

= Baelor =

" Baelor " is the ninth episode of the HBO medieval fantasy television series Game of Thrones . First aired on June 12 , 2011 , it was written by the show 's creators and executive producers David Benioff and D. B. Weiss , and directed by Alan Taylor .

The plot depicts Eddard Stark , imprisoned and accused of high treason , struggling with the decision whether to falsely confess to save his daughters . His wife Catelyn negotiates with Lord Walder Frey for the use of a strategic river crossing and his son Robb fights his first battle in the war against the Lannisters . Meanwhile , Jon Snow discovers a secret about Maester Aemon , and Daenerys stands up to Qotho and challenges Dothraki traditions to care for Khal Drogo . In this episode , The Twins is added to the Opening .

The episode matched the previous week 's season @-@ high viewership and was well received by critics , many of whom called it the best episode of the season . The episode was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series and Peter Dinklage won the award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series for his performance .

= = Plot = =

Like previous episodes , " Baelor " interweaves action in multiple separate locations in and around the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros .

= = = At the Lannister camp = = =

At dinner , Lord Tywin ( Charles Dance ) tells his son Tyrion ( Peter Dinklage ) that Tyrion and his barbarian allies will fight in the vanguard of the army . Tyrion suspects his father is trying to get him killed . Tyrion returns to his camp and finds the prostitute Shae ( Sibel Kekilli ) whom Bronn ( Jerome Flynn ) found for him at Tyrion 's request . As the three of them swap stories , Tyrion reveals that , when he was 16 , he married a woman named Tysha whom Jaime and he had rescued . When his father Tywin learned of this , he made Jaime confess that Tysha was actually a hired prostitute . Tywin then made Tyrion watch as Lannister guardsmen all had sex with her , each paying her one silver coin provided by Lord Tywin .

Later , Tyrion is awakened by Bronn as a Stark force approaches . Tyrion leaves his tent dressed in armor and orders the hill tribes to combat , but he is trampled as they rush to war . By the time he regains consciousness , the battle has been played out . Lord Tywin reveals that the Stark host was only 2 @,@ 000 men , leaving them to wonder where the other 18 @,@ 000 went .

= = = At the Twins = = =

The Stark army arrives at the Twins , a fortified bridge stronghold controlled by the cranky Lord Walder Frey ( David Bradley ) , who is nominally sworn to Catelyn 's ( Michelle Fairley ) father Hoster Tully . However , Lord Frey has sealed off the bridge and refuses to let the army cross , so Catelyn negotiates on her son Robb 's behalf . After some hard bargaining , Frey agrees to allow the Stark army to cross through The Twins and to commit some of his troops to the conflict with the Lannisters , but , in return , he wants Robb ( Richard Madden ) and his sister Arya ( Maisie Williams ) to marry two of his children , to which Robb reluctantly agrees .

After crossing the river , Robb divides his forces , sending the aforementioned 2 @,@ 000 men to distract Lord Tywin 's army . Due to the false information Robb gave to the captured Lannister scout , Lord Tywin 's force believes it is the whole Stark army . The remainder of Robb 's men sneak up on Jaime Lannister 's ( Nikolaj Coster @-@ Waldau ) army , defeating them and capturing Jaime . When captured , Jaime challenges Robb to a one @-@ on @-@ one duel to settle the matter , which Robb declines .

= = = At the Wall = = =

Lord Commander Mormont ( James Cosmo ) gives Jon Snow ( Kit Harington ) House Mormont 's ancestral Valyrian steel sword Longclaw , which was originally meant for his son Ser Jorah ( Iain Glen ) before Jorah 's exile , as a reward for saving his life from the undead ranger . Jon is upset , however , when Sam ( John Bradley ) tells him about Robb 's war against the Lannisters , feeling that he should be there to help Robb .

Maester Aemon ( Peter Vaughan ) summons Jon and explains to him the reason why members of the Night 's Watch do not marry : it would force them to choose between their duty to the order or loyalty to their loved ones . Aemon knows this very well because he is actually Aemon Targaryen , the Mad King Aerys Targaryen 's uncle and Daenerys ' ( Emilia Clarke ) great @-@ uncle , who dutifully and reluctantly stayed at the Wall while his family members were killed or exiled when the Targaryens were overthrown . Aemon advises Jon that he must choose either his duty to the Night 's Watch or his family , but also warns that the consequences of his choice will haunt him for the rest of his life .

