Disclaimer: This is a work of fiction based on the ASOIAF universe. All recognisable characters, plots, and settings are the exclusive property of GRRM; I make no claim to ownership.

Author's Note: So, here we are again. I never thought I'd actually post Dragonwolf, let alone finish it when I started writing. There are quite a few things I could have done better, but I believe I learned a lot of things on the way.

So, here we are, at the start of canon, and things are already tumbling to the side. Buckle up for a wild ride, folks!

Acknowledgements: This chapter was edited by Void Uzumaki. Cheers to Bub3loka, my beta reader, who helped me immensely.

The sun had not risen in months, and the only lights were the flickering flames of the torches and the soft glow of the waning moon. Unfortunately, Jon had no time to enjoy the view, no matter how magnificent. A cold wind was blowing, cutting as sharp as a knife through even the thickest of furs, and the screams of men dying echoed across the field. The air was filled with the stench of rot and decay.

Jon swiftly yet precisely brandished Longclaw in his right hand while holding a torch in his left. He could not allow himself to lose too much strength while killing wights. But they could not be ignored - there were thousands of them, a veritable tide of rot and death like usual. He cut through the undead like a hot knife through butter, but as soon as one foe was down, another would take its place. He could not avoid the clawing hands and hits piled on his armour. It was holding up nicely, but he could feel bruises slowly forming underneath.

Minutes turned into hours, and time lost meaning as Longclaw danced through the air. Eventually, the wave of corpses started waning. Just when Jon thought it was over, five ethereal figures riding horrifying icy spiders finally appeared and effortlessly ploughed through the thinning ranks of his men.

His lungs were burning, eager for breath, but each gulp of air was cold enough to rake through his throat. His body felt numb–they had been fighting for hours now. But the deep bone weariness and the cold were nothing new; the Cold Ones always came after waves of wights had softened the living.

"Bowmen, aim for the spiders!" a cry tore from his chapped lips, hoping that some of the marksmen still lived and had heard him. Each archer had but a single dragonglass arrow; there were simply not enough of them to go around. He himself only had two in his possession.

A thin volley of fire and dragonglass arrows fell over the Cold Ones. The fiery arrows felled the giant spiders, but most of the fire and obsidian bounced away harmlessly from the milky crystal armour of the Others. One of the Walkers was struck by the black glass-tipped shaft over its exposed blue face and shattered with a soft tinkling sound. The other four rushed into the line of men. People desperately tried to stop them but died by the dozen; the tired fighters couldn't put up proper resistance. The pale crystal swords were reaping lives effortlessly, and within a handful of seconds, the rest of the men did not dare to face the White Walkers and broke down. The Cold Ones decided to chase after the retreating humans.

Jon dropped his torch, sheathed Longclaw on his hip and quickly strung up his yew longbow. He nocked one of his two dragonglass arrows, drew to the limit, and aimed carefully at one of his icy foes. For a

short second, it felt like time had slowed down. With each breath that he took, half a dozen men were dying. With a twang, the arrow flew true, hit an icy blue eye, and shattered one of the Walkers just as he was about to slay yet another man.

The last three pale fiends immediately looked his way with their unnatural cold, burning eyes. He quickly let loose the last dragonglass arrow, but a crystal blade deflected it with a tinkling sound. Jon threw his longbow away and unsheathed Longclaw once again. Gathering his strength, he lunged at the one on the left with all his speed, barely avoiding the incoming strike from an icy blade, and ran Longclaw into an unprotected part of its face. A cracking sound was heard, and the pale Other shattered like glass. But Jon had no time to admire his handiwork, as his other opponents were already hacking at him. He dodged, but another blade still grazed him across his right leg.

He ignored his numerous wounds and bruises and pushed himself to the limit as he traded blows with the so-called Cold Gods. Jon could now easily match them in strength and speed and was even superior in skill. A bitter reward for the death of Ghost, yet he had grudgingly used it to the fullest. But even Longclaw could not cut through their crystalline armour, so Jon had to create an opening and strike in the gaps or unprotected parts. Jon's scale armour, however, did little to resist the crystal swords in their hands. Their icy edges would cut through it as if it were silk, so he had to either dodge, parry, or deflect every one of their attacks. And he was already tired and wounded from hours of fighting. If he were rested, he would be able to slay both of them down with ease.

