Disclaimer: I don't own HP, GOT, or ASOIAF. Would have finished the last two properly if I had.
Edited by Bub3loka

23rd Day of the 11th Moon, 303 AC

Tyrion Lannister

“COME OUT!”

The roar was like a thunderclap, rolling through the air and striking his head like a hammerblow. His ears were ringing, and his head buzzed with pain. By the time Tyrion managed to fight off the dizziness, a big chunk of the camp was converging towards the dragon, in a nigh unstoppable tide of steel, and the eunuch had already left him without a single care in the world.

He scowled inwardly and waddled towards the hill through the muddy snow. Tyrion hated many things, but at this moment, his ire was reserved for his short, stubby legs and the mud that clung to his pattens.

It was a man’s voice—not Daenerys. The dragon was similar in size to Drogon, but the colour was all wrong, with scales like a dark, stormy sea streaked with inky black.

Was this Jon Stark or another dragonrider? Ah, dragons were supposed to be rare, not as common as cabbages on a farmer’s stall.

By the time Tyrion arrived, his lungs greedily gasped for breath, and his legs had gone numb from the exertion—dwarves were not made to run. The sight before him sobered him quickly, and the weariness was forgotten.

The dragon loomed above them, rows of jutting spikes running across the length of the spine from head to tail that ended with a bony protrusion reminiscent of a morning star. But the most eye-catching thing was the rider nestled on a throne-like saddle between the spikes at the base of the neck.

With the pitch-black armour adorned with a single white direwolf head on the breastplate, this could only be Jon Stark, who looked utterly unperturbed by the surrounding army. His face was hidden behind a visored helmet, yet somehow the man looked at ease despite being surrounded by foes.

Father above, Tyrion could see fear and uncertainty filling the surrounding faces.

Wasn’t Stark’s dragon supposed to be half the size of Drogon at best?

Were Daenerys’ and Ser Barristan’s wits or eyes faulty?

A fierce burst of fury and jealousy rose within his gut like an angry beast at the sight.

Years ago, he knew Ned Stark’s bastard. A sullen, foolish boy with a desire to freeze his balls on the Wall for the rest of his life. Tyrion had tried to dissuade him, but the bastard remained stubborn as a mule and swore his life away.

He had considered the boy far below him then. Now, he was the one with nothing, and the bastard boy was a king and a dragonlord. Oh, how he wanted a dragon of his own—even a small one would do!

People would finally be forced to respect him once he became a dragonrider. It would matter little how short and stunted he was when soaring the sky above the rest.

Yet both Viserion and Rhaegal shared people's distaste for dwarves, and they growled in his direction as soon as he approached. And Tyrion was too craven to risk it. He did not like the thought of ending up roasted like Quentyn Martell. He had observed the Dornish fool's final moments, half-cooked and slowly dying for a sennight in utter agony.

Alas, Tyrion couldn't do much but lament.

Yet now everything changed. Not only was Stark's dragon as large as Drogon, but the bastard king was in the middle of Aegon's camp, clad in full plate and ready for war.

The only mercy was that he had yet to attack and demanded Aegon's presence instead. Tyrion shuddered at the thought; the dragon could probably devastate the whole army, and they, unlike his brother in the Golden Tooth, had no scorpions or high walls to hide behind. Things were looking grim, and with Viserion wounded and smaller, they were vulnerable without Daenerys and Drogon.

Apparently, Aegon had reached a similar conclusion.

Flanked by his five kingsguard, the king slowly trudged into the clearing, trying to stall for each heartbeat. His face was impassive, but Tyrion could see a hint of worry in his purple eyes.

His presence was swiftly noticed, and the Northern dragon twisted its scaly neck to face him.

"Aegon Targaryen, self-proclaimed king of the Seven Kingdoms and the First Men." Stark's voice was cold and crisp, slicing the tenuous silence like a knife would cut butter. "You've asked for my fealty twice now, yet the North does not bend easily, nor do I. Your wife issued a challenge to me in Winterfell, and I am here to respond. The North is yours should you best me in single combat!"

