# Chapter - 65

I didn't stay behind to watch the fallout; I was practically dead on my feet. I had to fix everyone's retinas before they went blind and heal any radiation damage they had.

Waiting for the shockwave to hit wasn't the smartest decision, but it was something I wouldn't regret.

I practically collapsed onto my bed once I reached my room, my mind feeling like it had been put through a blender.

Using however many parallel thought processes I had seemed like a brilliant idea at the time, and it had no doubt kept me alive.

Now?

My brain felt like it was trying to melt through my ears.

"I need rest, Vaylara. I only have a few hours before we reach the wildlings' camp," I mumbled, not even bothering to open my eyes.

"I can see that, but we need to talk about what happened." Her spectral form flickered with concern, or maybe that was just my vision going wonky.

"Which part in particular? The part where I almost died, the part where I nuked the night king, or do you want to say I told you so?" Wow I didn't even have the energy to convey my sarcasm

"The dragon we created is awake." Her tone lacked any humor.

"In a way," I conceded, still keeping my eyes shut. "He hasn't hatched yet. Just... woke up when I was using his heart to jumpstart mine." I paused, remembering those reptilian eyes staring into my soul.

"You're forgetting how serious this..."

"Yes, I know *exactly* how serious that is, and it’s something we should talk about. But can we please not do this when my mind feels like it’s on fire?"

She seemed to understand how close I was to snapping. "Very well. But this conversation isn’t over."

I sighed at that and drifted off before I could think of something witty to say.

---------------

Mance was not having a great day.

He paced restlessly in his tent, his mind churning with possibilities about what could have transpired.

He had sent some of his best people with the mage.

Their absence was already being felt, particularly during these crucial times when he needed every loyal warrior to help keep the tribes in check and stop them from panicking.

The first sign that something had gone terribly wrong came when the ground began to tremble beneath their feet. Not the gentle shake of distant movement, but a bone-deep vibration that made even the most seasoned warriors exchange uneasy glances.

But that was just the beginning.

What came next defied description - a presence so vast, so utterly alien, that it pressed down on their very souls.

The air grew thick, impossible to breathe, as if the weight of every winter that had ever been or would be had suddenly descended upon them.

The moment barely lasted a heartbeat that felt like an eternity. Then, as suddenly as it had come, the presence receded. But the unease remained, clinging to them like frost on fur.

Veterans of countless battles found their hands shaking, though none would admit it. Whatever force had stirred out there in the endless white was beyond anything their stories or songs had

prepared them for.

Mance had just begun to restore some semblance of order when the second impossible thing happened.

Without warning, night transformed into day.

The flash came like the gods themselves had decided to ignite the sky. Those unfortunate enough to be looking in that direction cried out, their vision filled with dancing spots of light and shadow. The brilliance painted the night sky in its eerie red.

Then came the sound.

Not just sound - a roar that made thunder seem like a whisper. It rolled across the frozen landscape like a physical force, rattling teeth and bones alike. Mance had seen avalanches that moved mountains with less fury.

The shockwave that followed nearly knocked him off his feet, and they were leagues away from whatever had birthed this madness.

As the light began to fade, leaving behind a strange, sickly glow on the horizon. In the distance, a pillar of fire and fury clawed its way into the heavens. The clouds themselves seemed to bow before it, parting like a curtain torn asunder by giant hands.

As he steadied himself, Mance couldn't even begin to comprehend what he had just witnessed. He had a sinking feeling that the mage's hunt had not gone according to plan. The display of power suggested either a desperate last stand or... something else entirely.

Something that made his skin crawl just thinking about it.

"I just hope they made it out alive," he muttered to himself, watching as the strange glow in the distance slowly faded.

Those he'd sent with the mage weren't just capable warriors - they were instrumental in maintaining the delicate alliances he'd forged between the tribes.

Losing them would be a devastating blow, one that could unravel everything he'd worked so hard to build.

The whispers were already starting among the camp. Some claimed it was the end of the world, others that the Others had unleashed some terrible new weapon. A few even suggested the gods themselves had finally tired of their mortal squabbles.

Mance knew better.

He'd seen the look in Mage’s eyes, that barely contained power lurking beneath the surface.

Whatever had happened out there, he had a feeling it was just the beginning.

He could only hope he hadn't made a terrible mistake in agreeing to help the mage.

But then again, what choice did they really have? Winter was coming, and with it, something far worse than cold and darkness.

At least now he knew one thing for certain - the stories about the White Mage of Winterfell had not been exaggerated. If anything, they hadn't done him justice.

Mance settled back into his chair, pulling his furs tighter around himself. All he could do was wait and hope his people returned with answers—preferably before whatever had just happened outside decided to pay them a visit.

The ground trembled again.

His blood ran cold. "Not again."

