The Reign of the Cruel

A Reset Proposal for r/FireAndBlood

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Core Principles

A Dynamic World

The world of A Song Of Ice And Fire is a vast, vibrant setting with too many facets to properly depict in a text-based roleplaying game. Expanding upon the dynamic claim system from r/NinePennyKings can give players the ability to focus on specific areas of Westeros that interest them and build up the local politics, lore, and characters.

Another area of focus is taking the existing mechanics that succeeded in r/NinePennyKings and further streamlining them, making modwork much easier and perhaps even delegating some mechanical tasks to players. Creating a more fluid mechanical system will greatly benefit the life of the RP.

The final area of focus is creating a world full of opportunities not solely tied to the central conflict of the setting. Allowing and encouraging pre-game creation of conflicts like blood feuds, broken betrothals, or even small wars, will give the different players of the game to have their own stories to tell as the RP unfolds.

Centralised Alternate Historical Setting

The early reign of House Targaryen has been a popular proposed setting for several iterations, but have been stymied by the presence of dragons and the difficulties in balancing their existence with the rest of the game. The solution of the Reign of the Cruel proposal is to rewrite the canon into an alternate historical setting without dragons, but to also keep the realm unified (with the exception of Dorne) to alleviate the issues that were raised during the iteration of r/CenturyOfBlood. Thus, history will be rewritten to establish Maegor the Cruel as King of Westeros and Aegon the Uncrowned as Prince of Dragonstone with a three-way 'cold war' between the blacks, supporters of King Maegor, the reds, supporters of Prince Aegon, and the whites, supporters of the Faith Militant.

The Reign of the Cruel will begin with an official coronation of King Maegor in King's Landing, signalling the true beginning of his reign.

Continued & Enhanced Mechanics

See the Mechanics Overview document for a list of mechanical changes and proposals.

The Alternate History of Reign of the Cruel

The Fall of King Aenys I

It was early into the forty-first year after Aegon's Conquest that King Aenys I declared that his son and heir, Prince Aegon, would marry his daughter and Aegon's sister, Princess Rhaena. The announcement was immediately followed by condemnation from the Faith yet the normally indecisive Aenys held his decision and declared his son the Prince of Dragonstone and heir to the throne.

The King then made the decision to send his children on a royal progress throughout the realm, hoping that they would garner the same support and popularity that Aenys once had on his own progress years earlier. He refused to allow Princess Rhaena to fly upon her dragon Dreamfyre as he believed it would shame Prince Aegon who had no dragon. Both the Prince and Princess were jeered the moment they set out, with smallfolk and lord alike claiming they were abominations of incest. Septon Murmison, the King's Hand, was expelled from the Faith for having officiated the wedding and was shortly thereafter hacked to pieces in the streets of King's Landing by members of the Poor Fellows.

King Aenys made the decision to flee King's Landing as the Warrior's Sons and Poor Fellows began to seize the city. As the King and his remaining family were preparing, a large mass of the Faith Militant charged Visenya's Hill to attack the royal family's manse. Queen Dowager Visenya was not present, as she was scouting the sea with her dragon Vhagar, leaving the Kingsguard and the dragons Quicksilver and Dreamfyre to defend the Targaryens. The battle that followed was quick and bloody, leaving several members of the Kingsguard and Dreamfyre dead. Their sacrifices killed a great score of the Faith Militant however, allowing the royal family to depart unmolested three days later.

The royal family made their way to Dragonstone by the end of the year only for King Aenys I to fall deathly ill. By this point the realm was in uproar, with many lords throwing their lot in with the Faith Militant. Queen Dowager Visenya took charge of Dragonstone's defenses and ably defended it from encroaching forces of the Faith. She even dismissed Grand Maester Gawen from the King's care and took over herself when his condition only worsened. Under her ministrations, it seemed that the King began to improve. However, in the second month of the new year, word came from the West that both Prince Aegon and Princess Rhaena were besieged at Crakehall by the Faith Militant. Upon hearing this news, King Aenys I collapsed and fell into a deep coma. Three days later, the King's heart gave out.