The silence was so grave that Tyrion could only hear his wheezing breath. At that moment, a roar sounded, and Stark's savage behemoth of scales and spikes turned his savage head to the noise.

Viserion flew over, landed next to Aegon, and crouched defensively towards Jon Stark's dragon. Tyrion felt a lump form at the back of his throat; the distinction in size was clear to see now, and the Northern beast was more than twice the size of the king's dragon.

We've done you no wrong, King Snow," came Jon Connington's hoarse protest. The words sent a chill down Tyrion's spine.

Had Connington lost his wits?

Would it kill the grouchy Stormlander to call the goddamned boy a Stark?!

"Trespassing in my lands, threatening my home and people." There was no anger in that voice. Merely coldness so deep it made Tyrion shiver. "Wars have been fought for less. I am not a cruel man, and I do not long for war, so we can settle this the old way."

A low, warning growl rumbled from the dragon's maw, which made his bones shake.

Oh gods, let them not fight. Not now.

“I did not come here to talk empty prattle. Come now, you wanted the North, so fight for it. You ought to be skilled enough to wield that sword.” An armoured finger stabbed at Blackfyre. “Or are you too craven and would rather hide behind bannermen? Or if you desire, we can test our mettle in the sky, like the dragonlords of old!”

There was a dark amusement thick in that voice, loud for all to hear. It was almost mocking, in a way, as if Jon Stark knew a jest none else was privy to. But it did not change the fact—the Northern dragonlord was backing them into a corner.

Aegon could decline, but would lose the respect of the soldiers and lords for it, and the army’s morale would plummet. Jon Stark’s presence atop his dragon was like a threat, as if saying, *“I’ve come here, and I’ll fight, whether you like it or not.”*

“I need some time to think it over,” Aegon said, wisely trying to stall for time. Daenerys had been gone for less than two hours; she ought to return soon.

The ruse was seen through because the reply was cold and dispassionate. “You have ten minutes and not even a second more.”

He took out an hourglass and tossed it into the slush below.

Then, Jon Stark removed his helmet, and Tyrion did a double-take. The youthful face in his memory had lost all traces of baby fat and was now sharp and harsh, covered in short stubble that made him look even more imposing. That was not the only change, for his eyes were no longer steely grey but dark amethyst.

He would think it was not the same person, but the rest of the long face and the hair were unmistakable, like a far younger and more rugged version of Eddard Stark. Gods, he was too drunk for this!

Or perhaps, he was not drunk enough for this. He pawed at his belt, but found it empty—the flask had been drained earlier already, much to his regret.

Tyrion waddled towards Aegon as fast as his legs allowed him, the king moving even further away from Jon Stark and his fierce dragon to discuss his strategy. All the royal councillors had gathered around the king, looking like a flock of frightened hens, and the Imp elbowed his way through with some struggle.

“Where in the seven hells is Daenerys?!” Connington furiously whispered.

“Still out flying, I believe,” Tyrion supplied unhelpfully. “She seemed quite frustrated after the failed assault on the Golden Tooth.”

Aegon pursed his lips and looked to the sky, expecting to see Drogon and Daenerys. He didn’t—the sky was the same old grey, filled with ribbons of falling snow.

“Snow’s challenge cannot remain unanswered,” Ser Barristan murmured. “Declining a contest of arms would forever stain your prestige, Your Grace.”

The king closed his eyes, sighed, and pinched the bridge of his nose.

“The risk is too great,” the Hand said, voice filled with caution. “A fight could go either way, and putting your life in peril is not worth it. Snow wields Longclaw, a Valyrian steel sword, so Blackfyre will grant you no advantage.”

Tyrion snorted. “That’s a road that goes both ways. Well, you all wanted to do away with Jon Stark. Here’s your chance!”