Slowly but surely, Jon started to tire even further. Every parry rattled his bones, and the sweeping cuts were harder and harder to avoid. Soon, he would be too slow to fight two of them at once. Perhaps this was where he finally died?

Jon was already tired of the endless struggle and cared little for life and death anymore. But he was not going down just like that - he might as well take the thrice-damned Cold Ones down with him. He gritted his teeth and jerked to the side, barely avoiding one crystalline sword, and stabbed Longclaw's tip in the face of its owner, killing him. However, the second pale sword impaled him through the torso. The Other cackled triumphantly and tried twisting the blade, but it would not move. Jon had grasped the icy sword hand in an iron grip of his own, and gathering the last vestiges of his waning strength, Longclaw tore through the air one last time, striking the unprotected pale neck. The cackling head fell off the corpse; then both parts shattered like ice.

The crystalline blade buried in his gut pulsed with a terrifying cold, which spread rapidly with every weakening heartbeat.

Jon knew he was finished for good this time.

A heavy metallic taste filled his mouth. The surroundings grew hazy, and his limbs were heavy. He took a few weak steps to lean on the nearby tree. A feeble tug barely pulled out the icy blade, which fell with a sharp, ringing sound. Then, Jon Snow collapsed with a weary sigh at the base of the tree, painting the bone-white bark with his dark red blood.

From the east, for the first time in moons, the rays of the sun peaked over the horizon.

Brandon Stark

Tears streaked across his cheeks as he watched in sorrow through the weirwood tree as the events played out.

“The second battle for the Dawn is finally won,” an old, raspy voice next to him uttered. “My time here is finally at an end. I can finally rest.”

“Why?” Bran croaked out weakly after removing his hand from the nearby milky white root.

“Why what, boy? Be more specific!”

“Why did everyone have to die?” he spat bitterly and glared. “My father, mother, brothers and sisters are all dead! Only I am left now, and I will never leave this cave!”

“Stop wallowing in self-pity, boy. You agreed to leave your family name behind when apprenticing under me. The world does not revolve around your former House. And you know that Jon was not truly your brother. The Starks might be dead, but millions of others live!” Brynden’s raspy voice grated in his ears.

Everything felt meaningless to Bran, and even the air tasted bitter upon his tongue. The sun rose from the east, but there was only darkness left in his life. The price was too high, too heavy.

His father, killed for trying to do the right thing. His mother and Robb, betrayed and butchered by scheming bannermen at the Red Wedding. Sweet Sansa, poisoned at her own wedding by the vengeful queen. Rickon drowned in a cruel autumn storm in the Bay of Seals. Arya, killed by the faceless men for trying to leave and return to Westeros. And now, Jon was dead after almost single-handedly destroying the Others and ending the Second Long Night. It was only Bran left now, but he was nought but a spectre himself, bound in this ancient cave until death decided to take him.

“There is no way you did not foresee this already. After all, you were powerful and experienced enough to glimpse into the future! Why did they all have to die?! It’s not fair!”

“The world isn’t fair. I warned you, boy! I warned you when you agreed to become my apprentice that you would watch how your loved ones die as you’re stuck here!” The Three-eyed crow glared at him with a single eerie red eye. “And yes, I can glimpse into the future. But time is like a raging river. Do not think for a moment that I arranged for the deaths of your kin. For dozens of years, I looked and looked for a way forward but only saw an icy death. Thousands of possible futures, and this was the only light in the future darkness!”

Bran recoiled on his chair as if struck. House Stark had eight thousand years of glorious history. Was this how it all ended? With him slowly wasting away in a quiet cave beyond the Wall, full of sorrow and regrets? Disappearing into the annals of history with nigh but a sigh. Was their existence always meant to end like this? He was powerful now. Not as a lord or a knight as he wanted before, but as a greenseer and a skinchanger. Could he truly not do anything, even with all his magical prowess? A wild idea formed in his mind.

