Stray Sparks
by LadyRhiyana

Summary

A place to store various Jaime-centric GoT/ASOIAF drabbles. So far they are mostly Jaime/Brienne, and mostly AU.

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Chapter 28: Heroes and Villains

Five variations on a superhero theme.

Featuring: Batman!AU, mild-mannered alter-egos, super villains, undercover agents and the mafia.
In which Lord Tywin, determined to thwart Jaime’s plans to join the Kingsguard, arranges a proxy marriage between his son and the first unmarried noble daughter he can find. It still doesn’t prevent Aerys from giving him a white cloak.

Long years later, Brienne finally meets her husband.

“Have you ever been betrothed, Lady Brienne?” Lady Catelyn asks.

Brienne considers the question. Lady Catelyn is only being courteous, making conversation to pass the time; perhaps she is genuinely curious, but Brienne is wary – Lady Catelyn’s son is the King in the North, and currently at war with the Lannisters.

“No, my lady,” Brienne finally says. “I have never been betrothed.”

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When Brienne was a young girl, her father used to tell her a story. It always went the same way –

*Now keep this quiet, darling girl. Promise you'll keep it quiet?*

Brienne had always giggled and promised never to tell another soul.

*When you were no more than a babe in arms, your mother and I went to King’s Landing. It was the year of the false spring, just before Lord Whent’s great tourney at Harrenhal.*

*Lord Tywin, the Hand of the King, was so busy ruling the kingdom that he took his eyes off his beloved children – until he heard that Jaime, his eldest son and heir was to join the Kingsguard. Lord Tywin was wroth! How dare he do this to me, he raged. I’ll teach him to think he can flout my authority in this way.*

*You must know, darling girl, that the King hated Lord Tywin – he would raise young Jaime to the Kingsguard in a heartbeat simply to spite him. Lord Tywin knew that he had to act quickly. He ordered his man to bring to him the first lord with an unmarried daughter he could find.*

*That was you, Papa! Brienne had always said.*

*Yes, my darling, that was me. He offered me five thousand gold dragons – here, she and her father had always mock-gasped at the vast sum – if I would agree to an immediate proxy marriage between my daughter and his son and heir.*

*Well, Brienne, five thousand gold dragons and the heir to Casterly Rock! I’ll admit I was tempted. But you were my only daughter, and not even a year old. I hesitated.*

*Lord Tywin looked me in the eye – his eyes are cold, darling, like sea-green ice and just as unyielding – and said, ten thousand. The marriage can be annulled and put aside later, but it must take place immediately.*
Ten thousand gold dragons was a prince’s ransom. What could I do but say yes?

However, even as your marriage was taking place in King’s Landing, in Harrenhal the King was clasping a white cloak around Ser Jaime’s shoulders.

Lord Tywin insisted that the marriage came first. Ser Jaime insisted that he donned the white cloak first.

The King only laughed and laughed, and said that proxy marriages could be set aside and besides he was the king, and so Ser Jaime got his white cloak – though much joy he found in it.

To this day, Lord Tywin insists that his son is married and every year petitions the High Septon to have him released from his vows, and Ser Jaime insists the very opposite.

And I held my tongue, took Lord Tywin’s ten thousand dragons and returned to Tarth, and used them to rebuild the docks and to refortify the keep and build up a fleet of trading ships. And when that was done there was still a great sum left over, and so I invested it with the Iron Bank so that Tarth will never lack for money.

And all you have to do, my darling, is not marry another man until the Lannisters’ legal tangle is resolved, which for all I know may be never.

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Brienne sees her proxy-husband for the first time when Lady Catelyn frees him from imprisonment.

He’s filthy, malnourished and vilely drunk. He’s crude, cruel, and crass, but beneath it all Brienne sees –

But then Lady Catelyn calls out her name, and drunk as he is, he frowns exaggeratedly, tilts his head, an unholy light dawning in his blurred eyes.

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“Brienne of Tarth,” he drawls, as they make their escape. “Daughter of Lord Selwyn. Now, where have I heard that name before?” Brienne closes her eyes and prays to all the seven gods for deliverance, but none is granted her.

“Oh, that’s right,” he continues. “My lady wife! I must say I never expected to meet you in such unconventional circumstances. You must excuse my current appearance.” He looks at her, takes in her height, her clothing, her armour, her homely face. “Has my father ever met you? Does he know what his ten thousand galleons bought him?”

She tries to ignore him.

“Are you sure you’re a woman? I do hope the septon checked your sex before he performed the marriage.”

He talks and talks and talks, probing and pressing on her every single weak point. He tears apart every illusion she had, from her girlish infatuation with King Renly to her belief that she might find acceptance as a knight. She grits her teeth and forces herself not to react, knowing that if she showed the slightest hint of weakness he would tear her apart.

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They fight with naked steel and she almost kills him.

When he jests about chastising his wife, she wishes that she had.

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Afterwards, when all the fight goes out of him and his eyes lose their reckless, ironic spark, she takes everything back.

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**Cloaked**

Chapter Summary

5 maidens to whom Jaime might have given his cloak, and one who draped her own around his shoulders.

Chapter Notes

This drabble is all about the cloak!porn. Please enjoy!

1. Cersei

They are six, perhaps seven years old when their mother first tells Cersei about the rituals of marriage. Lady Joanna brings out her own bride-cloak, crimson silk embroidered with gold, and explains how their father had replaced it with his own crimson-and-gold cloak in turn.

It is the most natural thing in the world to enact a similar ceremony of their own.

