Obligatory disclaimer: I don't own ASOIAF and HP.
B. Reader: Bub3loka

A year passed, and the Yronwood Rebellion showed no signs of abating. Arianne's consort, Ser Brandon Tallhart, proved a skilled warrior and an able leader of men, halting the aggressive Yronwood tactics more than once and even pushing them back at times. The fighting was bloody neither side managed to win a decisive victory.

House Martell had planted its roots deep and would not be easily dislodged, even with Doran Martell's numerous missteps and shows of weakness.

Yet, Gwyneth Yronwood's hand was the one thing to break the uneasy stalemate. With Trystane Martell rebuffing the offer to take Lord Yronwood's daughter for a wife, Anders Yronwood had one more card to play. Instead of looking to pull one more House away from Martell in Dorne, he gazed northward at the Rising Storm, who had just smashed his foes and united the Stormlands under his crown.

Secret messengers were exchanged, and three moons later, Gwyneth Yronwood became the Storm Queen, and Edric Durrandon entered Dorne with five thousand hardened veterans to aid his good-father.

The Rising Storm proved his valour on the battlefield once more, and at the Battle of the Scourge, he decisively smashed the Martell forces despite being outnumbered while most of Anders Yronwood's armies were still sieging Tor.

With Ser Brandon Tallhart captured, Prince Trystane attempted to rally the remaining Martell forces but was quickly defeated and slain in battle.

That was the tipping point, and House Martell was decisively crushed. Quickly enough, they were bent, bowed, and broken, and all their dwindling allies were quick to abandon them. Many argued about the complete destruction of the line of Nymeros Martell, but neither Lord Yronwood nor the Storm King dared to do the deed since the Winter Queen herself had made the marriage arrangement of the former Princess of Dorne. Instead, House Martell was demoted to a knightly House, sworn to their new overlord Lord Drinkwater, who had been awarded Lemonwood as his seat for services to House Yrownood.

Thus, House Martell, led by the freed Brandon Tallhart, was allowed to keep Sunspear—but with lands so paltry even a knightly house would baulk at. The former princely House would never recover from this blow and would slowly sink into obscurity.

And so ended the Yronwood Rebellion. By the ninth moon of 309 AC, Anders Yronwood crowned himself High King of Dorne—

Excerpt from 'The Blood on the Sand' by Archmaester Yandel

Artos the Scribe, Redcliff Castle, Sweetsister, 309 AC

When his lord father sent him south to Oldtown, it was not for love of learning, a desire to serve some lord for life, or because he excelled with sums and letters. No, the reasoning had been simpler and more pragmatic: to broaden his horizons, to gain a glimpse of the wider world and return better tempered for the life of a merchant. '*Knowledge is power,'* his father had told him, and Artos could only agree.

Artos of Barrowton had never dreamed of earning a maester's chain, and truth be told, he had little desire for one. Five years in the Citadel had already worn his patience thin.

The days were long, the studies endless, and the company… condescending. To many acolytes and archmaesters alike, he was little better than a savage, a wool-clad Northern cur sent south with tree gods in his heart and mud on his boots. His home was mocked, his accent sneered at, and no master offered guidance nor took him as an acolyte, despite his skill with healing, histories, and tongues that were better than most.

It was then that Artos understood: the Citadel did not like Northerners. And it would never like *him.*

As his father had said, his horizons had been broadened, though not quite the way he had hoped.

He bore it. He bore it all, for what else was a merchant's son to do? The world would never bend to his liking; better to go with it and learn. His father had sent him to gather knowledge and experience, and Artos did it, no matter how bitter it was. *Respect,* the old man had said, *is never given freely to our kind. You earn it with your blood and sweat—and even then, you must fight to keep it.*

And yet all the lessons of the Citadel had not prepared Artos for this.

He never imagined he would end up at the side of the Breaker himself—King Jon Stark, the man who had shattered the realm of the dragonlords and broken the Seven Kingdoms back into pieces. The one man whom all Northmen loved and respected in equal measure, the man who all Northmen were ready to follow to the depths of hell.

When the Conclave offered the King a selection of the Citadel's finest to take to Winterfell, Jon Stark had passed over every good maester and instead pointed at *him*—Artos, son of a merchant, mocked for his Northern blood. He had merely been passing by the courtyard when the confrontation occurred. Perhaps it was because he hailed from Barrowton. Maybe because the king found him a lesser eyesore than the other maesters. Whatever the reason, he was chosen, despite being an acolyte.

