

Chapter 1- A lovely talk between a grandfather and grandson

Aegon Targaryen (Son of Baelon) POV

The door shut behind him with a soft thud, and Aegon entered the King's solar. The room was large but not indulgently so. The sunlight from the tall, narrow windows, along with a dozen candles illuminated the room.

At the heart of the chamber stood a heavy oak desk, filled with neatly stacked ledgers, parchments and fresh letters. A chair carved from dark wood sat behind it, and upon it, sat the ruler of the Seven Kingdoms, Jaehaerys I Targaryen.

His grandfather.

Aegon stopped in front of the desk, clasped his hands behind his back and waited. And waited, and waited as his grandfather continued writing on his parchments. Their contents apparently more important than family.

Minutes passed in silence broken only by the scratch of quill on parchment. And at last, without lifting his gaze, the king spoke. “Have you come to complain about your betrothal again?”

Aegon would’ve been angry at the casual dismissal of his feelings, of his concerns, if he hadn’t long grown used to such treatment from his family. “If wishing to meet the woman I would share the rest of my life with before we get married is considered complaining... then perhaps Your Grace is not as wise as some people consider.”

The quill stopped.

Slowly, deliberately, Jaehaerys set it aside. He looked up at him then, truly looked. “The betrothal has is decided. And you will do your duty to your house. As Daella did. As Viserra did.”

‘As you did? By marrying Alysanne even when your own mother and regent advised against it?’ He wanted to ask but he knew it won’t achieve anything. You can always expect the sun to rise from the east, a rooster to crow in the morning, and King Jaehaerys to be hypocrite.

“Will I?” He asked instead.

Silence fell, and his grandfather’s eyes narrowed sharply. Jaehaerys slowly leaned back in his chair. “Excuse me?”

Aegon met the old man's gaze without flinching. Unlike his brothers, he neither feared, nor respected the King. "Has Your Grace ever wondered why I never claimed a dragon?"

The king raised an eyebrow. "Enlighten me."

"Because I never wished to bind myself to this house more than necessary." Aegon's tone remained even, almost conversational. "Without a dragon, I am... less tethered to the family. Like Saera." He paused just long enough for the name to settle between them. "I could leave Westeros entirely. And while my grandmother might grieve, I suspect Your Grace would simply name me a disgrace and be done with it."

That seemed to have finally struck a chord and Jaehaerys straightened in his seat, the calm slipping just enough to reveal the steel beneath. "Oh? You'll leave, will you? And go where? You think the world beyond Westeros is kind? That you can simply walk into it and survive?"

Aegon locked eyes with the King, his expression unreadable. "I imagine I shall have my answer soon enough."

A short, sharp scoff escaped the king. "So that is your master plan? To run?"

Aegon shrugged. “Seems better than remaining with this family. Especially with how you seem to treat us all like disposable pawns.”

Something dangerous crept into Jaehaerys’s expression. “Mind your words boy.”

“Or what? You will marry me off faster?” Aegon asked and then matched Jaeharys’ earlier mocking expression with one of his own. “Like you did with Saera? Pray tell, how did that turn out for you?”

The temperature in the room dropped. Jaehaerys gritted his teeth, his fists clenching and unclenching as he glared at him. “Your father always said that you were too smart for your age. I can see now how wrong he was. You are nothing but a foolish, petulant child.”

“And you’re an old, heartless monster who cares far more than the realm than he does for his own family,” he retorted. “If you had shown the love and care you hold for the realm to your own family, then perhaps half your family would not despise you today. Including your own dear wife.”

“Enough. Enough of you.” The King growled. “I’ll not have my decisions questioned by a child who would rather run away than do his duty to his family. Guards! Take him away. Confine him to his chambers. He is not to leave until the Royces arrive—and the marriage is done.”

The Kingsguard moved instantly, and for a moment Aegon considered fighting his way out of this. He had never really shown them his true strength, so perhaps he could take them by surprise. But even then, would it be enough?

He was unsure. And in the end, he did not want to kill these men who have served his family for so long for merely doing their duty. Plans, acting purely on emotions rarely led to a good result.

So in the end, he simply inclined his head, and allowed the Kingsguard to take him away. They escorted him out till he paused at the threshold and turned to face the King one last time.

“If I marry Lady Rhea Royce, will my children be permitted dragons? And what would be their names? Targaryen... or Royce?”

Jaeherys replied without hesitation. “When Rhaenys wed into House Velaryon, you yourself argued that too many dragon rider families would endanger the realm. And you yourself have shown no interest in dragons before. Continue to do so.”

Aegon’s fists clenched hard enough that they bled, but then he let out a laugh. As if he would ever live his life according to the desires of other. Though, this action of denying dragons to him and his children only cemented his thoughts regarding his own family.

He stepped out of the chamber and did not look back.

Chapter 2- A tale of two brothers

The knife slid cleanly through the wood, shaving off a thin curl that fell into Aegon's lap. Each shave brought the wood closer to his desired shape. The scaled head of a dragon.