But this wasn't the chaotic shaking from before. No, these vibrations had purpose—a steady rhythm that indicated something massive was moving with deliberate intent. His eyes were drawn to the northern edge of their camp, where the frozen ground had begun to bulge upward.

The frozen earth erupted in a shower of ice and dirt as something massive emerged - a creature that had no business existing in any sane world. Its circular maw gaped wide enough to swallow a mammoth whole, lined with rings of teeth that seemed to spiral into infinity.

Panic erupted instantly. Hardened warriors who had faced down armies scrambled backwards, their weapons falling from their hands. Women grabbed their children and ran.

Mance stood his ground, though every instinct screamed at him to flee. He'd seen many things beyond the Wall, but this... this was something else entirely.

Then, to everyone's bewilderment, people started walking out of the thing's mouth.

Not being spat out or escaping - just casually strolling out as if this was a perfectly normal way to travel.

He recognized Tormund first, the red-headed warrior looking absolutely gleeful.

Then Ygritte, followed by the others he'd sent with the mage. All alive, if somewhat pale.

The massive worm - because what else could you call it? - retreated back into the ground with surprising grace for something its size, leaving behind only a massive hole and a lot of confused wildlings.

"Where's the Mage?" Mance asked, noting his absence among the returning party.

Tormund's grin held a wild edge, like a man who'd witnessed something both terrifying and magnificent. "Still inside that beast of his, sleeping like a babe. After what he pulled out there..."

He gestured toward the horizon where that impossible light had carved a new dawn into the eternal night. "That was all him. Never seen the man truly angry before, but when the Night nearly killed him?" A shudder ran through his massive frame. "He decided to paint the sky with fire just to send a message. Makes you grateful he's usually so laid back, eh?"

Mance felt a headache building. He knew the mage was dangerous, but he hadn't expected anything like this.

"Tell me everything," he commanded, leading them toward his tent.

As they walked, he couldn't help but notice how his warriors kept glancing back at the hole where the worm had vanished, as if expecting it to return. He didn't blame them. Some things, once seen, couldn't be unseen.

And somehow, he had a feeling this was just the beginning of the strange tales he'd be hearing tonight.

------------------

Aemon woke with a start, sweat beading on his forehead despite the bitter cold.

Something had woken him from his sleep - not a sound or a touch, but a feeling.

A *presence* that made his blood sing with awe and fear.

Something had stirred in the world - something old yet new, something significant.

Making his way aimlessly around the castle, he was surprised to find Commander Mormont wandering as well, looking equally troubled. Even after weeks of having his sight restored by the healer's magic, the ability to see the world again and read people's faces was not something he had appreciated until he went blind.

"Trouble sleeping, Maester?" Mormont asked, his gruff voice carrying a hint of unease.

"I could ask you the same, Lord Commander," Aemon replied, studying the older man's face.

"Although I suspect we were both awakened by the same disturbance."

"Aye." Mormont worked his jaw, clearly wrestling with words to describe the indescribable. "Found myself walking these halls without any destination in mind. Started wondering if all these years had finally cracked my wits."

"If we're both wandering without purpose," Aemon said thoughtfully, "perhaps we could wander upward. It's been..." He paused, memories flickering behind his eyes. "Gods, nearly forty years since I last saw that view with my own eyes. "

He smiled, remembering that younger version of himself who had stood atop the world and watched the stars dance across the endless northern sky. "The mage was quite insistent that I should see it again with these restored eyes of mine. Said some views deserve a second chance at making a first impression."

Mormont's weathered face cracked into a slight smile. "You know, in all my years as Lord Commander, I don't think I've ever tired of that sight. Especially on nights like this, when the stars seem close enough to pluck from the sky."

They made their way up in silence. The ancient elevator creaked and groaned but still smoothly carried them to their destination.

When they finally reached the top, Aemon's breath caught in his throat. The view was magnificent, with stars scattered across the dark canvas of night like diamond dust.

"The mage was right," he murmured. "I would have regretted not seeing this again."

They stood there in silence for a long time with only the sound of the wind blowing by.

"Seems we made it just in time for dawn," Mormont observed, gesturing at a growing light on the horizon.

Aemon frowned. "It's too early for dawn."

The light grew brighter, impossibly bright, turning night into an unnatural day. For a moment, Aemon thought his newly restored eyes were playing tricks on him. Then came the sound - a roar like a thousand dragons awakening at once.

"What..," was all he could manage as the horizon erupted in fire and fury.

They watched in stunned silence as a massive cloud rose into the sky, its shape unlike anything he had ever seen before.

Moments later, he saw a wave of air hit the traveling so fast that his eyes could barely keep up as it struck the wall and dissipated.

The ancient stronghold remained unmoving.

"What by all the gods was that?" Mormont breathed, his usual stoic demeanor cracked by awe.

