

Chapter 13- Fishing village

As Aegon stepped toward the village and the change was immediate. The menfolk stopped what they were doing, the women stopped chatting, the children stopped playing and all turned to stare at him.

The looks made him a bit self conscious. But he kept walking until he had entered the village. And then a broad-shouldered man stepped into his path.

The two of them gazed at each other as the larger man quietly sized him up before he finally spoke. And Aegon frowned as it was a language he had never heard before. Though he did catch a few words that somewhat resembled High Valyrian. He guessed that this must be the bastardised form of High Valyrian that the people of Essos used nowadays.

Low Valyrian.

“...vesh... naejot... skoros?” the man said, his tone cautious, edged with suspicion.

Aegon tilted his head slightly. “I don’t understand,” he replied in the Common Tongue.

No reaction. So he tried again, this time in High Valyrian. “Nyke ēdruta... jorrāelagon.” *I wish to speak.*

The man blinked. Then frowned. So... he likely understood neither.

Aegon exhaled quietly. Fine.

He shifted his stance and raised his hands slightly, then began to act it out. One hand became a ship, rocking. The other struck it suddenly. His gestures mimicked blades, then chaos. He staggered a step, tilted his body, and dropped his hand toward the ground, before making a splash noise.

His cheeks were tinged red by the time he finished playing out the entire series of events. But he hoped that it'd be enough. Because there was now in hell he was going to repeat this again.

The man watched him closely the entire time. Then... slowly... nodded.

Good enough.

The man gestured with his head and turned, expecting Aegon to follow. Aegon did.

They walked through the village in silence. And he felt the stares on his back. He wasn't quite sure why the people were staring at him. Were they wary of him, or were they just curious. Maybe a mix of these two.

A few children lingered near the edges, peeking from behind the walls or baskets. One of them, a small slip of a girl met his gaze, and Aegon smiled.

The child flinched and darted away, dragging another with her.

Aegon huffed faintly and shook his head as they continued deeper within the village, until finally stopping before the largest house in the village.

Well... largest by their standard. It was not really all that impressive to look at. Just... wider than most others, and slightly better maintained. The kind of place built by someone who had lived long enough to gather a little more than the rest.

The man gestured for him to wait, then stepped inside.

Aegon remained where he was. And took the moment to observe the village. It's layout, its dirt paths, its people. He also noticed that there were no guards, no walls, and nor real defences.

It made him wonder how these people would protect themselves if they got attacked by Pirates, slavers, or the Dothraki.

He was brought out his thoughts as the door opened again and the burly man returned, this time with another man. An older man who was much better dressed than anyone else in the village.

The village chief, perhaps?

The old man paused outside the door and studied him for a long moment before he spoke. "Who are you?" He asked in rough, and heavily accented Common Tongue and Aegon's eyes lit up in joy.

"A traveller," he said, "My ship was attacked by pirates and I fell into the sea and washed ashore someplace south of here."

The old man's eyes narrowed slightly, thought not in suspicion. More like he was in deep thought. Then, he nodded once. "Come."

Aegon nodded and stepped in, noticing that the interior was modest but clean. His eyes swept across the room once before he was guided to a seat.

A moment later, a young woman entered, carrying food and water, and laid them out in front of him before offering him a bowl of water.

He gave her a grateful nod as he accepted the water. But as he was doing so, their fingers brushed, and he got a brief glance at her biology.

Aegon stilled, then continued as if nothing had happened.

After drinking his fill, he picked up the food and began to eat. Acting out his hunger so that these people won't suspect anything.

Across from him, the old man watched him steadily, waiting for him to finish his meal before he finally spoke up.

“You are from... sunset kingdoms.”

“Yes,” Aegon replied. “Westeros.”

“Hmm,” the old man grunted. “We don't get people from Westeros here... often. Where you going?”

“Braavos. I was headed for Braavos before the ship got attacked by pirates.”

