Daella asked dryly, and Saera snorted.

"I'm amazed you do," she joked, only to freeze as Daella's face fell. "What?"

"It's nothing," Daella muttered, looking away. "I am tired, Saera, and I should get some rest."

"Does it have to do with why you came here?" Saera asked, ignoring her. "Rhaenyra seems to fear that you're unwell."

"Why would she think that?" Daella asked, confused.

"Because you left the Vale for the first time since she was a young girl to visit your parents' urns," Saera replied, and Daella groaned.

"I'm perfectly well," she muttered. "I'm just..."

"You can tell me," Saera replied. "Even if you can't find it in you to forgive me, that just means we'll likely not see each other again after you leave, so I'm arguably the perfect confidant. You don't need to care what I think."

"Rodrik's been gone for such a long time," Daella sighed. "Aemma's been gone for years as well, and Jeyne, who I raised in place of her parents, the gods rest them, is a woman grown and not really mine. She's made it clear that I can stay in the Eyrie for the rest of my days if I choose, but those halls have just begun to feel...lonely. After Rodrik died, I had Aemma, and after she moved to wed Viserys, Edric grew sick and entrusted me to be Jeyne's regent. I miss having such purpose, though, and I guess I've begun to feel like I'm merely drifting through life."

"So you came here," Saera interjected. "Did you hope the familiar place might make you feel like you did when you lived here?"

"I would have written to Mother when she lived," Daella sighed. "I guess that I just kind of hoped that visiting her tomb might help me think of an answer."

"You could wed again," Saera replied, and Daella scoffed.

"I'm old, barren, and frail," she muttered. "What use would I be to a man?"

"There are other reasons to wed than making children," Saera chuckled, "and you're not that old. Has your change come yet?"

"No, but Aemma's birth was...difficult," Daella replied. "The maester at the time made it clear to Rodrik and me that I would likely never conceive again, and I didn't."

“Ah, I’m sorry,” Saera sighed, and Daella just laughed.

“I don’t think I ever saw such a sincere emotion out of you regarding anyone other than yourself during our entire childhood,” she chuckled. “Perhaps you have changed.”

“I’m content in a way that I can’t ever recall being,” Saera replied, smiling, and Daella furrowed her brow at her.

“There’s more to this than just Viserys welcoming you into the family and the Red Keep, isn’t there?” she asked. “I know you haven’t wed again since Theomore died.”

“I’ve...taken a lover,” Saera replied, and Daella just rolled her eyes. “You know, it might help you too.”

“Such things are sinful,” the older princess replied, “and besides, I...never understood all the fuss about it anyway.”

“What?” Saera asked, and Daella flushed a bright red.

“When I heard what happened to you and why, I couldn’t fathom it,” she muttered. “Why take up with three men?”

“Because it was fun,” Saera replied dryly, “and because I enjoyed them, and Perianne and Alys too. Are you saying you never enjoyed yourself?”

“The first time hurt more than the bee stings,” Daella replied, scowling at her, “and after that, I...Rodrik was a dear, sweet, and gentle man, and he so clearly enjoyed himself that I happily did my duties, but I never understood why you or Alyssa sought out...that as you did.”

“Gods, you poor thing,” Saera sighed, resting her hand on her sister’s knee. “You’ve never had an orgasm, have you?”

“A what?” Daella replied, her skin turning crimson when she recalled what that word meant. “I took countless ones while I was wed...”

“Oh, I know he did, Daella, but I meant you,” Saera replied, leaning in. “You do know that women can do that too, right?”

“What?” Daella asked, blinking at her in confusion. “What do you...”

Saera cackled just like she used to when Daella would scream in fright from one of her pranks and said, “Gods, if you felt Jon’s touch for just ten minutes, you’d...”

She trailed off and her eyes went wide as she realized what she’d said. Daella, meanwhile, rose to her feet so quickly, she set the chair behind her skidding back across the floor.

“Jon!?” she growled. “You vile little bitch, you haven’t changed at all. You said yourself, my darling granddaughter, all I have left of Aemma, is in love with him, and you’ve taken him just like you always took whatever you wanted.”

“Daella, it isn’t what you think,” Saera protested.

“Of course it is!” Daella shrieked. “You...”

“What in the seven hells is going on here?” Rhaenyra asked, rushing inside and closing the door behind her. “I could hear you from Laena’s chambers.”

“Gods, Rhaenyra, I’m so sorry, but this wretched little harpy...” Daella went to explain.

“I let slip that I was fucking Jon,” Saera explained.

“Oh,” Rhaenyra chuckled.

“Oh?” Daella asked, coming to an instant halt. “Wait, you...you know?”

“I do,” Rhaenyra replied.

“Wh...why?” Daella stammered.

“Saera, excuse us,” Rhaenyra commanded softly, and the older princess nodded before leaving. “I love Jon, Grandmother; I always have, but Father has been so reluctant to approve our union because of his history with Daemon and...”

“Has he coerced you into this?” Daella asked.

“Not at all,” Rhaenyra assured her. “He has been so patient and kind, and letting him have Saera and the others is something that I’ve been more than happy to do.”

“Others?” Daella asked weakly.

“Saera didn’t get to that,” Rhaenyra winced. “Viserra, Gael, and Elaena are all his lovers too. We’re family, and I’m more than happy to share with those I care for, plus, none of them intend to wed anyone else, so what’s the harm?”

“The scandal, if anyone found out, would be...” Daella argued.