Even so, he accepted. No matter how wealthy a merchant could get, any position by the king's side was better. Even as a small scribe, it was enough to gain him prestige and glory that would otherwise never be achieved.

The memory of the Archmaesters' horrified faces would warm him in the coldest nights to come. The way their waxed beards twitched, the stunned silence, the slow souring of their pride as the King of the North brushed aside their candidates without so much as a glance—it had been sweeter than Arbour gold. Not one dared to gainsay the King, not beneath that harsh gaze that froze all protests in their throats.

And then the flight by dragonback came. A waking dream turned nightmare. Winter's wings had cast a shadow as long as the Citadel itself, and though the flight was swift, his legs kept shaking for days after.

Still, Artos expected to ink letters, tally coin, and transcribe royal decrees. That was the work of a royal scribe. Not *this.*

Not slaughter. Not the stench of piss and shit and blood. And most certainly not heads impaled on spikes.

He vomited what little breakfast he'd managed—he was not alone. Roderick Dustin, the king's young squire, had also voided his. The heads of House Sunderland adorned the gate of Redcliff Castle, and inside its walls, the butchery continued. Every soul—scullery maids, squalling babes, guards who had yielded—was put to the sword. Even the maester.

No quarter was given, no surrender was accepted.

Even the dogs and the chickens were not spared.

The King watched silently as his orders were carried out, black armour slick with blood. They said he had taken Grief in hand and leapt the walls before any man, clearing a way for the rest of the Northmen. They said none had slain half so many. Artos could almost believe it. He stole a glance at the armour and shuddered. The dark steel of his mail seemed to drink the gore as if it were some blood-sucking beast.

"Roderick," Jon's voice cut through the din.

The boy approached, face pale and tight. "Aye, Your Grace?"

Roderick Dustin was but two-and-ten, lanky, auburn-haired and hazel-eyed. Smart, mild-tempered, quick of tongue—an honourable ward, chosen after many lords had begged for the privilege. But now, the boy looked regretful.

"I could have flown Winter here," the King said, "and melted this ugly heap of stone to slag. Yet I gathered the fleet and wasted time to storm it by land. Why?"

The boy licked his lips. "Because… the murder of your messenger could not go unanswered."

"True. But I could have avenged it with fire from the sky. Why didn't I?"

The boy faltered. "I don't know, Your Grace."

“Good. Better to admit ignorance than lie,” Jon said softly. “Loran Sunderland slew my herald. Perhaps he thought himself wiser than his lordly kin. Perhaps Triston Sunderland gave the order himself. Either way, their bloodline ends today.”

“But… if Triston was not guilty…” Roderick hesitated. “Couldn’t he have offered up Loran in his stead?”

“He might have. But he didn’t. And even had he tried, I would not have accepted it.”

The boy frowned, torn between obedience and conscience. “Still… the servants, the maids, the babes…”

“Triston Sunderland saw no dragon and wagered he might win, thinking he could negotiate his way out instead of surrendering. He lost. And now, his loss becomes a lesson for others. An admittedly cruel lesson for all who think House Stark can be slighted or pushed around with no consequence. It’s better to shed some more blood now than to suffer endless trouble and slaughter later.”

“Now, if any lord thinks to defy Winterfell, his maids and men-at-arms may think twice. Let them ask themselves if his folly is worth their lives. Let them know I won’t spare them and their kin when I come. After the glove is thrown, there will be no mercy, no surrender, nor any quarter given.”

Roderick swallowed hard. “And burning the castle… wouldn’t have said the same?”

Jon Stark looked down at the blood-slick stones, then at the heads above the gate.

“No. Dragonfire shows power, aye, but this shows *resolve.* They already know House Stark is strong. But now they know the North is more than merely a single dragonrider. The Northmen have the resolve to strike back, with or without me. Still, too much killing is no good, either. A single castle will do, for I must show mercy too.”

Understanding began to dawn behind the boy’s eyes.

“And the Tyroshi?” he asked quietly. “They raided our ships. Their sellsails stood beside Sunderland. Lords Borrell, Longthorpe, and Torrent sent no hostages. What will you do?”

“I’ll deal with these stubborn lords when they come crawling,” Jon said. “I doubt they will drag their feet after this battle. And a letter will go to Tyrosh. If their Archon cannot leash his dogs, I shall do it for him.”

He turned to Artos.

“Quill. Parchment.”

Artos jolted to attention, fumbling with his satchel. He produced a roll of parchment and the graphite stylus the King preferred—an odd, waxy stick of black stone that wrote like ink and never spilt.