“Why?”

“I was exiled from my home, for refusing to marry the woman my family had picked for me, and I wanted a new start in Braavos.” He said. “You wouldn’t have any spare clothes and weapons, would you?”

The old man raised an eyebrow. “You have coin?”

“I do.”

The old man studied him again, then nodded slowly. “We have no shop, as in towns.” he said. “Trader comes two weeks. But... we have a bit. Old things. If you want.”

“That will be enough.”

The old man nodded and went deeper into the house, returning a while later with a set of used clothes, and a slightly rusty spear.

The old man paused and looked at the spear for a long moment before he passed it over to him. “Mine,” he said. “From when I was younger.”

Aegon took it, weighing the weapon in his hand and nodded. “It’s good.”

The old man huffed. “It was. Killed a pirate with it.” His eyes went distant for a moment before he snapped back to the present. “Where you going?”

“Braavos,” he said. “I’ll continue walking North until I arrive there.”

The old man let out a short laugh. “You don’t walk to Braavos. There is mountain. Many mountains in the way.”

Aegon nodded once. He didn’t know much about Essosi geography, but if there was a mountain between mainland Essos and Braavos, then it kinda explained why they never got attacked by the Dothraki.

“I’ll manage.” He said.

The old man snorted, and muttered something in his own language. It was probably an insult, but Aegon didn’t really mind. These people have been rather kind and accommodating to him so far. Far more so than the people of Kings Landing would’ve been had they found him in a similar situation.

Aegon reached into the pocket and his tattered clothes and took out a gold dragon before tossing it over to the old man.

The old man caught the coin and his eyes widened. Then, he immediately shook his head. “No. Too much.” He said, trying to return the coin to him.

“Take it.”

“I said no—”

Aegon stepped forward and pressed the coin back into the old man’s hand, closing his fingers around it. “Take it. You need it more than I do.”

The old man stared at him for a long moment. Then... slowly... he nodded. “You... you change in this room. I wait outside.”

With that, the old man left the house, and Aegon quickly changed into his new clothes. They were bit tight in certain places, a bit loose in others. But otherwise fit him pretty well. And while they were peasant clothes, they were not all the uncomfortable either.

Wearing his new clothes, and with a new weapon in hand, Aegon finally walked out of the house, and found the old man waiting for him.

He noticed that the villagers had returned to their tasks but were still gazing over in his direction every now and then.

Aegon walked over to the old man, then spoke up. "That girl. She's... your daughter?"

"Wife," the old man replied, and he blink.

Okay.

"She... does she feel weak. Tired. Does her... joints hurt?"

The old man frowned. "Why you asking?"

"What about swollen and bleeding gums?" He asked, and the old man slowly nodded.

"She has scurvy," Aegon said.

"What's that?"

"A disease that comes from the lack of Vitamin C," he said, and then paused as he realised that these people likely had no concept of

what a Vitamin was. “Do... other people in the village have similar symptoms.”

The old man looked thoughtful for a moment before he nodded. “Few.”

“You should tell them to eat fruit,” he said. “Sour fruits, preferably, like lemons or oranges. If you don’t have them then guavas, papayas, and strawberry will do just as well.”

“You... healer?” The old man asked, giving him a strange look.

Well, he was not, though he likely had a far deeper understanding of a human body than almost any human in their world. So he nodded. “A bit.”

“Will fruits really help?” The old man asked and Aegon met his gaze and gave a confident nod.

“They will.”

The old man inclined his head slightly. “Then... you have my thanks.”

Aegon shrugged. “Don’t mind it.”

With that, he stepped out of the house, and felt the villagers' gazes on his back until he left their village and continued on his journey North.

Chapter 14- Aegon Halps

The land changed as he moved north, the soil becoming darker, richer and more fertile. The grass was thicker, and greener. And farms begin to appear more and more often. And people with them.

