



## CHAPTER 1: A WESTEROS PRIMER

Welcome to Westeros and A Song of Ice and Fire Roleplaying Game. Westeros is the creation of author George R.R. Martin, and it is a world of great houses great and small, true and false knights armored in shining steel, lords and ladies resplendent in silks and furs, and the smallfolk who toil in the lands and holdings of the nobility.

Westeros is composed of seven “kingdoms,” provinces that all swear fealty to the Iron Throne, but each has an ancient history as a kingdom in its own right. From the cold North where summer snows are all too common to the hot arid deserts of southern Dorne, and from the desolate and sea-swept rocks of the Iron Islands to the bustling capital of King’s Landing, the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros are filled with many colorful people and ripe with opportunities for wealth and glory.

In this world, seasons last for years, not months, and family generations can be traced back for thousands of years to the Age of Heroes. Ancestral weapons may be worth more than a lordling’s only daughter, and castles may have flown a score of banners in their storied histories.

Magic lives mostly in the myths and faded dreams of earlier generations. The learned maesters say that it died out a lifetime ago, but others say it still exists amongst the maegi and warlocks of the exotic eastern lands.

SIFRP is about Machiavellian court politics, family alliances and enmities, the rise and fall of kingdoms, and the clash of armies. But it is also about honor and duty, family tensions, the responsibility of leadership, love and loss, tournaments, murders, conspiracies, prophecies, dreams, war, great victories, and terrible defeats. It’s about knights, both false and true—and it’s about dragons.

*They had come together at the ford of the Trident while the battle crashed around them—Robert with his warhammer and his great antlered helm, the Targaryen prince armored all in black. On the prince’s breastplate was the three-headed dragon of his House, wrought all in rubies that flashed like fire in the sunlight. The waters of the Trident ran red around the hooves of their destriers as they circled and clashed, again and again until at last a crushing blow from Robert’s hammer stove in the dragon and the chest beneath it. When Ned had finally come on the scene, Rhaegar lay dead in the stream while men of both armies scabbled in the swirling waters for rubies knocked free of his armor.*

# AN ALMANAC OF WESTEROS

## INSCRIBED AND RELATED BY MAESTER JESIAH



The dragons are all dead. The last dragons—those that flew and exhaled fire—perished one hundred and fifty years ago. But the family Targaryen, who had come out of the ruin of Valyria to Westeros three centuries past on the backs of dragons, who had united seven squabbling kingdoms under the Iron Throne, whose emblem was a three-headed dragon, and whose words were fire and Blood, those dragons died only recently.

Aegon the Conqueror set foot on Westeros three hundred years ago, along with his sisters Visenya and Rhaenys. Together, they were the three heads of the dragon. They arrived on the backs of Vhagar, Meraxes, and Balerion—the true dragons—and they laid waste to all who opposed them. Some, like Corren Stark, the last king in the North, bent the knee. Others, like King Mern of the Reach and King Harren the Black, burned.

For three centuries, the Targaryens united the kingdoms of Westeros under one rule, despite many tumultuous upheavals. The Targaryens survived their own civil war between brother and sister, known as the Dance of the Dragons, where Viserys I's daughter Rhaenyra and his son Aegon nearly tore the realm apart with their dragons. The Targaryen dynasty would also survive the Blackfyre Rebellion of Aegon IV's bastards, the conquering and later marriage of Dorne into their kingdom, the invasion in the North of the King-beyond-the-Wall, and the War of the Ninepenny Kings. The Targaryen reign lasted until King Aerys II ascended to the throne. Known as the Mad King, he would usher in the fall of the dragons.

Aerys II was torturously cruel and violently insane. He saw enemies in every shadow and turned his subjects against him through inhumane acts of despotic power. In the end, Robert Baratheon of Storm's End led an uprising against the king and Crown Prince Rhaegar Targaryen abducted Robert's betrothed, Lyanna Stark. Known as the War of the Usurper, or Robert's Rebellion, Robert united many of the great houses behind his cause, including the houses Arryn, Stark, and Tully.