Aemon's mind raced through all of his accumulated knowledge, finding nothing to explain what they had just witnessed. "I don’t know," he admitted.

The glowing cloud continued to rise, painting the world in shades of crimson and gold.

# Chapter - 66

The Night King watched the anomaly's retreat with something approaching curiosity. Such power, such raw potential - and yet it chose to run away?

The anomaly had done something unprecedented, not just rejecting his magic but seemingly growing stronger from what should have been a fatal blow.

*Intriguing.*

The method of escape proved even more fascinating than the retreat itself. The frozen ground had split open like a wound in reality, revealing a creature that it had never encountered before - a behemoth of flesh and bone that moved with impossible grace for its size. The beast carved through the earth as easily as a salmon through summer streams, its massive form disappearing into the depths with its precious cargo.

He could have pursued. Could have commanded his armies to give chase, to swarm and overwhelm through sheer numbers. But something gave him pause. The power that had awakened when the anomaly brushed death's door... it resonated with something *old*. Something that dwelled in the deep places of the world, where even his eternal winter feared to tread.

Let it run. All things would join his army eventually. Time was his greatest weapon, patience his eternal companion. Whether it took years or centuries, winter would claim everything.

He recalled the wights back to him and the anomaly's presence flared again, a lot farther than before. Had it truly recovered so quickly? Perhaps he had given it too much credit - to challenge him again so soon spoke more of desperation than wisdom.

The spear it launched seemingly in retaliation was almost insulting - slow, predictable, destined to fall short of any meaningful target. He watched its arc with cold amusement as it buried itself in the ice almost a league short of where he stood.

Such a waste of-

*Click*

The world turned to fire.

Not the simple flames of dragons or wildfire, but something fundamental - as if reality itself had been torn asunder and replaced with pure, unfiltered destruction. The blast caught him mid-thought, a wall of force and fury that made even his ancient power quaver. Heat beyond imagining turned his armies to vapor in less time than it took to form a thought.

For the first time in millennia, he felt *pain*.

The shockwave that followed wasn't just destructive - it was erasure given physical form.

The ground beneath him ceased to exist, transformed into a crater of molten rage.

His consciousness struggled to maintain cohesion through the inferno, desperately weaving layers of protective ice even as they melted away. When the heat finally began to fade, only a cracked cocoon of ice remained where he had stood, his form reduced to little more than a torso and half molten face.

The ground inside the crater still glowed with residual heat, slowly eating away at what remained of his form.

For the first time since the dawn of winter, the Night King threw back his head and *screamed* - not in fear or pain, but in pure, unadulterated *rage*.

----------------

I woke up with only a mild headache - surprisingly manageable considering how close I'd come to melting my brain.

Paul mentally signalled to me that we had arrived.

Making my way to the main chamber, I found only Benjen waiting.

"Where'd everyone else go?"

"Paul dropped them at their camp hours ago," he replied, looking somewhat uncomfortable with the current accommodations.

"Oh shit, we're back at the Wall already?" I blinked, trying to orient myself. How long had I been out?

"...How would I know?" Benjen raised an eyebrow.

"Right, never mind." I rubbed my temples, thoughts still a bit scattered.

I'd missed my chance to properly discuss things with Mance, but hopefully Tormund or Ygritte would explain what had happened. They'd seen enough to understand the gravity of the situation.

I needed to figure out how to get the wildlings south of the Wall - wiping out the Night King's army would be pointless if he could just rebuild it with fresh corpses. But I couldn't make any promises without talking to Ned first.

I connected with Paul to figure out exactly where we were and discovered that we were under the forest right next to the Wall. Paul seemed quite uneasy about getting any closer to it.

I briefly had half a mind to see if he could take us under the Wall. But the Wall wasn't just ice and stone; it was old magic, the kind that had kept the Others at bay for millennia. Creating a tunnel felt like drilling a hole in a dam and hoping nothing bad would happen. Plus, leaving a convenient passage for the army of the dead seemed... counterproductive, to put it mildly.

Not wanting to freak out the Night's Watch with Paul's appearance, I had him surface in the forest briefly out of sight of Castle Black and then gave him instructions to take the long way around and meet me back at base.

Benjen and I walked through the trees toward Castle Black's gate. "You've been surprisingly quiet," I noted. "I'm sure you have questions."

"Many," he admitted. "But I imagine the Lord Commander will want to hear those answers as well."

"Fair enough."

The gates opened without fanfare, but the looks I got from the guards were different now - they were a lot more wary.

Seems like the mushroom cloud had been visible even from here.

Commander Mormont met us in the courtyard. "Lord El, glad to see you've returned. Though I gather things didn't go quite as planned?"

I let out a bitter laugh. "That would be an understatement."

"Perhaps we should discuss this somewhere private."