It wasn't until later that Aegon would learn that he had entered a rather fertile region called Andalos that lay between Pentos and Braavos. And yes, it was the same piece of land where all the Andals came from.

What had begun as scattered huts along the coast slowly gave way to proper villagers, then clusters of homes linked by dirt roads, and eventually, even minor towns begin to emerge.

He entered one such town, and exchanged his gold dragons for the local Pentoshi currency, as well as silver and copper coins and everyday spending.

The docks even had a ship that would sail toward Braavos, but Aegon was enjoying the journey so much that he decided to forego the ship in order to keep walking.

He walked, and walked, and walked, as hours turned into days, and days turned into weeks.

Most of the time, he simply walked in solitude, simply enjoying being one with the nature. But sometimes, he would enter humans settlements, and accept their hospitality. Enjoying warm food and a roof over his head for the night for a few copper coins before he continued along in his journey.

Slowly, as he conversed with the people, he started to learn their language. Mostly thanks to his Second power working quietly under the surface, and helping him learn at a far faster pace.

Within days, he started to understand fragments of their language. And with weeks, he got the gist of the what they were saying, and could even reply in a word or two. Simple words like Food, Sleep, Coin...

It was not enough to consider him fluent by any means but it was good enough for his purpose.

Not everything was sunshine and roses though, because the more he interacted with these people, the more he begin to realise something.

Most of them were... unhealthy in one manner or another. It was not something he had noticed before when he was living in the Red Keep. But now that he was walking among the people, it became too noticeable, and he could ignore it no longer.

One village had dug its latrine too close to their village well, and some of the human waste had seeped into their sole water supply. It didn't surprise him that most people in the village, especially the children, were sick in some manner or form.

The sight of a young child coughing up blood still haunted his nightmares.

In another village, he saw the people with trembling hands, and upon checking, found that they were suffering from Lead Poisoning. A bit of investigation revealed that the local brewer had the bright idea of using lead-lined vessels to make the wine.

The bastard had not even looked guilty upon learning that it was him who was causing all the health problems in the village.

“My father used the same vessels to brew wine. And his father before him. How dare you insult my heritage!”

“Then your father and grandfather were more stupid than you are.”

“Bastard!”

In another village, he met people whose stomachs and intestines were churning with parasites. And upon asking around, he learned of their local tradition of eating raw fish every week.

By this point in his journey, he had started to lose his patience, and wasn't quite diplomatic enough when he told them to change their shitty tradition.

Yes, they did not take it well. And then he had to run when things became violent, lest he be left with no choice but to skewer them.

It was not as if every village had fucked up their health in some major way. But even the villages where things were... normal, people were unhealthy. Mostly because things regarding health and hygiene that were common sense in his past life, were alien concepts here.

Boiling your water, cooking food properly, eating a balanced diet, washing your hands before a meal... none of the villagers here had ever even heard of such things.

The women who died from child birthing fever affected him the most, as they reminded him of his own mother whom he had failed to save.

Worst of all was the fact that when he offered them his help... they refused.

Some simple didn't believe that he knew what he was talking about, others didn't want to change their traditions based on the word of an outsider, and some, like the wine brewer, didn't want to change because of blind greed.

Part of it was perhaps because of his youth and that he had no reputation as a healer, but it still galled him that so few of these people were willing to listen to reason.

And among everyone, the healers were the worst.

Men and women who claimed to have knowledge in the art of healing. Yes, some of them had some idea of what they were doing. Some of their salves were actually quite good. But most of them time, they were clueless regarding most matters.

“No, bloodletting and leeching does not help patients with fever or cold. The complete opposite, really.”

“Yes, I understand that having your tools coated in blood makes you look profession, but it's actually pretty dangerous for the patients.”

“No, boring a hole into the skull to release evil spirits is a very stupid idea.”

“No, mercury does not, in fact, help with syphilis.”

Of course, when he offered his knowledge to help them improve their healing practices, they laughed at him, calling him a ‘milk-drinker who had no idea what he was talking about’. And those were the more polite ones.

