

Sitting behind a desk covered in parchments, each with a seal of a different color with a different insignia stamped into the wax, Harry could feel himself fighting off a migraine.

He'd spent years waging a war, accidentally if he was being perfectly honest, and he'd go back to the threat of death and bloodshed if it meant an end to the ceaseless invitations, ingratiation and proposals that found him by raven, again and again. He was of half a mind to put up a ward to keep them away if for no other reason than to give himself a few days of peace.

"Harry, my king," Barbo contained his laughter at the honorific, "these arrived for you just this afternoon." He placed three more parchments on the table. One had a red wax seal stamped with a sun, another a green one stamped with a rose, and the last was purple with a mark he'd come to associate with the Archon of Tyrosh.

"We'll be able to feed the fires in winter for a month with the number of missives we've been getting since I won the Stepstones." He opened the first of them and found it to be an invitation from Qoren Martell. He relented despite Harry's general disinterest toward all his attempts.

The man who'd become his most trusted confidant since their first meeting on the beach of Grey's Gallow only looked at the stack of them sitting behind him, "A week so far if I were to wager but give it time and surely, you'll have a month's worth."

"What of the city? How goes the work?" Harry turned his attention to something that actually interested him. Despite being claimed as a kingdom, the Stepstones had little more than shanty towns and pirate hideaways before his arrival. Bloodstone had the only thing resembling a city but even that was disheveled homes that looked like they could be blown over by a stiff wind.

But things were changing now that the islands were his, "Things are slower going without you there to help, but the men are working hard." Pirates had become soldiers, and now they were builders. It was no small feat, but they'd seen a real chance to build something with his help, and they were taking advantage of it.

"With any luck, I'll be down there by the end of the day." There was a great shadow that blocked out the light pouring in from the window, and as quickly as it came it passed by. There was a commotion outside of his keep, and then a roar. It was a noise that he'd become all too familiar with over the years. *Dragon.*

And a dragon meant an opportunity. Hurrying toward the door, Barbo was close behind as he threw open the door and made his way down the stairs. The main doors were already open, and he could see the great red beast waiting for him in the courtyard. He recognized

it, because he'd seen it at least a dozen times over the years more often than not when it was trying to kill him.

It was the Blood Wurm, Caraxes. Red, huge, and lean, he towered over the men in the courtyard. Many were looking at the beast in awe, others with fear. Much as he was interested in the dragon, Harry was more concerned with the man on its back.

He never had the pleasure of meeting his predecessor in person, but Daemon Targaryen's reputation preceded him. For every man that hated him, another loved him. For every man that feared him, another respected him. Hot-tempered yet charming, from everything Harry had heard, he was a man of extremes.

Daemon dropped gracefully from the dragon's back. It was the first time Harry got a chance to see him up close. His hair was like spun silver and his eyes a deep shade of purple. It was almost inhuman. Traits that marked him as the blood of Old Valyria. He wore a black tunic emblazoned with the three-headed red dragon of his house. His Valyrian steel sword, Dark Sister, rested in a scabbard on his hip. In his hand was another damnable piece of parchment.

With an air of unerring confidence, he walked to Harry, "Your Grace, it's a pleasure to finally meet you in person." He bowed his head in deference but didn't kneel. Harry didn't much care about the formalities of his title and took no offense.

"Prince Daemon," Harry greeted him, "I can say the same. To what do I owe the pleasure though?" Behind him, Caraxes took a great heaving sigh as he laid himself down in the center of courtyard. The weight of him was enough to cause a slight tremor in the ground.

He held up the letter in his hand, "My brother sent me."

*With a proposition, no doubt.* Harry had enough of them for a lifetime at this point, but the Targaryens could offer him something that he wanted, "And a dragon is faster than a raven."

Daemon smiled, "My thoughts exactly, your Grace."

Harry imagined there was more to it than that, but he didn't particularly care for the man's motivations. *From a king to a messenger in a matter of weeks, it seems like quite the fall from grace and yet he chose to do it.* Still, there were customs to keep, "Come, I'll have wine and bread brought for you."

Daemon followed him into the keep, scrutinizing it with a critical eye, "It's quite the construction. It appears it was made entirely from a single piece of stone."

“Given what I hear of the Red Keep, that is quite the compliment.” The keep wasn’t overly large. There were service quarters, a kitchen along with six bedrooms including his own and his private offices. But what it lacked in scale was made up for in its construction.

It was circular, domed, and looked as though it was capped in gold. There were six jutting turrets evenly spaced around the circumference. There were carvings hewn into the rock. Reliefs that told the story of the war that won them the Stepstones in shocking detail. There were statues atop each turret. Two of dragons that looked uncannily like the Hungarian Horntail, two of hippogriffs that resembled Buckbeak, and two of owls that looked identical to his oldest friend, Hedwig.