“What a farce,” Manfery Martell wheezed, looking quite worried. “Is the Northern boy truly arrogant enough to think he can resolve everything with a sword?”

“Do we know anything of Jon Stark’s skill with a blade?” Aegon asked.

“Only rumours, Your Grace.” The eunuch bowed his head deeply. “It is said that in the Battle for Winterfell, Jon Stark killed a thousand men single-handedly, painting the snow crimson and turning the tide of battle. In Barrowton and the White Harbour, there is talk about *the Demon of Winterfell*—invincible in battle.”

“There’s no way for a single man to kill so many, no matter how strong his sword arm or skilled with a blade,” Ser Barristan said dismissively. “Far more likely that his dragons turned the tide of that battle. But I still wouldn’t discount his skill with a sword.”

“Aye,” Tyrion agreed, rubbing his beard. “Wasn’t the word that his father slew Arthur Dayne around his age?”

“Seven fought against three in the Tower of Joy,” Varys supplied. “Nobody knew *how* that battle was fought, and Eddard Stark never spoke of it.”

Aegon looked even more tense; rivulets of sweat glistened down his pale forehead. “I don’t think I can best Jon Stark on dragonback even if Viserion wasn’t wounded. We have no scorpions to use against his dragon. So, unless my wife returns at the last moment, we must accept and stall for time.”

The silence turned grave again until Varys cleared his throat. “What if we accept the duel and simply overwhelm him with numbers while he’s away from his dragon?”

“And who will deal with the angry dragon causing untold devastation in the middle of our army when Jon Stark dies?” Tyrion asked blithely.

“I never said we would kill him,” the eunuch said with a titter. “We could overwhelm and subdue him. Once he’s in our hands, would the dragon risk his master’s life? At some point, Her Grace will return and help us deal with the beast.”

Quite the insidious plan, seemingly uncharacteristic of what he knew of Varys. But he was not wrong.

Why bother fighting fairly when you could just cheat to win?

Thankfully, as Tyrion looked around, he saw that the rest of the council were seriously contemplating the eunuch’s proposal, but only the king had a grimace on his face.

“If I pull such a cheap mummer’s trick, my word would mean far less in the future,” Aegon said, voice weak.

Yet it seemed the Spider had finally shown his fangs, shedding his usual facade of mercy and compassion.

“Would it truly matter, Your Grace?” he said, voice deathly calm. “History only remembers the victors, not those who died with honour—or without it. Without Jon Stark and his dragon, the North would have two helpless widows, two inexperienced women barely on the cusp of womanhood, of no real threat to you or yours.”

“I won't be party to this treachery,” Aegon said, voice stiff. “I won’t start my reign with such a black mark on my name.”

“You won’t have to,” Connington rasped, rubbing his gloved hand again. His voice was quiet but resolute. “I’ll be the one to give the order. I’ll be the one to bear the shame. When it’s done, I can be dismissed with disgrace or exiled, if need be.”

“Jon—” the king began.

“No.” Connington met his eyes. “I will wear such a stain gladly, if it keeps your name clean.”

Tyrion could see the war on the king’s weary face. The pull of honour and glory struggled against love and the need for victory and survival—

“Time’s up!” Jon Stark’s voice rang across the field.

They slowly dragged their feet towards the Northern dragonlord, who had not moved from his place for a moment.

“Well?” He quirked an eyebrow at their ant-like pace as if to mock them. “What say you?”

Aegon took a deep breath and stepped forth, his back ramrod straight.

“I accept,” he said, loud and clear. “Grance Morrigen of my Kingsguard shall fight in my stead.”

Stark laughed, the sound low and mocking.

“Yet another craven with a crown,” he said. “So be it.”

Tyrion listened with half an ear to Connington quietly instructing the kingsguard to draw the Northern king towards their side of the clearing.

But would Eddard Stark’s son be foolish enough to fall into their trap?