Almost every time their discussions ended in arguments. One of the healers had even tried to attack him. *Tried* being the keyword here, for the healer soon learned why that was a very bad idea.

And yes, he had to once again run away from the villagers after they learned that he had beat up their healer.

Suffice to say, by the time he left Andalos and reached the Braavosi mountain range, his heart was filled with disappointment at people’s unwillingness to learn.

But... it did not surprise him. Even in his part world, it took over 300 years for the Germ theory to gain widespread acceptance. So, to expect people to simply accept his new ideas on faith was optimistic at best, and foolish at worst.

Still, as someone with the power of Shaper, who understood human body far deeply than anyone else in the world, he felt it a personal responsibility to improve the overall health of these people.

Especially after having seen more than his fair share of sick and dying children in his journey.

So as he started to climb the Braavosi mountains, he made a decision on what he intended to do upon his arrival at Braavos.

Before, he simply wanted to make a name as a Sculptor, get some patrons, grow wealthy and do... something with that wealth. Maybe create a Merchant fleet of his own.

Yes, he had a plan, but it was a very rough plan.

Now... he had something more concrete at hand. He was going to revolutionise the health system of this world.

How he was going to do that, he still had no idea. But he just knew that he was going to do it.

And this time, he was not going to let anyone stop him.

Chapter 15- Power upgrade

The Braavosi mountains were harsh and unwelcoming. They were tall, jagged things, with loose gravel, and little to no greenery to soften the harsh landscape.

Only a few hours into the mountain range, and he found himself navigating narrow ridges where a single misstep would send him tumbling into a long, unforgiving drop. On other occasions, the ground beneath his feet would suddenly give way without warning, and reveal deep hollow tunnels beneath the surface.

More than once, he had to pull himself back from the edge of a fall, surviving only because his Brain Overdrive gave him a far faster reaction than an average human.

More than once, he reached a dead end and had to turn back, retracing hours of effort just to find another way forward.

It was a slow, exhausting journey. Crossing the mountains was hell, and for some reason, he felt more alive doing it than he'd ever felt before in his entire life. Smiling every time he faced a challenging situation, and laughing whenever he completed the challenge.

His thoughts once again went back to the long years he'd spent in Red Keep, suffocating under the pressure of his family, laying low so that he won't mistakenly reveal his power and catch the attention of the Faith.

He remembered the long hours when he would hide the depths of the royal library, to get away from Daemon, and to practice with his Shaper power in quiet solitude.

Why did I ever stay in that place for so long, when I could've simply left any day, any time I wanted?

He shook his head, and brought his smile back on his face. It didn't matter how much time he might've wasted in the past. What matters was that he was now living his life to the fullest. With no worry for the past or future. No worry for what someone might say to him.

He simply kept moving forward. One step at a time. And slowly, as the minutes turned into hours, and hours turned into days, the barren mountains gave way to mountains filled with greenery.

That didn't make his journey any easier. But he did appreciate the greenery as it made it easier for him to obtain food and water.

On one such quiet occasion, he imagined, briefly, if one day, he becomes a legend and someone writes a story about his life, would they write this chapter.

About how he crossed the entire Braavosi mountain range to reach Braavos.

He snorted lightly. *They'd likely get most of it wrong.*

Still... the idea amused him greatly.

Maybe one of the chapters would be about his fight with the Ironborns, after which he would escape and swim for two straight days to reach Essos. Crossing the sea, and surviving the mountains, facing one trial after another as he grows his legend to match that of figures like Hercules from his past life. Though unlike that particular legend, his story would be based on reality.

He might even have his own 12 trials. One of them could be him going to Valyria and fighting the Fire Wyrms gathered in that place to collect a bunch of Valyrian Steel sword.