Carving has been a hobby of his for a year by this point. Though in that single year, he'd become good enough that he could match the work of professionals, all thanks to his secondary power.

Slowly, he begin to carve around the eye of the dragon, going deep into the flow state until suddenly, his focus was broken by the loud scrape of steel.

The door to his chamber opened without ceremony, and Daemon Targaryen walked in with his usual arrogant swagger. Gael followed him a step behind, quiet as usual, but no less noticeable. Especially with that small baby bump in her belly.

Aegon gave him a look and then returned back to his carving.

"I'd heard you were locked away like some misbehaving child," Daemon drawled, glancing around with open disdain. "Heh. What a pathetic sight."

Another thin shaving peeled away. Aegon said nothing.

“The Royces have arrived,” Daemon added, as if it were an afterthought. “Your future wife included. I suppose it’s only fitting that someone like you marries an Andal woman. I would advise you not to look too disappointed when you see her. It reflects poorly on the family.”

Aegon hummed faintly. “I’ll try to contain my grief.”

Daemon’s lips curved, amused. He stepped closer, circling slightly, his gaze dropping to the carving. “Still playing with scraps of wood?” he asked. “Not that I expected much from a Targaryen that couldn’t even claim a dragon.”

The knife paused for the briefest moment. Then resumed.

“If you are truly not interested in this marriage, then I can offer some help.” Daemon said lightly. Lightly enough that the two Kingsguard standing outside his door won’t hear those words.

He paused at that and turned to look at Daemon, disbelief and skepticism clear in his eyes. After all, he and Daemon had always been at odds. So it was hard for him to believe that Daemon would suddenly grow a conscience and decide to help him. “How?”

“Well, I could take your place in the bedding ceremony.” Daemon said, his lips tilting up in a cruel smile. “You can sit on the side and watch. Let your betters teach you how it’s done.”

His mouth fell open at those words and then he sighed. *Why did I ever expected anything else?*

His gaze then slid over to Gael, as he wondered if she had something to say about Daemon’s casual insults to him. But she bit her lips, and looked away to avoid meeting his eyes.

‘I saved you.’ He thought, his heart breaking at the betrayal. ‘I saved both of you.’

If not for him arguing endlessly with his grandmother, then she would have never married allowed Gael to Daemon. Instead, Daemon would currently be in his position, being married to Rhea Royce, while Gael would later get impregnated by a travelling bard, have a miscarriage and then drown herself in grief.

I wondered why I ever expected my good deeds to be rewarded. I should know better by now.

He returned to his carving. “Did you deliver my message?” he asked, using all his effort to keep his voice even to show that he

hasn't been affected. The last thing he wanted right now was for Daemon to perceive him as weak.

Daemon didn't miss a beat. "I did."

"And?"

A slow, cruel smile spread across Daemon's face. "Our father thinks it's an excellent match. House Royce is an ancient and noble house. Good enough for a useless third son. He was quite pleased, in fact."

The blade bit a bit too deeply in the wood and he sighed at the waste before discarding the half completed dragon head. Then, he turned to look at Daemon. His eyes narrowed as he scrutinised Daemon's face, wondering if he was even telling the truth at all.

If his first power was stronger, and worked on other people, then he would be able to distinguish the truth from the lie. Because as things stood, Daemon could've simply burned his letter instead of handing it to father and he would not know any better.

In the end though, he suppose it didn't truly matter. If his father had cared, truly cared, then he would've visited him by now. That he hadn't, said enough about his stance on this matter.

Once again, he was not surprised by his family's treatment of him. Only disappointed. "I see," he said.

Daemon tilted his head. "That's all you have to say?"

"What would you like me to say?"

"Oh, I don't know." Daemon's eyes gleamed. "Beg, perhaps. Rage a little. Why are you always so disappointingly calm?"

He mulled over the matter himself. It's not like he was an overly emotional person in his past life either. But in this life, he was indeed too calm. Too detached. He wondered if this was a sign of his emotional maturity, or if it was just a coping mechanism for dealing with his family.

"If you're done," he said without looking up, "you can leave."

Daemon didn't move from his position. "And what would you do if I don't?"

He turned to glance at Daemon, his fists clenching as he sent a dose of adrenaline through his veins, preparing himself for a fight. Despite being three years younger, he knew he would win. There was no doubt in that as he had enhanced his body well enough.

“Leave now,” he said calmly. “Or they’ll have to carry you out.”

Daemon let out a forced chuckle. “Is that so.”

“I’ll count to ten,” he said. “One, two...”

“Aegon. Is this really necessary?” Gael finally spoke up.

Oh. Now you remember how to speak? Where was your voice when your husband was insulting me to my face.

He ignored her and continued counting. “Three, four, five, six, seven, eight...” He trailed off as the two Kingsguard entered the room and stepped in between him and Daemon.

“My princes,” one of them said firmly. “This is neither the time nor the place.”

