**The Snake is Most Silent Before the Strike**

**Kings Landing**

**Tower of the Hand**

**Small Council Chambers**

The dignified yet utilitarian hall held an elongated rectangular cherry wood table and heavy chairs arranged casually around the centerpiece. Two Lannister soldiers stood guard outside the chamber, as the six figures walked in with a purpose that only a lull in war could bring.

Cersei Lannister, Queen Mother, sauntered in last. Taking her seat next to her uncle Kevan Lannister, she eyed the other members of the Small Council with derision. All, except for her new Master of Whispers, the notorious ex-Maestor Qybog.

No Kings’ Guardsmen were present of course. King Tomen was surely busy learning matters of state, or more likely in the clutches of his betrothed. There was no love lost between the Queen Mother and the Rose of Highgarden as Margery was known. Still, the support of Highgarden was the backing the depleted Lannister armies needed to retain power. No, no true protection was within the Tower of the Hand. Except the lowly Lannister swordsmen and spies of course.

Krath Priest Zagro Fenn shuffled his weight, slightly fixing his mail-clad torso and straightened his helmet. The Lannister armor was ornate and imposing if not comfortable in the slightest degree. How the equite and arrived in these lands was a curious question, and a tale for another day. It was true to be said he had been in contact with this strange land all of his life and had connections both in Westeros and in the galaxy at large that played a part in this War of Ice and Fire as it was colloquially called. So, he waited. And listened, as none suspected a lowly soldier both in Westeros and beyond.

“This huborous will be your undoing Lannister whore,” thought Fenn, eyeing his sentry mate to his left. “Easy to infiltrate your ranks. How you have not simply been assassinated is beyond words. The House of Black and White could have picked your entire breed out in a single day if needed. But, I wait and listen. As commanded.”

Inside the chamber, despite the recent successes on the battlefields and domestic tranquility returning there was no peace. King Joffrey was slain as was Tywin Lannister. The fratricide caused by the Imp and the lingering rumors of sibling incest would not end the discord felt within Westeros. Likewise, word had come that the Iron Bank of Bravos had backed Stannis Baratheon.

“The man has no army, and has even left that miserable rock of Dragonstone. Reports are he has engaged Wildlings at the Wall as the Crown sent no aid to the Crows. Let him take all the gold the Bank has, they can go after him as they do us for our debts,” came the usual reply of Cersei Lannister to dark tidings from the Minister of Coin.

“My lady, it is not so simple. With Stannis at the Wall this complicates our chances of holding the North. The Northmen will never bow to the Dreadfort no matter if they control Winterfell or drive out all of the Iron-borne. As you let the Stark girls escape we can never be sure. And…the bastard is on the Wall,” Kevan Lannister retorted, the only voice of reason left to this sycophantic council.

Cersei was displeased. She was not use to people contradicting her tone and demands. Especially not from her uncle. She meant to rule through her son’s name and her uncle’s armies. Both seemed to be slipping from her tired grasp. She had considered paying the Lannister guards loyal to her to take him out so that his son, her erstwhile lover would be the head of Lannister forces, but this would not do. There was a strangely unique soldier new to the capital standing guard her thoughts lingered to, however.

“Enough of this. We press onward with our development and consolidation of power. We have many domestic enemies that must be eradicated before we turn to the remaining thorn in our side. Let the Freys and the Boltons handle the North, the Seven Gods know I would rather see that whole area destroyed. My daughter is still in Dorne. With the war all but won I want her back,” stated Cersei.

The aged Maestor interjected. “My lady, Marcella is betrothed to the heir of Dorne. Recalling her now would be enough to cause the South to rise up. Bad enough the Prince’s brother has been killed at Kings Landing under odd circumstances…defending your brother no less.”

“Let them come. Highgarden can handle them. And the Lannister armies and I will swoop down and burn their cities. Make it so,” stated Cersei with a solemn tone “Guards prepare all sentries and pass the word for a War Council immediately.”

No response was forthcoming. Kevan Lannister sprang from his chair and exited the chamber. “My lady, lords, stay where you are. The guards have been slain. We have assassins afoot.”

Assassin. Spy. Krath. Fenn was already running through the catacombs of the city, hurling himself to a waiting fishing boat that would pass on dark tidings. Fenn was sure he was not followed and reached out with the Force to reassure his accomplice. “Send word to Dorne, to Prince Oberyn personally. Princess Marcella must be guarded well and triple the forces on the Dornish March but do so discretely. War is coming to Dorne.” The boat entered the sea and Fenn sat and thought. Perhaps it was time. Dorne would arm and be ready to trap the enemy forces preparing to invade. And what of Kings’ Landing and Westeros proper? Perhaps it was time to send word across the Narrow Sea. For Fenn knew the son of Rhaegar Targaryn was nearing maturing and amassing his own army. With the Mother of Dragons conflicted in Slaver’s Bay, no Essos forces would stop the son of Rhaegar. The Lannisters would be on their own. And that, that, would be enough to ensure a Targaryn restoration. With the help of a Krath Priest as the puppet master.