Minutes later, we were settled in his solar with Maester Aemon and Benjen. I let Benjen handle most of the retelling, only jumping in toward the end.

"And then I got skewered and almost died," I explained, keeping my tone light despite the memory. "Decided a tactical retreat was in order."

"So the Others have truly returned," Mormont's face was grim.

"Oh yes," I nodded. "And they're far more terrifying than any of the stories suggest."

"And at what point during your tale did you summon the sun?" he asked wearily.

I smiled, but there was no humor in it. "Let's just say I was a bit pissed about almost dying. Decided to leave the Night King a parting gift - It wasn't the sun, just a weapon I'd built as a last resort. Didn't think I'd need to use it so soon."

“Do you have more?”

"No, I had built just one, which took me months mind you, and it was experimental."

"Did it achieve its purpose?"

"Kill the Others? Well, I definitely took out most of his army. But the Night King himself?" I shook my head. "After what I've seen, I doubt it. But we've bought ourselves time - he'll need to rebuild his forces from scratch."

"And the wight you meant to capture as proof?"

"Ah." I winced. "That... may have slipped my mind between almost dying and ensuring everyone's escape."

Mormont waved it off. "We've seen enough to know this threat is real. The question is: how do you plan to convince the rest of the realm?"

"First things first - Benjen needs to come to Winterfell. His word will help convince Ned and the Northern lords. The real challenge will be getting them to accept bringing the wildlings south of the Wall or at least let them settle close enough to the wall"

"That's going to be difficult," Mormont frowned. "There's too much bad blood."

"I know. But we need every living body we can get to defend the Wall when the time comes."

I stood up, stretching. "And by the way - no more ranging beyond the Wall, especially where you saw that mushroom cloud. That area's going to be poisoned for a few generations."

"What?" everyone asked, alarmed.

"Yeah, even beyond and the wildlings were slightly poisoned from the blast alone. Not to worry, I have healed you up now, but that doesn't mean you are immune to it."

Looking at their still wary faces, I added, "Don't worry about it, just make sure no one goes close. It's not really something that's visible or readily apparent or fast, but as long as no one goes close to it, you're good." I waved off their concern.

Anyway, I've got to head back - lots to do, plans to make, an apocalypse to prevent. Benjen, get to Winterfell as soon as you can. You know what, show me to your horse, I'll make it the fastest horse to ever exist."

As I made my way out, I remembered something.

'Oh fuck, I just realized I completely forgot about Hobbs. I hope he ran away in time.'

--------------------

I thought hard on what my next steps need to be as I was flying towards Winterfell. Dealing with the Game of Thrones was no longer a priority, just a nuisance at best.

That brought me to pause - I just realized the knowledge I had of this world was woefully lacking. Sadly, it made sense because I hadn't really made it past the first episode of the show and I hadn't read the books.

My entire knowledge of this world was based on fanfiction and memes, so I probably would need to stop depending on it.

I definitely needed to stop messing around and get stronger. My powers were capable of a lot more, but they seemed to be locked until some condition was met. It would be good to know what those conditions were, but life wasn't that fair.

I knew I had a few more years before the Night King had his entire undead horde ready to start marching towards the Wall.

I was going to need redundancies in place if there was some prophecy fuckery going on.

Arya needed to be trained if she was destined to kill the Night King.

Now, the training with the Faceless Men wasn't something I could give her, but that didn’t mean she couldn't start her water dancing lessons right away. Winterfell had enough visitors from Essos that I should be able to leverage some favors to get someone to teach her.

What about Jon? He was already quite strong. I could just upgrade him to peak human form now, but then he would become like me - someone who just overpowers his opponents. He wouldn't develop the instinct that comes with real battles. He was really skilled already at swordsmanship; I couldn't defeat him while relying solely on my base strength. He just needed real battle experience, which could be built up over time. I could take him on a journey to Essos.

And Bran? There was no way I was gonna let him become Bran the Broken.

That reminded me - I wanted to get my hands on one of the Children of the Forest to see what they were all about. I still wasn’t sure what to do about him.

Let's put a pin on that, I could just tell Ned that I had seen the future and divulge parts of it to signify the importance of training his kids.

Then there was Daenerys. The mother of dragons would be great to have, especially since I could make her dragons much more dangerous. Ensuring her loyalty shouldn't be too much of an issue.

Wait, if I timed it right it should be really easy. I should be somewhere in the beginning of the first episode as far as I can tell.

Wasn't she about to be married to that horse lord? Hmm, I don't think I will be able to make it in time for the wedding. After that, it would be much harder to convince her—Stockholm syndrome and all that.

It seems I'm stuck at logistics again. Ugh.

Wait a minute, I had access to magic!

Logistics should not be a problem.

"Valayra, I need your help with a spell."