Robert Baratheon slew Crown Prince Rhaegar on the banks of the Trident. King Aerys, in desperation, opened the gates of King's Landing to the armies of his former hand, Lord Tywin Lannister, who immediately betrayed his king and set his forces to sack King's Landing. Tywin's son, Ser Jaime, an honored knight of the Kingsguard, murdered the king he had sworn to protect and has been known ever since as the Kingslayer.

It is now the reign of Robert Baratheon, the first of his Name, King of the Andals and the Rhoynar and the first Men, Lord of the Seven Kingdoms, and Protector of the Realm. He is married to Lord Tywin Lannister's golden daughter, Cersei, and they have three golden-haired children: Crown Prince Joffrey, Princess Myrcella, and Prince Tommen.

The only surviving Targaryens, Prince Viserys and his younger sister Daenerys Stormborn, hide in lands far to the east.

## WESTEROS

To talk of Westeros is to discuss several distinct regions, known collectively as the Seven Kingdoms, for at one point each was its own great realm. This usage dates back to the time of Aegon I Targaryen, known as Aegon the Conqueror. When the Targaryens arrived on this continent, they encountered the King in the North, the King of Mountain and Vale, the King of the Rock, the King of the Reach, the Storm King, the King of the Iron Islands, and the Prince of Dorne, each dominant in his own lands.

And before there were seven kingdoms, hundreds of kingdoms and different peoples existed. The earliest period of Westeros—long before the Targaryens, or even the first Men, were known—is referred to as the Dawn Age. During this era, the children of the forest lived alone throughout Westeros and worshipped natural gods, such as the gods of the trees and rocks and streams. This period lasted until the arrival of the first Men, who invaded Westeros about 12,000 years ago. The first Men came from the east across a land bridge, through what would one day be known as Dorne. The first Men brought

bronze weapons and horses with them, in addition to their own gods. They warred with the children of the forest and cut down the children's woods and their carved weirwoods—pale trees carved with the faces of their gods, which the first Men feared. The children eventually shattered the land bridge, creating the region known today as the Broken Arm of Dorne and the Stepstones, but it was too late to stop the first Men.

The war between the children of the forest and the first Men lasted for centuries until they buried their enmity by forging the Pact on the Isle of Faces. The Pact was a great peace that ended the Dawn Age and began the Age of Heroes: four thousand years of friendship between the first Men and the children. They worked together, traded between their villages, and the first Men even took on the old gods of the children, adopting the carved weirwoods as their own.

This era also encompassed the founding of the Seven Kingdoms, though that name would not come into the histories until far later. Many of the noble houses of Westeros today trace their lineage back to the Age of Heroes, when grand figures such as Brandon the Builder and Lann the Clever were said to have lived.

The Seven Kingdoms were not all born at once, but each of today's regions can be seen in the pattern of that time long ago. The Starks, family of Brandon the Builder, rose as the rulers in the North. The Casterlys ruled in the west—until Lann the Clever winkled Casterly Rock from them, making it then and forever the historic home to the Kings of the Rock. The kingdom of the Reach was established by Garth Greenhand, father of House Gardener (and many smaller houses as well, for his seed was fertile). The Storm Kings, founded by Durran, swept over the stormlands. Durran raised their castle at Storm's End with stone and magic to withstand the fury of the gods of sea and wind, for he stole and married their daughter. Then there was the legendary Grey King, who ruled not only the Iron Islands but also the sea itself; the Mudd family was one of a dozen houses to rule over the Riverlands.

During this era, the Sworn Brotherhood of the Night's Watch was founded. The Night's Watch was to be the shield that guarded the realms of men from the barbaric wildings and nightmarish Others of the far North. Brandon the Builder was said to have helped the Night's Watch build their mighty wall, a construct of stone and ice high 700 feet tall and hundreds of leagues long.

Both the peace of the Pact and the Age of Heroes reached their end with the arrival of the Andals, new invaders from across the sea, who landed in what is known today as the Vale of Arryn. The Andals brought new gods and deadly weapons forged of steel with them. The Andals fought the first Men for centuries until, in time, all six southern kingdoms fell, and the Andals destroyed the weirwood groves and the children of the forest wherever they found them. The children were either all killed or fled far to the North, for they were never heard from again. The only realm of the first Men to stand against the Andals was the Kingdom of the North.

