

A Dragon's Legacy Chapter 2 (A Meeting with A Princess)

The morning sun glinted off the emerald waters of Blackwater Bay as the Velaryon fleet approached King's Landing. Their ships were unmistakable—hulls painted in sea-green and adorned with silver seahorses that seemed to dance upon the waves. At the head of the procession sailed the Sea Snake, Lord Corlys Velaryon's flagship, its massive sails billowing proudly in the breeze.

From atop the battlements of the Red Keep, Princess Rhaenyra Targaryen watched the display with mixed emotions. "The Sea Snake never misses an opportunity to flaunt his wealth, does he?" she remarked to Ser Harwin Strong, who stood a respectful distance behind her.

"Can you blame him, Princess? The man who rose from second son to the richest lord in the Seven Kingdoms wants everyone to remember it," Harwin replied with a small smile.

Rhaenyra was about to respond when a shadow passed overhead, followed by a deafening roar that sent birds scattering from the towers. Meleys, the Red Queen, circled above the harbor, her scales shimmering like freshly spilled blood in the sunlight. Atop her back sat Lady Rhaenys Targaryen, the Queen Who Never Was, her silver-streaked dark hair whipping behind her.

"And there rides the true dragon of that house," Rhaenyra muttered.

Before long, another shadow, larger and more terrible than the first, darkened the sky. Vhagar, ancient and massive, dwarfed Meleys as she soared above the city walls. The Beast of Braavos, mount of Visenya Targaryen during the Conquest, now bore young Laena Velaryon on her bronze-scaled back.

"Gods be good," Harwin breathed. "I forget how massive Vhagar is until I see her again."

"The oldest and largest dragon in the world," Rhaenyra said, unable to hide the hint of envy in her voice. Her own Syrax was fierce but nowhere near Vhagar's size. "They're landing at the Dragonpit. We should make our way to the courtyard. Father will be waiting."

An hour later, Rhaenyra stood beside her father in the Red Keep's outer courtyard. King Viserys I Targaryen wore his finest black and red doublet, the Targaryen crown resting heavily on his brow. Despite his jovial smile, Rhaenyra noticed the way he occasionally touched his left side where the maesters had recently treated a persistent wound.

"Stop fidgeting," Viserys muttered through his smile as trumpets announced the arrival of their guests.

"I'm not fidgeting," Rhaenyra replied, though she immediately ceased smoothing the folds of her crimson dress.

The great gates swung open, and the Velaryon procession entered the courtyard. Five ornate carriages led the way, each painted in sea-green and silver, pulled by white horses adorned with ribbons and silver bells that chimed softly with each step. The Velaryon seahorse banners fluttered alongside the three-headed dragon of House Targaryen in a display of unity.

The carriages came to a halt before the royal party. From the first carriage, a footman hurried to open the door, revealing Lord Corlys Velaryon. He emerged like a man accustomed to making an entrance, his white-gold hair bound in sailor's knots and decorated with small ornaments of white gold. He turned to offer his hand to Lady Rhaenys, who stepped down with regal poise, her bearing every inch that of the queen she had never become.

From the second carriage emerged Laenor Velaryon, Rhaenyra's husband-to-be, his silver-white hair catching the sunlight. He paused briefly, extending his hand to assist his sister. Laena stepped out with the confidence of a dragonrider.

Behind Laenor, nearly unnoticed, Ser Joffrey Lonmouth descended from the same carriage, positioning himself a respectful but tellingly close distance behind his "friend."

The other two carriages were filled with servants and other important things of the Velaryon family, and fifty Velaryon soldiers had arrived with Corlys Velaryon.

"Your Grace," Corlys bowed deeply before King Viserys. "House Velaryon is honored by your invitation."

"The honor is mine, Lord Corlys," Viserys boomed, stepping forward to embrace his cousin's husband. "And Rhaenys, you grow more beautiful each time I see you."

Rhaenys's smile was polite but cool. "Your Grace is too kind."