“Yes, Your Grace,” he said, dipping his head, ready to write the next command from the Breaker.

There are many speculations to this day, but none can say for certain why Loran Sunderland, the uncle of Lord Tristan Sunderland and the mayor of the nearby port, had decided to slay the royal messenger of the North. Yet, retaliation had been as swift as it was brutal. Less than two moons later, House Sunderland had been extinguished—man, woman, child, young and old, servants, and even their dogs weren't spared. None dared lay a finger upon messengers carrying the direwolf livery ever since.

After Sunderland’s Folly, the Three Sisters became a part of the North. Houses Borrell, Longthrope, and Torrent were quick to surrender and swear fealty to House Stark. Jon Stark let them choose—marry into the North and foster all their children with Northern Houses for five generations or exile, and all chose the former.

Redcliff Castle, the seat of House Sunderland, was pulled apart stone by stone, and Seawatch was built on a nearby rocky hill instead. King Jon Stark decreed that Seawatch would be ruled by a steward appointed by the Northern Crown, a position that was not hereditary, just like the Protector of the Moat.

Excerpt from ‘The Grand Northern Expansion’ by Scholar Artos

Jon Stark, Winterfell

Sure enough, he was now the father of twin girls. The older was named Argella Stark, with lilac eyes and black hair, and the younger Lyarra Stark, her tuft of hair silver-gold and the grey eyes of House Stark. They were hale and hearty but not nearly as powerful in magic as their elder brother. Jon just prayed that they took after their mother; he had no desire to deal with a smaller version of Arya, even after she had mellowed out even further after her marriage to Torrhen.

His daughters were born twenty days ago, but today was the day the realm would learn of it—ravens and criers were sent out, announcing for the whole North that it had two more princesses.

It was a tradition to wait before an announcement, for it was not rare for babes to die before their first year, but Jon held little fear. Yes, accidents happened, but the twin girls were as healthy as babes could be, and the amount of benign magic and protections woven in the birthing rooms and on Shireen’s jewellery would make even a goblin green with envy.

While Jon was not experienced in dealing with childbirth, he had plenty of magic to spare and was not afraid to use it. Sure, he lacked knowledge of delicate healing spells, but with a heavy hand of brute intent and a veritable sea of magic, there was little that scared him. Thus, just like with Rickon, he had been present during the birth, much to Wolkan and the midwife's chagrin.

Of course, just like with Rickon's birth, a grand feast was thrown in Winterfell and Wintertown, where all the smallfolk feasted, made merry, and filled their bellies on the Crown's dime. In a land where the winters were long and brutal, and food was often scarce, such acts only grew the fervour and loyalty House Stark commanded. It also sent a message—the king was generous and loved his wife and children. Last but not least, it displayed that having a strong and prosperous House Stark meant that the North would prosper and be strong in turn.

A sigh tore from his lips as he walked towards the council chamber.

Ruling a kingdom was tedious, even after delegating and cutting down as many trivialities as possible. Yet, it could not be completely done away with or skipped. Left alone, problems would fester, and small issues would grow into big ones. No matter how impeccable a system of governance was, it was as flawed as its weakest link. As much as Jon didn't like the burdens of ruling, he had no choice but to do it for House Stark's future.

He delegated, while splitting certain responsibilities amongst his council for balance, yes, but kept the reins of power tightly in his fist. Kings of old had done as much, yet oft found themselves supplanted or set aside, sometimes even reduced to powerless figureheads.

Such woes and challenges lay far in the future, beyond his time, but they most certainly wouldn't be absent.

Hopefully, Rickon would grow up soon enough. Once his boy was a man grown with a good head on his shoulders, he would become Hand. Hopefully, his firstborn would prove himself and gain experience, and Jon wouldn't hesitate to pass the crown to him when such a time came.

But for now, he was content to play the devil and clear the way of any trouble for his children.

He shook his head and entered the council chamber. All of his councillors were already waiting, knowing his distaste for tardiness. The birth of twins had taken a toll on his wife, so she was not in attendance; she was resting under strict orders.

"Congratulations, Your Grace!" Wyman Manderly beamed, raising a goblet of wine in a toast before draining it in one go. "The whole realm is celebrating—from the Wall to the Neck!"

Locke and Glover echoed the Hand's words with their own toast as Jon joined them at the head of the table.

The Lord of Deepwood Motte inclined his head. "The gods smile upon the North. I just received word from the dragonyard this morning—Bloodfyre clutched three eggs as well. Will the old tradition of placing eggs in the royal cribs be followed?"