“Such arts were lost with the Doom... It is a marvel to see them anew. But then wonders never cease where you’re concerned. I never could manage to build something on my meager holdings here. But considering you can contend with a dragon, it seems a rather small feat in comparison.” It was all flattery, and Harry could see why many found the man charming. There was something about him, maybe the ease with which he fell into conversation, that reminded him of his godfather.

As they entered his office, there was already wine and bread waiting on the table for their guest, “I’m only doing the best with what I have, Daemon. That’s all anyone can expect of themselves.”

Daemon took the seat across from Harry’s and poured himself a goblet of wine and took a bite of bread, “There’s some truth to that, I suppose. I would say that what you have is something entirely different than most men could hope for though.”

“And I’m making the most of it, all the same.” Harry gave a faint smile.

“This magic of yours,” He could hear the curiosity in his voice, “could it be taught?”

For a long moment, Harry just looked at the prince. Even before the end of the war, he sent ships with men in an effort to learn all he could about the magic of the world he found himself in. There was magic to be found, certainly, but it was nothing like his own.

The Shadowbinders in Asshai, the Undying of Qarth, the Faceless Men, or the fire magic of the followers of R’hllor, all of it had its uses but lacked the ease and utility of his own magic. From what he understood, Valyria was the closest and it was a ruin.

But one thing was clear, any could learn the magical arts of this world, you didn’t need to be born to it. So, his answer was simple, “No, or at least, I’ve yet to meet anyone who could learn from me.”

Daemon nodded his understanding, “Fascinating... but I’ve allowed myself to get sidetracked. I was sent here for a reason, after all.”

He placed the parchment on Harry’s desk and waited for him to break the seal and unfurl it. It was an invitation to visit King’s Landing, proposed by King Viserys, so that they might discuss the furthering of bonds between his new kingdom in the Stepstones and the Seven Kingdoms.

“I don’t need to tell you that you’re of great interest to a great many people.” His eyes drifted to the many pieces of parchment scattered about the room, “My brother is no different. And unlike so many others, he’d like to discuss matters with you in person... as his honored guest.”

There were plenty of people who wanted to meet him in person, but they didn’t have nearly as much to offer as Viserys. Placing the parchment down, he ran his hand through his hair. There was no benefit in appearing too eager, and so he at least feigned contemplation of the proposal as Daemon waited patiently for his response.

“I’ll meet with your brother.” He finally told the prince.

Daemon smiled, “We’ll look forward to your arrival. There are many at court who will be eager to put a face to all the stories they’ve heard.” With his business done, he stood, “I’ll inform my brother at once.”

Following the man out, Harry watched as he strode across the courtyard to the waiting dragon. With a rush of air, the great beast climbed into the air and circled around head north. His hulking frame became ever smaller in the distance.

Barbo was by his side, watching the departure, “So... to King’s Landing then?”

“To King’s Landing.”

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Rhaenyra stood there primly as her maids made sure everything was perfect. Her dress was black and red, made from Myrish silk, and hugged her curves as though it were poured on. It left a tantalizing hint of her impressive bust, but not enough to be improper. Her hair was in an intricate braid that hung over her right shoulder, complete with little rubies tucked into the strands. She was meeting a potential husband; it wouldn’t do to make anything less than a lasting impression.

The entire court was abuzz with excitement because the newly made king was meant to arrive that very afternoon. Her maids couldn’t help themselves but speculate. It was Rosamund, or Rosie, that asked her, “How do you think he’ll arrive, princess?”

There were rumors that he could pop from one place to another in the blink of an eye, or that he had a broomstick that he could fly. *Neither of which have nearly the same gravitas as sitting on the back of a dragon, that's for certain.* Still, Rhaenyra couldn't deny her own curiosity, but the truth was quite simple, "I think he'll walk through the doors of the Red Keep the same as any other lord who comes to visit my father."

Whether he was as dull as the rest of them remained to be seen, "I've heard he's rather handsome..."

"Yes, and daring, and dashing, and terrifying as well." Rhaenyra cut her off, though not unkindly, "From many people who can't even say that they've laid eyes on the man." Satisfied with what she saw in the mirror, she turned and squeezed Rosie's hand, "We'll find out the truth of them soon enough." The only person she knew that had actually spent time with the man was her uncle, and even he only had so much to say about him outside of battle.

As she turned toward the door, Ser Criston was waiting for her and followed as she made her way to the throne room. She was the last member of the court to arrive, every eye turning to her as she made her way through the doors. Her good mother was to her father's left. She was holding Rhaenyra's youngest half-brother, Daeron, while Aegon, Aemond and Helaena sat obediently beside her.

Her father smiled at the sight of her as she made her way over to sit beside the throne. Her place was closest to the throne with her uncle to her right. Her sworn shield took up his place beside his brothers.