"Princess Rhaenyra," Corlys turned to her, performing another bow, though not quite as deep as the one he had given her father. "You have grown into a true beauty since last we met."

"Lord Corlys," Rhaenyra inclined her head. "Your ships made quite the impression on their approach. I say half the city came out to watch."

"Only half?" Corlys chuckled. "I shall have to try harder next time."

Laenor stepped forward, his movements graceful but slightly stiff. He took Rhaenyra's hand and brushed his lips against her knuckles. "Princess. I trust you are well?"

"Quite well, Ser Laenor," Rhaenyra replied, noting how his eyes darted briefly toward Joffrey. "And you? I trust your journey was pleasant?"

"As pleasant as sea travel can be," he answered, his smile not quite reaching his eyes.

"Laenor has always been a poor sailor, despite his father's best efforts," Laena interjected, stepping forward to save her brother from further awkward conversation. She embraced Rhaenyra warmly. "It's wonderful to see you, cousin! You look magnificent."

Rhaenyra's smile became genuine. "And you! I heard about Vhagar. You must tell me everything—how you approached her, what it felt like the first time you flew."

"It was terrifying," Laena's eyes lit up. "She roared so loudly when I approached that I thought my ears would bleed, but I kept walking. I knew she'd kill me if I showed fear."

"Ladies, perhaps we could continue this conversation inside," King Viserys suggested, gesturing toward the castle. "I've had refreshments prepared, and I'm certain our guests would appreciate a moment to rest after their journey."

As they proceeded into the keep, Viserys fell into step beside Corlys. "Tell me, how fare the Stepstones? I've heard reports that pirates have begun to reappear now that Daemon has returned to Runestone."

"Nothing my fleet cannot handle," Corlys replied confidently. "The pirates learned their lesson during the war. The few who dare return are quickly dealt with."

Rhaenyra hung back slightly to walk with Laena, eager to continue their conversation about dragons. Behind them, she could hear Rhaenys clearing her throat pointedly, followed by the reluctant footsteps of Laenor as he abandoned his whispered conversation with Joffrey to join them.

"Princess," Laenor said, appearing at her side with forced enthusiasm. "I... heard you rode your dragon to Dragonstone last month. Was it... pleasant?"

"Flying is always pleasant, Ser Laenor," Rhaenyra replied, exchanging an amused glance with Laena. "Though I imagine you know that better than most, with Seasmoke."

"Yes. Yes, of course," he nodded too quickly. "Seasmoke is... very fast."

An awkward silence fell between them as they entered the Red Keep, broken only when Laena took pity on them both.

"Rhaenyra, you simply must tell me about the new gowns you've had made for the wedding. I hear the Myrish lace this season is particularly fine," Laena linked her arm through Rhaenyra's, effectively rescuing her from Laenor's painful attempts at conversation.

As they walked ahead, Rhaenyra glanced back to see Laenor's relief as he drifted back toward Joffrey, who had been following at a discreet distance. She sighed inwardly. Seven days of festivities followed by a lifetime of marriage stretched before her like an endless road.

"It won't be so bad," Laena whispered, correctly reading her expression. "Laenor is kind, if nothing else."

"Kindness doesn't make heirs," Rhaenyra whispered back.

Laena squeezed her arm sympathetically. "No... but it makes life bearable. And who knows what the future might bring?"

Rhaenys Targaryen

The chambers assigned to House Velaryon were among the finest in the Red Keep, befitting the wealth and status of the Sea Snake. As befitted a man accustomed to captaining ships, Corlys Velaryon immediately inspected every corner of their accommodations, checking that the windows provided adequate ventilation and that the doors could be securely barred.

Rhaenys watched her husband with mild amusement as she removed her riding gloves. "The Red Keep isn't likely to sink in the night, husband."

"Old habits," Corlys replied with a half-smile. "A captain who doesn't know his vessel is a captain who loses his crew." He gestured at a servant who had been unpacking their trunks. "Leave us."