# Chapter - 67

Ned slumped in his chair, the weight of recent news pressing down on him like a physical burden. Just when he thought he had enough on his plate managing the growing influence of Winterfell, a raven's message had shattered any hope of peace.

Jon Arryn was dead. The man who had been his foster father, was gone. And now Robert, in what passed for wisdom these days, had decided to drag half the kingdom north.

He knew exactly why. The position of Hand of the King would be offered, and Robert wouldn't take no for an answer. But with everything happening in the North - the growing tensions, El's warnings about the Others, the constant flow of nobles and merchants - Ned couldn't afford to get entangled in southern politics.

He rubbed his temples, trying to ward off an approaching headache. The king's entire family would be coming too, which meant the nobles currently in Winterfell would likely extend their stays. More complications, more schemes, more-

A soft knock interrupted his brooding.

"Psst, it's me, El." The familiar voice made Ned's shoulders relax slightly.

"Come in," he sighed, wondering what new chaos the mage would bring.

“Why are you sneaking around?”

El slipped in like a shadow, his usual pristine white coat looking surprisingly weathered. "Nobody knows I'm back yet," he said without preamble. "And I'd like to keep it that way for a few days. Got something important to handle first."

"You're back early," Ned observed, studying El's unusually serious expression.

"Yeah, about that..." El's usual light tone faltered. "I don't really come with good news."

"The Others?"

"Very real. And far worse than I imagined." El ran a hand through his hair, a rare display of genuine agitation. "I nearly died out there. If not for a series of incredibly lucky circumstances..." He trailed off, leaving the implications hanging in the air.

Ned felt ice settle in his stomach. He'd never seen El rattled like this before.

"I couldn't get any physical proof, but Benjen was there. He saw everything."

"Benjen?" Ned's eyebrows shot up. "You took him beyond the Wall?"

"Needed a guide," El shrugged, but the gesture lacked its usual nonchalance. "He's fine - shaken, but alive. Left him at Castle Black to report what we witnessed. His word should carry more weight than mine alone."

El began pacing, "We need to fortify the Wall, Ned. And not just with criminals. The abandoned castles need to be restored, properly manned." He paused, fixing Ned with an intense stare. "And then there's the wildlings."

"The wildlings?"

"Thousands of them, all perfectly good recruits for the Night King's army if we leave them out there. We need to get them south of the Wall."

Ned felt a headache building behind his eyes. The political nightmare of such a suggestion alone...

"I know it's a lot," El said softly, reading his expression. "I bought us some time, but..." He trailed off, something dark flickering across his face. "I'm not sure how much."

"Now, what's been happening here? You look like you've aged a decade since I left."

"Jon Arryn is dead," Ned said heavily. "And the king rides for Winterfell."

El went very still. "How did he die?"

"A fever, they say. At his age..."

"Wonderful timing," El muttered darkly. "Let me guess - Robert's coming to offer you the Hand's position?"

"Aye."

"You can't accept," El said flatly. "Not with what's coming."

"I know." Ned leaned forward, fixing El with a steady gaze. "There's something else, isn't there?"

El seemed to wage an internal battle before speaking. "Ned... have you ever felt like I know certain things I shouldn't?"

"... The thought has crossed my mind."

"It's because I do. I've seen... a possible future, one where I don't exist. And in them..." El took a deep breath. "Your children play crucial roles in what's coming. But they need to be prepared. Trained."

"What exactly are you saying?"

"I know about Jon," El said quietly. "About his parents."

Ned's blood ran cold. Before he could respond, El raised a hand.

"Not that I really care," he said, a sardonic edge lacing his words. "I'm only telling you this so you believe me. There is some sort of prophecy at play, and I'm not arrogant enough to dismiss it anymore."

His eyes took on a distant cast as he continued, "What I'm trying to say is that I have seen a version of the future, and it does not end well for you or most of your children. But they do play an integral part in the defeat of the Night King."

A shadow of something ancient and terrible crossed his face. "Most of them die, and the ones that live go through horrible things that I wouldn't wish on my enemies. And it all starts with you going to King's Landing."

"Now, all of this was based on what I had seen in my vision. A vision where I didn't exist.”

His voice dropped to a whisper, each word carrying the weight of impending doom. "But what I saw out there was a lot more terrifying than anything I have seen in my visions."

---------------

I left the castle after explaining certain parts of what I had remembered to Ned enough to make him believe I wasn't spouting nonsense, though I was slightly distracted. Something didn't make sense. Jon Arryn was killed by Baelish, but Baelish was no longer in the capital due to my interference.

Did Cersei kill him because he discovered her infidelity?

Oh... oh fuck no. It was never Petyr directly killing him—it was Lysa. Shit. I had thought that with Baelish on the run, Jon Arryn would survive.

When I left for the Wall, the news hadn't reached me. I believed I had interfered enough in King's Landing to prevent his death, but it seems I had merely delayed the inevitable.