The Return of the Cruel

Less than a day had passed since King Aenys I was pronounced dead in his coma when Queen Dowager Visenya took upon her dragon Vhagar and flew to Essos to retrieve her son, Prince Maegor. The Prince had built a thriving life for himself, founding a mercenary company called the Black Sons and fighting in a half dozen wars between the Free Cities of Essos. However, when Queen Dowager Visenya found him in Pentos, the Prince was mourning the loss of Balerion the Black Dread. A coalition of Myr, Tyrosh, Lys, Volantis, and Braavos had come together to kill the great beast that was at the time fighting for Pentos and succeeded. Their armies had been dashed but the Black Sons abandoned the field once they saw their leader fall. It was only with the quick action of his followers that Prince Maegor had survived.

What was said between the Queen Dowager and the Prince is known only to them, but within the day Prince Maegor declared he was no longer Captain of the Black Sons and passed leadership to his second. Then Queen Dowager Visenya and Prince Maegor mounted Vhagar and flew across the Narrow Sea to Dragonstone. It was a journey laden with storms, and as the greatest living dragon neared the isle of its birth, its sudden appearance through dark clouds caused a fright among the dragons roosting on Dragonstone. The Cannibal, an infamous beast known for devouring dragon young, took flight at the same time as Quicksilver, King Aenys I's former dragon. The three beasts clashed in the sky above Dragonstone, but it was only Vhagar that survived. The great bronze beast was injured and let out a terrifying roar, causing the young dragons on the island to take flight and flee. Where they went only the gods know, but it is assumed they fled to their homeland of Valyria. The young dragons' travel became known as the Dragon Plague in Essos, as they marauded across the Free Cities and their lands in search of food for several years.

Queen Dowager Visenya acted quickly upon her return to Dragonstone, gathering the royal family and court together and declaring that Prince Aegon was lost to the Faith Militant. Before the assembled eyes she crowned her son King Maegor I, and the only one to speak out was Grand Maester Gawen. The Grand Maester lived but seconds longer before King Maegor took his head and declared he was returning to King's Landing to retake the capital. Many of the men-at-arms of Dragonstone took up the new King's call and sailed west into Blackwater Bay as Maegor and Queen Dowager Visenya flew upon Vhagar. The King and Queen Dowager landed upon Visenya's Hill and planted the banner of House Targaryen, calling all loyal men to their side. Queen Dowager Visenya then put a challenge out to the Faith Militant in the city, demanding they prove themselves and the strength of their claims.

Queen Dowager Visenya's challenge was quickly answered by the Grand Captain of the Warrior's Sons himself, Ser Damon Morrigen. When King Maegor challenged Ser Damon to a trial by battle the Grand Captain said he would only fight if it was a trial by seven to honour the gods. King Maegor agreed, and rallied six fighters to his side beginning with Dick Bean, a humble man-at-arms. The battle between the Warrior's Sons and King Maegor's followers was brutal, with all being slain except for the King himself. Yet King Maegor was struck insensate and fell into a deep coma. Without a king, many of Maegor's followers began to lose hope. Queen Dowager Visenya took her son's unconscious body to the foundations of the Red Keep and kept all away, her will enforced by the great dragon Vhagar. After over a fortnight without any news all seemed lost, Queen Dowager Visenya ordered a cordon around Aegon's Hill. There were no eyes to see what happened at the summit once the sun set, but all across King's Landing were able to hear the dying screams of Vhagar. Once the sun rose Targaryen men took away the great beast's body to be returned to Dragonstone and the King awoke.

The Blacks, the Reds, and the Whites

Their king awakened, the men loyal to House Targaryen were filled with a surge of action. The remnants of the Faith Militants' forces in King's Landing were quickly purged and control reestablished over the city. The battle to retake the Sept of Remembrance was especially bloody with men, women, and children alike being slaughtered as they sought safety in the arms of the Seven. Many lords cried out for this injustice yet even more flocked to Maegor's banner. The gathered men began to form into an army as King Maegor and Queen Dowager Visenya began to plan on how to reassert control over Westeros when messengers began to arrive, bringing word that Prince Aegon and Princess Rhaena were alive and had broken free from the siege of

Crakehall. Their children had been born stillborn, giving rage to Prince Aegon and the westermen and allowing them to defeat the forces of the Faith Militant that were attacking them.