Jon snorted. "A dragon is not a toy to be given to toddlers."

Too much had to be considered when dealing with dragon eggs. Dragon eggs and dragons were power, and power had to be earned, not given mindlessly without care for stability or succession. In the end, dragons were merely a crutch, not real strength. Real strength came from within.

“Won’t the eggs… petrify with time?” Manderly asked.

“They will, but I have ways to preserve them, so fret not.” He waved dismissively. “Dragons are all well and good, but House Stark has stood strong for eight thousand years without them.”

And it was true; he intended to slowly expand the power of his House further, making it formidable even without dragonriders. Rickon had inherited his talent in wizardry, which was a far greater boon than a dragon could ever be.

“How fares the war in the Narrow Sea?” Jon asked, his voice even as he gestured for his squire, young Roderick Dustin, to fill his tankard with the dark Northern ale he favoured.

“Braavos remains besieged, Your Grace. The Purple League’s fleets have withdrawn from the harbour for now…”

It was yet another boring council meeting.

They talked of trading lanes, of the ambitious Pentoshi magisters seeking further allies with the bearded priests of Norvos, and of how the Braavosi sought help from Lorath and Ibb.

War threatened to spill further into the Narrow Sea and engulf much of Essos, but Jon remained reluctant to dip his foot into the conflict. The North had neither grievances nor any great interest—even if Braavos fell, Lorath and Pentos would be just as eager to buy Northern furs and timber. If he entered such a meaningless war that scarcely concerned him now, it would be far easier to do it the next time the occasion called.

“But much of the trade will be crippled if all of the ports our merchants visit are at war,” Wyman cautioned. “The crown’s trade taxes will suffer no small blow.”

“We can always just sack a Free City or two to scare the rest into submission and refill the treasury with plunder,” Glover proposed.

“The North shall remain neutral in the quarrel,” Jon said flatly. “War is not an issue—Northern steel, timber, fur, and tar will only fetch a higher price, so long as the Bite remains undisturbed by the war. But you’re right, our trade is too heavily skewed to Essos.”

“There’s not much we can do about it, Your Grace. The Iron Islands—” Lord Manderly halted, his eyes widening with realisation.

“That’s right,” Jon said, smiling. “Henceforth, Houses Dustin, Glover, and Blackwood shall be granted limited city and harbour charters. In return, they will each raise and maintain fifteen war galleys in service to House Stark. The smaller Houses along the western shore and in the mountain passes shall be offered town charters, provided they muster three galleys apiece.”

A stunned silence followed.

Young Roderick gaped, and Glover pinched his wrist to ensure he hadn’t dreamt it. Even Artos, seated near the fire and furiously quilling the king’s words onto parchment, looked up with wide eyes.

“You mean to turn the West into our new trade route?” Manderly’s tone was cautious, but Jon did not miss the sharp glint in the Merman’s eyes.

“Aye,” the king answered. “With the Ironborn crushed for good, the Sunset Sea shall soon prosper. The ports of the Reach, the Westerlands, and the Riverlands lie open to us.”

“It will upend the balance of the North,” the fat lord murmured, clearly fretting over the diminished power of White Harbour.

“The western shore has been too long neglected, and I shall see it rectified.” Jon met his gaze, and the Merman lord quickly bowed his head. “These city charters shall be limited. No stone walls higher than twenty feet, and none thicker than seven. The towns may raise only wooden palisades or brick and plaster defences.” *Strong enough to keep out pirates and bandits, but not kings or any strong host.*

It was more than a gesture of royal grace, but a strategy to further develop the North. The rise of fortified towns would draw smallfolk from the hills and forests, merchants from across the sea, and breathe life into desolate coasts. The wealthier the North grew, the more trade, tax and customs it would see, making House Stark wealthier and more powerful than ever before. It would not happen at once, of course. It would take a decade or more to see such a plan come to fruition, but it was enough.

Harbours needed to be dredged, roads paved, and fortifications and shipyards raised. Some would say strengthening too many bannermen would only weaken the king. But Jon was cautious at this, too. By then, Winterfell’s strength would be near unassailable, even without the dragon. House Stark had the vastest lands in the North, and some of the most fertile.

The walls of Wintertown were being built sixty feet high and twenty feet thick. The cost was sky-high, but Jon was not afraid to spend coin. The royal treasury was nearly full, and he could always auction spellforged swords if he ever ran out—one blade would easily be worth ten king’s ransoms.