“No! I refuse!” Bran uttered through his now clenched teeth. Brynden looked at him as if he was a fool. “I refuse to give up on my family!”

“There’s nothing you can do, boy,” Brynden’s hoarse voice sounded mocking to his ears. “Even if you could go back in time, this is the only way the Others could be defeated. You are but a cripple that

cannot lead, govern, or fight, and none would ever listen to the ramblings of a child. At best, you'd only make things worse than they already were."

Bran suppressed his boiling anger while looking at his mentor's ghastly face. The old man was right; he had no talents for any of those.

A daring idea formed within his mind, one that simply would not go away.

"Yes, I would not be able to do much for true," he admitted slowly, but he found his face twisting in a feral grin. "But Jon, on the other hand, could. He's the one who rallied the shattered remains of North, the Night's Watch, and the Free folk against the gathering darkness. He's the one who could best the Others in a fight and live! He is the one who brought the Dawn!"

"And how would you return him, my young and green apprentice? He is already dead and does not have the greensight. And suppose you somehow succeed, you would change things irrevocably. 'Tis not a guarantee that your cousin could win again or that any of your family would live," his mentor's voice was nary a whisper now, but something unknown flashed in his red eye.

"*My brother* died with his lifeblood colouring a heart tree's roots red; he's still within my reach. Even now, his corpse is still warm. I will drag his mind into the weirwood and cast it back in the river of time!"

"Simply trying to glimpse through time is already incredibly dangerous. Meddling with the turbulent rivers of time will drown your mind both in the past and the present. You change one thing, and the ripples can spread far and wide," Brynden warned him quietly, but his apprentice's eyes were still full of conviction. "Are you sure you want to do this?"

Bran knew he was not meant for glorious deeds. He knew that ever since he woke up with his legs crippled. He knew that he had made many mistakes. But now he could make everything right again.

Bran nodded and no longer paid attention to his mentor. His hand weakly lifted Dark Sister from the nearby wall and ran the cold, rippling blade through his palm. He then grasped the thickest of the bone-white roots with his bleeding hand and pushed ***all*** of himself into the weirwood.

Finding Jon's mind was easy. Even after his brother had died, his soul still shone with power like a beacon in the surrounding darkness, slow to disperse. Bran touched it with his magic and tried pulling it. It felt both freezing cold and searing hot to the touch and as heavy as a mountain. It barely budged. He pulled with all his strength, hoping to drag it into the weirwoods, but it was too heavy. Bran, however, did not give up and continued stubbornly.

In the cave, Brynden Rivers watched as his apprentice began to bleed from every orifice. The foolish boy was truly attempting it and was killing himself in the process. But Bran was not strong enough, his mind not sturdy enough, and his powers not polished enough to succeed. At least not alone.

Brynden was already lingering for too long and had no desire to wait for decades until he managed to find another apprentice. He remembered his sweet niece, Melantha Blackwood, who married Willam Stark. All of the Starks were his kin too, in a manner of speaking...

Did he want things to truly end like this? His kin were dead. The Blackwoods, the Targaryens, the Starks, and even the Baratheons were all gone now. At this moment, he felt every single year of his cursed existence weighing upon his bony shoulders. Duty had always been heavy, but as he got older and older,

it grew into a crushing mountain upon his shoulders. Could he cast an already-won victory back into uncertainty because of a youthful folly just for a slight chance of things being better for some of his wayward kin? Was it worth it to completely sever the line of the three-eyed greenseers, surviving all the way from the Pact? Could Jon Snow, his great-grandnephew from both sides, succeed again if given a second chance?

Yes, he could!

The boy had been as brittle as cast iron when leaving Winterfell. But the cruel world had hammered him repeatedly, and he did not break but instead turned into pure Valyrian steel. The age of the greenseers had been long over. Brynden was the last remnant of once mighty, yet now forgotten powers, better left little more than a distant memory. Mayhaps it was for the best if it ended with him and Brandon.