He couldn’t help but imagine it and snorted quietly.

Such a death would be fitting to complete the pitiful ending for House Stark.

Rickard Stark was burned to a crisp in a trial by combat, and Brandon Stark choked to death on a Tyroshi strangling device. Eddard Stark was executed for trying to do the honourable and right thing.

The Young Wolf perished at his uncle's wedding under the sacred laws of hospitality.

And now, Jon Stark would probably lose his life to another ruse.

The Northern king looked undaunted, doubtlessly confident in his sword skills. Had he learned nothing from his kin's demise?

Each one of his predecessors had died more pitifully than the last, yet here he was, following in their footsteps.

Jon Stark leapt off his saddle with surprising nimbleness despite the hefty armour, landing with practised ease in the slush below without producing a sound. His dark armour was the direct opposite of the enamelled white plate of the kingsguard that Morrigen wore.

The clearing was surrounded on every side by men sworn to Aegon. The enemy's dragon was given a large berth, but on their side, the boundary of the impromptu fighting ground was surrounded by a sea of steel-clad knights and men-at-arms. Tyrion saw how Barristan was talking to the marksmen and crossbowmen, and his lips curled in amusement.

So much for honour.

Jon Stark threw a disdainful glance at Aegon again before donning his black helm.

Aegon, seemingly unperturbed, sat on a chair his squire brought over. Yet, Tyrion noticed his hand was balled into a fist, quivering.

The two fighters were nearly forty yards apart. They had not agreed on an officiator in their impatience.

The Northern king picked up a rock from the slush.

"We begin when the rock lands," his voice echoed, and the stone flew. Three heartbeats later, it landed softly in the snow, yet neither of the combatants moved from their position.

Tyrion tensed. Was their ruse uncovered? But no, there is no way Stark would have heard from so far away.

A cold gust lifted his coat, making him silver, yet the fighters stood still like two statues, their cloaks fluttering in the wind like banners. The dragon behind the Northerner looked utterly uninterested in everything aside from Viserion. It gazed at Aegon's dragon the same way Tyrion looked at his luncheon.

The tension mounted, and nobody dared to utter. Stark was the first to buckle. Slowly striding forth, Jon Stark unsheathed his blade, revealing a dark sword, the same make as his armour. It looked barely long enough to be a greatsword, yet it was wielded with a single hand.

At that moment, a shred of suspicion appeared in his mind as the Northern king neared leisurely like a maiden taking a stroll in a flower garden.

Tyrion had spoken at length with Jon Snow five years ago. The boy was sullen and prickly yet smart and observant. As Lord Commander of the Night's Watch, he did the impossible and forged peace with the wildling savages, so he knew how to negotiate.

Yet, this was clearly a trap for anyone with the wits to rub together. Jon Stark had not given conditions upon his victory. It was as if he *didn't* care about winning, as if victory was not the goal.

Tyrion frowned; things simply didn't add up. If victory was not the goal, then what was?

But at that moment, Jon Stark had come far closer to their men than he was to his dragon, yet Connington remained as still as a statue, still not giving the order.

As soon as the Northerner was less than a stone's throw away, the Hand whistled, the men-at-arms rushed over with swords drawn, and the sea of steel swelled like a violent tide, intending to devour Jon Stark.

For a heartbeat, the Northerner halted, but Tyrion felt it was not out of surprise.

"TREACHERY!"

Jaime Lannister, the Golden Tooth

"TREACHERY!"

It was like a thunderclap, echoing all the way to the curtain walls and the tower that Jaime and his companions had come to observe. They didn't have to wonder for long about the newly arrived dragonrider's identity. Only one house used the direwolf sigil, even if his coat of arms was just the shaggy, howling head. Yet Jon Snow atop a dragon raised ten times as many questions as it answered.

"Gods, the lungs on that man." Addam Marbrand shook his head with awe.

