

## Chapter 9- Rapid improvement

The deck pitched beneath his feet, and Aegon shifted with it, adjusting without thinking now as he parried the guard's blade, knocking it aside before stepping into his guard. A push sent and hook of his foot behind the man's ankle sent him crashing onto the deck.

The second guard came in from the side, and Aegon turned to meet him. He blocked the sword and drove his elbow into the man's ribs in a single, smooth motion. The guard grunted as air was driven out of his lungs and staggered back. Aegon followed, his blade rising and coming to rest against the man's throat.

The man went still and Aegon's lips curled up in a smile.

"Dead," he said.

"Ahhh fuck! There goes my silver." The spectators commented.

"How the fuck did he find his sea legs so quickly?"

"There's no way he hadn't sailed before. He must've been pretending to take our coin."

Aegon's lips twitched as he listened to them and thought of the first few days he'd spent on the ship; sparring at the deck to get used to its constant swaying motion. It had been... a challenge, to say the least. And he got his ass kicked more often than not.

But only two weeks into the journey, and he was now able to fight veteran guards who'd spent their entire lives in the sea, and win.

Aegon released a breath of satisfaction and moved to the side of the deck, resting his forearms against the railing as the wind hit his face, refreshing him.

"Not bad, lad." The voice came from behind as the Captain of the *Lusty Maid* joined him at the railing, arms crossed as he gazed out into the open ocean. "You sure you ain't some Velaryon bastard?"

"I'm not,"

"Eh, must be a natural then. Most green lads take moons to find their feet out here," he said, scratching his beard. "Some of them never do. Those ones aren't suitable for sailing. But you... you were born for it."

Aegon stayed silent as he didn't feel deserving of the praise. Not when his second power did most of the work, allowing him to learn skills at 10 times the pace of ordinary people.

Though, with how his powers grew with use, the multiplier has probably increased to 15x-20x by this point.

“Still not interested in serving as a ship guard,” he replied, knowing well enough what the captain wanted from him.

“Are you sure. I'd pay you fair. Just ask Raaga.”

He shook his head. “My answer remains the same.”

The captain didn't seem surprised, nor disappointed by his words. Having been rejected multiple times by him before. “Aye. Figured as much. Worth askin', though”

Aegon leaned over the railing and looked down at the blue ocean below. “Why do you need so many guards? You seem to have quite a lot already.”

The captain's face sobered up in an instant. “Triarchy,” he said, voice rougher now. “Those three whores stopped bickerin' long enough to cleared out the Stepstones.”

*Oh... so that has already started.*

“I assume they’re winning?” He asked.

“They’re. Problem is... the rats ain’t dyin’. They’re scatterin’. Every last one of them. And where to scatter, but to the Narrow Sea,” the captain spat down the railing. “Those whores have made the water dangerous for everyon’.”

Aegon nodded slowly and silence settled between them again. Then, the captain pushed off the railing.

“Keep that blade close, lad,” he said. “These waters ain’t safe no more. You never know when trouble’s gonna come knockin’.” With that, the captain walked off, already barking orders at a sailor halfway across the deck.

Aegon stayed a moment longer, watching the endless blue waters stretch out before him, at the horizon where the sea met the cloudy sky. Then he turned and headed below to his cabin.

His cabin was a small room, but clean and private enough that he saw no reason to complain.

Aegon sat on the edge of the bed and reached for the small collection of wood pieces laid out beside him. Some of them were finished work, showing immaculate carving of various animals, birds and fishes. Others were rough blocks, just waiting for him to perform his magic.

This was his plan on how to acquire wealth and find his footing in Braavos. By selling sculptures, carvings, relief paintings and what not.

Braavos was wealthy. Its people had coin to spare—far more than the common folk of King’s Landing. So he had no doubt that his work would sell. It was simply a matter of finding the right buyers.

He picked up a block of wood and reached for his dagger. The Valyrian Steel one that belonged to his mother. The blade slid through the wood like a hot knife through butter, and shaving fell away in smooth curls, as a form began to emerge beneath his hands.

Aegon’s focus narrowed as he worked, the outside world fading into the background. Before he knew it, he had completed a few more pieces, and the day had turned to night.

He was waiting for someone to bring him his dinner when a muffled shout cut through the ship. “Pirates!”

## Chapter 10- Night Raid

“Pirates!”

Aegon grabbed his sword on instinct and rushed out of his cabin, boots striking hard against the wooden steps as he climbed. A good thing he had listened to the captain’s advice and hadn’t removed his armour.

He burst onto the deck and paused as he took in the chaos. Steel rang, men shouted battle cries, and someone screamed as blood spurted on the deck floor.