Once they were alone, Rhaenys sank into a cushioned chair by the window that overlooked the bay. From this vantage point, she could see the Velaryon ships anchored among the royal fleet, their sea-green sails and silver seahorse banners standing out proudly.

"You saw them together," she said without preamble. "Laenor couldn't keep his eyes off that Lonmouth boy for more than two breaths at a time."

Corlys poured two goblets of Arbor gold and brought one to his wife before settling into the chair opposite her. "He's young still."

"He's nine and ten, Corlys. Not a child." Rhaenys took a long sip of wine. "And his preferences have been fixed since he was fourteen. This isn't something he'll simply outgrow."

"Many young men experiment before settling into marriage," Corlys argued. "The Princess is beautiful. Once they're wed—"

"Once they're wed, he'll still prefer the company of men," Rhaenys cut in sharply. "You know it as well as I do. Denying it won't change it."

Corlys grimaced. "What would you have me do? Call off the betrothal? This match puts our grandson on the Iron Throne."

"If he produces one," Rhaenys countered. "A marriage without heirs is worthless to our ambitions."

"He knows his duty," Corlys insisted. "And duty doesn't require desire. It requires determination." He leaned forward, lowering his voice. "I've spoken to him. He understands what his duty is."

Rhaenys raised an eyebrow. "And what did our dutiful son say to that?"

Corlys shifted uncomfortably. "He said he would try."

A sharp laugh escaped Rhaenys. "Try. Gods be good." She shook her head. "At least the girl isn't naive. She knows what she's getting. And what she isn't."

"Perhaps that's for the best," Corlys mused. "No false expectations on either side. A practical arrangement."

"Practical won't keep Viserys's son from claiming the throne if Rhaenyra fails to produce heirs," Rhaenys said bitterly. "That Hightower woman already has a son and a daughter and another child on the way. She reminded me of it three times during our brief greeting."

Corlys's face darkened. "Alicent Hightower would do well to remember that Rhaenyra is the named heir, regardless of how many sons she bears."

"Named heirs can be unnamed," Rhaenys replied, her voice hollow with the weight of personal experience. "Or simply passed over when a king dies."

A heavy silence hung between them for a moment. Rhaenys had been the logical heir to the Iron Throne after her father's death—the only child of the old king's eldest son—but the Great Council had passed her over in favor of her cousin Viserys. The wound still festered, even after all these years.

"We must ensure that Joffrey Lonmouth keeps his distance during the festivities," Corlys said, changing the subject. "I've arranged for him to have duties that will keep him occupied."

"And what duties might those be?" Rhaenys asked skeptically.

"He'll be overseeing the security arrangements for our household during the tourney," Corlys replied. "A task that will keep him far from Laenor's side, especially in the evenings."

Rhaenys nodded her approval. "Good. And make sure Laenor spends time with his bride. They need not be in love, but they should at least appear comfortable together."

"I'll see to it," Corlys promised. He hesitated, then added, "Speaking of appearances... have you heard the strange news from Dragonstone?"

"What news?" Rhaenys asked, her interest piqued.

Corlys leaned closer. "Two weeks ago, one of my captains was delivering supplies to the garrison there. He reported that Vermithor was seen flying over the island with a rider."

Rhaenys sat up straight, her wine forgotten. "Vermithor? That's impossible. The Bronze Fury has been riderless since King Jaehaerys died."

"So I thought," Corlys agreed. "But my captain is no fool, and he knows dragons well enough. He swears he saw a rider on Vermithor's back, circling the Dragonmont before landing on the far side where the wild dragons nest."

"Who would dare approach Vermithor?" Rhaenys wondered aloud. "He's grown even more fearsome since Jaehaerys's death. The dragonkeepers can barely get close enough to feed him."

"No one knows," Corlys replied. "When questioned, the garrison commander said they found no evidence of an unknown rider on the island. But they did confirm that Vermithor had been unusually active, and they found scorched ground on the far side of the mountain."