Bloodraven slipped into the weirwoods and pulled on Jon Snow's mind, together with his apprentice. Bran's senses flared in surprise, and his efforts stumbled for a moment, but he quickly regained his bearings. They managed to drag it into the weirwood network and began to push against the river of time together. In the cave, thick black blood began oozing from his orifices, too. It took half a minute of heavy exertion, yet Bran started to weaken rapidly. Their bodies grew thinner and thinner.

Pushing such a magically heavy mind was supposed to be nearly impossible. Yet the strongest greenseers in eight thousand years working together could accomplish it, albeit at the cost of their existence. With a final effort, they mustered all their strength and managed to hurl Jon Snow's essence across the turbulent stream of time. The moment they succeeded, the waters began to boil and churn, and the river roared with rage, drowning Bran and Brynden. With the final embers of life and magic left within him, Bloodraven sent Jon Snow one final gift before his essence was crushed by the furious waters.

In the cave lay two corpses. An old man with bloodstained, parchment-like skin lay entangled within a twisted throne of weirwood roots, and a smaller boy stuck on a chair-like contraption. Instead of eyes, on their faces lay empty sockets filled with blood. Both corpses were only loosely hanging skin and brittle bones, but a grotesque smile sat on their faces. And so, the ancient cave beyond the Wall became the final resting place of the greatest Greenseers of this Age, where their remains lay forgotten together with the bones of the Children and the Giants.

Winterfell, 2nd Day of the 3d Moon, Year 298 after Aegon's Conquest

Eddard Stark

Lord Stark,

Deepwood Motte has officially finished construction.

Galbart Glover

Short and to the point, as always. He sighed and placed the letter in the drawer. Galbart had killed Maron Greyjoy at the siege of Pyke and later expressed heavy concerns about retaliation upon Deepwood Motte in the future, especially since it was quite close to the sea. Ned hoped there would be no more fighting within his lifetime, but he knew all too well that one rarely got what he wished for, so he gave Glover his blessing and permission to crenellate and relocate towards a favourable hill overlooking the

Bay of Ice, giving the man permission for a small port town in the future–and potentially providing better protection to the nearby shores.

The castle was neither deep in the woods nor a motte and bailey, but Glover insisted on keeping the old name. On the one hand, Ned could understand the tediousness of going through the records to change the castle's name, first with Winterfell, then the Citadel, then King's Landing, not to mention the new ravens that would need to be commissioned for the new location. Glover keeping the old name was hardly the queerest thing a lord had done.

On the other hand, merchants and sailors were likely to make uncountable jests at the castle as they docked at that new port Glover hoped to build.

Galbart had quickly started negotiations with the Wulls for granite from their quarry. The old Wull Chieftain only agreed after Glover took his youngest daughter for a wife, much to Ned's chagrin. Now, eight years later, the new seat of House Glover was complete.

Ned had even visited it in person with Robb and Jon two years ago. The new castle was built out of stone; ironwood was used for support beams, and it looked impressive even when half-finished. The curtain walls were in two rings. An outer ring that was thirty-five feet tall and twelve feet thick stone walls, with a proper moat outside, and the inner wall was forty feet tall and fifteen feet wide. And all of it was built on a hill overlooking the Bay of Ice, less than a mile away, with its own spring inside to feed the moat. It was not a large holdfast, but not a small one either.

He could envision a port town sprouting around the natural harbour, with ships from all over Westeros docking and bringing trade and wealth to Galbart and the North. Ned would allow the Glovers a couple more years before he raised the topic of taxation–perhaps next spring.

All of this was only possible because of the bountiful and long summer, and even then, the Glovers would still have to tighten their belts for the next handful of years, though Ned was sure their old castle with its lands would still provide them with enough wealth to recover swiftly.