Having never been in a real battle before, Aegon hesitated, his heart hammering into his chest. Then, he deliberately slowed his heartbeat and sent a rush of hormones through his system to make himself calmer and more alert.

Now, in a better state of mind, he observed the battle taking place under the dim, uneven light of the moon, and noticed the grappling hooks dug onto the ship’s railing. Being used by more and more figures to climb up from the darkness below.

He also noticed something else in that moment. Each one of the attacker was wearing an armour. And not like the leather armour he

was wearing but metal armour. It was crude armour, made up from mismatched scavenged gear, but real armour nonetheless.

And his eyes narrowed as he realised that they weren't fighting pirates. Even the pirates of Stepstones weren't crazy enough to wear metal armour while fighting on ships.

No... these were Ironborns.

'Bastards,' Aegon cursed, realising that the Ironborns must be taking advantage of the chaos in the Stepstones to prey upon merchant ships for a hefty profit.

He shook his head and moved forward to join the fight.

One of them immediately noticed him and lunged. Aegon shifted to the side, and then triggered Brain Overdrive. The world around him slowed, and watched the Iron born's swing go past him at a far slower pace than before.

Aegon stepped toward the Ironborn, and looked around at his mismatched armour, immediately noticing a gap.

His sword flashed and the the man let out a choked gasp as it went right through the gap in his underarm, and came out of the shoulder, all but tearing off that arm in two.

Aegon tore the blade out of his flesh and then twisted, kicking the Ironborn into the chest.

The man staggered back, and hit the railing before vanishing over it and plunging into the sea below. A loud splash sealed his death, but Aegon had no time to celebrate as yet another Ironborn climbed aboard and attacked him.

Aegon used Brain Overdrive again to deal with him quickly. But then another came, and another. The deck was filling, and their numbers were increasingly far too quickly.

He sent his blade through the throat of another Ironborn before grimacing at the pain lancing through his skull. He's used the Brain Overdrive ability too often during this battle. He was definitely going to get a migraine later on, provided he survived this battle.

Aegon backed off and took a moment to glance up... and froze for half a second.

Most of the guards were dead or dying. And by now, there were far more Ironborn on the deck than there were guards.

'We've lost this battle,' he realised, his stomach sinking.

Then suddenly, a shout cut through the chaos. “Stop!”

Aegon turned, and saw the captain standing on the upper deck, blood running down one side of his face, chest heaving. His sword clattered on the deck as he threw it down. “We surrender!”

Silence followed his words as the guards and Ironborns looked at each other. Then, one by one... the guards threw down their weapons.

Then, a large figure stepped forward from the Ironborn ranks, and Aegon’s jaw fell open in shock as he noticed the man holding a head. A rather recognisable one that as it belonged to none other than Raaga.

The Ironborn contemptuously threw the head over the railing and met the captain’s gaze evenly. Slowly, a cruel grin came over his face, one that reminded him starkly of his brother, Daemon. Something cold settled in Aegon’s chest at the sight of that smile.

“Too late,” the Ironborn captain said. “You should’ve bent the knee sooner.”

He then lifted his axe, and threw it. Aegon watched it sail through the sky before it struck the captain clean in the chest. The man who had accepted him into this ship let out a wheezing gasp, then he staggered and fell over.

“The Drowned God is hungry tonight!” The Ironborn captain shouted. “Kill them all!”

The deck erupted again as the Ironborn started to slaughter the now unarmed guards without any mercy.

Aegon stepped back, watching in shock as the slaughter commenced. And then he noticed some of the Ironborns coming at him.

‘There’s no way I’m going to win this,’ he realised. And that only left one path for him.

Aegon reached for his dagger, and the Valyrian steel flashed, cutting through the straps of his leather armour. He dropped it in the deck and took a step back, the railing pressing against his spine.

The Ironborns were too close now, and there was no time to think.

Aegon turned... and jumped over the railing.

The rushed up to meet him, and then it swallowed him whole.

## Chapter 11- Contemplations

The sea had no mercy. Aegon Targaryen had learned that within the first hour he jumped into the sea. It has been two days since then. Since he'd thrown himself into the sea and vanished beneath its waves.

He no longer looked human.

His legs had fused completely, bone reshaped, flesh reknit into a single powerful tail that cut through the water with smooth, efficient strokes. Muscles layered over each other in tight, streamlined bands, built for endurance rather than speed or strength. His arms remained mostly unchanged, though the fingers had lengthened slightly, and thin membranes now stretched between them to form natural paddles. Gills opened and closed along his neck and upper chest, pulling oxygen directly from the water, sparing him the constant need to surface for air.