I should have expected this, but there was no time to dwell on it. I could trust Ned to handle things; for now, I had something more pressing to work on. A rough idea had formed in my head—one that could help me tremendously if I could figure it out.

Runes were rapidly becoming my favorite branch of magic for their sheer versatility. My fingers traced the intricate patterns with practiced precision as I constructed the first half of what I needed—a spell to generate an accurate map of the world. The existing cartography couldn't be trusted, not for what I had planned.

The first part was elegantly simple: a pulse of magic with a singular purpose. Wherever significant bodies of water met land, it would draw a scaled-down version of the coastline.

I was quite happy watching the lines appear on my version of the painted table.

Sadly though, the spell's reach was limited. It dissipated somewhere halfway across Essos, and in certain locations—particularly at the Wall and Valyria—it fizzled out much earlier, as if encountering heavy interference, but that was to be expected, I guess.

With my magically accurate map of half of this world's terrain complete, I compared it to the hand-drawn version I had and roughly estimated the location of all major coastal cities.

Then came the real challenge: the teleportation spell. My initial construct was crude and unstable—if it had worked, it would have transported objects in pieces, which was less than ideal. However, it had helped Vaylara finally understand what I was trying to do, and with her help, we developed a rudimentary working version. Still, it remained highly inefficient with an impractically long channeling time for combat use.

It was also loud and flashy. I could teleport anywhere on the map from my underground base; however, I could only teleport back to my base. It was highly inefficient, but it worked. I could now teleport, which meant no more long, boring flights from one place to another.

Okay, why did I want portals again? Oh right, I needed to go get Daenerys and convince her that—

Wait, where exactly was she again?

"Shit, Braavos or Pentos? I always get them confused."

After racking my brain for a good five minutes, I was 95% sure she was in Pentos. I hoped I was right.

I looked around the room that I had set up for this purpose. The entire floor was covered in runes, and at the center of the room was a stone table containing the most accurate map of Westeros—well, part of it anyway.

I glanced at the other hand-drawn map that I had bought from someone in King’s Landing and took one of the target pins, stabbing it at the location closest to where I guessed Pentos would be.

“Wish me luck," I said to Vaylara, knowing she couldn't accompany me as someone needed to be here to facilitate my return jump.

Her spectral form flickered with concern. "Are you sure we don't have time to test this properly?"

"This *is* the test run," I replied with a grin, earning an exasperated eye roll.

"You still haven't told me why you need to reach Pentos in such a rush," she pressed, arms crossed in that particular way that suggested she already knew she wouldn't like the answer.

"Let's just call it insurance," I said, checking the rune alignments one final time. "And helping a girl avoid a tragic fate."

"I should be back by tomorrow," I added, "day after at the latest, in case I get slightly... distracted."

Vaylara sighed, the sound carrying centuries of resigned experience. "*Please* don't do anything stupid."

"Relax," I assured her, already channeling power into the array. "I've learned my lesson. Bye!"

It took a full minute before it was stable enough to activate, and with the sound of thunder, I was somewhere else.

It took me a moment to orient myself before I realized I was falling, and that wasn't really a surprise as I had been expecting it. I let my wings unfurl and checked to see if all of me had arrived in one piece before scanning my surroundings.

I was flying above a coastline, but it was quite barren below me. However, I could see a city in the distance; it wouldn't take more than a few minutes of flying to get there.

So, I set off towards Pentoss. As I contemplated how exactly I was going to find the cheesemonger's house, I noticed that the city appeared to be under attack.

No wait, upon closer look there was definitely an army at the gates, but it was not attacking. As I flew closer, I realized that it was an army, just not the kind I was used to.

"Oh, you've got to be kidding me," I muttered, adjusting my trajectory for a better view.

There, in the center of the gathering, was unmistakably a wedding ceremony in progress. My timing wasn't just good - it was almost suspiciously perfect. I had to stifle a laugh at the irony of it all.

"Well, there goes my plan of a quiet midnight extraction," I mused, circling high above the proceedings like a vulture.

"Right then," I whispered to myself, analyzing the crowd. "How does one kidnap a princess from her own wedding without starting an international incident?"

# Chapter - 68

Daenerys sat stiffly atop the wooden platform, acutely aware of every breath, every slight movement she made. Her new husband, the imposing Khal Drogo, had his attention focused on something in the distance while he barked commands to his bloodriders in their harsh tongue.

Just below them, she could hear her brother's increasingly agitated voice as he spoke with Illyrio. Though they tried to keep their voices low, Viserys' frustration carried clearly to her ears.

"When?" he demanded, the dragon embroidered on his new black tunic seeming to writhe with his agitation.

Illyrio's hand waved lazily through the air. "When the Khal chooses. When the omens favor war."