Daemon didn’t look away from Aegon. “Why not? My brother has finally grown some balls. Would be a pity if he doesn’t make use of them. Now move.”

“Prince Aegon’s wedding is in a few days. His grace would be wroth if either of you were to be injured now.” The Kingsguard said.

A beat. Then another.

Daemon exhaled sharply through his nose, irritation flashing before he reined it in. He straightened and sent him a glare. “Another time then, little brother.”

Aegon didn’t bother to respond.

Daemon glanced once at Gael. “Come.”

Gael hesitated, just slightly, her eyes flicking toward him with uncertain emotions, before she bit her lips and turned to follow her husband out.

The door shut behind them, and silence returned in the room.

Chapter 3- Marriage vows

The sweet and thick scent of the Incense caused him to grimace as the Septon droned on and on. He let out a breath and he watched the smoke curl lazily upward, where it got trapped beneath the carved stone roof of the Royal Sept.

His gaze then shifted to the audience. The Royal Sept was crowded today with nobles that sat shoulder to shoulders filling up the entire rows. Many were from Crownlands but many more were from the Vale. Allies or distant family of House Royce. Their attention sharp as they watched him. And watched her.

In front of him stood Rhea Royce. Wearing a bronze coloured wedding dress. She looked rather beautiful and from what he'd heard of her, she would've made for a good wife.

Had he not been forced into this marriage like this against his will. Had he actually been given the chance to talk to her, to learn more about her, maybe, maybe this could have worked.

But, there was no point in thinking about it anymore.

Finally, the Septon's droning voice came to a halt and Aegon started paying attention as the old man turned to face Rhea Royce. "Lady Rhea, will you take this man?"

Rhea Royce gave a confident nod. "...I'll take this man," she said.

"Prince Aegon," the septon continued, turning to face him, "will you take this woman?"

He stared into Rhea's eyes and his lips pressed into a thin line. He said nothing.

Silence fell into the Royal Sept and the nobles came to a slow, creeping realisation that something had gone wrong.

For the first time since he'd met her, which was about half an hour ago, he saw the first break in composure in Rhea Royce's face as she opened her mouth to say something but then decided otherwise and remained quiet. Still, her eyes were begging him to say it. To say the words.

I'm sorry. You don't deserve any of this, Rhea.

The septon cleared his throat, the sound too loud in the silence. "Prince Aegon," he repeated, a touch sharper, "will you take this woman?"

Aegon's jaw tightened. And for a fleeting moment, he considered yielding. Considered taking the easy way out. But then he turned and his gaze fell upon Jaehaerys, whose stern gaze was boring into him. And his father, who seemed to be awaking to the possibility that maybe, just maybe, forcing your children into a marriage was not such a good idea after all.

Aegon exhaled and then spoke up.

“No.”

Chapter 4- Punishment

The doors closed behind him with a hollow, final sound as Aegon once again entered the King's Solar. He stepped forward and took a seat in front of the desk.

Across the chamber, Jaehaerys I Targaryen stood with his back to him, hands clasped tight behind him, gaze cast over King's Landing through the tall window.

To the side, Baelon Targaryen sat at the table, a stamp rolling slowly between his fingers. Back and forth. Back and forth. His eyes unfocused.

No one said anything and the silence stretched as Aegon prepared himself for whatever punishment he might get.

The worst case scenario he could think was the King sending him to the Wall. In which case he would simply go over to the Land Beyond the Wall. With his powers, it shouldn't be that difficult for him to survive. And eventually thrive.

Was there anything worse than that? Well, he supposed the King could strip him of the Targaryen name, but he somehow doubted it.

Despite all the disdain the King held for Saera, he still hadn't written her off from the family. So he doubted it would happen to him.

The King could punish him by refusing him and his line a dragon henceforth. In which case he'd simply wait till the King is dead before taking his own dragon, Vermithor, for himself. Wouldn't that just be hilarious.

The sound of the door opening brought him out of his thoughts and he turned to see Viserys stepping in, only to pause as he noticed the tense silence within the room. His gaze flicking from their father, to him, and to their grandfather's rigid back.

Viserys hesitated. Then cleared his throat. "They've left," He said at last, his voice careful. "House Royce I mean. And the Vale lords left with them."

The words settled heavily into the room. And he looked to the King to see how he would react. Jaehaerys didn't turn, or show any other reaction. A long moment passed before he finally spoke up. "Leave us."

Viserys inclined his head once and slipped out, looking almost relieved at being dismissed.

The door closed and the heavy silence returned once again.

Then Jaehaerys moved. Slowly, he turned from the window, walked back to his chair and lowered himself into it. For a moment, he said nothing. Then his eyes found Aegon. “Are you satisfied?”

Aegon shook his head once. No, he was in fact rather sad to put Lady Rhea through something like that. Nor did he want to shame his family. But the circumstance left him with little choice.

A short, humourless laugh escaped the king. “No?” he said. “Then what would take it for you to be happy? Perhaps when you’ve insulted and turned every house in the realm against us, then you’ll be happy?”