King Maegor wished to lead his men on a march to Pinkmaiden where the Prince and his supporters were marshalling, but Queen Dowager Visenya advised caution. Maegor had less men and no dragons, with the death of Vhagar mysteriously coinciding with the King's reawakening and the Dragon Plague marauding across Essos. King Maegor's wroth was great and several men who tried to calm the King were slain with Blackfyre, but eventually the Queen Dowager calmed her son's fury and convinced him to treat with his nephew.

Mere days passed after the news of Prince Aegon's return arrived when a new messenger appeared. This one brought word that the High Septon who had declared the Faith in opposition to the Targaryens had passed under mysterious circumstances and that the new High Septon was a much more diplomatic man. Queen Dowager Visenya and other advisors of King Maegor worked for several weeks to communicate with Pinkmaiden and Oldtown, eventually brokering a parley between the three factions. Eventually a council was organised to be held in Stonebridge in the first month of the forty-third year after Aegon's Conquest. The goal was peace in Westeros and the building of a new order of House Targaryen and the Iron Throne.

Time moved quickly as the three factions prepared for the Council of Stonebridge. The first month of the year was primarily taken up by arrivals, introductions, and agreements on the carrying of arms and who had the right to oversee justice. As time went on, the different camps took on nicknames for easy reference. The supporters of King Maegor were known as the blacks, the supporters of Prince Aegon known as the reds, and the lords who stood by the Faith against House Targaryen were known as the whites.

The Council of Stonebridge truly began in the second month of the year, at the first official meeting between the High Septon, King Maegor, and Prince Aegon. Talks nearly fell apart before they had begun when King Maegor demanded that Prince Aegon forfeit his title as Prince of Dragonstone and swear fealty to him before immediately demanding the High Septon disband the Faith Militant and swear fealty as well. Both men refused outright and brought demands of their own and for a moment it appeared that King Maegor would attack them with bare fists. Thankfully, advisers on all sides stepped in to calm the tension and bring recommendations.

The first point of agreement was on the subject of incestuous marriage. The High Septon insisted that, while House Targaryen was obviously of exceptional blood they did not have the right to marry siblings in the ways that other men were prohibited nor could they marry multiple wives at once. Both King Maegor and Prince Aegon agreed, likely in order to push for their own demands later, and the marriages of King Maegor and Ceryse Hightower, King Maegor and Alys Harroway, and Prince Aegon and Princess Rhaena were annulled. When the Princess heard what had been agreed upon, she stormed from the council and departed Stonebridge for the riverlands.

The second point of agreement, and most vital, was the inheritance of the Iron Throne. With the annulments performed by the High Septon King Maegor found himself unwed and childless. To deal with the claimant his nephew presented, after months of negotiation King Maegor agreed to recognise Prince Aegon as Prince of Dragonstone and heir to the Iron Throne. In return, Prince Aegon would recognise King Maegor as his rightful liege and vow to serve him as he would his own father. Additional clauses were added by advisers stipulating that any child born of King Maegor would come after Prince Aegon in the line of succession but that

if Prince Aegon was ever found guilty of treason, sedition, or conspiracy he would be immediately removed from his position. Both men agreed to the terms, yet onlookers claimed that both held malice in their eyes as they shook hands and signed the parchment.

The final point of agreement to end the Council of Stonebridge and the year was the subject of the Faith Militant and the laws of the Faith. The High Septon was a masterful diplomat and had managed to gain ground for the Faith in several of the discussions, such negotiating a large tithe to be paid by the Crown each year and a permanent place for the Faith on the small council, the Royal Septon. Yet neither King Maegor nor Prince Aegon were willing to see the Faith keep their soldiers which greatly outnumbered both their armies. The High Septon saw his opponents uniting and made a bold offer to fully disband the Poor Fellows in exchange for keeping three chapters of the Faith Militant. One would be housed in Oldtown, the second in Lannisport, and the third in Gulltown. Each chapter would additionally be limited to five hundred knights each, leaving the Faith Militant as a minor force in Westeros yet still in existence. In exchange, the Faith would be permitted to hold their own courts for members of the Faith as well and any nobles who violated the laws of the Faith, as well as the Royal Septon always being a judge in royal courts. Prince Aegon agreed immediately, as did King Maegor after a private discussion with Queen Dowager Visenya. Thus ended the Council of Stonebridge, with peace restored in Westeros and a new king ready to be crowned.