The Andals spread their faith in the Seven Gods throughout the lands. They established themselves as Kings of Mountain and Vale (from which House Arryn descends) and Kings of the Westerlands.

The last major migration to Westeros happened roughly 1,000 years ago, when the warrior-queen Nymeria led her fleet of 10,000 ships from the east to Dorne. Her people, the Rhoynar, named for the Rhoynne River they once called home, were initially met with hostility from the Dornish lords, but Nymeria made peace with Lord Mors Martell by taking him as her husband. With their combined strength, they forced all of Martell's rivals to bend the knee, and he became the first Prince of Dorne, after the custom of Nymeria's Rhoynar.

These centuries were marked by regular skirmishes and bloodletting across the kingdoms. The lords of Dorne fought intermittent wars with both the Kings of the Reach and the Kings of the Stormlands. Southron armies smashed and broke against Moat Cailin to the north, and from north to south, King Rickard Stark slew the Marsh King. The Storm Kings conquered the riverlands of the Trident and held them for hundreds of years until the ironborn defeated Arrec the Storm King and claimed them for themselves.

Then, more than 400 years ago, the Doom came to the wondrous freehold of Valyria, far to the east of Westeros, known as the ancient home of language, art, and magic. The survivors fled the smoking ruins, arriving on the eastern tip of Westeros, at the isle of Dragonstone, which had been Valyria's westernmost outpost. Dragonstone's masters, the Targaryens, already long established on Dragonstone, came to dominance over the remaining Valyrians. They abandoned their old gods who had betrayed them and converted to the Andal religion of the Seven.

The Targaryens remained on Dragonstone for more than a hundred years before they ventured forth and set foot on Westeros. Aegon, accompanied by his sisters Visenya and Rhaenyra, sailed from

Dragonstone to unify the squabbling kingdoms of the Andals. They landed on the eastern coast and built a simple wooden and earthen fort. Few could see that one day that very site would bloom into King's Landing, seat of the king of all Seven Kingdoms. Although the Targaryens had few forces and were vastly outnumbered, they had the greatest weapon of all: dragons.

When King Loren of the Rock and King Mern of the Reach joined their armies to drive the Targaryens from Westeros, they had nearly 60,000 sworn swords under 600 different banners. The Targaryen army numbered barely 12,000 and was made of conscripts and volunteers, most of them as young and green as spring grass. They met on the ripening wheat fields of the Reach, and the Targaryens fell like the summer harvest. Only then did Aegon and his sisters release the dragons—the only time in recorded history that all three flew as one. Four thousand burned on the field of fire, including King Mern. King Loren escaped and later bent the knee.

With the power of their dragons, the Targaryens conquered six kingdoms: the Kingdom of the Rock, the Kingdom of the Reach, the Kingdom of the Mountain and Vale, the Kingdom of the Storm King, the Kingdom of the Iron Islands and the riverlands, and the Kingdom of the North. Only Dorne remained unconquered for several generations, but it, too, would eventually fall under the Targaryen rule, first by sword, and then by marriage.

One hundred and fifty-seven years after Aegon the Conqueror, his descendent Daeron the First, the Young Dragon, broke the Dornish armies when he was but 14. However, although the Dornishmen were conquered in name, they resisted brutally and won back their freedom when they slew the Targaryen king. It was almost 30 years later when King Daeron II married the Dornish princess Myriah, and married his sister to the Dornish Prince, that Dorne was truly brought into the Seven Kingdoms.

## LANDS OF WESTEROS

The continent of Westeros is long and relatively narrow. The lands north of the Wall are wild and uncharted, home to wildlings and stranger beasts that dwell among the frostfang Mountains and swim in the Shivering Sea. The farthest region, which stretches beyond the known map, is called "the Land of Always Winter;" even the longest summer has nothing to melt its snows or thaw its ice.

Beneath the Wall, the North stretches south to the boggy marsh of the Neck, the Bay of Ice borders the region on the west, and the Bay of Seals borders on the east. It is the seat of the Starks and contains the port city of White Harbor.

South and east of the North is the Vale of Arryn, surrounded by the stony peninsulas of the fingers, the rocky and barren Bay of Crabs, and the foreboding Mountains of the Moon. It is the seat of House Arryn, the Defenders of the Vale.