Aegon tilted his head slightly. “Do not put this on me, your grace. I never asked for any of this.”

“For a marriage with a reputable house?”

“A marriage with a woman I’ve never even met before.”

“So that’s your excuse then? You wanted to meet her before marriage. What would that have changed?”

“I would have known whether we were right for each other or not.”

“So you’re saying you’re not at fault here. Is that what I’m hearing?” The King asked softly.

He shrugged. “I’m at as much fault as a drowning man is at fault for trying to get another breath.”

The king’s expression hardened. “Lady Rhea Royce is a noblewoman of good character and standing. She would have given you lands, a castle, allies, a future.” His voice sharpened. “She was a far better match than you deserved.”

His lips sharpened into a thin line as he did his best to not be affected by the King’s words.

“You have no accomplishments,” the king continued. “No men. No land. No command. No legacy. Nothing but a name you seem intent on dragging through the mud.”

Aegon closed his eyes and remained silent.

“You stand here,” Jaehaerys pressed, “having insulted one of our most loyal houses, shamed your family before the realm, and you dare —*dare*— to compare the marriage to drowning?”

Aegon inhaled slowly. 'It doesn't matter.' He reminded himself. 'I'm only thirteen. No sane man should ever expect a thirteen year old boy to make such a heavy decision such as marriage.'

"Speak," the king snapped suddenly. "Or have you lost even that courage?"

Aegon remained still.

"I said speak!" Jaehaerys barked, rising halfway from his chair. "Do you have nothing to say for yourself?"

Aegon met the King's gaze and deliberately said nothing.

For the first time, real anger broke through as the King all but snarled at him. "You would defy me even now?" Jaehaerys demanded. "You would stand there, mute, after what you've done?"

Aegon held his silence.

As far as he was considered, he had done nothing wrong but stand by his principles and values. And as far as the King was considered, he had brought shame to House Targaryen's name. And nothing anyone said would ever change either of their minds.

Jaehaerys stared at him, breathing harder than before. “I should strip you of your name,” he said, voice low, dangerous. “Cast you out of our house. Of Westeros. Let the world see what becomes of ungrateful sons.”

Baelon finally stood from his chair. “That would be too far, father” he said quietly.

Jaehaerys’s gaze snapped to him. “Too far?” he echoed. “He has disgraced us before the entire realm. Why would anyone ever respect House Targaryen if we cannot even keep our word?”

‘Then you shouldn’t have given your word regarding my marriage.’ He thought spitefully.

“He is still your blood,” Baelon replied. “Punish him... but not like that.”

A tense pause followed.

Then Jaehaerys let out a sharp breath, dragging a hand down his face before turning slightly away. “Very well, son.” he said. “What would you have me do with him? Speak. Not as the boy’s father but as the heir to the Iron Throne.”

Baelon hesitated for a moment, then spoke up. “Send him to Dragonstone,” he said. “Confine him there. Let him cool his head for a few years.”

Jaehaerys considered it. For a moment, it almost seemed enough. But then his expression hardened again. “No,” he said and then stood, slowly. “If he wishes to cast aside his duties,” Jaehaerys said, turning his gaze back to Aegon, “if he believes he can survive without this family, then we shall see how well he fares.”

Despite all his mental preparations, Aegon felt his mouth go dry at that moment as he waited for the verdict.

“You will be exiled,” Jaehaerys declared. “Seven years. You will leave Westeros—and you will receive no gold, no support, no guards, and no wealth beyond what you can earn for yourself.”

Baelon stepped forward. “Father—”

“I am not finished.” The room fell still again. “You wished for freedom,” Jaehaerys said, his gaze locking onto Aegon’s. “Now you will have it. You will live as you claim you desire. Without House Targaryen’s protection or privilege.”

Baelon’s jaw tightened. “Father. He is a boy.”

“He is a disgrace,” Jaehaerys replied flatly. “And I’ve had enough of those in this family.”

Aegon felt like he was drowning, as his surroundings suddenly became all too clear to him. He could feel the uncomfortable movements of the Kingsguard. Feel the fabric of his clothes. The warmth of his doublet.

At the same time, he felt detached. As if he was watching things from a third person’s perspective. As if he was not himself.

Slowly, he got up from his chair, and spoke up. “When do I have to leave?”

“As quickly as possible,” Jaehaerys replied without even looking at him.

He took a deep breath and then exhaled. ‘Seven years. Seven years of no court, no expectations, no one deciding my life for me. Maybe... this punishment is a blessing in disguise.’ He thought but the thought didn’t make him feel any better.

He inclined his head. “As you command, Your Grace.” With that, he turned and left.

Chapter 5- Farewell

The trunk sat open at the foot of the bed, already half-filled with his belongings. Aegon stood over it, a shirt in one hand, staring at the rest of the belongings as if seeing them properly for the first time.

It wasn't until he needed to fit it all within a trunk that he finally realised how much he owned.