Now, with a hundred bowmen, Deepwood Motte could hold off thousands of attackers, and Galbart could hopefully sleep easily at night. Hopefully, Balon Greyjoy would avoid any foolish moves as long as Theon was sitting here in Winterfell. But Ned knew that the Lord Reaper of Pyke was not known for his wits and had not written to his last son a single time in nearly ten years. A pity his advice to send the man to the Wall was left unheeded. The Lord of Winterfell wouldn't be surprised if Balon bided his time to strike again when Westeros seemed weak.

After receiving Galbart's letter, Ned was curious enough to send a team of stonemasons and architects to survey Moat Cailin. He knew that his father had the desire to rebuild the entrance to the North during his childhood but had never gotten around to doing it. The reason became apparent as soon as the survey team returned. The price of restoring Moat Cailin would eat away all their saved-up coin and still beggar House Stark for a generation. Comparing the ancient fortress with Glover's new castle was like comparing Winterfell to Tumbledown Tower; Moat Cailin required far more resources to be rebuilt than any castle in the North, nay, all of Westeros.

While they were not poor by any measure, the closest stone quarry was hundreds of miles away, and the price of transporting the required stone over such a massive distance was unfeasible. The troubles did

not even end here. The swampy ground surrounding most of the moat was not very suitable for crops, and the upkeep of the Moat would have to come purely from Winterfell's coffers. Worse, the amount of work it would take to drain the surrounding swamp in order to dig for new foundations for the curtain walls was tremendous.

It was simply not worth it, especially since there were no enemies to the South. While only three towers remained of the Moat's original twenty, they were more than enough to repel invasions from the Neck with the assistance of the crannogmen. Ned couldn't help but wonder if every new Lord of Winterfell dreamed of restoring the Moat to its former glory, only for the idea to be quickly squashed by reality.

His mind slowly wandered to more immediate issues. Ned grimaced at the thought that the whole southern court was coming to Winterfell because his foster father was dead. That had caught him completely off-guard, and he had no idea what to do. The South rarely boded well for House Stark. At least it would be some time before they arrived. If they were coming by land, it could take them up to half a year to arrive. After all, the royal entourage would only travel as fast as its slowest member.

After a few moments, Ned shook his head and banished those thoughts completely; they only made his head hurt. A mournful howl that chilled his spine was heard in the distance, making him grimace. He'd deal with things as they come. He stood up, grabbed Ice, left the solar, and headed towards the serene godswood, for he needed to clear his head.

Walder hastily intercepted him in one of the hallways, gasping for air. The face of the gigantic guardsman that loomed more than a head over him was heavy with worry and distress.

"My Lord," he took a deep breath and continued grimly, "Bran has fallen."

Everything froze, and Ned felt as if he had dived into the icy waters of the White Knife during the onset of winter. Fallen…?

"Lead the way," he managed to eke out after gathering himself. "Is my son…?"

He was afraid to voice the word lest it became real. Ned vividly remembered the day when the news of his father and brother's death arrived, along with Aerys' demand for his head. Everything felt surreal then, and it took him days to fully believe he was not dreaming.

"I don't know, Lord Stark. I was sent here to fetch you immediately."

Eddard forced himself to calm down and quickly followed after Walder. His mind refused to work, feeling sluggish as if drowning in a swamp.

As soon as they entered the courtyard, the only sound that could be heard was a heartwrenching wail. The wail of his wife, Catelyn. His blood ran cold now, and he numbly approached where all the guardsmen had clustered together.

He found the weary face of Rodrik Cassel, who shook his head grimly when he saw him. The ring of men-at-arms opened to let Ned through, and he finally saw.

His boy, oh his young boy! Bran, the cheerful, full of hope son, lay deathly still on the cold ground, head cracked open, blood everywhere... Catelyn had crumpled over his body, weeping with sorrow.

Robert Baratheon, the Crownlands

He had dreamt of fighting at the Trident again, and the sound of Rhaegar's breastplate caving in under his warhammer still echoed in his ears, sweeter than the song of the finest singing girls from Lys. He had begun dreaming of it less and less as of late. But while his dreams were joyful, the waking world oft fell short.

"What is it this time?" He asked, not even bothering to hide the annoyance in his voice.