= = = In Lhazar = = =

Khal Drogo ( Jason Momoa ) , delirious from an infection caused by the chest wound inflicted by Mago , falls from his saddle , a sign of weakness among the Dothraki . Daenerys takes Drogo into her tent and sends for Mirri Maz Duur ( Mia Soteriou ) to help him . However , Ser Jorah Mormont advises Daenerys that they should leave now because the Dothraki only respect the physically strong . He explains that , if Drogo dies , Qotho ( Dar Salim ) and the other bloodriders will fight amongst themselves to be his successor ; whoever wins will kill her and her unborn child to prevent Drogo 's son from growing up to be a rival . Daenerys refuses to abandon her husband , even when Mirri tells Daenerys that she cannot save him and instead advises giving Drogo a quick , clean death . In desperation , Daenerys encourages Mirri to use blood magic despite Mirri 's warning about the consequences of such a spell , that only death can pay for life . Mirri brings Drogo 's horse into the tent , slits its throat , orders everyone to leave , and warns that none must enter during the spell . Qotho , shocked at what Daenerys has done , tries to stop the spell , but Mormont kills him to prevent interference . Daenerys then goes into premature labor , but none of the Dothraki midwives help her , owing to their belief that she is cursed . In desperation , Mormont carries Daenerys into Drogo 's tent to seek Mirri 's help .

= = = In King 's Landing = = =

Varys ( Conleth Hill ) visits Ned ( Sean Bean ) in the dungeons and tells Ned that if he makes a false confession and swears loyalty to King Joffrey ( Jack Gleeson ) , Cersei ( Lena Headey ) will spare Ned and let him serve the Night 's Watch as his exile . Ned initially refuses but relents after Varys tells him that his daughter Sansa 's ( Sophie Turner ) life is also at stake .

Arya , who has been living as a beggar in the streets of King 's Landing since her escape from the Lannisters , learns a crowd is gathering at the Great Sept of Baelor , where her father will be judged before the gods , and in order to see over the crowd , climbs onto the statue of Baelor the Blessed . As he is dragged through the crowd , Ned notices Arya on the statue , and alerts the Night 's Watch recruiter Yoren ( Francis Magee ) to her location . With Sansa , Cersei , Joffrey and the Small Council looking over him , Ned confesses to treason and swears fealty to Joffrey in front of the crowd . Satisfied , Sansa and Cersei ask Joffrey to spare Ned as Joffrey promised , but Joffrey breaks his promise and orders Ned to be executed . As Sansa watches in horror , Cersei , Varys and the Small Council attempt to intervene , and Arya tries to rescue Ned , only to be stopped by Yoren , who prevents her from seeing her father 's execution . When he sees that Arya has been rescued , Ned accepts his fate and is beheaded by Ser Ilyn Payne ( Wilko Johnson ) .

= = Production = =

### == Writing ==

The episode was written by the showrunners David Benioff and D. B. Weiss , based on the original book by George R. R. Martin .

The title of the episode refers to the Great Sept of Baelor , the main religious building in King 's Landing , where the episode 's pivotal scene takes place . In the world created by George R. R. Martin , Baelor I Targaryen was a king during a previous century , revered as a patron and supporter of the Faith of the Seven . " Baelor " includes the content of the book 's chapters Eddard XV , Catelyn IX , Jon VIII , Tyrion VIII , Catelyn X , Daenerys VIII and Arya V ( 59 ? 61 and 63 ? 66 ) .

The scene with the drinking game between Tyrion , Bronn and Shae was written specifically for the episode , but the story of Tyrion 's ill @-@ fated marriage to Tysha was taken from a previous chapter of the books . Shae 's background was changed from Westerosi to foreign to accommodate Kekilli 's accent . Other notable divergence from the books include the modification of the whole strategy of Robb Stark when dividing his forces , and a change to the Targaryen genealogy as explained by Maester Aemon : in the TV adaptation the Mad King is described as the son , rather than the grandson , of Aegon V ( thus eliminating Jaehaerys II from the succession of kings ) .

### == Casting ==

" Baelor " marks the first appearance of the German actress Sibel Kekilli , in the role of the prostitute Shae . Executive producer George R. R. Martin commented that she was extraordinary in her audition , in which she read the scene where Shae meets Tyrion in a tent the night before the battle of the Green Fork . According to Martin , " a lot of beautiful young women read for Shae . [ ... ] But there 's another dimension to Shae as well . She 's not as practiced and hardened at this as a more seasoned pro . There 's still a girl next door quality to her , a sense of vulnerability , playfulness , and , yes , innocence . [ ... ] All of our Shaes were hot as hell . But only a handful of them captured that other quality , maybe three out of twenty , and Sibel was the standout . [ ... ] Watching those auditions , any red @-@ blooded male would want to take every one of our Shae candidates to bed . But Sibel made you fall in love with her as well . "

Also introduced in this episode was the English actor David Bradley , playing the role of the Lord of the Crossing " Late " Walder Frey .