He stood there for a moment, and then shook his head. *This is too much.*

He did not need to take it all in his journey. And could not. Especially since he won't have a horse to carry his luggage for him.

He let out a quiet breath and then reached down. With a single motion, he tipped the trunk over, spilling out its contents across his bed.

He took out a bedsheet, and started filling that one instead. This time, he chose carefully, and picked only the most basic of items. A single change of clothes, a waterski, a flint, a pouch of coin, and few other necessities.

Everything else, he would leave behind.

It felt... cathartic, to let go of so many material items. He felt as if an invisible burden he hadn't even known he'd been carrying had suddenly been put aside.

Huh... I can see why the Buddhists go on and on about being wary of material possessions.

He tied up the bedsheets, and lifted it to check its weight. Light. Even if he only had the strength of an *ordinary* teen, he would be able to carry it around with no difficulty.

A part of him still wanted to carry more. To carry another change of clothes, a book to read while he's idle, or another pair of boots. But he ignored that part of his. Reminding himself that even in the worst case scenarios, he had a far higher chance of survival than an ordinary man.

Should he feel cold, he could burn the fat in his body to improve his body temperature. Should he go hungry, he could adjust his digestive system to consume grass or even the bark of wood. Should he be injured, he could simply heal himself. Should he be chased by slavers or even Dothraki, he could simply outrun them.

All, in all, the odds of him dying in Essos were far lower than an ordinary man. Not to say that he couldn't die. His Shaper was still

pretty weak in that regard. But even a weakened Shaper power had infinite uses.

Finally, he set down the bundle, and reached for his leather armour. It was a bit small on his frame as he had been given it as a gift a year ago and had since outgrown it. But it still protected him well enough.

The best part was that it wasn't needlessly ostentatious. Yes, it did look like high quality work, which it was. But aside from that, it was pretty unremarkable. No ornamentation, no sigil that screamed Targaryen. *Unlike Daemon's*

Aegon fastened it around his form before wearing his boots. And finally, he placed the sword and scabbard to his belt. He was not used to carrying his sword around at all times, but he was well aware that Essos would not be as safe for him as Westeros was. Especially if he hid his true identity.

With all his preparations made, there was only one thing left to do.

He went in front of his mirror and looked at his features. Silver hair. Pale eyes. Such features were not so uncommon in Essos. Especially if you went to Lys or the Triarchy in general. But he would rather not give away his identity if possible, lest someone tries to kidnap him for ransom.

With a thought, his hair started to grow. Except, unlike his usual hair, his newly grown hair was filled with Melanin, and thus looked muted brown. He let it grow until he was the correct size, and then he took a blade, and cut off the silver part of his hair.

Good.

He gathered the discarded hair and tossed it into the fire. The flames caught quickly, and Aegon watched it burn, finding the sight strangely symbolic.

It was time for him to stop being a Targaryen prince, and start being himself. Whatever that meant. He supposed he would find out in this upcoming journey.

A knock came at the door brought him out of his thoughts. When he opened it, he found Baelon Targaryen standing outside.

His father's gaze went first to his face then lingered on his hair.

"I dyed it," Aegon said, "Don't want to bring further shame to the family with my actions." *Nor do I want to be dragged off for ransom.*

His father gave a slow nod. "May I?"

Aegon stepped aside and his father entered, his presence feeling rather unfamiliar in his room. He couldn't remember the last time his father had come to visit him in his room.

Baelon stopped near the bed, eyes falling the small bundle he'd made for himself. "So little?" He asked, frowning.

Aegon shrugged. "I've seen sellswords travel with far less."

"You are not a sellsword." Baelon replied.

'Not yet.' He wanted to say, if only to needle his father about his exile. But he chose not to.

"No, I'm not," he said instead.

Silence followed in the wake of his words as his father's gaze drifted around his room, seeming unsure of what to say. Finally though, he found his voice.

"I have not been a good father."

Aegon raised an eyebrow, not expecting *that*.

“After Alyssa passed away... I thought...” Baelon exhaled quietly. “I thought time would... fix things. That I would... find my footing again.” His jaw tightened. “I did not.”

Aegon remained silent, waiting for Baelon to continue.

“Alyssa—” Baelon’s voice faltered, just slightly. “When she died... I felt so lost. It felt as if life had lost its meaning. I was not there for you. Nor for your brothers. But... Viserys and Daemon had each other. You did not.”

“I told myself you were strong,” Baelon continued, quieter now. “That you did not need me as much.” A humorless breath left him. “I can see now that it was just a convenient lie I told myself.”

Aegon said nothing. Though he was a bit impressed by Baelon’s self awareness. Most people never realise, or accept their faults. The fact that Baelon had done so was admirable, if a bit too late.

Baelon reached into his belt and drew out a dagger. He held it for a moment before offering it to him. “This was your mother’s,” he said.

Aegon took it, feeling how light it was. Raising it up high, the blade caught the light and revealed its smoky rippling patterns to him.