Viserys leaned over and said conspiratorially, "For a moment there, I was wondering if you were coming at all."

"I wouldn't dare miss it." Rhaenyra assured him with a little laugh, "I'm as interested in this new king as the rest of the realm seems to be."

There was some commotion in the hall outside the throne room, and Viserys turned away from her as he said, "It seems none of us will have to wait much longer."

The seneschal stood at the side of the door announcing loud and clear, "His Grace, Harry, King of the Stepstones and Narrow Sea."

Only three men walked in. The one to the left wore garish colors and far more jewelry than seemed necessary. He looked the part of a pirate, down to the cutlass on his hip. The man to the right had dark skin, like a rich mahogany. His hair was tightly braided to his head, and he wore a simple shirt and trousers. It was rare that any lord, let alone king, would travel

with so few of his men. While he was invited as a friend, something was still clear to Rhaenyra. *He has no fear of being held. He knows that there's no keeping him here.*

In the middle was the man they were waiting for. His clothes were light, the sort that could keep him cool in the summer heat in the south. He was probably only a few years older than her. His hair was as dark as a Baratheon's and cut rather short. His eyes were a striking emerald that would put any of the Lannisters to shame. There was a scar in the center of his forehead that looked as though it had been neatly cut there to resemble a lightning bolt. He was lithe and athletic in build, and of a height with Ser Criston.

*My uncle was right, he is quite handsome.* He approached the throne calmly even as hundreds of eyes watched with obvious interest. When he stood at the foot of the Iron Throne, he bowed his head and said, "King Viserys, my thanks for the invitation." His accent was Westerosi and sounded similar to the one in the Riverlands.

Her father greeted him, "King Harry, I'm pleased you accepted. Let me introduce you. Daemon you've already met." He gestured to the left of the throne, "My wife, Queen Alicent Hightower and our children: Aegon, Aemond, Helaena, and young Daeron." It was then that he gestured to her, "My eldest child and heir, the Princess Rhaenyra."

She'd seen so many men, from lowborn to high, look at her with lust. Whether it was a lust that came from her beauty or the power that she represented, it was always there. It was there in his eyes too, as they took in her face only to drift lower to take in every inch of her. She could feel them on her like a physical touch, and she couldn't pretend that she disliked it.

When he spoke, it was only to her, "Princess, you are every bit as beautiful as the stories I've heard."

The moment was broken by the piping up of a tiny voice, "Is it really true that you can do magic!?" Aegon stood beside his mother, "Show me!"

Viserys stared stonily down at his son, as Alicent pulled her son back and offered, "Apologies, your Grace, he's a young boy with a young boy's curiosities."

While Rhaenyra didn't particularly care for her younger siblings, even she couldn't help but be curious about Harry's response. An easy smile came to his lips, and he glanced first at her than at her father before finally settling on Alicent and Aegon, "No apologies necessary. In due course, I'm sure he'll have an answer to his questions."

"Of course, only at your discretion. No one here intends to make demands of you." Viserys regained the attention of the court, even as Alicent quietly scolded her son, "We'll feast you

tonight. But for now, surely you wish to rest. It is no short journey from the Stepstones. Rooms have been prepared for you. Rhaenyra..."

"Yes, father?"

"Please show the king to his quarters."

"Of course," She stood, and walked down from the dais to stand beside Harry. He was taller than her by half a head. Ser Criston made to follow but she stopped him before he had the chance, "I don't think I'm in any danger with the king, Ser Criston. And should any danger befall, I'm surely in safe hands with a man who can withstand a dragon."

Criston didn't look pleased with her reasoning but stepped back beside his fellow Kingsguard. Returning her attention to Harry, she told him, "Follow me, please, your Grace."

As they left the throne room together, she could hear the murmurs of the court before they even turned the corner. They walked in a comfortable silence, but Rhaenyra found herself glancing at her potential husband. The castle didn't seem to faze him in the slightest. In fact, he seemed entirely comfortable there, as though it wasn't the first time he had been in such a place.

It made her wonder. *Perhaps he's the bastard son of one of the lesser lords and has simply made a name for himself in the world.* But then, if there was anyone who had any familial bond with the new king, they surely would've claimed it already. When she glanced at him again, she found that he was looking at her.

It was a rare thing for Rhaenyra to feel flustered, but something about the look in his eye made her feel it. Turning her eyes back ahead of her, she was searching for anything to say, and found herself blurting out, "So, is there any truth to it?" Honestly, Rhaenyra didn't doubt for a second that the magic that held Caraxes in check existed but found it difficult to believe that it all came from one man.