Jaime scoffed. "Well, what good are lungs when he lacks wits? He walked into a bloody trap that even a child should have seen."

They weren't alone, of course. The men-at-arms had lined the rampart below, watching for a second assault. A quarter of an hour earlier, the first thunderous shout had even attracted the Lady of the Golden Tooth atop the square tower. She was made from sterner stuff; the field of corpses below her walls did not seem to daunt her.

"Who cares?" Alysanne Lefford's voice thickened with intrigue as she leaned in to watch with her Myrish far eye. "I'm far more curious to know how he hid a dragon for years. His beast is nothing like the description of the three Daenerys Targaryen commands."

"Well, so begins another slaughter." Jaime sighed, raising his own far-eye—the one he had taken from Riverrun over a year ago. "Can the army slay the dragon?"

He was just in time to see the Northern drake rear up, its maw opened widely, and a torrent of dark, blue-streaked flames engulfed the soldiers trying to rush it.

Everyone and everything began scrambling.

A good chunk of the men ran away, unwilling to face the dragon. A few braver souls with vain dreams of becoming dragonslayers attempted to get near, only to be swept away by the spiked tail as if they were annoying flies. They all fell broken, bleeding, and unmoving—Jaime realised they had died in an instant.

Many were being cooked in their armour by the eerie swirls of flames that surged endlessly from the dragon's maw as it slowly spun around, drowning the hill in a dark sea of fire. Even the marksmen loosening arrows at the beast only attracted its attention, meeting a quick, fiery end.

Aegon's smaller, cream-scaled drake wisely backed away from a sizeably larger opponent who was effortlessly wreaking havoc and death upon the army.

After looking around, Jaime finally spotted his target. His treacherous little brother was sitting there, seemingly dazed. Yet the gods seemed to watch over Tyrion for once, as he wasn't trampled to death as many soldiers fled in a bid to rush as far away from the fire-breathing behemoth as their legs could carry them.

Jaime spat on the stone walkway. Whoever said that kinslayers were cursed was lying through their teeth.

Another glance told him the old Griffin Lord was struggling to control the knights, waving his hands and crying out in desperation, trying to send them towards the Northerner.

Yet, contrary to what Jaime had expected, Jon Snow had not been captured by the wave of knights and men-at-arms.

No, he had become a black blur, and Jaime's eyes struggled to track his movements. And where Jaime's sight failed to keep up, the men's reflexes stood no chance.

The dragonrider moved like a phantom, leaving a trail of blood. His wicked blade was like a dark omen, ghosting through the air, cleaving through wood, bone, and steel like a hot knife through butter. Even the finest castle-forged steel would have dulled or shattered under such strain, but this did not. It was no ordinary steel.

With each heartbeat, half a dozen men were falling to Jon Stark. It was as if he were not fighting seasoned knights and veteran men-at-arms but cutting grass.

"Seven above…" Alysanne's voice turned faint. "This… shouldn't be possible. No mere man could move like that. He must have killed over a hundred men in less than half a minute!"

"And he isn't slowing down," Jaime noted absentmindedly. Even if he had his right arm again, he wouldn't be a match for the ungodly speed of such a fiend. Perhaps he could block a strike or two before meeting the same fate as the soldiers below. "And his strength must be no less than the Mountain that Rode to cleave through steel like that."

Predictably, armoured corpses quickly littered the ground as Jon Snow killed men faster than they could rush him. Aegon's men were no fools—they quickly saw that rushing the Northman was folly and began to falter. Yet the new waves from behind kept pushing them forward, probably unable to see the slaughter.

Worse, the dragonrider didn't slow down but grew *swifter* instead, like a dark spectre reaping lives.

"Look at Aegon," the lady tittered in delight. "The damned silver-haired fop isn't so arrogant anymore."

It took Jaime to find him in the chaotic mess below. The young pretender king looked shaken, remaining in his fancy chair like a statue as if he couldn't believe what his eyes were seeing.