Or, once he's even stronger, he could fight and kill a rogue dragon, like the Cannibal. *Or Caraxes.*

He was brought out of his thoughts when he suddenly noticed the area going dark. He looked into the distance and saw the sun dipping slowly beneath the mountains, drowning the mountains in darkness.

Aegon exhaled and glanced around. *Welp. Time to set camp.*

As good as his night vision was, it was still not as good as walking around in the day. And he didn't want to take the risk of travelling these mountains without all precautions.

Once he'd set up his camp, which was basically just a hammock tied in between two tall trees so that he won't get bitten by insects, he picked up a stone and then flicked it upward in a smooth motion. The stone struck a bird perched on a branch with a dull crack, sending it tumbling down.

Aegon moved quickly, catching it before it hit the ground. And with a quick twist, he snapped its neck before he got to work. Plucking its feathers, cutting its belly open and removing its organs.

After washing away the blood in a nearby stream, he lit up a fire and set the meat to cook. Then, he sat back, and waited, listening to the crackling sound of the fire, and breathing in the faint smell of cooked meat.

Yes, his digestive system was good enough that he could easily survive on grass, leaves or even tree bark. But that didn't mean he actually wanted to eat those things if a better alternative was available.

As he was waiting for the meat to cook, his sensitive ears suddenly caught the sound of a twig snapping behind him.

Aegon stilled, his eyes narrowing as he sniffed the air, filtering the scents of the forest around him. Until he caught an unfamiliar scent. A mix of pungent urine, dried blood and rotting meat.

He reached for his spear and turned. His eyes quickly adjusting to the darkness as he looked for where the sound had come from. For a long moment, he saw nothing.

But just as he was about to lower his spear, and chalk the entire thing up as nothing, he saw it. A faint movement under the darkness of the canopy.

In the distance, roughly thirty feet away from him... was a Shadowcat. Its body was low to the ground, muscles tense beneath its dark fur as it stalked him, only to go still as their eyes met. For a moment, he saw its hesitation. Then, it *moved*.

It sprinted toward him, crossing the distance in a burst before it lunged, its claws extended toward him.

An ordinary man would have no way to react to a creature so fast. But Aegon was no ordinary man.

He triggered Brain Overdrive, and the world sharpened, and slowed to a crawl. The shadowcat's leap unfolded before him in perfect clarity—muscles tightening, as it opened its jaw wide, ready to snap down on his neck.

Aegon stepped, raising his spear in slow motion, and thrust forward with precision.

A moment later, time returned to its usual speed, and his spear met the beast mid-lunge. Its own momentum carried it further onto the weapon, the tip piercing through its throat and bursting out the other side.

The impact wrenched the spear from his grip as the Shadowcat flew past and crashed behind him on the ground with a heavy thud.

Its body convulsed violently, limbs thrashing, claws tearing into the dirt as it struggled against death. But it was already dead. Its body just hadn't realised that yet.

Aegon approached the beast cautiously, and then, with a swift motion, he drew his dagger and slit its throat. The convulsions slowed, and within a minute, stopped completely.

Silence returned within the clearing, and Aegon exhaled, cleaning his dagger and placing it back into its sheath.

‘Damn, that’s a big one,’ he thought, looking at the size of that thing that could easily match a Bengal tiger. He hadn’t even known that Shadowcats lived in Essos.

He crouched beside the corpse, running a hand along its fur. A worthy trophy for him.

He placed his hand against the creature’s body, and focused before using Shaper. He separated the skin from muscle cleanly, far more efficiently than any blade could manage. Then he worked further —killing bacteria, drawing the moisture out, and changing the compounds in the leather to preserve the hide.

A process that should’ve taken weeks to complete, was done in minutes.

Aegon collected the fur, folding it into a bundle with a huge smile on his face before he suddenly paused. And frowned as he looked down at his hands.

“...Wait. What the fuck did I just do?”

He stared at his hands as excitement slowly started to bubble in his heart, before he turned his attention to a nearby flower and placed

his hand on it. And focused. With seconds, its petals shifted, going from white to purple.