With how slow his power worked, it had taken half a day to make all these changes to himself. But since then, he had been swimming nonstop.

Survival demanded it.

At the bridge of his nose, beneath newly formed cartilage, a new organ pulsed every so often. It was copied from the beak of a pigeon, one that allowed him to sense North at any given moment. And based on that, tell him were all other directions were.

And so, he swam east. Always east. Because at the time when he jumped off that ship, he'd been under the believe that Essos would be closer.

But distance on a map meant little when you were alone in the water, stranded, with no land in sight.

Two days.

His fat reserves were thinning. And unless he found land soon enough, he would have no choice but to cannibalise his own muscles in order to keep swimming.

If he could generate his own biomass, then none of this would be a problem. But as things stood, his Shaper still had many, many limitations. And this was one of them.

He supposed he could always create a large net and see if he could capture and eat planktons from the water. Like how a whale does. But it was a last minute option as he'd never done such a thing before wasn't sure if he would succeed.

He paused in his swimming and surfaced, gazing in the distance to see if there was land. No such luck. He sighed and continued swimming.

‘How much longer?’ He wondered for the thousandth time before his thoughts drifted once again as his exhausted mind sought to distract itself.

He remembered the warmth, light, cold, pain from when he first awoke in this world as a baby.

Even back then, he had been aware. Aware of the weakness in his body. Aware of the strain in his mother’s voice. The inevitability closing in.

That had been why he chose Shaper as his first power. To fix it. To save both of them. But what he received... had not been enough.

It had not worked on others. Not worked on her. So, while he was able to save himself, he was unable to save her.

A year she lasted after that. Bedridden from the sickness, her strength slowly fading as the infection took over. He could feel her biology, feel where everything was going wrong. But as a baby, he could do nothing to help her.

For a year, he had a mother. And then... nothing...

His tail struck harder against the water.

After his mother's death, the world had become a worse place for him, as his family all but forgot about him.

His father drifted between two extremes; one a distant figure, and one almost kind. Never fully here, never fully there.

Viserys Targaryen had been... present, at times. But never close.

And Daemon Targaryen... Daemon had made his hatred clear early. Blaming him for killing their mother. And that had not changed ever since.

At times, even his father would get the same look on his eyes as Daemon. As if blaming him for killing his Alyssa. As if asking why he lived, while she died.

Even as a child... he had understood. That this was not a family he could be able to live with for long. If what he was doing could even be considered living.

And now... here he was. Far from them. Free, alone, lost, and dying.

The thought made him pause. Dying.

‘Would I truly die here?’ He wondered and realised that it was very much possible. As he currently was, a single Shark taking interest in him is all it would take.

His movements slowed again as despair begin to take over his mind once again.

‘There’s still more, so much more that want to do,’ he thought. ‘So many places I want to visit, things I want to try, food I want to do... so many possibilities. So much potential. Would it really all end here?’

He thought of his grandmother Alysanne, whom he had been somewhat close to, until she quarrelled with the King and left for Dragonstone.

He thought of Viserra, whom he had lightly poisoned prior to her send off to White Harbour. If only so that she won’t go out and break her neck in a horse race.

Viserra never thanked him for saving her life. Never even knew he'd saved her life. Same for Gael, who would never know how her life would've turned out if not for him.

He thought of Aemma, poor Aemma, and how he had argued with the King to wait until she's older before marrying her to Viserys. He had failed to change her fate, as the King refused to listen to him. But he had tried. And for all his efforts, Aemma had never even made any effort to get to know him. To speak on his behalf when Daemon mocked him on family dinners.

'What an ungrateful family I have gained in this life,' he thought with a bitter smile. So much he had done for them, and in return, all he had gained was mockery and apathy.

Then, he was slowly brought out of his thoughts as he noticed something in the distance.

He stilled for a moment, and then surfaced above water, his eyes narrowing as he saw something in the distance, for just a moment, before it vanished behind the waves.

'Was that just my imagination?' He wondered. 'Have I started to hallucinate.'

But then the waves gave way, and he saw it once again, and his eyes lit up in joy as he saw it properly.

Land.

Aegon exhaled a soft, quiet laugh, bubbles escaping into the water. *It seems I will not die here after all.*

His tailed moved once again, and he shot into the distance.

Toward Essos.

## Chapter 12- A new beginning

Aegon lay where the waves had thrown him, half in the water, half on the sand, the tide washing over his body every so often. For a few moments, he didn't move and enjoyed the feeling of a solid ground beneath him, his fingers digging into the soft sand as if to confirm that this was indeed real.

