

House of the Dragon Episode 8- "Edge of Glory" "The Preamble" "The Dragons Will Dance in Two Years Time...Eventually"

Well, friends we've made it to the end of the the second season of *House of the Dragon*, after what felt like an eternally long setup. We've seen heirs slain, twin knights battle, and dragons fall with their riders. How will this chapter in family melodrama end? Turns out, in restless suspense.

Any expectations of a grand season 2 finale were immediately tempered when the episode started with Ser Tyland negotiating with the Triarchy. Tyland give the pirates the Stepstones but he has to battle their trusted sea captain Lohar in order to get the army. If there's one thing the *Game of Thrones* universe loves, it's a quirky Lannister side plot. Especially, if that side plot involves being attached to a big strong woman. Tyland mud wrestles, sings for the Triarchy and gets asked to sire children with Lohar's many wives. It's the type of side plot that you'd see early in a season, not at it's finale.

Aemond doesn't take being outnumbered by Rhaenyra's dragons well and blows off steam the only way a Targaryen can: by burning down Sharp Point. Larys visits Aegon to convince him to flee the castle and we get a vivid oral description of Aegon's charred bits. Despite Aegon's sadness about his disabilities, he does not want be murdered by his brother or his sister. Aegon choose life.

Corlys urges Rhaenyra to act quickly while she has the upper hand. He reminds her that Halaena also has her dragon, Dreamfyre, despite not being a regular rider. And there is only one other person who can take on the bloodthirsty Aemond: Daemon.

Daemon has successfully corralled the Riverland armies. Ser Alfred arrives in Harrenhal with orders to bring him back to Dragonstone but his disagreements with Rhaenyra's plans turns his alliance towards Daemon. Daemon simply smirks at him and walks away.

In King's Landing, Helaena is still in shock from the smallfolk riots from [episode 6](#), and Aemond demanding she join the war on dragonback only makes things worse.. He even gets physical with Helaena, forcing Alicent to step in to protect her daughter. Alicent realizes the situation is only getting worse, and calls in a favor from the maester so that she can leave the castle once more.

Over in the Team Green Army encampment, a sullen Criston Cole is sniffing Alicent's hanky. Gwayne outs his dalliance with the queen to all the soldiers and Cole just admits it. Seeing dragon battle has made Cole a nihilist and he's now at peace with death, shedding the false pretense of honor that has defined his actions this entire season. "The dragons dance and men are like dust under their feet," he says solemnly, looking old for the first time.

Pouty McPoutFace, or as he's more commonly known, Jace Targaryen, is still pissy about the bastard dragonriders. Baela attempts to knock sense into him but it's not easy to be calm when witnessing Ulf's terrible manners at the dinner table. Rhaenyra cuts the awkward dinner to

announce that they will battle at Oldtown in two days. Hugh Hammer looks conflicted about burning innocents in war and Ulf looks way too excited.

Ser Simon sends a raven from Harrenhal warning Rhaenyra that Daemon may be turning against her. Meanwhile, Daemon fully completes his Ayahuasca retreat. His witch shaman, Alys Rivers, appears crying by his bed and takes him to the Godswood tree. Daemon sees visions of the future including; a Targaryen with a facial birthmark, dragons at war, the Night King (whose CGI makes it look like he's been to a medspa), his ownself drowning, Rhaenyra on the Iron Throne and the back of Daenerys Targaryen as she holds baby dragons. Helaena appears with a message to him, "It's all a story and you are but one part in it. You know your part". Now we know: Daemon's entire plotline this season was about getting comfortable with the fact that his wife is the Queen and to not mess that up for her.

Aemond pressures Helaena again about fighting in the war but she rebuffs him. Our Oracle Queen puts down her usual metaphors and plainly describes Aemond's death to him. It's genuinely affecting Aemond as no amount of violence will change his fate. It didn't change when his sister predicted him losing an eye in their youth and it will now change now.

Rhaenyra arrives in Harrenhal and Daemon struts over to her like these last five episodes haven't happened—the biggest moment of the episode is Daemon kneeling before his Queen. The prophecy emboldens him like Viserys to put his faith in Rhaenyra to lead them. The line "I am meant to serve you" is gonna go gangbusters on AO3, shortly. The music swells as Daemon riles up the Riverland army and Rhaenyra anxiously accepts her fighters.

Rhaena may be the most disappointing part of this episode. The writers clearly wanted to build up anticipation for her to find the stray dragon in the Vale but it's wedged amongst so many busy plot points that it get lost in the mix. At the end, Rhaena finds the dragon but the shows cuts before we even see her approach it.

Second to Rhaena in plot disappointment is Alyn's scene where he goes off on Corlys and his deadbeat ways. While the impassioned speech is brilliantly acted by Abubakar Salim, this E plot does not feel season finale worthy. We are introduced to Alyn's character as Corlys' savior from the fleet who distances himself away from him. The rest of season is a constant push and pull between them. Corlys needs an heir and Alyn wants none of it. Corlys offers the first mate position again and while Alyn refuses, it's revealed in the end that he begrudgingly accepts with no clue into how Corlys managed that.

While *Game of Thrones* is remembered for its epic battle scenes and dramatic deaths, the show also had season-long arcs to justify a character's future actions (think Arya in her Faceless man era or Bran's time in the Three Eyed Raven cave). Obviously, *Game of Thrones* did this to varying degrees of success. *House of the Dragon* is spending all of season 2 immersing the audience in these characters and all the ways they feel conflicted. That's why the show works at its best with the relationship between Rhaenyra and Alicent.

Alicent meets with Rhaenyra in the middle of the night to save herself and Helaena from the cruelties of war. She proposes a plan to release King's Landing to Rhaenyra once Aemond is gone to fight and Helaena has queen authority. Rhaenyra is standoffish as that plan does not work for her or the reality of their circumstances. The only way this war ends is in the death of Rhaenyra or Alicent's sons. Rhaenyra goads Alicent to choose, coolly remarking "A son for a son". And Alicent agrees, not fearing that the history books will paint her as a traitor. She asks Rhaenyra to run away with her, paralleling a moment in their youth when Rhaenyra wanted to escape with her and her dragon. Alas, there is no repairing this friendship as they're on the precipice of war. Despite only having two scenes together all season, Emma D'Arcy and Olivia Cooke make a meal out of it, enriching us with their tragic love story. But are those scenes enough to save the season?

The show ends with a montage of both sides gearing up for battle, Otto Hightower in jail (diva down!) and Aegon fleeing with Larys. Ending on a cliffhanger before another two year wait between seasons is a special way for showrunner, Ryan Condal, to ask for the worst internet harassment. Season 2 retread laboriously on the same moments—Daemon learning to respect Rhaenyra, Corlys and his bastards, and Alicent's guilt. The total 8 hours of this season is the longest preamble ever.