Jaime couldn't help but feel vindictive satisfaction as the foes who had hunted him like a dog through the Riverlands perished one after another. If the self-proclaimed son of Rhaegar were killed here, it would be even better.

Yet just as Aegon looked ready to stir from his seat and flee, the wooden leg beneath him gave up, and his boots slipped into the muddy ground. His squire bumped into him in the chaos, and his head fell towards an inconspicuous rock amidst the slush.

The white cloaks near him tried to help their king stand up, but all they could do was turn Aegon face up. But he didn't move, and his face was soaked with blood.

"Gods!" Addam swore. "Did the dragon king just die from falling off a chair?"

"I think so." Lady Lefford's eyes turned into crescents as her voice thickened with delight. "Serves the bastard right for trying to burn my castle."

"One dragonlord down, one more to go," Jaime snarked. "Aegon looked significantly easier to deal with than the Northman, who will break an entire army on his own if this continues."

Their joy quickly drained. There were no sarcastic quips or the like either, for the North was their foe as much as House Targaryen.

The furious roar of Aegon's dragon attracted his gaze next. The smaller drake was enraged by the death of its rider, spewing fire blindly into the fleeing men. Even Aegon's squires were roasted without mercy before the dragon halted.

Viserion's rampage seemed to be the last straw, and any desire to stay and fight had evaporated from the army; the Targaryen host was now scattering, all men fleeing like rats from a sinking ship. There was no order to this desperate retreat, and Jaime could see every man who had the misfortune to slip into the cold slush trampled by his comrades.

It was over. Aegon was dead, and his army was shattered. Jaime even saw the dark blue behemoth roast the traitorous eunuch who had slain his Uncle Kevan. Unlike the previous victims of the beast, Varys' charred corpse was gobbled up as if it were some sort of dragon delicacy.

Then, a swirl of purple blotted out everything. Jaime cringed at the surge of brightness and put away the far eye, only to gape.

The entire army was engulfed by angry purple flames, spreading rapidly like an enormous, fiery flower bloom in heartbeats. It was too bright, but even after he closed his eyes, the sight was seared in his vision. In the end, he settled for squinting as he shielded his vision with his forearm.

Down the ramparts, the men-at-arms were swearing or praying. A few fools who had looked for too long were clawing at their own eyes.

"I thought dragon flames were a specific colour," Alysanne Lefford whispered. There was something… new in her voice. Fascination.

"I'm not certain that this one came from the dragon," was Marbrand's grim reply.

After a minute, the purple sea of fire receded, leaving a glowing, barren landscape where an army camp was. Thousands of men were gone, just like that.

Tyrion Lannister

Fear, unbridled fear, ran through every fibre of his being as he was stuck amidst the fiery storm of fire and death. He felt so small, so insignificant, and helpless like never before.

But for some reason, the flames parted around him as if they had a mind of their own and had decided to spare him.

Oh, Tyrion still felt the blistering heat and the rancid smell of charred meat and burned leather, which raked at his throat, stung his eyes, and made him empty his stomach more than once.

Even his bladder had given out, voiding itself in a primal response to such helplessness.

The light was blinding in intensity, as if trying to look at the sun, so Tyrion was forced to close his eyes.

Soon, the heat lessened, and he opened his eyes, coughing and choking on the thick veil of curling smoke. It felt hotter than the worst sweltering summer day, and he could feel his skin blister.

The veil of smoke then dwindled, revealing a blood-chilling sight.

The surrounding ground seemed like something out of the Seventh Circle of hell. Everything was glazed from the heat, like a field of broken black glass covered with ash and steaming cracks. Lumps of what looked like half-melted armaments could be seen as far as his gaze could reach, along with a field of charred bones half-baked into the glass itself.

It was a miracle he was not cooked alive.