"The Queen's wheelhouse has broken down again, Your Grace," the blond ponce squeaked. Were they going to wait half a day until that thrice-cursed monstrosity on wheels was repaired again?!

Gods, he was surrounded by blond cunts everywhere. The boy looked thin and soft, like a woman, and almost as pretty, and the only thing missing was a cunt and a pair of teats. He struggled to remember why he had taken those two ponces as squires. A few moments later, he scowled when it came to him. His goddamn harpy of a wife wouldn't shut up about it, so he had agreed to silence her incessant screeching. At least now, on the road, he did not have to deal with her while she was stuck in the blasted monstrosity she called a wheelhouse.

Damn it all! At least he was going to visit Ned now! The thought alone lit a fire inside him and brought a smile to his face.

He drank in the surrounding sights, the rolling green hills and fields full of wheat. And most importantly, the fresh, warm breeze that gently blew by. The only time he managed to get away from the stinking pile of shit called King's Landing was when he went out on a hunt. Maybe a royal progress was in order? It would be good for his subjects to see their king. And the fact that he'd be away from the stench of King's Landing and its vipers for a long time definitely did not have anything to do with it. Not one bit!

But first, he had to get Ned to be his Hand. They would be together again, just like in the good old days!

"Wine!" He ordered, and the blond twat passed him the skin of wine, and he took a heavy swig. Ah, Arbor Gold was the good stuff, albeit a bit too sweet. Those flowers were shit at fighting, but at least they made decent wine, but it was not bitter enough for his taste. "When did we leave King's Landing?"

"A sennight ago, your grace!" the golden-haired shit replied with trepidation, making him frown.

Gods, they had passed through Hayford yesterday, and the keep was scarcely a day's ride away from King's Landing. At this pace, they would get to Winterfell next year!

This just wouldn't do. He turned to look at the blond twat he had regretfully taken in as a squire. What was his name again? Lanot? Lannet? Bah, did it even matter?!

"Boy, tell everyone to get ready; we'll continue on horse!" Robert ordered.

"The whole retinue?" The blond shit asked weakly. "B-but what of the Queen's wheelhouse and the servants?"

“Yes, the whole retinue! Their King commands it! And Others take the blasted wheelhouse. If Cersei can’t ride a horse, she’s welcome to return to King’s Landing, but all my children stay with me. Anyone else who is too slow to follow can stay behind!” He declared and grimaced, trying to ignore the coming headache. Just imagining his harpy of a wife’s screeching made his head swell. Would it kill Tywin’s thrice-cursed daughter to keep her mouth shut for once in her life?!

High Heart

“What is this? Things have changed!” A raspy cry tore through the air. “Ah, ah ah, the gods have gone silent…The Song?!! I cannot see! There is only an endless shroud of snow and blood!”

A pale old woman no taller than three feet hobbled weakly among the weirwood stumps, barely standing upright with the help of her small gnarled cane.

Dragonstone

Melisandre recoiled as her flames raged, tearing her vision to shreds. It took her a few heartbeats to calm down, and she continued gazing at the twirling fire.

She stood still, looking and looking as time flew by. Outside, the sun slowly hid behind the horizon to the west when she finally stirred again. No matter how she looked now, no visions came from the angry flames. Why did R’hllor punish her so?!

Or maybe the Lord of the Light wanted to tell her something. The last of her visions was about the lands of cold and ice, something that could only be beyond the Great Wall.

Melisandre shuffled uneasily in realisation.

Was R’hllor displeased with her for dallying here and trying to push her own goals?!

She hastily gathered her small travel bag, threw her scarlet cloak over her shoulders, and rushed towards the docks, paying no heed of anything in her way.

Patchface watched as the Red Witch glided like a spectre in the hallway and cackled with glee while scuttling sideways like a crab.

“In the dark, the dead are dancing, and the shadows come tagging, tagging!” His face, painted in motley, twisted in terror, and his joy was replaced with horror. “The Song is drowning! Oh, oh, oh!”

Author's Endnote:

The Game is on again! The river of time has been muddied, and ripples are already showing!