"My magic?" She could hear the smile in his voice without even looking at him. There was a soft 'pop' beside her, and then she came up short. Standing at the end of the hall, smiling at her, bold as brass, was Harry. Calmly, she looked to her right, if only to confirm that her eyes and mind weren't playing any tricks on her. Sure enough, there was no one beside her any longer.

There was another 'pop', and he was gone again. Then from just behind her, soft and teasing, she heard his voice, "At least a bit, princess."

No one would ever get her to admit it, but she jumped, and he knew it if his chuckle was anything to go by. Rhaenyra's heart hammered in her chest, whether it was from fear or

excitement or some combination of the two, she couldn't say. But it was exhilarating, a feeling she couldn't honestly say she felt with any of the dozens of suitors that had been put before her during her tour of the realm.

Turning around, she didn't expect him to be quite so close. She found herself looking up into his striking green eyes as she bit her bottom lip, "Impressive... I look forward to finding out more during your visit here."

He had a roguish smile, the sort that made her feel a little weak, "Maybe I'll let you." It wasn't an outright refusal, but she was a woman that was accustomed to people doing what she asked.

"I'm a princess and..."

"I'm a king, princess." That was enough to bring her up short. What left her speechless was the fact that he leaned down and pressed a kiss to her cheek, "Now, did you want to show me to my rooms?"

Rhaenyra could feel the heat in her cheeks. There were many who would be scolded or worse for taking such liberties with her, but they were far from her mind. It took her far longer than she'd care to admit finding her voice, and when she did it took everything in her power to keep her voice even, "Of course, your Grace."

As they continued their walk, she found herself flustered. It was hard to think of what to say next to a man who'd proven to be far more than she expected. But then she remembered that she was Rhaenyra Targaryen, and the words found themselves, "Tell me, what you just showed me, what do you call it?"

While he wouldn't necessarily show her everything she wanted without fail, he was willing to answer her question, "Apparition or disappearance."

"Is there a difference?"

"Whether one is staying or going. To you, I disappeared, so disappearance." They were getting nearer to his quarters, and she found herself slowing as they did. Hoping to learn more before they were forced to part.

"Are there any limits to where it can take you?"

"No, not here."

That answer raised a whole host of other questions, but they could wait for another time, "Not even being able to see where you're going?"



“Not as long as I’ve been there before.” The implication wasn’t lost on her. Now that he’d been inside the Red Keep, he could come and go from it whenever he pleased. It was an awe-inspiring ability... and only scratched the surface. *If this was the very first thing he might show me, what more is there?*

But there was another more dangerous thought that came to mind. *And should we find ourselves as his enemy, he could simply enter the throne room. We invited a wolf amongst the sheep without even knowing it.* Suddenly, her father’s interest in creating closer ties with the new king were far more pressing. And that had nothing to do with the fact that her cheeks were still flushed.

“Could you take others with you?”

Something about that question made him laugh, “I’d reckon six, one for each limb, one hugged to my front and one to my back, even if it would be difficult, so long as they could hold on tight. Though, it’s far from the most pleasant sensation.”

Rhaenyra always preferred to be the judge of such things for herself, “I’d like to try someday, if you’re willing.”

“I think that can be arranged, princess, even if you might come to regret it.” They came to stand outside of a large set of double doors. When she stopped and turned toward him, he did the same, “Though, I might ask for something in return.”

She knew what most men wanted from her, and she didn’t have any intention of giving it to him with so little effort, “What might that be?”

Then he surprised her, yet again, “I’ve only had the pleasure of meeting a dragon when it was trying to kill me... I wonder if you could help me change that?” People often marveled at the dragons, but most were far too afraid of them to meet them up close.

She had to stop herself from smiling, “You wish to meet Syrax?”

“If you’re willing, yes.”

“I think that can be arranged, your Grace, even if you might come to regret it.” Throwing his own warning right back at him, “Dragons can be quite temperamental, after all.” And she didn’t just mean Syrax in that moment.

Whether he caught her meaning or not, only time would tell, “I’ll be sure to keep that in mind.”

They shared a look as she finally turned to open the doors. The room was lavishly furnished, but she couldn’t help but notice none of his things were waiting for him. Even as

the thought occurred to her, he produced a small box from the inside of his pocket. He placed it down at the foot of his bed and waved his hand over it.

It expanded in one quick movement and a full trunk sat there. *More interesting by half.* It only strengthened her resolve to learn more about him.

She needed to return to her father, but before they parted, she informed him, "Please, rest from your journey, someone will be sent to gather you when it's time for the feast." And that someone would be her, she'd ensure it.

"Thank you for escorting me, Rhaenyra." It was the first time he'd called her by her name, and something about it sent a jolt of pleasure through her, "I couldn't have asked for more pleasant company."

"Likewise, Harry." With that she shut the doors behind her. As she made her way back to the throne room, she did her best to calm her pounding heart.