Valyrian Steel.

“I thought...” Baelon cleared his throat. “You should have it.”

Aegon slid it back into its sheath and looked at his father again. “...Thank you.” It was not enough to mend their relationship. Not even close. But it was... something.

Baelon nodded once. Then, after a moment’s hesitation, he placed a hand on Aegon’s shoulder.

The touch felt... unfamiliar.

“If it becomes too much,” Baelon said, meeting his eyes properly for the first time, “you can return to the Red Keep. I will speak to the king. The punishment—”

“I won’t,” he said before his father could continue.

Baelon paused and held his gaze for a moment longer. Then nodded again. “...I thought you might say that.”

Another pause. Then, without warning, Baelon stepped forward and pulled him into an embrace.

Aegon froze. For a second his body didn't respond. Then, slowly, awkwardly, his arms came up to return the hug.

Too late.

When they pulled apart, Baelon turned slightly and he noticed a slight sheen in the corner of his eyes that he quickly wiped away.

“We'll meet in seven years then,” Baelon said, forcing a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. “Make them count.”

Aegon inclined his head. “I will.”

Baelon gave him one last look. Something like regret in his eyes. Then, he turned... and left. The door closed behind him with a soft thud, and Aegon stood there for a moment, his new dagger in hand.

Then, he reached for his bag.

Time to start his new journey.

Chapter 6- A much needed lesson

Aegon walked through the Red Keep's courtyard, carrying his small bundle of belongings across his back. No one gave him a look, probably not recognising him due to his changed hair.

Finally, he arrived at the gate of the Red Keep, feeling a faint sense of fear and excitement fill his body as he reached its threshold. Beyond this, his journey would finally begin.

Then, an annoying voice reached him.

“Aegon.”

He paused, his teeth gritting together before he took a deep breath and turned to look at the person who'd called him.

Daemon walked over to him lazily, his gaze slid over to his now-dark hair and a mocking smile took over his face. “The dragonless Targaryen.” Daemon drawled out. “And now you don't even look like a Targaryen. Wonderful.”

The handful of guards standing near the gate suddenly found the walls very interesting to look at.

Aegon met Daemon's gaze evenly. "What do you want Daemon?"

"What? Can't I come to meet my little brother who's about to go on exile?" Daemon asked, his voice almost conversational.

"What do you want?" He asked again.

Daemon's lips twitched, "The King gave an order. And I'm here to relay it to you."

Aegon tilted his head. "What order?"

"Your gold." Daemon said, his gaze sliding over to the gold purse tied to his belt. "Leave it behind."

Aegon paused. He knew that Jaehaerys was an asshole but he hadn't expected this level of pettiness from him. Or... "Did his grace really give such an order? Or are you just making shit up?" He asked.

Daemon's smile took a cruel edge. "Why don't you go back and ask grandfather yourself."

His lips pressed thin. They both knew he wouldn't do that.

Aegon exhaled slowly and he reached for his purse.

“Wait.” Daemon said suddenly, and he paused. “I’m feeling generous today, so I’ll let you keep the purse.”

“You... generous?” He asked. “Forgive me if I don’t believe that.”

Daemon smiled. “Indeed. It won’t be for free. You’ll have to do something for me in return.”

“What?” He asked, and knew that he’d made a mistake the moment he asked that question. He should’ve known better.

“All you have to do...” Daemon’s smile widened, “is crawl your way out of the gate instead of walking. And you can keep the purse.”

Silence. The guard, the servants, the knights and lords in the courtyard who had been listening in on the conversation all went silent.

The guards near the gate shifted uncomfortably but Aegon paid them no mind. His gaze were locked on Daemon as for the first time, he looked at Daemon. Really looked. At the arrogance. The casual cruelty. The certainty that nothing would happen to him.

‘Of course. Why wouldn’t he believe that? He’s ever been the darling of the family. And due to my own meddling, he even got to marry a Targaryen princess instead of Rhea Royce. Why would he not be arrogant?’ Aegon thought and then chuckled.

“What are you laughing about?” Daemon asked.

“I’m laughing because I just realised that I don’t need to hold myself back anymore” He said, and then *moved*.

There was no warning. One moment he stood still, the next his fist crashed into Daemon’s face. A wet crack split the air.

Daemon staggered back, blood already spilling from his nose before he even understood what had happened.

Aegon didn’t stop. He stepped in, closing the distance before Daemon could recover, before instinct could fully catch up. Daemon’s hand went for his sword... but Aegon caught his wrist and *twisted*. A sharp pop followed as Daemon hissed, breath cutting short as his arm gave way, shoulder tearing out of its socket under the pressure.

Aegon drove a knee upward, and landed clean in Daemon’s groin.

Daemon let out a strangled noise, his face twisting in pain as his body folded in on itself. Aegon let go, and Daemon dropped on to his knees.

Aegon took a step back and then *kicked* Daemon in the face. The blow snapped his head back, teeth cracking, blood spraying across the stone. Daemon's head lolled for a moment before he crumped to the ground, limbs slack.