### == Filming locations ==

The interiors of the episode were filmed at the Paint Hall studios , close to Belfast . The area of the Castle Ward estate , also in Northern Ireland , was used to film on location the Stark and Lannister camps , the Crossing , and the battlefields of the Green Fork and the Whispering Woods .

The climactic scene before the Great Sept of Baelor was shot at Fort Manoel , in the Maltese town of G?ira . The filming took place in the last week of October 2010 .

### == Execution ==

Years later , showrunner D. B. Weiss commented that the explicit style of the execution scene was selected in part to make it clear to the viewers that Eddard Stark , despite being the arguable protagonist of season one , actually was dead : " It ? s that rule : ' If don 't see the body then they ? re not really dead . ' Like when we cut Ned ? s head off , we didn ? t want a gory Monty Python geyser of blood , but we needed to see the blade enter his neck and cut out on the frame where the blade was mid @-@ neck . [ ... ] we needed Ned 's death to be totally unambiguous . "

### == Reception ==

== Ratings ==

" Baelor " gathered 2 @. @ 7 million viewers in its premiere telecast in the United States , equaling the season high reached with the previous week 's episode . The total for the night , including the repeat , was slightly lower , with 3 @. @ 4 million viewers . In the United Kingdom , the episode was viewed by 1 @. @ 043 million viewers , making it the highest @-@ rated broadcast that week .

== Critical response ==

The episode received great acclaim among the critics . From the reviewers of The A.V. Club , where it was rated with an A , Todd VanDerWerff called it " unquestionably the finest episode of Game Of Thrones yet , " and David Sims found it " terrific " and with a conclusion that would be " sure to blow the minds ( and break the hearts ) " of the watchers Matt Fowler of IGN TV gave the episode a perfect " 10 " saying that it was a " clean and epic entry with a daring , tragic finish " that had " an admirable undercurrent of audience contempt . "

The focus of most reviews was in the climactic final scene , whose directing and acting is universally acclaimed by critics . Writing for Cultural Learnings , Myles McNutt stated : " the final shot , with Arya looking to the sky as everything goes to silence and all she sees is the birds flying was just wonderfully haunting . Alan Taylor 's direction sold both the chaos and the resignation of that moment . " HitFix 's Alan Sepinwall felt that " that final scene was so gorgeously shot , and the weariness of Bran 's performance and the horror of Maisie Williams ' so perfectly conveyed the emotions of it , even as things seemed so chaotic . "

The emotional charge of the scene hit home for many reviewers : Scott Meslow of The Atlantic called it " an absolutely nightmarish scene " and labelled Eddard 's death " horrific in its indignity . " Jace Lacob from Televisionary and Maureen Ryan from AOL TV admitted having shed tears at the episode 's dramatic conclusion . The latter found the scene " masterful " and felt that the visual medium and Alan Taylor 's excellent work had made it more powerful than the book 's original version .

Besides the final scene , other aspects were discussed : Garcia noted the acting of Richard Madden and how the Freys had been introduced . Ryan praised the wide range of emotions used by Emilia Clarke while playing Daenerys , and how Peter Dinklage played Tyrion 's frustration and confusion during the episode . Both she and McNutt were glad that Tyrion 's exposition scene in the tent with Bronn and Shae did not use sex to keep viewers , as was done in past episodes .

There was debate about the merits of the producer 's decision to avoid depicting the two battles between the Starks and Lannisters . Ryan criticized it and confessed being " a little disappointed that many of the major characters are caught up in a war and we 're not seeing it . " Sims regretted not seeing the fight , and although he claimed to understand the budget constrictions , he felt that " all this off @-@ screen fighting is just getting my blood rushing for some on @-@ screen fighting . " Sepinwall concludes : " Ideally , we 'd get a few epic , Braveheart @-@ level battle scenes at some point , but I also respect the demands of time and budget here . Those kinds of sequences cost a fortune , and they eat up a lot of screen time , and I think ultimately I 'd have rather had the time , say , that we spent in Tyrion 's tent the night before the battle , with the mortifying story of his ex @-@ wife , and then whatever it cost to make the execution sequence look as good as it did , than for the episode to have given us one or two long fight scenes . "

In 2013 , TV Guide ranked the final scene as the second greatest twist of all time .

== Accolades ==

Peter Dinklage chose this episode as his submission named in his candidacy for the 2011 Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series . Spenser Davis , writing for entertainment industry awards website GoldDerby , noted that the choice was curious because while the episode itself was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series ( which it lost to Friday Night Lights ' " Always " ) , Dinklage 's screen

time in the episode was rather limited . Davis noted that Dinklage 's nomination was the only acting Emmy nomination among the 13 received by the show , and opined that " A Golden Crown " better showcased Dinklage 's contributions to the series . Dinklage 's win was the only major award received by the series and the first Emmy of his career .

= = = = Awards and nominations = = = =