Then, a laugh escaped him; soft at first, then a little louder, carried away by the wind.

"I made it," he muttered to himself, his cheeks hurting from how much he was smiling. "I fucking made it."

He had finally crossed the Narrow Sea and had arrived at Essos. The journey might've been a bit difficult... but he had finally reached his destination, away from his family, in a place where he could start a brand new life.

He stayed there for a while longer, a large and silly smile plastered on his face before he finally pushed himself upright and sat on the wet sand.

Then, transformation began.

His tail split slowly, the process feeling painless thanks to him having shut down the part of his nervous system that delivered pain. The process was still a bit unpleasant, and rather gruesome to look at, not to mention slow; but he endured it without complaint.

An hour later, his legs returned back to normal, and he focused on the other parts of his body. He leaned forward and retched, forcing out the filtration organ he had created within his mouth. For the sole intention of filtering out salt from the seawater so that he could remain hydrated.

The rest followed quickly. Gills sealed and merged back into his skin. His fingers shortened and the membranes between them withdrew. His skin tightened on some places, and loosened in others. And finally, his muscles went back to their original place.

By the end of it, he looked human once again. A very malnourished human, judging by the ribs that were visible against his skin. His body fat percentage was low. Critically so. And yet—

He felt good.

Light. Unburdened.

Free.

To go wherever he wants, do whatever he wants. With no one to question him.

Aegon stretched slightly, testing his limbs, then pushed himself to his feet. His balance wavered for a moment before settling.

Then, he bent down and picked up a starfish that had washed ashore on the sand. He turned it in his hand before biting into it without hesitation.

The taste was... questionable, until he altered his tastebuds and it started tasting like fried chicken instead. He ate one, then another, then another, enhancing his digestive system as he went.

By the time he was done eating, nearly an hour had passed, and he felt... whole again.

“Much better.” He thought before looking down at his clothes that lay in tatters. His boots were gone, his sword was lost somewhere beneath the sea. And only a dagger remained tied to his person. But it was a mere inconvenience, and the smile refused to leave his face.

Aegon straightened and looked around, his gaze falling upon rolling hills, and sparse greenery.

No immediate signs of people.

He thought on it for a moment and realised that he must have landed somewhere around Pentos. Except, his destination was in Braavos. So he would have to go North. But... that could wait.

For now, he was mentally exhausted, from having gone through a life and death battle, and then swam for two days straight. So he laid down on the ground, increase his body's temperature, and went to sleep under the open sky.

He slept like a baby.

When he awoke, he found that the sun had already reached the horizon, and it was getting dark. He sat up and enjoyed the view of the beautiful red sky and its shimmer reflection on the sea.

For a long moment, he simply sat there, listening to the calls of the seagulls, feeling the evening breeze on his skin, being fully present in the moment until finally, the red in the horizon vanished and was replaced by the dark of the night.

He adjusted his eyesight to see in the dark and got up, dusting the sand of his body.

Then, he started walking North.

The first few steps were awkward, as his body still remembered the sea more than the land. But it didn't take long for him to adjust back to the rhythm of walking.

The shoreline stretched endlessly beneath the night sky, the sound of waves like a quiet hymn playing in the background. Aegon walked along the shore unhurriedly, as if he was taking a stroll.

A breeze rolled in from the sea, brushing against his skin. Aegon inhaled deeply, and looked up. Above him, the sky had opened fully. The clouds that had hidden the sky the night before were gone, leaving behind a spread of stars that stretched far beyond anything the walls of the Red Keep had ever allowed him to see.

His thoughts once again went back to the Red Keep. To the unfortunately familiar smell of piss and shit wafting off from Kings Landing. To the pressure his family placed on him. To the disdainful look of Daemon. To the fawning smiles and false praises of the courtiers.

And his lips curved up slowly.

All that... was behind him now.

— — — — —

Aegon kept moving as the night turned into day, and day turned into night.

Whenever he felt hungry, he would eat whatever he could find nearby. Grass, roots, washed up sea creatures. His enhanced digestive system breaking down everything and turning it into biomass for his use.

Whenever he felt tired, he would simply lay down and fall asleep under the open sky.

He did not think about the future. Or the past. He simply enjoyed the present. Enjoyed the nature around him and the quiet solitude.

All good things come to an end however. And after four and a half days of walking, he finally saw it.

A human settlement. A small coastal village, with nets hanging on the rooftops, boats tied up, and the people milling around.

He brought his head down and sniffed his clothes. They... yeah, they did not smell good. Nor did they look good.

‘About time I buy some new clothes.’ He thought.

He brought out the flesh pouch from within his stomach, took out a gold coin, and walked to the village.