“And what of the other Lords?” Manderly asked, his voice tight. “Will they not demand the same honours?”

Jon smiled thinly. “They may have town charters—if they build a wide, paved road from their seat to Winterfell and see it well kept on their dime. Those granted the charters shall do the same. Of course,

House Stark will halve their taxes for five years to lighten the burden of construction and aid at about half of the construction effort."

The merman's eyes flashed, doubtlessly calculating the costs.

"It is a mighty cost, Your Grace," Manderly said after a long silence. "Restoring Moat Cailin and building the Academy will already empty much of the royal treasury. To pave the North with stone roads would bleed us dry."

"It will be done slowly," Jon replied. "Gifts from foreign kings lie untouched in our vaults. Let the golden ones be reminted into gold and the rest sold. And if gold proves lacking, I shall bring more, so fret not. The roads are the lifeblood of a realm. It's not merely a matter of trade, but warfare. Armies can muster and march faster, should the need arise."

Manderly said no more, though the tightness in his mouth betrayed his unease. But the king had spoken, and the North would follow.

The most stubborn wildlings that had refused the generous offer of the 998th Lord Commander of the Night's Watch remained beyond the Wall and were never seen or heard from again.

After the legendary battle near Westwatch-by-the-Bridge, the Night's Watch was in a deplorable state. The fierce winter that followed did not help much either. It was only after the Bloody Spring began that new lifeblood trickled into the ancient Order. The decline might have been stemmed, but restoring the previous glory of the Night's Watch was still far from sight.

By Grand Scholar Samwell's estimate, less than seven thousand wildlings survived the winter of 303-306, considered the coldest in recorded history.

Yet the weather after 306 AC turned rather mellow in the North; each season was about as long as the previous one, and while some scholars thought it was a coincidence, by 325 AC the trend continued with only small and insignificant changes. Mostly women and children remained from the wildlings, and they settled down in the now lush lands of the Gift, picking up ploughs and looking after sheep and cattle. Only a handful of the most stubborn ones ventured North of the Wall to continue their nomadic ways.

After officially being acknowledged by the King for their aid against House Bolton and swearing fealty to Winterfell, clans Giantsbane, Thenn, and Shieldbreaker were granted lands and quickly picked up the ways of the North—every generation, their heirs would foster at their neighbouring lords or clans, making easy connections and slowly but surely folding into the North. While never particularly large, together, they had enough influence to be a significant force under the direwolf banner.

By 309 AC, fewer than two hundred giants were left, roaming around the Gift with their mammoths. The Northern King offered them a generous plot of land to call their own, and in return, they would not be

obliged to pay yearly dues or provide military service, but aid House Stark's efforts in construction across the North.

And thus, the wildlings and giants that had plagued the Lands Beyond the Wall were no more…

Excerpt from 'On Wildlings and the Watch', by Grand Scholar Jeor

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"Does the Conclave still demand their books back?" Jon chuckled.

"Aye, Your Grace," said Lord Wyman Manderly, barely suppressing a wheeze of laughter. His vast belly shook with mirth all the same. "They write each moon without fail, delivering demands, threats, pleas in equal measure."

A faint smile tugged at Jon's face as his fingers drummed the arm of his oaken chair.

It had been nearly four moons since the Citadel first sent word. The Conclave had vowed no new maesters would cross the Neck until the tomes were returned, and even threatened to strip the chain from those who refused recall. Yet in the North, the Measter's Order was no better than an old, toothless lion. No maester in the North had dared to abandon their sworn keep.

"Write back," Jon said at last. "Tell the Conclave their archmaesters can retrieve the books in person. But they may carry only what their arms allow. Only archmaesters—no maesters, no acolytes, no apprentices or servants."

The gathered lords shared a good laugh. Most archmaesters were old, shrivelled things that could barely walk, let alone make the journey from Oldtown to Winterfell and back and carry books.

"Let the stuck-up grey rats totter North if they dare," Galbart sneered.

"It shall be done," Manderly agreed, though his brow furrowed. "But the damage is done, Your Grace. The Citadel shall remember this slight, and in the coming years, we may find no new maesters willing to serve the North. The Academy is still half-finished, and we lack the tutors to come teach each subject planned."

Jon waved off the concern. "Aye, but half is more than enough. Some halls are fit for use, and scholars from Essos arrive every day, eager to join. I'll oversee the effort myself."

The room fell silent at that.