Rhaenys frowned deeply. "If someone has truly claimed Vermithor, we would know of it. A bond between dragon and rider isn't something that can be hidden. Once formed, that bond remains until death."

"Could it have been one of the dragonseeds?" Corlys suggested. "Some baseborn Targaryen trying their luck?"

"Possibly," Rhaenys conceded. "Though most with enough Targaryen blood to attempt such a thing are known to us. Besides, if successful, why hide it? Claiming a dragon like Vermithor would bring prestige, not punishment."

"Unless they have reason to remain hidden," Corlys pointed out. "Or unless they're dead. The Dragonmont has claimed many fools over the years."

"If they had died in the attempt, Vermithor would not have accepted them as rider in the first place," Rhaenys countered. "No, if someone rode him, they succeeded in bonding with him. And they're still alive."

Corlys drained his wine and set the goblet aside. "I'll have my men make discreet inquiries. If someone has claimed the Bronze Fury, I want to know who and why they're hiding."

"What about Daemon?" Rhaenys asked suddenly. "Could he be behind this somehow?"

Corlys shook his head firmly. "Daemon has Caraxes. No rider can bond with two dragons."

"I don't mean as the rider," Rhaenys clarified. "But he could be involved. He's unpredictable, and he covets power."

"Daemon is many things, but not a kinslayer," Corlys said dismissively. "He would never raise arms against us. Besides, Daemon is not exactly known for his discretion or subtlety. If he were plotting something, half the realm would know of it by now."

"Perhaps," Rhaenys said, unconvinced. "But remember those rumors we heard about him and Rhaenyra two months ago? They were seen together at a pleasure house in the city."

"Gossip," Corlys waved his hand. "Daemon enjoys provoking his brother. Taking the Princess to a brothel would certainly accomplish that."

"Daemon has always had a taste for young maidens," Rhaenys added bitterly. "They say the Hightower's first experience with Targaryen, wasn't Viserys, but Daemon. That's why Otto hates him so fiercely."

"Unproven rumors," Corlys reminded her. "And irrelevant to our concerns. Our focus must be on Laenor and Rhaenyra now."

Rhaenys sighed and looked out toward the bay again. "Very well. But keep your eyes open during these festivities, husband. Between the Hightowers, Daemon, and this mysterious dragon rider... I feel a storm gathering."

"Then it's fortunate," Corlys replied with a grim smile, "that I've weathered many storms in my time."

Viserys Targaryen

The royal gardens had been Aemma's pride. Every shrub, every flower bed, every winding path had been designed under her watchful eye. Even now, five years after her death, Viserys could feel her presence here more strongly than anywhere else in the Red Keep.

King Viserys Targaryen dismissed his Kingsguard to a respectful distance and settled onto the stone bench beneath the flowering quince tree. This had been their special place, where they had spent countless afternoons planning their future, dreaming of the children they would have. In the end, they had been granted only Rhaenyra.

"The Velaryons arrived today," Viserys said softly with a hushed tone as if Aemma sat beside him. The habit of speaking to her had begun shortly after her death, first in desperate grief, later as a comfort. Now, it was simply part of his life. "Corlys brought half his fleet, I swear. A grand display. You would have laughed at the spectacle of it all."

A gentle breeze stirred the branches above, sending a few white petals drifting down around him. Viserys caught one in his palm.

"Rhaenyra looked beautiful today. So much like you when we were first betrothed." He sighed, rubbing absently at the persistent ache in his side where the maesters had recently treated another small infection. "I wish you could see her. She's strong-willed, just as you were. Too much so, at times."

He paused, watching a butterfly alight on a nearby blossom. In his mind, he could hear Aemma's gentle laughter, could almost see the way her eyes would crinkle at the corners when she smiled.

"The wedding preparations are underway. A full week of festivities—feasts, hunts, a grand tourney." His voice lowered. "I know what you're thinking. It's excessive, especially with the treasury as it is. But it's necessary. The realm must see the strength of this union."