“Not the same as if I were caught doing as he is, and you know it,” Rhaenyra replied. “We’ve hidden all of this from my father, for obvious reasons, and I will continue to demand discretion from them after I wed him, but so long as it’s with women I approve of, I don’t mind him enjoying himself. He is quite the man, and having a few other women around will likely be a boon.”

“You and he haven’t...” Daella went to ask.

“No,” Rhaenyra interrupted her. “My virtue is intact, as is Laena’s.”

“Laena?” Daella asked. “What does she have to do with this?”

“My idea of how to placate the Velaryons without having to wed Laenor is to have Jon wed her too and then wed our children together to secure the succession,” Rhaenyra replied. “We’re still working on a plan to get my father to agree to this, though.”

“You shouldn’t have to share your husband with anyone,” Daella protested.

“Laena is...very dear to me,” Rhaenyra replied, “more so than any of the others are...yet.”

“You...oh,” Daella sighed, sitting down. “You do...desire Jon, though, yes?”

“Oh gods yes,” Rhaenyra replied. “My fondness for Laena has no impact on my fondness for him.”

“*Not like Jeyne then,*” she thought to herself. “Even if you pull this off, it will complicate your life in ways that a more typical marriage wouldn’t.”

“My life is complicated,” Rhaenyra muttered. “Half the lords of the realm believe that Aegon should be the heir in my place, and that extends to the court, even if Alicent’s allies have learned to hold their tongues. With the riders of Vhagar and Vermithor at my side, though, my position would be secure, and I love them both anyway, so why shouldn’t I try this?”

“I hate that you have to think in such terms at all,” Daella sighed, cupping her cheek. “You deserve better than to have to plot against your own siblings.”

“Half-si...” Rhaenyra cut herself off and sighed. “I’m used to it by now. Can I trust you to keep what you’ve learned here to yourself?”

“Of course,” Daella sighed. “I may not agree with or even understand this, but your happiness and safety mean more to me than anything, and I wouldn’t jeopardize either. Can you really trust my sister, though?”

“I’ve learned to trust most of my great-aunts at this point,” Rhaenyra replied. Sighing, she added, “I know that she was wretched to you as a girl, but I ask that you try to see her as she is now. She is still your sister, and I’ve seen enough of how she’s been around Viserra and Gael to know that she isn’t like the girl I’ve heard descriptions of.”

“Her getting along with Gael is surprising,” Daella admitted. “Viserys really accepted her daughter being around the court?”

“Elaena is one of my ladies-in-waiting,” Rhaenyra replied. “Father was a little reluctant, given what she is, but he accepted her once I asked.”

“I...am tired from my long journey and this even longer conversation, and I would rest,” Daella said, and Rhaenyra nodded.

“Of course,” Rhaenyra smiled, hugging her. “Sleep well, Grandmother.”

Daella watched her leave and buried her head in her hands. She knew what her mother would have said about her granddaughter if she’d heard any of that, and she didn’t even want to think about what her father would have.

“*Is that the point of this?*” she wondered to herself. “*Is this Saera’s way of getting back at him, leading the future queen down this path?*”

It made sense to her, given what she knew of Saera, who had apparently believed that holding to any level of morality was beneath Valyrians. According to her mother, her sister had used Maegor, of all people, as an example to follow, something so foolish she’d come to wonder if the girl was mad back then.

“Two wives and at least four mistresses,” she thought to herself. “Six women, just like my great-uncle.”

She trailed off in her mind, realizing that the only way she was going to learn the truth of this was to stay around for a while and observe them. She just hoped that that wouldn't necessitate following them to King's Landing.

Luckily for Daella, Rhaenyra stayed in Dragonstone for the next few days, as did the others. It meant that she didn't need to go to the city where her darling daughter died and gave her an opportunity to spend time with her granddaughter, who wisely didn't bring up her strange arrangements with Saera and the others again, clearly deciding to give her time to come to terms with it on her own. Daella didn't bring it up either, wanting to just observe them all together for a time and keeping an especially close eye on Saera, though it was often drawn to Jon as well.

“It was one of my first flights after I bonded with Vermithor,” he recounted as they feasted one evening, “flying through the Vale, and I see this small group of people I figured were merchants being hounded by a tribe of wildlings. Without hesitating, I directed him onward, and we dove towards them. The mountain men might have seen us sooner if the sun was out, but it was a very cloudy day, and by the time they did, his fiery maw was already about to loose flames. Gods, it was extraordinary.”

“I heard about that all the way in the Eyrie,” Daella commented. “Jeyne was most pleased that you had saved her dearest friend's kin.”

“Yes, I learned after the fact that it had actually been a party including the lord of House Redfort,” Jon chuckled.

“It's a pity Jaehaerys never thought to assemble all of our dragonriders while Aemon still lived to deal with the Mountain tribes then,” Saera muttered. “If just he, Baelon, and Aemon could lay waste to the Dornish as they did, surely the lot of them together could have dealt with the problem once and for all.”

“It wouldn't be as easy as you might think,” Jon explained. “That was a united army that the three dragons wiped out, something more akin to the field of fire. The clans are scattered about the mountains, and even dragons would need to spend years finding their hidden encampments. I've thinned their numbers a fair bit over the years, though.”

“The people of the Vale appreciate your efforts, Jon,” Daella smiled slightly. “We get far fewer reports of attacks now than we did in Rodrik's day.”

“I'm glad,” Jon smiled. “I've come across the aftermath of their attacks before. Those who they killed were the lucky ones.”