The Reign of the Cruel

With the negotiations at Stonebridge ended, King Maegor and Prince Aegon returned together to King's Landing to prepare a grand coronation. All the realm would be invited and the coronation would be where Prince Aegon formally swore fealty to King Maegor and was reaffirmed as Prince of Dragonstone and heir of the Iron Throne. Yet all was not well, for whispers abounded that the Faith still had troubles with the Targaryens and Prince Aegon would not be content for long to be King Maegor's heir. Each faction would need to act quickly before any others were able to secure too much power. Their opportunities would need to wait however, as the coronation was set for the first month of the forty-fourth year after Aegon's Conquest. There, the reign of the Cruel would begin.

Westeros, 44 AC

For canon characters that may be alive in 44 AC, please see the <u>Reign of the Cruel Canon Characters</u> <u>List</u>. This is not a binding list, but a recommendation for characters that may be included.

The Blacks

King Maegor, called the Cruel by his enemies and detractors, sits as the King of Westeros on the Iron Throne. Yet he is not secure for his nephew must surely be plotting against him to rebel and the perfidious Faith was not fully disarmed. Thankfully King Maegor and the Crown are not alone, with his mother Queen Dowager Visenya sending her tendrils out throughout the realm. The Crown must exert control and remind the treasonous lords that even without their great beasts, House Targaryen are still dragons.

The Crown and the blacks must focus on consolidating power in the Crownlands and Trident where support is strongest, but keep a watchful eye upon both Dragonstone and Oldtown. Will Maegor the Cruel be able to defeat his challengers and become the uncontested King of Westeros, or will he fall in shame and madness?

The Reds

Prince Aegon was meant to be King, like his father before him. Yet when **King Aenys I** passed from this world Prince Aegon found the throne pulled out from under him by his uncle and the rise of the Faith Militant. His attempts to fight for his title were stymied by a lack of support from the great lords of the realm and he was counselled to attend the Council of Stonebridge by his sister **Princess Rhaena**. Her support was crucial as it brought many to his side, yet their relationship has now turned cold since Prince Aegon accepted the Faith's demand that he annul his marriage to her.

Aegon the Uncrowned is the rightful King of Westeros, and his uncle is nothing more than a usurper. Will Prince Aegon be able to overcome the greater power his uncle wields as King and rally support, or will he falter without his sister to help guide him?

The Whites

The Faith has only been led by the **High Septon** called 'the diplomatic one' for a little over a year and yet he is renowned for accomplishing the gains at the Council of Stonebridge. The faithful see the Targaryens' abandonment of incest and polygamy as great victories, but there are many more who believe the former dragonlords are too unclean to allow to continue to rule. The High Septon must now use the vast influence of the Starry Sept and the remaining chapters of the Warrior's Sons to continue the push.

The Faith calls for a righteous war, but their desires must be balanced on a knife's edge with diplomacy and tact. Will the Starry Sept and the Faith Militant continue their crusade against the heretical royalty or will the Faith become merely one more vassal of the Iron Throne?

The North

It has been nearly fifty years since the last King of the North, **Torrhen Stark**, knelt before House Targaryen and the North ceased to be an independent kingdom. The northmen have gained a reputation as cowards and weaklings as they were the only kingdom to join without bloodshed. Even worse, religious conflict has arisen in the south and the Faith of the Seven has become significantly more hostile to those they consider heathens.

The North is not completely isolated, with **Lord Theomore Manderly** and **Lord Dustin** having connections to the south. Lords like them must decide between connections to their own kinsmen or to attempt to integrate further into the rest of Westeros.

Will the North break away from their unfortunate reputation and show Westeros the kind of men they truly are? Will the integration of a vast land with an entirely different religion succeed? How will House Stark and their bannermen adapt to the changing world around them?

The Riverlands

Of all the regions of Westeros, none are as divided between support for King Maegor and Prince Aegon as the Riverlands. Led by the skilled and diplomatic **Lord Prentys Tully** the Trident has the potential to form the strong arm of the Crown, but to whom will their support be thrown behind?

Beyond the Crown, the Riverlands must also grapple with the High Septon and the Faith Militant. **House Blackwood** stands as the sole followers of the Old Gods in the south, and if they become a target of zealots it may drag the entire Trident into bloodshed.