Viserys closed his eyes, feeling the warmth of the afternoon sun on his face. "I sometimes wonder if I've done right by her, naming her my heir. The burden I've placed on her shoulders..." He trailed off, then continued more firmly. "But she is the best of us both, Aemma. She has your grace and my determination. She will make a fine queen when her time comes."

The wound in his side throbbed suddenly, and Viserys winced. The maesters assured him it was healing well, but these persistent infections worried him more than he let on.

"Laenor seems a gentle lad," he continued after the pain subsided. "Not the match I would have chosen for her in a perfect world, but we both know this world is far from perfect." He chuckled softly. "What would you say to this match, my love? Would you approve? I think you would see the wisdom in it, even if..." He left the thought unfinished.

Everyone at court knew of Laenor's preferences, though none would speak of it openly. Viserys was no fool; he understood what kind of marriage his daughter faced. But political marriages rarely began with love.

"I miss your counsel, Aemma," he whispered. "Alicent tries, but it's not the same. She sees the world differently than you did."

Mentioning his second wife always felt like a betrayal in this sacred space, so Viserys quickly changed the subject.

"The Small Council squabbles endlessly. Thankfully, Lord Strong is not like Otto. He used to press me daily about changing the succession." Viserys shook his head.

A raven cawed overhead, breaking the spell of the moment. Viserys sighed and rose to his feet. The sun was lower now; he had been here longer than he intended. The feast to welcome the Velaryons would begin soon, and he needed to prepare.

"Until next week, my love," he murmured, touching the trunk of the tree gently as he always did before leaving.

As he turned to go, something caught his eye across the garden. A flash of silver hair among the rose bushes—Rhaenyra? She wasn't supposed to be here; she should be preparing for the feast. And who was that with her? A young man with dark hair stood close beside her, pointing at something among the flowers.

Viserys frowned. He didn't recognize the man, though something about his bearing seemed familiar. The two Kingsguard who had been waiting at a distance straightened as Viserys began walking toward the pair.

"Rhaenyra?" he called out, his voice carrying across the garden.

The silver-haired figure turned, and Viserys almost stumbled in surprise. It wasn't Rhaenyra at all, though the resemblance was so striking that, for a moment, he thought his eyes were deceiving him. The young woman had the same Valyrian features, the same silver-gold hair, though her face was slightly more angular than his daughter's, her violet eyes a shade darker.

The young man beside her turned as well, and Viserys was further startled to see striking purple eyes set in a solemn, handsome face framed by dark hair with a curious streak of white at the temple.

Both strangers immediately dropped into deep, respectful bows.

"Your Grace," they said almost in unison.

"We apologize for disturbing your solitude," the young woman added, the way she spoke, she must be highborn. "We were merely admiring your beautiful gardens."

Viserys approached them slowly, the Kingsguard following at his heels. "You have me at a disadvantage," he said, studying them carefully. "You know who I am, but I do not know you."

The man straightened from his bow. "I am Daeron, Your Grace." His voice was deep and carried a curious Northern burr beneath the more polished tones.

"And I am Daenerys," the woman said, her violet eyes meeting Viserys's directly in a way that few would dare. There was something oddly familiar in her gaze, something that tugged at Viserys's memory.

"Daenerys," he repeated slowly. "My grandfather had a daughter by that name. She died in infancy."

"It is a proud Targaryen name, Your Grace. Though I cannot claim relation to your royal house."

Viserys wasn't so certain. The Valyrian features were unmistakable, especially the eyes. "And yet you have the look of Old Valyria about you. As does your companion, despite his coloring."

Daeron shifted slightly. "My father was of Valyrian descent, Your Grace. My mother was of the North."

"Interesting combination," Viserys mused. He turned his attention back to the woman. "The resemblance between you and my daughter is remarkable. For a moment, I thought you were Rhaenyra."