A pitiful whimper that made his empty stomach churn attracted his attention. About fifty yards from him, Viserion was writhing pitifully on the ground, eking out a low, wheezing rumble from his throat. His scales were charred, and his wings were gone. No, not gone, but nothing remained of the bat-like membranes but thin bones that flapped helplessly. Even his eyes were gone, replaced by two grotesque, smoking pits.

Aegon's dragon pitifully flapped his skeletal wings, but to no avail. At that moment, the other dragon, completely untouched by the flame, flew over and lunged at Viserion's neck, yanking his head off with a wet crunch.

Yet Tyrion's morbid fascination was short-lived as soft footsteps slowly echoed his way. The sound was barely audible, and Tyrion wouldn't have heard it if everything else wasn't deathly silent.

Jon Stark, his armour splattered with soot and blood, was slowly walking towards a pile of ash, completely unperturbed by the destruction around him. Spots of rust covered his black armour and sword. Dried-up blood, Tyrion morbidly realised. Yet his face was completely clean, and the helmet was tied to his belt.

The king reached over and pulled a corpse covered by crusted mud and ash from the pile, relatively untouched by the flame—the skin had yet to melt. Was it because it was buried?

His dark sword blurred, decapitating the body. The head had silver-gold hair and a familiar dragonsteel crown encrusted with red rubies—Aegon. It was hung on Jon Stark's belt like a grim trophy before he fished out Blackfyre's scabbard from the ashes, loosened the sword belt and slung it over his shoulder.

The Northerner then looked towards him, and the dwarf felt a chill crawl up his spine. The cold realisation that most of those rumours from the North were probably true made him tremble. This sorcery had to be Jon Stark's doing; it had to be. There was nobody else here. But why was he left alive?!

The bastard king was now looming above Tyrion. While not as tall as the Clegane brothers, he was only a little shorter than Robert and manyfold more intimidating than any of them.

"Do you know what happened to Widow's Wail?" he asked, voice bereft of feeling.

"W-Wa?" A hoarse sound was all that Tyrion could pry from his dry throat.

The dragonlord tossed him a flask, and Tyrion quickly unclasped it. His chapped lips greedily found the mouth, and he felt the bitter-sweet liquid wash away most of the ash from his throat.

Even though it tasted more like ash than ale, Tyrion drained it empty without remorse. Then, he raised his head to find that the dragonlord had not moved and was watching him like a wolf would watch a rabbit.

"The second half of my family's ancestral sword, Ice," Jon Stark continued, voice patient. "You know, the ancestral sword of House Stark that *your* family stole. The very same sword your father shamelessly ordered to be melted into two. *Where*. *Is*. *It*?"

He furiously tried to wrack his muddled mind. He had no desire to lie or displease a man who had just roasted tens of thousands of men with nary an effort.

"Last I saw the sword, it was gifted to Joffrey at his wedding," he croaked out, not daring to lie even as the words tore through his dry throat.

"I see. Where is Daenerys' third drake?"

"I—" his quip died on his tongue. Could he do anything but answer honestly? "Rhaegal started roosting in one of Harrenhal's towers and has been there for months."

The bastard king furrowed his brows as if deep in thought, yet Tyrion's mind drifted to the earlier challenge, the massacre that followed, and the inferno that followed.

"You… you never planned to kneel," Tyrion realised. "The whole challenge was a ruse!"

"Perhaps." Jon's lips quirked. "But none can deny that I extended a hand, a road forward for Aegon, even after the slight Daenerys offered. Is it my fault he chose not to take it and resorted to vile treachery instead?"

Tyrion groaned. "Nothing but a mummer's farce…"

“You would be surprised how far observing customs and basic courtesies get you, Imp,” Jon said coolly. “But I am neither a weakling nor a lackwit, and a dragonrider’s ambition soars high. A kingdom cannot have two kings.”

Suddenly, the Northern King spun around and looked to the side, blade drawn.

Tyrion traced his gaze, only to see a naked, tall beauty walk their way by the ashes—the supposed Red Witch that Varys had captured.