“I think that's enough talk of butchery for now,” Rhaenyra said firmly. “Grandmother, I wrote to Viserra and Gael and let them know that you had decided to stay here a while. They'll be arriving in three days' time.”

“Really?” Daella asked, her eyes flicking to Saera, who was staring up at Jon impishly. “How lovely!”

“It will be,” Laena smiled. “That will be the most of your siblings in one place in years, yes, Saera?”

“Since Father’s funeral,” Daella replied. “Even Vaegon and Maegelle attended that, and they seldom leave Oldtown at this point.”

The fact that Saera didn’t was left unsaid, and the woman didn’t even notice, too busy swirling her wine around her cup before finishing it off.

“Anyway, I think it’s time to turn in,” Rhaenyra smiled. “I intend to go flying early tomorrow and want to get some rest while I can.”

“That sounds like a plan,” Laena smiled, standing up as the princess did.

“Goodnight, Grandmother,” Rhaenyra murmured, kissing her cheek.

“Goodnight, little dragon,” Daella replied, calling her the same thing that her mother had called her often enough.

She watched them leave and said nothing as Jon and Saera did as well, going in separate directions, yet she couldn’t shake the feeling that they’d be meeting up. Since she arrived, the two of them had been discreet, far more than Saera apparently was back when she got caught with her lovers. She’s kept a close eye on them and found herself feeling better than she had in ages. It wasn’t that she enjoyed trying to investigate Saera’s influence on Rhaenyra and the others much, but doing so gave her purpose, something that she realized she’d lacked since Jeyne came of age. Standing up, she followed after her sister, keeping a safe distance away as she went.

“Okay, maybe I do enjoy this a little,” she admitted mentally. “I wonder if this is the sort of thing that the city watch does much in King’s Landing. Jon makes it sound like most of what they do is cracking skulls, but surely they investigate some matters.”

Part of what had bothered her so about all of this was Jon himself, who, contrary to what she’d come to expect after she learned that he was bedding three of her sisters, her niece, and planned to wed her granddaughter, turned out to be a perfectly polite young man. He was a warrior and had the same air of controlled violence that Aemon and Baelon had had, but he wasn’t nearly as arrogant as she’d have expected. She’d expected a younger Daemon and found something quite different. He was also undeniably handsome, and she understood why Rhaenyra was so taken with him.

She continued following Saera around at a distance and was led on a winding path through the castle as her sister seemed to want to walk off the food she’d just eaten. It was irritating, and every time she turned a corner, Daella had to duck into an alcove or hide behind some decoration lest she catch her in the corner of her eye, but it was also kind of exciting too. There really was a degree of fun to be found in sneaking about like this, something that Daella never learned as a child. Eventually, though, she did enter a room, and Daella was left puzzled by it. There was no guard outside, as she’d have expected, and she wondered just what she was doing when she heard a faint click come from inside.

“Secret passages,” she thought to herself, scowling as she realized that she really should have guessed as much.

She carefully opened the door and poked her head inside, finding no one there, and scowled again as she slipped into the room and closed the door behind her. The click sounded like it came from a spot to her left, so she focused there as she started searching for some loose brick or sconce to move about. She had heard Saera mention how she found so many secret passages years ago but barely remembered what she'd said. She did know that it tended to involve things hidden in plain sight, though.

"What are you up to?" she muttered to herself, hoping that she'd find her in the middle of discussing something nefarious. She was aware that there was a chance that she was just bedding Jon, in which case she'd just leave and try to follow her another time.

Eventually she found a stone that was clearly not mortared properly and pulled it out, finding a lever hidden behind it that she pulled. An entire wooden panel next to her clicked open, and she carefully pulled it away, finding a pitch-black tunnel waiting for her. She gulped, being no fonder of such dark, confined spaces than she was as a girl, but she grabbed a nearby candleholder and went inside, only to nearly scream when the candle went out.

"Gods," she grumbled, putting it back and leaving the room in search of something to light her way.

It took her a little while to find a servant who could bring her a torch, not wanting to risk another candle going out, and she thanked him as he lit it for her, not questioning her at all. She returned to the hidden passage and went inside, wincing as she realized just how long and winding the hidden hallway was. It didn't branch off into different paths, something that would have prompted her to turn back and forget this entirely, but it was a long path, and one that she wasn't willing to move through quickly, as she really couldn't see around very well.

She continued on, though, determined to see or just hear what her sister was doing, and as she drew close to the other end of the hallway, she quickly got her answer.

"Yes, yes, yes, yes!" Saera cried, and Daella stopped in her tracks, rolling her eyes.

She'd walked past a building she hadn't known was a whorehouse once and heard similarly exaggerated sounds of pleasure there, so she knew what her sister was doing, and she sighed. As she turned to leave, though, she heard something else that made her blood freeze in her veins.

"Gods, it really feels good to be taken that roughly?" Rhaenyra asked.

"I'm amazed he even fits," Laena added.

"No," Daella thought to herself.

She'd been so caught off guard by what Rhaenyra told her all those nights ago that it had taken her hours to process it all. As much as she came to fear that it was a scandal waiting to happen, she took some solace in the fact that her granddaughter had claimed that she hadn't yet become a part of the depravity that Saera had pulled the others into. If she was caught doing anything inappropriate before she was wed, the chances of her taking the throne would be nonexistent, and while this could still end poorly afterward, it would mostly reflect on Jon instead of her. Daella was still hoping to find some proof that her sister had nefarious motives in all of this first, but even that would be for naught if Rhaenyra had despoiled herself.