The kingsroad, which runs all the way from the Wall to King's Landing in the south, passes by the western border of the Vale, paralleling the mighty waters of the Green fork of the Trident. The Trident marks the riverlands, a lush and bountiful region ruled by House Tully from Riverrun. It contains the lake called the Gods Eye, which holds the Isle of Faces. The riverlands are bordered by the Neck to the north, the Vale to the east, the westerlands to the west, and King's Landing and the Reach to the south.

The westerlands are home to the Lannisters, who rule from Casterly Rock. The region is also home to some of the richest gold and silver mines in all the Seven Kingdoms. It is a small region, dominated by Lannisport and the Rock.

South of the westerlands sits the Reach, the largest region except for the North. Its northern boundary is the goldroad, which runs from the Rock to King's Landing, and it includes everything to the southwest of the stormlands and Dorne. The Reach contains the Shield Islands, the Arbor, and the vast city of Oldtown. It is rich and vibrant, warm and bountiful, and ruled by the Tyrells of Highgarden.

The stormlands, south of King's Landing and Blackwater Bay and east of the Reach, stretch down to the Sea of Dorne. The stormlands are small but filled with thick forests of the rainwood and the kingswood. The stormlands also include Shipbreaker Bay, Cape Wrath, and the Isle of Carth. The Baratheon family seat is at Storm's End, held by King Robert's younger brother, Renly.

Dorne, the most southern and hot-blooded realm of Westeros, lies between the Dornish Marches, home to the Red Mountains that form a natural border with the rest of Westeros and the Sea of Dorne. Dorne also forms the shore of the Summer Sea. Dorne is ruled by the Martells from Sunspear.

The Iron Islands sit apart from the other realms, lying off the western coast of Westeros, touching the edges of the North, the riverlands, and the westerlands. The Iron Islands lie in Ironman's Bay,

# WESTEROS

## THE SEVEN KINGDOMS



**TARGARYEN**

**STARK**

**BARATHEON**

**GREYJOY**

**ARRYN**





**Tully**



**Tyrell**



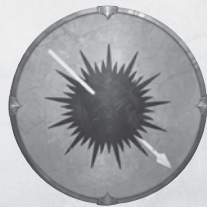
**LANNISTER**



**HIGHTOWER**



**MARTELL**





west of the Trident and the Neck, and contain seven notable islands and many sea-swept chunks of rock. The ironmen are ruled by House Greyjoy of Pyke, and many there follow their own ways and their own religion, the Old Way of the Drowned God, distinct from the other peoples of the Seven Kingdoms.

These many distinct regions and peoples all bend the knee to King's Landing, the seat of the Iron Throne from which the king rules. Once seen as the territory of the Targaryens (whose heart and seat were on the isle of Dragonstone), King's Landing remains the capital under King Robert I Baratheon and Queen Cersei. It is the largest city in the Seven Kingdoms and the center of trade, politics, and adventure.

## KING'S LANDING

King's Landing is, in many ways, the heart of Westeros. Although a relatively young city—it only dates back to the first days of Aegon the Conqueror's rule—it is the center of the king's power and the lifeblood of the Seven Kingdoms.

When Aegon and his sisters landed upon Westeros, the site of King's Landing was home to little more than a fishing village. The Targaryens built the first fortification here, a holdfast of wood and earth. Today, the city is a sprawling tapestry of wattle-and-daub houses, inns, wooden storefronts, warehouses, brothels, taverns, market stalls, quays, statues, squares, and majestic structures, stretching from one edge of the horizon to the other.

The king rules from the Red Keep, a massive stronghold of seven huge drum-towers built of pale red stone that sits majestically on Aegon's high hill. Construction was begun by the command of Aegon I, but it was completed by his son, Maegor the Cruel. Once the final block was laid in place, Maegor rounded up the craftsmen and workers and had them all murdered. The secrets of the Red Keep would be for the Targaryens alone.