"I piss on these Dothraki omens," Viserys spat. "I've waited fifteen years to get my throne back."

Dany risked a glance at her new husband, studying his impassive face. His dark eyes were fixed on something below, his expression unreadable. Following his gaze, she saw what had captured his attention - Dothraki women dancing to the rhythm of drums.

Before she could process what was happening, a warrior strode into the circle, grabbed one of the dancers, and took her right there on the ground.

The crowd's cheers made her stomach turn, but worse was the approving grin that spread across Khal Drogo's face. More warriors joined in, each claiming a dancer for themselves, until inevitably, two men reached for the same woman.

Steel flashed in the sunlight as they drew their curved blades. Dany wanted to look away but found herself transfixed by the deadly grace of their movements. The fight ended in a brutal fashion: one missed block, one decisive strike, and suddenly a man's insides were painting the dust red.

The victor didn't even take the woman they'd fought over. He simply grabbed another dancer as the crowd roared their approval, and Dany felt bile rise in her throat. This was to be her life now?

She barely registered Illyrio's polite applause as he leaned toward her brother. "A Dothraki wedding without at least three deaths is considered a dull affair."

The words echoed in her head as she struggled to maintain her composure.

She was scared. This was no wedding. It was just an excuse to kill and fuck like animals.

She had stopped praying. She had prayed every day leading up to this, to any god listening to her, pleading that she would not have to marry the barbarian her brother had sold her to in exchange for an army.

<BGM: Like a Prayer (Choir Version)>

She was all alone. No one here was going to help her.

Just as despair threatened to overwhelm her, she felt something... shift.

Like a gentle breeze washing over the gathering, people began swaying on their feet. One by one, they slumped forward.

Even Khal Drogo, the fearsome warrior who was to be her husband, fought against the invisible wave for a moment before succumbing. His massive frame hit the ground with a dull thud that seemed to echo in the sudden silence.

That was the last thing she saw as she too succumbed to whatever that was.

She jolted awake with a gasp, her heart hammering against her ribs.

‘Had that been a dream?’

For a moment, she began to hope that the entire wedding was just a dream, but reality was not that kind.

The evidence lay scattered around her. Bodies sprawled across the courtyard, peaceful in their unexpected slumber, exactly as she remembered.

Her eyes darted from face to face, searching for any sign of movement. The entire wedding party lay still, their chests rising and falling in the steady rhythm of deep sleep. The silence felt oppressive.

Movement caught her eye - a figure moving purposefully among the wedding gifts, examining each with casual interest. Fear warred with curiosity in her chest as the stranger paused, seeming to sense her gaze.

"Oh good, you're awake!" he said cheerfully, as if they were meeting for afternoon tea rather than in the midst of … whatever this was. "I thought you would take longer."

"Who..." The question died in her throat as she struggled to process the surreal scene before her.

"Oh, you can call me El. It's cool, though; you don't have to introduce yourself. You're quite famous where I'm from."

For a moment, she felt disbelief. What was happening?

Recognition flickered in her mind - whispered stories from her handmaids about a white-robed healer who worked miracles in the North. The White Mage of Winterfell. She'd dismissed them as mere tales, but now…

She didn't know what to say. Why was he here?

Before she could form a coherent thought, he spoke again: "I'm really sorry about this, but I kind of have to kidnap you for a bit."

# 

The silence was deafening. Even the sleeping bodies seemed to radiate awkward silence.

"That came out wrong," he added quickly, running a hand through his hair.

"Why?" she managed, finding her voice at last. It came out steadier than she felt.

"...Huh, great question." He looked genuinely thoughtful, as if he hadn't quite expected such direct inquiry. Then his expression shifted, becoming more serious. "I can see the future, and I really don't like the suffering and death it gives you, so I'm going to give you a better future, in exchange for a favor a few years down the line. After that you can do whatever you want..." He paused.

“No genocide though”

“What?" Daenerys stared at him, her mind struggling to process everything that was happening.

"Which part of that do you need a clearer explanation on?"

"Why would you think I would commit genocide?" She felt oddly offended by the implication.

"You Targaryens are a fickle bunch." He said it so matter-of-factly.

She opened her mouth to protest, but El just raised an eyebrow and glanced pointedly at her brother's unconscious form.

Her protest died in her throat.

"Ok," she said quietly.

"Ok what?"

"Take me away?"

"...Just like that?" Now it was his turn to look confused, as if his carefully planned kidnapping had gone too smoothly.

"Why would I say no?" The words came out a lot bitter than she had expected.”Why would I say no when all I have been doing for the past few days was begging any god listening that someone would take me away from here”

"Fair enough I guess, I was about to bribe you with these, in case you had second thoughts" he said, holding up her wedding gifts - the dragon eggs she'd barely had time to examine. They caught the light strangely, their scaled surfaces seeming to ripple with hidden life.