His heart skipped a beat at the sight, and then started to beat ever faster.

He reached for a branch, and focused again. It took much longer this time but slowly, a small bud formed and then grew until swelling into a fruit before his very eyes.

Aegon stared. Then chuckled. The chuckle soon turned into a full blown laughter that echoed through the entire mountain.

“It works! Holy shit! It works!” He shouted, wiping a tear from his eyes.

His Shaper power, that had only ever worked on him till this point, now worked on others as well. Or, at least other things. He had not tested if it worked on other living beings but something told him that it will.

With this, he could heal other people. Healing sick children whom he had no way to help before. Or helping wealthy merchants, for a *small amount* of donations.

With this, he could create High Yielding plants and bring about a Green Revolution in the entire world, should he choose to do so.

With this, he could create cure to any form of disease, and set up entire systems to mass produce those cures.

With this, he could create an entire army of super soldiers to fight for him.

Aegon threw his head back and let out a shout of joy.

Because with this... everything was about to change.

Chapter 16- Back in the Red Keep

It was a peaceful morning.

Sunlight filtered through the tall windows of the Red Keep's solar, catching on polished stone and gilded edges, painting everything in a warm, quiet glow. The table was laid with fresh bread, honey, fruit, and steaming cups of spiced milk.

Baelon Targaryen sat at its head, watching his family with a quiet fondness.

Aemma Arryn held Rhaenyra Targaryen in her arms, gently feeding her, murmuring soft nonsense as the child reached up with tiny, baby fingers. The sound of her light and innocent laughter filled the room.

Across from them, Gael Targaryen watched the scene, one hand resting on the curve of her belly. There was a soft wistful expression on his face as he watched the mother and daughter.

Two more moons, and he would be a grandfather twice over.

Baelon allowed himself a small smile.

Then it faded. Because there was an empty seat at the table. His eyes lingered there for just a moment too long, and the guilt rose in his heart once again, before he smothered it.

Alyssa would never forgive me for this. He closed his eyes briefly. No, she would be furious. At me, and at our father.

The door opened, and Viserys Targaryen stepped inside, calm as ever, though there was a faint crease between his brows.

“Father,” he greeted.

Baelon nodded once. “I don’t see your brother with you.”

Viserys hesitated. “Uh... Daemon is not in his chambers.”

Baelon’s jaw tightened. He did not need to ask further. His gaze shifted, just briefly, toward Gael.

She had lowered her eyes to her plate and said nothing.

His fingers curled slightly against the table. Of course. He knew where Daemon had like vanished off to. A brothel. Or drunk somewhere in the Flea Bottom with his *friends*. Likely both.

Daemon has been visiting such places too often ever since Aegon gave him that lesson in humility.

Baelon would usually not care for such a thing. But Gael was now heavy with child. And it spoke badly of Daemon to keep visiting such establishments during such a critical period. And it spoke badly of him, as Daeomn's father.

He exhaled slowly through his nose. "I will speak with him," he said, keeping his voice calm.

The meal ended soon after. And Baelon rose, pressing a brief kiss to Rhaenyra's head, earning a soft, delighted sound from the child as he tickled her tummy.

For a moment... a pain he always seemed to carry on his chest eased. For a just a moment. Then, it was gone.

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The Small Council chamber felt colder these days. Had done so ever since he took his brother's place as the heir.

It was a betrayal, he knew. But his father had managed to convince him that this was the right course of direction. In his foolishness and grief, he had allowed himself to be persuaded, and had this alienated his niece and her family.

Baelon took his seat, his gaze sweeping the room.

His father, Jaehaerys I Targaryen sat at the head of the table, expression carved from stone. Beside him, Septon Barth stood still with a parchment in hand. That alone was enough to put Baelon on edge. Barth did not bring out news at the start of these meetings unless they were of great importance.