He gasped at the sight of the red hair and eyes. The only thing on her body was the glowing ruby choker, untouched by the flames, just like her. Ash did not cling to her pale skin, and he found his gaze moving towards her bare teats so full they would make a whore turn green with envy. Then, his eyes flicked even lower—her hair was red there, too.

“We meet again, Melisandre of Asshai.” Jon tilted his head, looking completely uninterested in her naked form.

Tyrion, however, found that he simply couldn’t tear his eyes off the sight. It was the best he had seen—better than any whore.

“My Prince.” Her voice was full of devotion as the woman kneeled. “You must go back North with all haste. The Great Other is about to strike at the Wall.”

“Have you seen something in the flames again?”

“Yes, My Prince.” Tyrion couldn’t help but admire her shapely behind as she crawled over and kissed Jon Stark’s dark boots. “A storm of ice and death batters the Wall day and night, and the only thing holding it back is a small, purple streak of lightning and fire.”

The king’s expression turned stormy, and the air became oppressively heavy. Tyrion felt his legs tremble, and his chest felt as if it were pressed by a giant stone. His traitorous bowels chose to void themselves at that moment, and the stench of shit wafted in the air. Stark’s face then shifted into an icy mask that felt just as dangerous, but at least Tyrion could now breathe.

“Get up. I have no need for people to crawl and kiss my arse or boots.” When Melisandre remained unmoving, the king leaned to lift the naked woman, “But you have my gratitude, Melisandre of Asshai. If what you speak of proves true, I will owe you a single favour so long as it does not concern the North or my kin.”

“There is no need for repayment,” she said. Tyrion could see fanatical reverence in her crimson eyes as she gazed at the Northern king. She attempted to prostrate herself on the ground again, but the king’s arms held her up. “I live to serve Azor Ahai!”

For the first time, Stark’s icy facade dropped, and he let out a long, exasperated sigh. Tyrion’s mind, however, was enchanted, and he couldn’t even bring himself to care that he had soiled himself. Oh, what would he have done if he had such lush, exotic beauty so fervently devoted to him? Day and night, he would bed her again and again until he passed out from exhaustion.

Yet her devotion, her declaration of servitude, was rebuffed.

“My mind shall not change,” Stark declined, his voice full of steel. “My word is already given and shan’t be taken back. A king’s dignity cannot be denied. Remember that, Melisandre of Asshai.”

The Red Witch pouted, stepping away, but left one final warning before turning away, “You must hurry, Your Grace. The Great Other is growing more powerful by the day.”

At that moment, the blue dragon came over and landed heavily, raising ribbons of ash everywhere in the air. Tyrion closed his eyes, coughed heavily, and covered his face with his dirty cloak.

When the ash cloud dispersed, he saw the dragon looming over him, and blood ominously dripped from its crimson-stained mouth.

Jon Stark held up a large leather bag that again gave Tyrion chills. The behemoth spat a huge piece of bloody meat inside, and when Tyrion blinked, the bag was already gone, and Stark was rubbing the bloody snout of his dragon, eliciting a low, rumbling purr from the ferocious beast.

He would have thought the scene somewhat endearing if not for the amount of blood and the fresh memory of the dragon spewing torrents of flame that cooked alive scores of men each second.

Just as Tyrion wondered if there were any limits to Jon Stark’s sorcery, the former bastard fished out a piece of parchment and a quill from under his cloak. A few lines were hastily scribbled down and tied to a peculiar arrow; its tip seemed to be the same make as his blade.

A pale weirwood longbow covered in crimson runic script appeared in his hands. The runes were of the First Men, but unlike the rubbings Tyrion had seen, those flowed smoothly like a river, and were all inked in crimson red, like freshly drawn blood.

In less than a dozen heartbeats, the longbow was strung up. Tyrion watched with trepidation as Jon Stark turned towards the Golden Tooth and nocked the arrow.