With rage like she'd never known, she frantically searched around for the lever to let her in and pulled it the moment her hand found it, barreling inside.

“Rhaenyra, this is...” she growled, only to go still as she saw just what was happening.

All four of them were nude, with Rhaenyra and Laena lounging on a table together as they watched the pair on the bed. It was clear from how they were positioned that they were being intimate as well, and the two of them froze as she walked in, turning to stare at her in horror just as Saera let out a keening wail.

Daella stood, still as a statue, as her sister convulsed on the bed, screaming like she was being tortured, all while Jon continued to rut her like a beast. She was on her hands and knees, and he was taking her as a wolf takes a bitch, his large, strong hands gripping her hips hard. He noticed her after a moment, and he went still, looking up at her in surprise.

“Grandmother?” Rhaenyra asked.

“Princess Daella?” Laena asked.

“What in the world is this?” Daella asked, looking around.

“That...dear sister...was an orgasm,” Saera panted, chuckling as she looked up at her and brushed the hair out of her face.

“You promised me that you hadn’t yet...coupled with him,” Daella muttered, looking at Rhaenyra, who covered herself as best she could with her hands.

“She hasn’t,” Jon replied before she could. “The two of them just wanted to see what it was like, and Saera and I indulged them.”

“And you,” Daella hissed. “What do you think will happen if word gets out that you’re bedding half the women of this family?”

“That would be bad, but we are discreet about these things, and we can trust the servants here to keep their mouths shut anyway,” Jon replied. “Trust me there.”

“Why can’t you see that you are flirting with catastrophe here?” Daella asked, her eyes firmly on Rhaenyra’s. “The Hightowers want to put their blood on the throne and will use any hint of scandal to harm you. Why risk giving them what they need?”

“The Hightowers are a risk, one that I hope to mitigate by strengthening my own position,” Rhaenyra replied. “My family are the ones I can trust most, and I’ve been surrounding myself with them more and more in recent moons. Saera finally has an idea for how to convince my father to let me wed Jon and let him wed Laena...”

“Saera’s ideas are never good, Rhaenyra,” Daella muttered.

“I think you’ll like this one, given that you’ll play a central role in it,” Saera grinned, “and it will finally let you vent frustrations you’ve had for years.”

“Will you just leave them alone?!” Daella hissed, glaring at her sister, who was resting her head on her hands, she stared at her. She flushed scarlet as she took in more of Jon’s body than she ever would have expected to, but pressed on, saying, “Perhaps Viserys and Corlys will agree to this, but you and the others you’ve dragged into this mire of filth are threatening any hope of that. If you

have changed as you claim, then do the selfless thing for once and let them go and try to find some actual happiness.”

“Princess, that...” Jon went to say only for Saera to reach behind him and cup his cheek.

“Daella, it’s no secret that I never loved Theomore,” she said. “I never once desired him either, but I did my duty and gave him a child. What I’ve found with Jon has fulfilled me in a way that I had given up on ever achieving. That said, I will give it up as you ask if you can manage one thing.”

“What’s that?” Daella asked warily.

“Couple with him...” Saera went to say only for Rhaenyra and Daella to both erupt at that.

“What?” Rhaenyra gasped, looking at her in shock that was reflected in Laena’s silent stare.

“Are you completely mad?” Daella asked.

“You didn’t let me finish,” Saera replied. “You said that you never understood by Alyssa and I both sought out sex, which means you don’t know what you’re asking me to give up. Couple with Jon, and if you can honestly still say that you don’t understand in the end, I’ll give him up. I’ll even help you convince the others.”

“What the fuck are you doing?” Jon whispered in her ear, and she chuckled as Daella gaped like a fish and flushed scarlet.

“Daella here’s never had an orgasm, darling,” Saera replied. “I think a lot might change for the better here if that did.”

“Wait, really?” Rhaenyra asked. “How?”

“Nyra!” Daella hissed as Jon pulled his cock from Saera’s cunt and sat next to her, exposing his entire body.

Her jaw dropped at the sight of him, his firm, defined muscles so unlike the potbelly and thick, flabby arms that Rodrik had had when she wed him. Dark hair was just about the only thing the two had in common, and even this looked better on Jon, whose long hair fell to his shoulder in waves, rather than being cropped short to account for a badly receded hairline, as her late husband had done. What truly set him apart, though, lay between his legs, and she nearly fainted as she beheld the long, thick shaft, glistening with her sister’s juices.

“That...that...” Daella stammered. “How is it so...”

“Big?” Saera asked, grinning wickedly as she stood up on shaky legs. “He is impressive, isn’t he? Your granddaughter had trouble imagining it fitting until I showed her that it could.”

“Saera, this is...” Daella went to say, staring up at her as she drew close.

“My apology, sweet sister,” Saera cut her off, caressing her cheek with the backs of her fingers. “I was a terrible sister when we were girls, so let me make up for that here.”

“By dragging me into your depravity?” Daella asked.

“By curing your loneliness,” Saera replied, and the shorter woman’s purple eyes went wide.

“I’m not...” she went to protest.

“You are,” Saera replied. “Merely drifting through life, you said.”

“Is that true?” Rhaenyra asked.

“It was said in a moment of weakness,” Daella muttered, looking away. “I’m not going to find purpose by cavorting with a man half my age and...”

“Daella?” Jon asked, and she shivered as she looked up at him. He was so close she could reach out and touch him, and a small part of her wanted to. “You can turn around now, leave, and we can pretend this never happened. I’m not going to push you into something that you don’t want, but if it’s true that you’ve never known pleasure, that is a tragedy that I’d love to correct.”