"So we've been told, Your Grace," Daenerys replied with a small smile. "We had the pleasure of glimpsing the Princess from afar earlier today. The likeness is indeed striking."

"Are you here for the wedding festivities?" Viserys asked, his curiosity growing. He couldn't shake the feeling that there was something significant about these two.

"We are, Your Grace," Daeron answered. "We arrived in King's Landing just last week."

Viserys studied the young man more carefully. There was something in his stance, in the way he carried himself, that spoke of rigorous martial training. "You're a knight?"

"I have some skill with a sword, Your Grace," Daeron replied modestly.

"Some skill?" Viserys raised an eyebrow. "I've heard reports of a new knight in the training yard who bests the Gold Cloaks with ease. They say he moves like no fighter they've ever seen. Would that be you?"

A ghost of a smile touched Daeron's lips. "I enjoy keeping my skills sharp, Your Grace."

"Where did you learn to fight like that?" Viserys pressed. "My Master-at-Arms was most impressed by the description of your technique."

Daeron and Daenerys exchanged a brief glance before he answered. "I had many teachers over the years, Your Grace. Some beyond the Wall, others in Essos."

"Beyond the Wall?" Viserys's eyebrows rose. Few ventured into those savage lands, and fewer still returned. "You've lived an interesting life for one so young."

"Life has a way of presenting unexpected challenges," Daeron replied.

"And you, my lady?" Viserys turned to Daenerys. "Your accent suggests you've spent time in the Free Cities."

"I was raised in Essos, Your Grace," she confirmed. "But I consider Westeros my true home."

"And how are you two acquainted?" Viserys asked, noting the subtle protectiveness in the way Daeron stood beside her.

"Daenerys is my wife, Your Grace," Daeron answered, a warmth entering his voice for the first time.

"Ah," Viserys nodded, though something about the pairing struck him as unusual. Not because they seemed ill-suited—quite the contrary. There was an ease between them that spoke of deep understanding. But there was also something, though he couldn't pinpoint why he felt that way.

"And where are you staying in the city?" Viserys inquired.

"We've taken rooms at the Inn of the Green Eel near the River Gate, Your Grace," Daenerys replied.

Viserys made a swift decision. There was something about these two that intrigued him, and he had learned over the years to trust his instincts. "That won't do. Not for guests of such... interesting background. I insist you stay in the Red Keep for the duration of the festivities."

Surprise registered on both their faces, though they quickly masked it.

"Your Grace is too generous," Daenerys began, "but we wouldn't wish to impose—"

"Nonsense," Viserys waved away her protest. "The Red Keep has plenty of room, and I'm certain you'll make a fascinating addition to our gathering." He smiled broadly. "Besides, I'm curious to see my daughter's reaction to meeting her double."

"We are honored by your invitation, Your Grace," Daeron said with another bow.

"Excellent! It's settled then." Viserys motioned to one of his Kingsguard. "Ser Lorent, see that appropriate chambers are prepared for Lord Daeron and Lady Daenerys."

"Yes, Your Grace," the knight replied, though he shot a suspicious glance at the strangers.

"You must join us for the feast tonight," Viserys continued. "I'm hosting a welcome banquet for House Velaryon. It will be the perfect opportunity to introduce you to the court."

"We would be delighted," Daenerys replied graciously, though Viserys caught the quick, meaningful look she exchanged with her husband.

"Splendid!" Viserys clapped his hands together. "Ser Lorent will show you to your chambers so you can refresh yourselves before the feast." He paused, then added with genuine curiosity, "I look forward to learning more about both of you. I have a feeling there's quite a tale there."

As the pair bowed once more before following the Kingsguard, Viserys watched them thoughtfully. There was something about them—something they weren't saying. But what secrets could they possibly hold that would matter to the Iron Throne?

Whatever it was, Viserys was certain of one thing: the arrival of Daeron and his silver-haired wife had just made the wedding festivities considerably more interesting.