Absolute silence fell in the yard. The guards, servants, knights... all stood and watched in utter shock as Daemon learned a lesson that their father should've taught him a long time ago.

To be not be an asshole. Especially to someone who had nothing left to lose.

Aegon heard the sound of boots hitting the ground and turned to see two Kingsguard running over. He scoffed, reached into his belt, and pulled out the gold purse.

He held it for a second, weighing it in his hand. Then, he tossed it. The heavy purse struck Daemon across the face with a dull thud, eliciting a painful groan from him.

"Keep the change," Aegon said, and walked out through the gates of the Red Keep.

Chapter 7- Two silver moons

The alley stank of rot, piss and stale fish as he Aegon stepped into it, slipping past stacked crates and broken barrels until the noise of the harbour dulled a bit.

Then, he stopped and retched. Slowly a round fleshy thingg crawled up his throat and then dropped into his hand. Still warm and covered in bile from where it'd been attached to his stomach lining.

Aegon exhaled, and wiped his mouth before he turned the pouch over. He cut it open, and inside were over a dozen gold coins. His emergency reserves. One that he'd placed inside his body in case his gold purse ever got lost or stolen.

He hadn't expected to be robbed by his own family. But such was the House of Targaryen.

He took out a gold dragon, and placed the rest inside his boot, pressing them into place until they sat secure against his ankle. A bit uncomfortable but they'd be safe there.

He discarded the flesh pouch and stepped back out into the docks. He started asking for a ship that'd take him to Braavos. He

had absolutely no idea how much such a passage cost, but one gold dragon should more than cover it.

Eventually, a man approached him with an easy smile. “Looking for passage to Braavos, friend? I could get you one.”

“How much?” He asked.

“Only two silver moons,” the man said. “Cabin included.”

Aegon paused at that number. That was cheaper than he thought it would be. Too cheap. He did not know the price of the ticket, yes, but he knew economics. He didn't react outwardly as his mind ticked through the numbers automatically. He deduced that unless the foot was complete shit, the price of it alone should cost a silver moon.

“Show me the ship,” Aegon said.

The man nodded immediately. “Of course. Right this way.”

They walked past the busier docks, toward the edges where ships sat farther out, anchored beyond immediate reach. Then, the man stopped and pointed at a ship in the distance. “There.”

Aegon followed his gaze and saw a ship. A merchant vessel. Large and clean enough. But... was it truly as the man had said.

“Take me aboard,” Aegon said, feeling highly skeptical.

The man laughed lightly. “Ah, we’d need a boat for that. Costs extra. And the ship doesn’t set sail until tomorrow.”

“How much for the boat ride?” He asked, his suspicion increasing even as he kept his face composed.

The man waved a hand. “Not much. But unnecessary. You can board when we depart.”

“I’ll pay.”

The man paused. “Uh... I’m not sure the captain would allow it. The ship is still being cleaned and—”

Aegon’s hand shot out and seized the man by his throat, slamming him against the nearest wooden pillar with a dull crack. The man’s breath hitched, hands clawing at Aegon’s wrist.

Aegon leaned in slightly, his grip firm but controlled. “Are you trying to swindle me?” he asked quietly.

Now that his hand was touching the man's skin, he could feel his complete biology. And while he still couldn't meddle with the biology of other people, that didn't mean he couldn't sense it.

The man choked out a response. "N-No—no, I swear—"

Lie.

Aegon's fist drove forward and the impact snapped the man's head to the side with a sharp crack. His body went slack instantly, sliding down the pillar into a heap.

Aegon released him and crouched before taking the scammer's purse. Only a few silver coins. Tch.

"Amateur," Aegon muttered and tied the purse to his belt before moving on.

Chapter 8- Booking a passage to Braavos

“Are you the captain of this ship?” he asked.

The man leaned back against the railing, one boot hooked over the edge as if the deck. His beard was thick, salted more with grey than black, and his coat had been patched so many times it had become more patchwork than coat.

“Aye, that’d be me. Proud captain o’ the *Lusty Maid*.” He spat to the side, then squinted at him. “What dy’ya want, lad?”

Aegon didn’t answer immediately, instead studying the captain carefully. The past hour had been... educational. Two more scam attempts, one cutpurse, and a dozen times when he noticed people studying him.

Either the docks was a more dangerous area than he’d initially assumed. Or... he looked like an easy prey.

“Would you sail to Braavos,” Aegon asked.

“Aye,” the captain replied, scratching his beard. “Eventually. We ain’t no royal courier, mind. Driftmark first. Then Pentos. Then—” he

waved vaguely toward the horizon, “—Braavos. Sill didn’t answer my question though. What dy’ya want?”

“I want passage to Braavos,” Aegon said. “Preferably in a cabin, if you have one.”

The captain didn’t even pause as he replied. “One gold dragon.”

Aegon stared at him. “Do you take me for an idiot?”