“I...” Daella whimpered, looking up into his dark purple eyes.

“Like I say, sister,” Saera grinned as she walked across the room and joined Rhaenyra and Laena. “If you don’t understand why I crave him with every fiber of my being after a round with him, I’ll leave him and return to White Harbor, and you won’t have to fear my influence over Rhaenyra ever again.”

“This isn’t necessary,” Rhaenyra whispered to her as she sat down.

“I disagree,” Saera replied. “I think that woman has needed a good fuck all her life, and we know that Jon is very capable of giving her that.”

“V...very well,” Daella said, feeling her heart hammer in her chest as she reached for the skirt of her simple blue gown and started hiking it up. “Rhaenyra, dear, if you could get dressed and go...actually, all of you. I don’t need an audience for this.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” Saera chuckled. “I can’t have you claiming to have felt nothing later. Rhaenyra, Laena, it might be better if you two went somewhere else tonight. I imagine she’ll relax more easily with a smaller audience.”

“You’re probably right,” Rhaenyra sighed. “Enjoy yourself, Grandmother. I know I would in your place.”

Daella just gawked at her granddaughter for a moment before turning to her sister and saying, “Fine, you know what? Stay if you must. I’ll happily endure a minute of humiliation if that’s what it takes to get you out of Rhaenyra’s life.”

She had finished bunching up her dress around her arse by then and climbed onto the bed on her hands and knees. Rhaenyra and Laena quickly helped the other dress as she moved and left through the hidden passageway, closing it behind them.

“Just lower my small clothes and do what you must,” she continued, hoping that Jon had the sense to not try to push that entire ridiculous thing inside her.

“Gods, you really have never enjoyed yourself, have you?” Jon asked as he joined her on the bed.

“What are you...mmm!” Daella cried as he pushed her onto her back, snaked a hand around her neck, and pulled her in to kiss her.

His lips felt good on hers in a way that seemed foreign, and she realized that she’d forgotten more about coupling than she thought in the year since she’d last done it. Rodrik had often kissed her first, tender man that he was, before positioning her and taking her. She hadn’t honestly expected it of Jon, but she didn’t exactly mind, even as his tongue brushed against hers, making her gasp. He pressed himself against her, spreading her legs and grinding his oversized shaft against her core, and she broke the kiss to whimper in pleasure.

“You’re beautiful,” Jon whispered in her ear, nibbling on the lobe. “Let me see more of you.”

“I...if you want,” Daella whimpered, her eyes darkening as he began undoing the laces holding her simple dress together.

It had been so long since anyone had looked at her with desire in their eyes that she hardly recognized the signs, yet the hunger in Jon’s eyes could be nothing else. The rest of the room faded away as he bathed the slender column of her neck with kisses, his hands expertly undressing her as he lit a flame low in her belly. She’d always thought Rodrik a tender lover, but her late husband never spent anywhere near the sort of time that Jon did just exploring her.

“Wha...what are you doing?” Daella gasped as he pulled her dress down past her chest, exposing her small breasts.

“What do you mean?” Jon asked, cupping one of her surprisingly supple mounds with his large hand.

“This, all of this,” Daella replied. “We’re meant to be coupling, and I...”

“I’m taking my time,” Jon replied, caressing her face softly. “Don’t tell me that this is your first time experiencing foreplay.”

“I...” Daella stuttered, blushing and looking away.

“I suspect she isn’t jesting about having never experienced pleasure, Jon,” Saera chuckled.

“Gods,” Jon sighed, earning an embarrassed look from the older woman. “We’ll have to do something about that. Saera, help me undress her.”

“Gladly,” Saera grinned, hopping off the table and padding over to them.

Daella was about to say something when Jon kissed her deeply, and she found herself utterly distracted by him again. His tongue explored her mouth, coaxing her own out to join it, and soon the two were tangled together, dancing in their mouths as Saera pulled away her dress and small clothes. She lost herself in the kiss, experiencing a form of it she’d never known, and by the time Jon pulled away to let them breathe, she was completely naked. She went to cover herself up instinctively, but Jon grasped her hands, bringing them to his lips and kissing them both.

“Such a beauty,” he whispered, making her eyes widen. “Tis a shame you’ve gone unsatisfied for so long.”

“I’ve been perfectly satisfied,” Daella protested. “It was only when I began to realize that no one at the Eyrie truly needed me anymore that I felt less so.”

Jon grinned and leaned in, whispering, “You’re going to experience wonders today you’ve never imagined before.”

She shivered at his words, and before she could reply to them, he leaned his head down and captured one of her pebbled nipples with his lips. She gasped and whimpered, holding him to her chest as he sucked on the hard peak before switching to the other one. His lips, tongue, and even teeth felt good in a way that threatened to make her cry out, and she began covering her mouth just as he started kissing his way down along her soft belly.

“What...what are you...” Daella stammered, and Jon just grinned up at her.

“You know those wonders I mentioned?” he asked as he spread her thighs with his hands and leaned in towards her cunt. “This is one of them.”

“You would...ahh!” Daella cried as his nose brushed against her clit.

She could feel his hot breath on her sensitive flesh and flushed scarlet when he parted her silver curls and gazed down at her sex. This was certainly something that Rodrik had never done, and while a part of her wanted to tell him to stop or at least demand to know what exactly he had in mind, her excitement outweighed her shame. He parted her folds with his fingers, looking puzzled by something for a moment before shrugging and giving her a long, slow lick. She cried out, pleasure washing over her at the strange act, and clapped a hand over her mouth again.