“My Prince,” Barth began, voice steady, though quieter than usual. “We have received reports from Essos.”

Baelon pause, a frown appearing on his face. Why would he care about Essos? Had the Triarchy finally offended the other Free Cities enough to cause a war?

Barth noticed his confusion and explained. “After Prince Aegon’s exile, his grace bid me to keep an eye on the young prince. And...” Bath paused, as if mulling on how to best say the next few words. “The ship carrying Prince Aegon... never reached its destination.”

It took a moment for the words to settle. And the his stomach sank.

“No,” Baelon said immediately, rising to his feet so quickly his chair scraped harshly against the floor. “Wha—what are you saying?”

Barth met his gaze, calm but unyielding. “No port along the route or near Pentos has sighted the vessel. And it’s been well over a moon since they should’ve arrived.”

“Then it must’ve turned back,” Baelon snapped. “Or m-maybe they ran into a storm and lost their way. It happens, right?”

“There were no such storms during this time, my prince.” Barth replied. “No currents strong enough to drive a ship so far off course that they would not reach any big port for so long.”

Baelon’s breathing grew sharper, his heart beating faster in his chest. “What are you saying. Speak clearly!”

Barth inclined his head slightly. “I fear the ship carrying Prince Aegon was set upon by pirates.”

Silence fell. And Baelon hands trembled. No. He shook his head vehemently. “No,” he said again, quieter this time. “Aegon is not—he would not—”

“He was traveling alone,” Barth said gently. “On a merchant vessel. Through waters recently destabilized by the Triarchy’s actions in the Stepstones.”

Baelon’s vision swam. “No. This is... all this is just a guess.”

“It is an informed conclusion, my prince.”

“Then your conclusion is wrong!” He shouted.

“Enough.” The voice cut through the chamber cleanly, and Baelon turned.

Jaehaerys had not raised his voice. But then again, he never needed to in these meetings.

“Sit down,” the King said.

Baelon stared at him. “...Excuse me?”

“I said,” Jaehaerys repeated, slower now, “sit down.”

Baelon did not move, his gaze locked onto his father's.

“If Aegon is dead,” the King continued, “then there is nothing to be done. If he lives, we will know soon enough. Either way—” He leaned back slightly in his chair “—your display serves no purpose.”

Something inside Baelon snapped. “Display?” he echoed, not believing the words he was hearing.

Jaehaerys's gaze sharpened and he nodded. “I understand the grief of losing a son as well, Baelon. Believe me, I do. But you are first foremost the heir to the Iron Throne. So compose yourself.”

Baelon let out a short, disbelieving laugh. *Compose myself? When my son is likely dead or in pirate hands right now, suffering who knows what, and I should compose myself?*

He looked at his father as if he was seeing him for the very first time. As if, after remaining blind for so long, his eyes had finally been opened.

“You sent him away,” he said softly.

Jaehaerys did not react. “He defied me,” the King said. “A King who can be defied so easily does not remain King for long.”

“He was thirteen.”

“And I don’t remember you fighting against his exile,” his father replied, and he might as well have stabbed him in the heart with a dagger, and it would’ve hurt less than those words.

A pin drop silence fell in the room as Baelon gazed down at his trembling hands.

“Yes. And it’s something Alyssa would never forgive me for,” he said, voice barely audible before he turned to gaze at his father once again. “But it you who exiled you. You... who put him on that ship.”

Jaehaerys’s eyes hardened. “A path he chose himself.”

Baelon’s hands clenched. “He was a boy,” he said once again, not sure how to *explain* this to his father. Has his father truly forgotten what it meant to be a child? To make mistakes?

“And you,” the King replied, “are acting like one.”

The room went still. And Baelon’s lips pursed as he stared at his father. “Aegon was right about you,” he said softly. “You care more for this realm than you do for your own family.”

The small council members around him shifted uncomfortably. But Jaehaerys's expression did not change, as if carved from the same stone that was his heart.