"Those were mine anyway," she pointed out, feeling strangely bold.

He grinned at that. "Ah, but I was about to tell you how to hatch them."

She froze at that. "How...?"

"Eh, it's quite easy. I'll tell you when it's time." He waved off the question with casual confidence.

"How long?"

"A moon, maybe two."

"And you were doing this for a favor and a condition of no genocide?" The words felt ridiculous leaving her mouth.

"Well, with dragons you can never be sure, and they are going to be part of the favor."

She paused, the implications suddenly hitting her. Dragons. Real, living dragons. The thought itself was so absurd she almost laughed.

"Why?"

"I'm a nice guy and I recognize when I need to delegate." He shrugged as if discussing the weather rather than resurrecting extinct creatures.

"Very well. Where will you be taking me?"

"Winterfell."

Fear gripped her heart. "I do not believe that..."

"Oh, you don't need to worry about that. I can easily make you look non-Targaryen enough, then I could change you back as well if it's safe enough and you can take care of yourself."

She quietly nodded at that, not knowing what to say.

Instead she stared at the sleeping figures scattered across the courtyard. "What did you do to them?"

"They're asleep” El replied, hands casually tucked in his pockets. "They'll wake in a few hours. As much as I'd love to do more permanent damage to certain individuals..." His eyes flickered briefly to her brother and the magister. "Best not to advertise who's responsible for your disappearance."

"I understand." Daenerys straightened her shoulders. "When do we leave? I have no desire to linger here."

El gave her an odd look. "You know, you're being remarkably calm about all this. It's actually throwing off my whole rescue speech."

"Would you prefer I protest?" A ghost of a smile touched her lips. "Beg to stay and marry this barbarian warlord instead?"

"Point taken." He sighed, gesturing toward the darker side of the city. "Let's walk. I've got transportation arranged, but we need some distance first."

As they walked away, Daenerys allowed herself one final glance at Viserys's unconscious form. Years of fear and abuse crystallized in that moment, making her next question inevitable.

"What happens to him?"

"Hmm?"

"In the future you saw. What becomes of my brother?"

“In the future I saw, your brother... well, he gets exactly what he's been asking for."

"What do you mean?"

"He gets his crown." El's voice was oddly gentle. "Just not the way he imagined. Your soon-to-be-ex-husband pours molten gold over his head."

Daenerys stopped walking, her blood running cold. The worst part wasn't the horror of the image - it was how easily she could picture it happening. How fitting it seemed.

"I..." she started, then stopped, unsure what she even wanted to say.

"Yeah," El nodded, understanding in his eyes. "Though you have to admit, your brother has this unique talent for making people want to kill him in creative ways."

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That entire interaction was a trainwreck from the start. I mean, who the fuck starts a conversation with "Hey, I'm here to kidnap you"?

In my defense though, she was far more beautiful than I'd expected. I mean, what the fuck was going on with that? Like, Jesus.

"This is probably far enough," I said, trying to reclaim some semblance of professionalism. "This is going to take a few minutes."

She said nothing, just watched me with that intent gaze. I forced my attention to the task at hand, though my usual focus kept slipping every time she moved.

The swarm moved invisibly through the air, following my mental blueprint to inscribe the required runes. It was a lot simpler than the one from my home base, as it was just a beacon to help the main array, which did most of the heavy lifting.

The runes took shape beneath our feet, each line precisely placed by my army of invisible assistants. The magic flowed smooth and steady, like a well-rehearsed dance.

At least my powers weren't as socially awkward as me. Small mercies, I supposed.

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Daenerys watched in fascination as El seemed to deliberately avoid looking at her, his attention fixed on some invisible task. Then she saw it - threads of crimson appearing on the ground as if painted by phantom hands, forming intricate patterns that made her eyes hurt from their complexity.

The symbols spiralled outward, creating an elaborate pattern of blood and magic that somehow felt both ancient and new. Each line connected with perfect precision, building something that tugged at the edges of her understanding.

She opened her mouth to ask what was happening, but the symbols glowed an otherworldly shade of red that forced her to shield her eyes then she felt the world... shift.

The open air of Pentos vanished between one heartbeat and the next, replaced by cool stone walls and dancing shadows. They stood in what appeared to be some sort of underground chamber, though any windows or traditional features had been replaced by strange glowing crystals that cast an ethereal blue light.

The sudden transition left her momentarily dizzy, her mind struggling to understand.

The air here felt different - heavier somehow, charged with an energy that made her skin tingle. The room itself seemed alive, covered in pulsing runes that mimicked the pattern she had seen a few moments ago.

She steadied herself.

"Welcome to my humble workshop," El announced, finally looking at her again. "Sorry about the decor - I haven't really had time to make it more guest-friendly."