“Don’t feel the need to quiet yourself on our account, sweet sister,” Saera chuckled, and Daella went to glare at her, only for her eyes to widen as she saw her sitting with her legs spread, a hand playing with her cunt as she watched Jon lick her.

“Oh gods, why does that feel so good?” Daella moaned, and Saera just laughed.

“It’s meant to feel good, sister,” she grinned, “and Jon here is particularly skilled at making sure that it does. You’re going to appreciate this when he buries himself inside you, as you want to be as wet as possible when you take someone his size.”

“I...ahh!” Daella squeaked as he swirled his tongue around a spot that made her entire body shake. “I birthed a babe, sister. He might be larger than...well, he’s not as large as a babe, and I’m sure I can endure a short...”

“I assure you, nothing of what I have planned for you will be short,” Jon chuckled. At her curious look, he added, “You do realize Saera and I had been having sex for several minutes when you walked in, right?”

“Jon doesn’t lack stamina, Daella,” Saera giggled. “How’s she doing?”

“Starting to get wet,” Jon replied, pushing a finger inside her, making her gasp, before pulling it out to examine it.

“Don’t make her cum like this,” Saera grinned. “I want it to be on your cock.”

Daella moaned and grabbed his head, wondering if he'd done this to Rhaenyra as well. She insisted that she still had her maidenhead, and Daella believed her, but this wouldn't have broken it, and it certainly felt good in a way that she never would have imagined. As his dexterous tongue continued to dance through her increasingly wet folds, she felt something building inside her that she couldn't comprehend. It was like a pressure of some kind growing stronger and stronger low in her belly, to the point that it bordered on being painful.

"What's going on?" she gasped, crying out as Jon sucked on something that made her back arch off of the bed. "Oh gods, what is this?"

"The pleasures of a woman, dear sister," Saera grinned, walking up to them and brushing Daella's hair out of her face. "Jon."

"I know," Jon chuckled, and Daella cried out mournfully as he stopped licking her, all thoughts of why she was doing having left her.

"Please don't stop!" she cried. "Gods, don't stop!"

"Oh, don't worry, Daella," Saera giggled, "that feeling inside you, the pressure in your core, the exquisite pleasure each touch gave you, it will only grow more intense from here. Fuck her, Jon; show her what she's been denied all her life."

"Do...do you want me to roll back over?" Daella asked, looking up at him as he drew close.

"No," Jon replied. Leaning in, he added, "Not this time, anyway. This time I want to take you just as you are, on your back and open to me."

If she'd been in her right mind, she'd have said something about his presumption that there would be other times, but in that moment, all she could think of was how badly she wanted him to get back to making her feel as he had been. When he slapped his heavy cock on her mound, she arched her back and cried out, only to gasp as he captured her lips with his own again. Fisting his cock, he carefully lined himself up with her dripping opening and pushed inside, making her moan into his mouth lewdly.

"Oh gods!" Daella cried, clinging to him as his thick cock spread her inner walls wide.

"Fucking hells," Jon groaned at how hot, wet, and surprisingly tight she was.

"He feels so good, doesn't he?" Saera grinned, staring down into her sister's eyes as Jon started to fuck her with slow, short strokes, letting her get used to him as he buried himself inside her inch by inch, going a little deeper each time he thrust forward.

"Yes," Daella whimpered, shaking as he brushed against something inside her that felt incredible. "Gods!"

"The gods have nothing to do with it," Saera thought to herself, knowing already that she had her sister where she wanted her.

She barely remembered Rodrik Arryn, but she did recall not thinking much of him back in the day, and her assessment had clearly been correct, given how overwhelmed Daella already seemed. She watched Jon bury more and more of his cock inside her, impressed by how much the short, thin woman had already taken. She wasn't asking him to slow down or give her a moment to adjust,

though it seemed like Jon had stopped eating her out when she was right on the edge of orgasm, so that desperation was likely part of it.

“Oh gods...never felt...oh!” Daella cried, burying her face in the crook of his neck as she tightened her arms around him.

Most of his shaft was buried inside her by then, so she wrapped her legs around him as well, pulling him further, and he chuckled.

“Tell me what you want,” Jon whispered in her ear.

“More,” Daella whimpered, not willing to look at him as she voiced her shameful desire.

This had started out as a way to either force Saera to leave Rhaenyra alone or reveal herself to be as untrustworthy as she always was, but that pretense had worn away a while ago. Daella felt pleasure on a level she hadn't known possible and felt something building inside her that could only be the orgasm that Saera had described and apparently experienced as she first walked into the room. She should have been horrified by the thought of having one herself, knowing that it would be losing the gambit she made with her sister, but she was too enthralled just then to care, too lost in the maddening ecstasy of it all. She felt Jon's hips come to rest against her bum, and she cried out, her whole body shaking.

“She's so close to it,” Saera grinned, watching intently. “Do it, Jon. Make my dear Mandia cum.”

“Gladly,” Jon rumbled, pulling most of his shaft from her quivering cunt and thrusting back inside her hard.

Daella cried out in pleasure, throwing her head back into the bedding as she felt him hit something deep inside her that made her see stars. There was just so much of him, and he was so deep inside her. There had been times with Rodrik where it all felt a little better than normal, but never anything like this. She grabbed the bedding on either side of her, digging her nails into it and squeezing her fists until her knuckles turned white. Her small breasts jiggled across her chest as he picked up his pace, fucking her with long, hard strokes.