The Riverlands stand poised to become pre-eminent in Westeros, but their position is a precarious one. Will the riverlords be able to unify behind one cause or be torn apart by infighting? Will the new internal peace be wrecked by zealots hunting followers of the Old Gods?

The Vale

The Vale is home to some of the finest knights and most skilled warriors of Westeros. Several of these warriors, such as those of **House Corbray**, have spread across the realm to offer their services and build relations. Yet at the homefront, there is tension. **Lord Hubert Arryn** gained his titles as the heir of his cousin **Ronnel Arryn**, last King of Mountain and Vale and victim of **Jonos the Kinslayer**. Yet it was not Hubert who led the charge against the Kinslayer, it was **Lord Allard Royce**.

Many believe the tension will dissipate on its own, as Lord Hubert is the goodson of Lord Royce. Yet others note that power is the most tempting of fruits, and wonder if Lord Royce will be satisfied with his grandchild ruling the Vale. Even more wonder if the ongoing conflict between Crown and Faith may boil over into the Vale, the ancient heartland of the Andal religion in Westeros.

All is not well in the Vale, and the growing tension throughout Westeros is reflected in the mountains and the valleys. Will House Arryn keep their dominion or will they fall to claims from other Houses? Will the Vale be able to unify before the rest of Westeros erupts, or will they descend into anarchy and chaos?

The Iron Islands

Just over half a decade ago, **Lord Goren Greyjoy** banned all septons and septas from the Iron Islands as a reward from King Aenys I, showing thanks to his efforts in putting down independence movements. Yet now there are no dragons to burn the ironborn fleets and the reavers look greedily at the shores of Westeros.

The Iron Islands are not as unified in faith as they once were, with the preachers having converted several lords to the Faith of the Seven before their ban. Septons may be banned from preaching, but these new faithful lords may bring new ones to serve new purposes.

The ironborn once struck fear into the hearts of all Westerosi. Will they regain their lost reputation? Will the converted lords join their fellows in reaving or fight to protect their religious brethren? Will the death of the Targaryen dragons mean the end of the Iron Throne's hold over the isles?

The Crownlands

The Crownlands were once the backwaters and hinterlands of multiple kingdoms, forming the disputed lands between the Kingdoms of the Reach, Stormlands, and the Isles and Rivers. Now they are sworn to a new king, but not as afterthoughts. They are the core of the Iron Throne, situated around the new capital of King's Landing. Yet this proximity has also put the Crownlands at the forefront of the conflict between the blacks and the reds. Lords Darklyn and Rosby stand as supporters of the King, while the proximity of House Velaryon to Dragonstone may threaten their position as Master of Ships.

The prevalence of the crownlords in the court of the capital is also now being challenged by the rise of the riverlords, challenging the positions the crownlords have worked hard for.

Will the Crownlands be torn asunder by the tension between the blacks and the reds? Will they become relegated to the background as lords from far realms take positions of high court, or will they show themselves as the heart of Westeros and its throne?

The Westerlands

The Westerlands stand as the richest of the different regions of Westeros, though that is in no small part thanks to **Lord Lyman Lannister** and the sheer magnitude of his hoard of gold. Lord Lyman is the son of the last King of the Rock and many whisper he holds aspirations of kinghood himself.

Yet his bannermen find themselves torn between loyalties to the reds, such as **Lord Farman** and **Lord Westerling**, while others have rallied to the side of the High Septon and the whites, such as **Lord Rupert Falwell**, known as the Fighting Fool. The Westerlands are even home to one of the last three chapters of the Warrior's Sons, situated in Lannisport.

Are the rumours of Lord Lyman Lannister's ambitions true, or is he more pragmatic and willing to side with one of the competing factions for the Iron Throne? Will the presence of the Faith stay strong in the West or be overtaken by loyalty to the King or Prince?

The Reach

Nowhere is the Faith's influence felt more strongly than in the Reach. The High Septon is situated in the Starry Sept of Oldtown with five hundred knights of the Warrior's Sons and has the support of great lords such as Lord Torgen Oakheart, Lord Rickard Rowan, and Lord Osgrey. Should the realm break out into conflict, these lords are sure to flock to the High Septon's banner.