The captain snorted. “No. But you’re late, ain’t ya? Last-minute seat costs extra. That’s the way o’ things.”

“What’s the normal price?” He asked.

“Ten silver moons.”

“So you’re charging me three times the normal rate.”

“Aye.” The captain shrugged. “Cost o’ business.”

Aegon’s gaze drifted over the ship. It seemed... solid. Not pristine, or anything impressive but it was well maintained, and the crew looked like they knew what they were doing.

He looked back at the captain. "What if I offer my sword for the duration of the journey?"

The captain blinked once. Then barked out a laugh. "You?" His eyes ran over him, at his smaller stature and the lack of visible scars. "You even know which end o' the blade does the cuttin'?"

"I do."

The captain smirked. "Could've fooled me."

Aegon didn't react. "Well, since you don't trust me... we can make it interesting. How about a bet."

That caught the captain's attention. "I ain't much for gamblin', lad. But I'll hear it."

"I fight your best man," Aegon said. "If he wins, I pay the gold dragon. If I win, I pay the normal fare."

A pause. Then... the captain's grin widened. "Not good enough. Double or nothin'." He said. "If my man wins, you pay two gold dragons. And if you win, you don't pay a single damned coin. How's that for a deal, eh lad?"

Aegon considered it. Then nodded. “Very well. I accept.”

The captain’s grin snapped into place. “Good lad.” He leaned over the railing and bellowed, voice cutting across the deck like a whip
“RAAGA!”

A few moments later, heavy footsteps answered as a giant of a man approached them. The man looked less like a sailor and more like a pit fighter. Judging by the various scars across his arms, he probably was. Or used to be one.

“What?” The giant man growled.

The captain jerked a thumb toward Aegon. “This boy says he can beat you with one hand tied behind his back.”

Raaga turned. Looked him over. Slowly. A deep scowl spread across his face. “Is that true, little boy?” Raaga asked.

Aegon climbed atop the deck and drew his sword, raising it toward Raaga.

Raaga's scowl broke into a wide grin. "Good," he said, rolling his shoulders. "Raaga likes you." He then drew his cutlass in a single smooth motion. "Try not to die."

And then, he moved. Faster than a man his size had any right to be. His boots slammed against the deck as he closed the distance, cutlass already arcing toward Aegon's head with enough force to split cleanly in two.

Aegon moved as well. But instead of going back, he moved forward. The blade passed where his head had been a heartbeat ago, close enough that he felt the wind of it brush his hair.

He swung his sword, leaving a wound on Raaga's round belly. Raaga grunted and swung again, and he dodged back, circling Raaga from the side.

Wood creaked as the cutlass bit into a railing behind him, splintering it. Raaga ripped it free and turned, already grinning wider.

"Not bad, little boy," he said, then charged again.

This time, Aegon raised his blade to deflect the attack. His wrist screamed as steel met steel, and the impact jarred through his arm, the sheer force behind the attack nearly ripping his sword from his grip. Hard. Too hard. Even with slightly enhanced physique, he was no match for Raaga's strength.

Raaga took advantage and pressed onward. Another strike, then another. Each one heavy and relentless. Aegon dodged to the back, giving ground as the monster charged at him.

Realising that he was not going to win like this, he activated a nerve in his brain, and his breathing suddenly slowed, his vision sharpening as his reflexes increased fourfold.

Raaga's next swing came... and Aegon saw it. The shift in the muscle, the angle of the shoulder, the tightening of the grip. And way the sword moved slowly toward him, at a fourth of its usual pace.

He stepped to the side and twisted. His blade flicked out and left a quick, precise cut along Raaga's forearm. Not deep to sheer off Raaga's muscles and tendons. But enough.

Raaga hissed in pain as blood spurted out and his cutlass clattered to the ship's deck.

Aegon took the moment to step behind Raaga and kicked the back of his leg, dropping him to his knees. Raaga grunted and turned to face him... only to find the edge of his blade pressing against his throat.

Raaga froze. Then slowly... he grinned. “Good,” he said again, his voice softer this time.

Aegon didn't move for a second. Then he stepped back, lowering his blade. He looked around him, and noticed the entire crew gaping at him in utter shock.

Then, a laugh rang out, breaking through the tension.

The captain slapped the railing hard enough to make it rattle. “Ha! Seven hells—did you sons o’ whores see that? One heck o’ a fight. Well fought! Well fought!”

Raaga held his forearm, wincing slightly at the cut, then barked out a laugh of his own. “Fast little boy,” he said, rubbing his knee. “I like him.”

The captain hopped down from his perch and walked over, still grinning.

“A deal’s a deal,” he said, looking Aegon up and down again—this time with something closer to approval. “You sail with us. In the best cabin I have. For free.”

Aegon sheathed his sword and inclined his head slightly, a smile coming over his face. “I accept.”

The captain clapped him once on the shoulder. Hard. “Then welcome aboard the *Lusty Maid*, lad.”

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.

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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.