Wyman coughed into his sleeve. "Forgive me, Your Grace, but... while no man questions your wisdom or your skill with sword or seal, perhaps someone more learned might better steer such a ship. Such a task is below the king. Maester Wolkan is far more suited."

Jon’s smile was not unkind. “I shall not steer the ship alone, Lord Hand. Wolkan will counsel me. I have a small bit of knowledge of running Orders, so fret not.”

He turned to Artos, his newly minted scribe, who stood ready with quill and ink.

“Write,” Jon commanded. “Let Wolkan’s ravens carry these words to every lord and learned soul from Sunspear to Skagos, and let our ships bring the call to the corners of the world: House Stark bids all scholars, healers, alchemists, and sages to the Northern Academy. Knowledge, loyalty and service shall be richly rewarded. Honour, coin, prestige, everything shall be within reach for the capable.”

His councillors shared a worried glance, but dared not speak further. Jon did not explain either.

Artos’s quill scribbled furiously over the parchment, the only sound in the chamber.

Since his jaunt in the Citadel, plans have slowly been brewing in Jon’s mind as he delved into his last life’s memories. He was well aware that he now needed a scholarly order of his own. Truthfully, the thing that took the longest was coming to terms with the inevitability of more work, even if temporary.

Jon didn't want to bother running what was essentially a school, but if it meant things would go smoothly from the very beginning, he would have to do it himself until the institution ran the way he wanted. None of Manderly's outlined plans or Wolkan's ideas differed notably from the Citadel's way, which could use some flexibility.

His goal was simple—he needed an order of scholars. Not a purely academic institution, but a place where knowledge and skills were taught. He needed learned and talented men to fill his budding administration and any institutions he deemed necessary, not merely arrogant academics and learned servants to serve the lords.

There was no rush. Blindly expanding the administration beyond what was necessary was dangerous. Bureaucracy was a monster that could take on a mind of its own, becoming a glutton that only wanted to devour more and more, giving nothing back. Harry had seen this happenstance in both the magical and Muggle worlds.

His thoughts were interrupted by a sharp tug at the edge of his mind. It was filled with urgency and anger.

Ghost.

The direwolf’s vision surged through him, and the world was filled with screams, blood, and mangled bodies. Fury swallowed his mind. Rage as hot as dragonflame thundered in his chest. For a breathless moment, Jon nearly lost himself to it.

Shireen. Rickon.

The protections around them still held—he felt them. His family lived. But the danger was laid bare before his eyes.

Rage receded, giving way to frigid cold anger. There was no need to flame to his wife and son and reveal his abilities, no matter how much he wanted to do otherwise.

He stood so swiftly that his chair scraped against the stone.

“This council is ended,” he said harshly.

He was already rushing out of the chamber.

Someone had *dared*!

Someone had dared to try to kill his wife and his son.

Winter stirred, sensing his fury, and Jon had to calm the dragon too, lest he wreck half of Wintertown.

No, anger would not serve him here.

For six years, the Breaker dismissed his advisor's urgings to form a kingsguard.

Yet, in 309 AC, things changed.

A new order, the Royal Guard, was formed—thirteen of the North’s finest sworn to protect House Stark. It was said that the king himself handpicked the first members. Similar to the Kingsguard, they vowed to serve for life, but the king allowed them the option of marriage after twenty-five years of loyal service, provided the woman in question was approved by the King and would live in Winterfell as part of House Stark’s retinue.

According to rumours, magic was involved in giving the vows. Each Royal Guard was allowed arms and armaments made of Northern Bronze, sharp, light, and unbreakable, forged by the king himself. Yet the spellforged arms were bound to the position, not the man.

The drastic shift in attitude resulted from a singular event.

No more than two moons after the birth of the twin princesses, twelve catspaws attempted to slay the Good Queen Shireen and Prince Rickon in broad daylight at the Craftsman’s Square in Wintertown. Ghost, the King’s direwolf, had torn down three assassins, and Shadow, the Prince’s direwolf, took down another. Jyanna Snow and the queen’s ladies-in-waiting killed two more, while the last six were ganged upon by the nearby smallfolk who had rushed to help their queen. Five of them were beaten to death, while the last survived, albeit heavily battered by the time the city watch arrived.

Those who had rushed to protect the Good Queen were generously rewarded with honours, gold, and opportunities to enter Winterfell.

In the end, neither his wife nor heir was harmed, but the king's rage was not quelled.

The Demon of Winterfell himself interrogated the final assassin for hours before donning himself in full armour, mounting Winter, and flying away—

Excerpt from 'The Red Spring' by Archmaester Perestan