Within the Red Keep is Maegor's Holdfast, a secure square fortress within the greater castle that holds the royal apartments. The mighty throne room in the Great Hall—once decorated with the skulls of dragons—is entered through doors of oak and bronze. Rising with sublime and terrible majesty at one end of the room is the Iron Throne, a jagged creation perched atop a dais that looms over the hall. Aegon forged

the Iron Throne with the fires of his dragon, Balerion the Black Dread, from a thousand swords collected from his vanquished enemies. Even today, the throne is a weave of sharp edges, razor points, and metal teeth. "No king should sit easily upon a throne," Aegon claimed, and his legacy has forced every king of Westeros to agree.

The King of Westeros rules with his Hand, the second most powerful man in the land. The Hand of the King speaks with the king's voice and can hear petitions, draft laws, command armies, and even pass the king's judgment in his absence. The Hand alone is allowed to sit the Iron Throne when the king is away.

The king and his Hand are aided by the small council, a group of advisors and ostensibly wise lords appointed by the king to help run the kingdom. Today, under King Baratheon, Lord Jon Arryn is his Hand, and the small council consists of Grand Maester Pycelle; Ser Barristan Selmy, the Lord Commander of the Kingsguard; Lord Stannis Baratheon, the master of ships; Lord Renly Baratheon, the master of laws; Lord Petyr Baelish, the master of coin; and Lord Varys, the master of whisperers.

## THE CITY

King's Landing is a walled city, guarded by tall curtains of stone and entered by any of seven gates: the River Gate, the King's Gate, the Dragon Gate, the Lion Gate, the Old Gate, the Gate of the Gods, and the Iron Gate. The common folk know the River Gate better as the Mud Gate, and it leads through fishmonger's Square to the ever-busy docks that teem with sailors, merchants, and fishermen from a hundred cities and foreign lands. The King's Gate leads out to the Blackwater, and the tourney grounds on its banks. The gatehouse to the Gate of the Gods is carved with exquisite figures whose eyes follow everyone who passes through.

The City Watch keeps the peace of King's Landing. ~~Sample~~ "gold cloaks" for their golden mantels, they patrol the city and the Red Keep both, and they ~~Sample~~ the gates and the walls. The City Watch has its own Lord Commander, loyal to the city and king.

The streets of King's Landing are a constant stream of hustle and fuss. Lords share the winding streets with smallfolk, horsemen make way for ~~Sample~~ litters, and local sailors sell their catch alongside Ibbenese whalers. It is said anything can be bought here for the right price.

Geographically, the city is divided by three great hills. The Red Keep rests atop the largest, Aegon's Hill. The other two are named for his sisters, and the Street of Sisters runs arrow-straight between them. The Great Sept of Baelor is located on top of Visenya's Hill, resplendent in marble with seven crystal towers. It is the seat of the Great Septon and where kings are laid to rest. In contrast, Rhaenys' Hill ~~Sample~~ deserted. It holds what was once known as the Dragonpit; its blackened walls are now abandoned, its dome is ruined, and its bronze doors have been sealed for a century.

At the base of Rhaenys' Hill is flea Bottom, the swarming slum of King's Landing. flea Bottom is a warren of snaking streets and crooked alleys, unpaved and awash in mud and urine. Digsties, tanneries, and stables all add to the stink, and a visitor can easily become lost in this maze of ramshackle buildings built atop one another, all falling apart or threatening to fall down in every direction.

## THE LAST CARGARYENS

Once the battle began to turn in favor of Robert Baratheon and his sworn swords, King Aerys made plans to protect his line. He sent his queen, Rhaella, newly pregnant, along with their son Viserys to the historic Cargaryen seat at Dragonstone. To ensure Dorne's loyalty, Aerys kept Prince Rhaegar's Dornish wife, Princess Elia, and her children, Rhaenys and Aegon, with him. Tragically, when King's Landing was sacked by Lord Tywin Lannister's forces, Elia and her young children were brutally murdered.

With Rhaegar slain on the Trident, Aerys murdered by his Kingsguard, and the Cargaryen forces shattered and windblown, Stannis Baratheon sailed to take Dragonstone. Queen Rhaella died in childbirth, but her servants acted to protect her children. Before Stannis's forces could arrive, Prince Viserys and his newborn sister Princess Daenerys were put on a ship and sent across the narrow sea. Today, they are said to be hosted by the lords and merchants of the free Cities. They are not welcome in Westeros, but it would be shortsighted to assume that they have no friends among the noble houses of the Seven Kingdoms.