“Careful, Baelon.”

But Baelon was past careful. “He is dead because of you,” he said. “Because you would rather send a boy of thirteen into exile than risk being seen as weak.”

His father's expression cooled noticeably at those words. And for a moment, he wondered if this was even his father whom he was staring at. *When did he change so much? When did he grew so uncaring of his own family. Was it after Aemon's death? Or before? Or maybe he was always a monster and I was just too blind to see.*

Finally, his father spoke up. “Prince Baelon is tired. Escort him to his room.”

The Kingsguard stepped forward, and Baelon did not resist, not wanting to be in the same room any longer. Not with a father whom he didn't even recognise anymore.

— — — — —

He stared at the portrait of him and Alyssa in the quiet of his chambers, a portrait made a few weeks before their wedding. His mind busy pondering over what great and unimaginable tortures Aegon might be suffering right now. Provided he was still alive.

It's been hours since that council meeting. Hours since he saw his father's true face. Hours since he came to a decision.

The door opened at last. Viserys entered first, and Daemon followed, his eyes bloodshot, and clothes crumpled, and his hair a right mess.

Viserys looked... subdued as he looked around the room, dodging his gaze until he finally could not any longer. "I... heard, father." Viserys said softly. "Aegon... he was... he was always different. I mean... what I mean to say is. Sorry for your loss."

Baelon said nothing and simply stared at his eldest son. *Sorry for my loss? He was your brother as well.*

Then, the tranquility of the room was abruptly broken by Daemon's short and sharp laugh. "Well," he said, shrugging lightly, "at least that problem's solved."

Silence.

Viserys froze. And Baelon turned, slowly, to look at his middle son. Not wanting to believe what he'd just heard.

“What did you say?” Baelon asked.

Daemon met his gaze without hesitation and shrugged. “I said,” he repeated, “the disgrace of the family is finally gone.” Something dark flickered in his eyes. “Perhaps now we can move forward without —”

Baelon crossed the room in a second. And a slap cracked through the room.

Daemon's head snapped to the side, his body twisting with the force as he drunkenly stumbled and hit the ground. Blood pooled at the corner of his mouth almost immediately.

For a moment... no one moved.

Baelon stood over Daemon, chest rising and falling slowly as he stared at his son. At a son who was celebrating the death of his own brother.

He had always known that Daemon was quick to anger, slow to forgive, petty, violent and had a dozen other flaws. But this... what even was this?

Oh Alyssa. Where did I go wrong?

“You will not speak of your brother like that,” he said quietly.

Daemon spat blood onto the floor and looked up, eyes burning as he glared up at him. “He killed her. He killed mother!”

“He was just a babe.” Baelon said calmly. Too calmly. “He had no hand in her death.”

Daemon continued to glare at him defiantly and Baelon sighed.

“If Alyssa could see you now, celebrating the death of your own brother” he said, voice low, “she would be ashamed.”

Daemon looked as if he'd been slapped. And Baelon decided that he no longer wanted to be in the same room as his sons. He turned and walked out of his room. A Kingsguard followed.

“My Prince,” the man said carefully. “Where do you intend to go?”

Baelon did not slow his pace. “The Dragonpit.”

The guard hesitated. “Shall I inform His Grace—”

“Yes,” Baelon said flatly. “Tell him.”

He stepped out into the open air. The sky stretched wide above him, clear. *They had been clear the day the gods took Alyssa away from me as well. The heavens truly are uncaring for the plights of us mortals.*

His hands curled into fists, as he took a deep breath to steady himself. Then, he glared into the distance, at the Narrow Sea.

When Aemon had died, he had burned the entirety of Myrish forces with his own hands. Now, it was time these people are reminded why it’s a bad idea to harm a Targaryen. Even unintentionally.

He arrived at the Dragonpit not soon after, and gave a single order. “Ready Vhagar.”