The Faith is not unopposed in the Reach however. Lord Theo Tyrell was a boy when his father Lord Harlan Tyrell was raised up as Lord Paramount of the Mander and the Tyrells have ever more reasons to support the Crown with other reachlords coveting Highgarden. King Maegor's support is furthered by men such as Lord Peake and Lord Caswell, though his divorce of Ceryse Hightower has left the loyalties of Oldtown uncertain.

The Reach stands at the centre of the conflict between Faith and Crown. Will they unify for either party, or become divided in conflict and bloodshed? Will House Tyrell's young and tenuous hold on Highgarden stay strong or be thrown down in favour of older blood?

The Stormlands

The stormlanders are known to be a hardy and wrathful people, and they have no greater enemy than the Dornish to the south. Merely three decades have passed since the infamous events of the First Dornish War, such as the Wyl of Wyl's attack on Fawnton, and the stormlords have never forgiven. The Second Dornish War led to the sack of Blackhaven and the mutilation of Lord Harmon Dondarrion, though the Vulture King was put down by Lord Orys Baratheon, Lady Ellyn Caron, and 'Savage' Sam Tarly.

Now the Stormlands are ruled by **Lord Rogar Baratheon**, grandson of Orys One-Hand. He must balance the conflict growing in the rest of Westeros with the protection of the Marches from Dornish provocation, and manage the fury and vengeance of his bannermen.

The Stormlands seek the blood of their foes, but will they survive to spill it? Will the tensions between Targaryens and Faith draw their attention away? Will the Stormlands strike first and start a Third Dornish War?

Dorne

Dorne is the only kingdom to have remained independent in Westeros after Aegon's Conquest. It was through the blood of their people and the fire of their resolve that they managed to defeat the forces of the other kingdoms that invaded, though the Dornish gained a black reputation and the eternal enmity of many of their foes. Now, the aged **Princess Deria Martell** rules from her seat at Sunspear and worries.

The Iron Throne seems secure with a king and an heir, and the Council of Stonebridge has resolved the issues between the Targaryens and the Faith. Even worse, there are whispers that **Lady Clarisse Dayne** is a possible candidate for King Maegor's new Queen. Lords such as **Lord Walter Wyl** call for an invasion of the Stormlands to seize the Marches fully and show the Iron Throne Dorne is not to be challenged in their supremacy of the south.

Will Dorne find herself drawn into the conflict of the north? Will the Dornish lords be the aggressors in a Third Dornish War or the defenders against vengeance-seeking enemies? How will the Faith, now part of the Iron Throne, treat the sole independent kingdom?

The Small Council

Hand of the King: Decided by King player **Master of Laws:** Lord Lucas Harroway

Master of Coin: By player lottery

Master of Ships: Lord Aethan Velaryon Master of Whispers: By player lottery Grand Maester: Grand Maester Myros

Lord Commander of the Kingsguard: By player lottery

Royal Septon: Determined by Faith player

The only known canon small council members in 44 AC are Lord Lucas Harroway, Lord Aethan Velaryon, and Grand Maester Myros. As such, all other positions will be assigned by player lottery. Lucas

Harroway has been reduced from Hand to Master of Law due to his daughter's marriage to Maegor being annulled.

To help support the courtly intrigues of King's Landing, each member of the small council is able to delegate responsibilities to lesser positions among the nobility and bureaucracy. This gives councillors the ability to reward their own allies personally instead of needing to go through the King and have significantly more interactions relating to their position on the small council. Different positions may also have the ability to affect the court, such as a Chief Gaoler freeing a prisoner as part of a plot or the Harbourmaster of King's Landing permitting smugglers to bring in illicit goods.

The Kingsguard

Lord Commander of the Kingsguard: By player lottery

Knight of the Kingsguard: Ser Davos Darklyn Knight of the Kingsguard: Ser Olyver Bracken Knight of the Kingsguard: By player lottery Knight of the Kingsguard: By player lottery Knight of the Kingsguard: By player lottery Knight of the Kingsguard: By player lottery

As the Kingsguard of King Maegor canonically has seven members with several of minor Houses or being the only canon member of their House, **Symond Crane**, **Maladon Moore**, **Jon Tollett**, **Harrold Langward**, and **Raymund Mallery** have been retconned in order to open up more spaces for players to have members of their House as a Kingsguard.