“More, more!” Daella cried, convinced in that moment that she'd die if he stopped, and Jon chuckled.

“I'll give you everything you want and more,” he promised, his voice deep, rumbling, and dripping with sinful promise.

Daella screamed when he wet his thumb between his lips and brought it down to stroke the spot that he'd licked and sucked on before. Colors flashed behind her eyes, her whole body began to shake, and just as the pressure inside her started to become completely unbearable, it burst, and her vision went white. A scream like none she'd ever heard sounded around her, and it took her a moment to realize that it came from her as her senses left her.

Wave after wave of pleasure beyond anything she could have ever fathomed thundered through her entire body, making her writhe and convulse in Jon's arms. He fucked her even harder, pounding into her as she was lost in a maelstrom of madness that seemed like it would never end. She clenched her eyes shut, convinced that this was going to make her pass out, but after what might have been seconds or hours for how little she understood during it, it ended, leaving her a panting, glassy-eyed wreck.

“Gods...” she whimpered as her eyes fluttered open, and she was forced to blink away unshed tears.
“Gods.”

“Just Jon, I’m afraid,” Saera chuckled. “Do you see what I mean now, sweet sister?”

“Yes,” Daella admitted, realizing that she’d lost their little bet of sorts. “That was...extraordinary.”

“Oh, it’s not done yet,” Saera chuckled, and she looked between them in shock before realizing that Jon felt just as hard inside her as he had before.

“You didn’t...” she went to ask.

“Not even close,” Jon chuckled, rolling them over. “Saera, if you show her how to ride me, I’ll let you sit on my face.”

“Gladly,” Saera grinned, embracing her from behind and leaning her head on her shoulder.
“Consider this also part of my apology.”

“Saera, that...oh!” Daella gasped as her sister grasped her hips and started physically showing her how to move.

“Once we’re done here, if you’re still awake, I’ll explain my plan for Viserys,” Saera grinned. “I think you’ll find it...cathartic, should you agree.”

“Ahh!” Daella cried, too consumed by how good Jon felt inside her to wonder at her sister’s wicked tone.

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” Daella thought to herself as she crept through a hidden passageway in the Red Keep over a week later. She’d thought her sister mad when she first explained this the morning after their long night of debauchery, a night that ended up being merely the first of several, though as she thought about it more, it did have some merit.

“So what is this plan of yours?” she asked, wondering how exactly she might be able to convince her former good son to agree to betroth Rhaenyra to Jon. “I’ve never been exactly persuasive.”

“I’m curious about that too,” Rhaenyra commented, having joined them just after dawn. The knowing grins she’d been giving her had made Daella’s face burn.

“I don’t need to tell either of you that the anniversary of Aemma’s death is coming up soon,” Saera began, and Daella’s eyes narrowed. “Rhaenyra, you mentioned that Viserys spends that anniversary on his own, in his chambers, getting drunk, right?”

“He didn’t the first few,” Rhaenyra replied, “choosing instead to focus on me, but as I grew older and needed him less, he started just taking the day for himself. Alicent always looks like she’s sucked on a lemon all day, even more than normal.”

“What does this have to do with Rhaenyra, Laena, and Jon?” Daella asked.

“Wondering that myself,” Jon commented.

“You, Daella, are rather remarkably youthful for your age,” Saera explained, something that was true of most of them, “and I understand that Aemma looked a great deal like you, having very little of her father in her.”

“Her hair was more golden than silver,” Daella replied, “sort of like Mother, but other than that...”

She trailed off, her eyes widening as she realized what her sister had in mind.

“Saera...” Rhaenyra went to object.

“Before either of you object, just listen to me first,” Saera sighed. “Viserys has proven intractable on this matter, but that doesn’t mean that his mind can’t be changed. His guilt over Aemma’s death is something we can exploit, as are the hidden passageways in and out of his chambers.”

“This is classic you,” Daella muttered. “Do you even realize what you’re asking of me? I’d be...”

“Impersonating your daughter, I know,” Saera replied, “and though that, convincing Viserys not to lock Rhaenyra here into an unwanted, unhappy union. I was in one of those myself, and trust me when I say, it’s a fate no one wants.”

“That would be cruel,” Rhaenyra objected, twisting one of the rings on her fingers.

“It could work, though,” Saera replied.

“We could just wed in secret,” Jon suggested. “Between Laena and I, we have far too much firepower to just dismiss.”

“That didn’t work out for Maegor,” Daella pointed out. “Viserys’ insistence on keeping Rhaenyra as his heir will give her legitimacy, something that just taking what you want wouldn’t, and you three running off together infuriated him enough to change his mind he might decide to go with Aegon instead, and I’ll be damned if I let the throne pass to the son of a woman who barely waited until my daughter’s ashes had been collected to replace her.”

“So you’ll do it, then?” Saera asked.

“I...” Daella trailed off, looking at Rhaenyra, who sighed.

“I know you blame him for what happened to Mother, but he’s still my father, and I love him,” the younger princess sighed. “If you do this, just promise that you won’t be unnecessarily cruel.”

“Once Viserys agrees to this, Corlys won’t be hard to convince,” Saera chuckled. “He wants his blood on the throne, and this might be a more circuitous route to get there, but it will still work, provided you two don’t have all sons or all daughters.”

“If that happens, it will just be proof that our lines weren’t meant to be united,” Jon muttered.

“So?” Saera asked, looking around. “Are there any other objections?”

There hadn’t been, as Daella was already half-convinced by then, and so Rhaenyra had agreed to give her one of her mother’s old gowns. From there, Jon smuggled her in, and that was that,

leading to this moment, where she found herself sneaking to the king's chambers in a deep blue, very conservative gown. Her hair was tied up and covered with a hood, hiding the one major difference between her and Aemma. It was late in the day, and Viserys was likely to be quite in his cups by then, the one thing that gave them any reason to think that this might actually work.

She found the entrance to Viserys' chambers and opened it carefully, finding him sitting up in bed, staring at a small painting in his hands.

"I'm so sorry," he whispered, and Daella nearly growled, alerting him.

"Who...oh gods!" Viserys gasped, turning white as a sheet. "Aem..."

He trailed off, looking like he might scream, and she hissed at him, "There isn't much time."

"This isn't possible," Viserys breathed, setting the painting down next to him. "You're..."

"What? Dead?" Daella asked. "I know."

"H...haa..." Viserys stammered, trying to get out of bed.

"Don't!" Daella hissed, making him freeze. "I only have a moment, and the gods made clear that if you touched me, it would end early. I only got one wish out of this, Vissy."

It was something that Rhaenyra said she called him only when they were alone, and his eyes widened at the nickname he hadn't heard in years.

"Aemma?" Viserys whimpered, his eyes filling with tears. "Oh gods, I'm so sorry."

"*Not sorry enough,*" she thought to herself, wishing that she could tear the strip off of him that she'd always wanted to for putting her daughter through what he had.

She'd promised Rhaenyra that she wouldn't be cruel, though, not sure that she truly could anyway, and she only had a moment before the tincture her granddaughter had slipped into his most recent cup of wine was going to take effect. If anyone other than the servant trusted to bring his wine through the day had normally done so, the guards would have reacted suspiciously, but no one was going to question Rhaenyra, especially on this of all days.

"Our daughter's in danger," Daella said, making his eyes go wide.

"Rhaenyra?" Viserys asked. "In danger from what?"

"Plots," Daella replied. "Nobles throughout the land plot against her, seeking to supplant her with her brother."

"I have made it perfectly clear what will happen to any who even breathes a word of such treason," Viserys hissed.

"I know, but you're not going to live forever, Vissy, and when you're gone, she'll need someone else to protect her," Daella replied. "We both know that Laenor Velaryon isn't such a man."

"Lord Corlys' fleet is..." Viserys went to protest, his eyes growing noticeably heavy.

“Not enough,” Daella replied, “and neither is Seasmoke. She needs a warrior, Viserys, and preferably one who rides a large, very dangerous dragon.”

“Jon,” Viserys sighed. “I like him, I do, but he...”

“Is not his father,” Daella replied. “He loves her too and would fight to his last breath for her. The Bronze Fury would be enough to make any potential traitors think twice. I have seen what fate befalls her if you wed her to Laenor, and I begged the gods to let me come warn you. Please, Vissy, please save our little girl.”

“I...sometimes wonder if...the throne is even worth all this,” Viserys struggled to get out, lying back as he grew very tired.

“Surely you wouldn’t disinherit her,” Daella said coldly. “Surely you wouldn’t do that to her and to me.”

“No,” Viserys promised, his eyes going wide. “No, I...I do wonder how Corlys and Rhaenys will react, though, if they are spurned again.”

“Our daughter is smart, Viserys,” Daella replied. “Ask her, and I’m sure she’ll have a solution that will work, provided you don’t stop her. If she is to remain safe, though, she must wed Jon.”

“Alright,” Viserys whispered, his eyes falling closed. “I...”

He trailed off then, falling asleep, and Daella glared down at him, though her gaze softened as it fell on the painting of Aemma. Her eyes filled with tears as she gazed at it and she let out a shuddering breath, wanting to pick it up and look more closely, yet feeling like she’d tested her luck enough. Slipping back inside the hidden passageway, she carefully closed the door behind her and padded along, a single thought occurring to her as she went.

“I hope he remembers that in the morning.”

Saera assured her that he would, that the tincture of lavender and a number of other flowers that would be masked by the dark wine he was drinking, especially if he’d already had a few, would simply induce extreme calm and tiredness and not affect his memory. Trusting her younger sister was something that she was continuing to struggle with, but having Viserra and Gael join them and seeing how she interacted with them had helped a little.

“That’s not all that’s helped,” her traitorous mind chimed in, and she blushed heavily at the memory of all the sinful things she’d done with her sisters and their shared lover.

She knew it was wrong, and she should stop, but the simple fact was that she felt more live, than she had in years. Getting to know her sisters again had given her a family connection that she hadn’t even realized she was craving, helping Rhaenyra gave her the sense of purpose she’d been lacking, and Jon...Jon gave her things she never knew she wanted. It was wrong, and she knew that her parents wouldn’t have approved, but after spending so long feeling like she was going through the motions of life, she felt like she was making choices for herself, something she couldn’t say she’d ever really done, and that was worth putting up with the sense that she was doing something wrong.

“I just hope that Maegelle never learns about this,” she thought to herself as she slipped back into Jon’s chambers and found him waiting for her, utterly nude and grinning at her as he slowly stroked his cock.

“It’s done,” she said, earning a wider grin from him.

“Well done,” Jon chuckled, crooking a finger inward to beckon her over. “Now come get your reward.”

Daella shivered and rushed forward, thinking, *“Yes, Maegelle must never learn of this.”*