After all, no one has yet told them it is impossible.

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2. Lysa Tully

His father had put a swift end to his plans to join the Kingsguard.

Instead, he had been bundled off to Riverrun with an escort of Lannister men-at-arms to make sure he arrived at his destination.

And now here he stands in the sept at Riverrun, beside a girl he barely remembers, too shy to even look him in the eye. She fidgets and blushes as he drapes his cloak over her shoulders, and her attention flitters over to a small, dark boy on the fringes of the crowd.

Jaime doesn’t care. If Cersei were here, his eyes would stray to hers as well.

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3. Rhaenys

“Ser Jaime!” the young princess calls, flying out to meet him. She skids to a stop and looks up at him with her wide purple eyes and a gap-toothed grin. “I’m catching fireflies!”

In the fading twilight, the tiny garden has been transformed by brightly coloured Dornish silks and glowing braziers. Princess Elia reclines on a languid chaise, Lady Ashara Dayne beside her, and her other ladies are scattered throughout the garden chasing drifting green fireflies.
“Will you come and catch them with me?” Rhaenys asks, tugging on his hand and pulling him into the gardens.

Jaime smiles, feeling something like joy welling up inside him after the terrible events of the day. He follows the young princess into the garden, into the company of gentle Princess Elia and her women.

White-cloaked and armoured, he chases fireflies in the fading light.

When twilight finally gives way to true night and the air grows chill, he gathers Rhaenys up in his arms, trusting and half-asleep, stripping off his cloak to envelop her in its pale woolen folds.

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Later, when his own father lays Rhaenys and Aegon’s bodies before Robert Baratheon draped in crimson Lannister cloaks to disguise the bloodstains, it’s all Jaime can do not to weep.

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4. Margaery Tyrell

The day after Joffrey’s death, Margaery’s grandmother calls her into her solar and says that Lord Tywin has proposed another match.

“Ser Jaime?” Margaery repeats, bemused.

“He’s not a monster, at least,” Lady Olenna says. “Ruled by his sister, of course, but a little bird tells me Cersei has grown rather cool towards him since he came back crippled. If you play your cards well you might just supplant her.”

“But grandmother,” Margaery says, smiling sweetly, “surely he is so much more than just his sword hand.”

“Exactly,” Lady Olenna smiles.

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When Ser Jaime drapes her in a crimson silk cloak before the High Septon in the Sept of Baelor, Cersei sends her a look of such venom that if Margaery hadn’t already known her for an enemy she would have quailed in terror.

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5. Pia

Her dress is in tatters and her skin is filthy, and she looks up at him with naked gratitude, tears welling in her eyes. She is a shivering, pathetic figure in the chill air, and so he shrugs off his thick cloak and wraps it around her, unthinking.

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+1. Brienne

Snow is thick on the ground. The walls of Winterfell are slick with ice, the howling wind filled with driving sleet. Jaime huddles in the scant shelter of a guard tower, warming himself over a brazier filled with glowing coals.
“Jaime, you look like you’re freezing,” Brienne says, taking his hand and his stump in hers and drawing them beneath her furs. Shivering, he all but melts into her warmth and solid strength. “Why don’t you have any furs yet?”

His thick, winter-weight woolen cloak is soot-blackened, torn and even bloodstained in places, and no longer suitable for the winter cold. But he has never imagined himself wearing furs, shaggy and broad-shouldered like a barbarous Northerner. Like Ned Stark.

“Here, take this,” Brienne says, grumbling and cursing as she strips off her own thick fur cloak and swings it around his shoulders, fastening it with brisk competent ease and enveloping him in her warmth and scent. “You can use it until you get one of your own.”

He takes the cloak and all that it symbolizes for his own, and refuses to let her take it back.
In which Tommen takes after his father, and Ser Pounce is more than he seems. (Did you think that only Northmen and wildlings could be wargs?)

Tommens has the same eyes as Uncle Jaime: bright, wildfire green, glowing and eerily reflective in candle- or firelight.

“It’s a gift,” Uncle Jaime says. “All Lannisters are lions; some of us are more so than others.”

“Joffey’s and Mama’s and ‘Cella’s eyes aren’t like this,” Tommen points out.

“No,” Uncle Jaime says, smiling, “just you. And just me.”

Tommens likes that thought. Joffey is older and taller and Mama’s favourite; ‘Cella is a girl and possibly Father’s favourite, but Tommen is the most like Uncle Jaime.

**

Uncle Jaime knows all the castle cats. From the snarling, half-feral stable-toms to the fat, lazy kitchen cat, they all twine about his feet and shamelessly entice his attentions, even the wildest and most distrustful purring under his petting fingers.

Sometimes he seems almost to speak with them. Sometimes his eyes are more cat than man.

“When I was a boy there were lions at the Rock,” Uncle Jaime tells Tommen. “Poor, toothless beasts who had forgotten what it meant to be free, if they ever knew it. But all cats are lions at heart, no matter how small.”

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When Tommen is five years old, Uncle Jaime gets him a kitten.

“He’s yours,” Uncle Jaime says. “You have to take care of him now. One day, when he’s older, he’ll take care of you.”

Tommens likes the idea of something to take care of him. He names the kitten Ser Pounce, which makes Uncle Jaime laugh.

Not long after that, Tommen has his first cat dream.

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[When Uncle Jaime is captured at the Whispering Wood, Robb Stark puts him in the dungeons of Riverrun and orders all the castle cats killed.]
Chapter Summary

“There is power in the blood of kings,” Melisandre says. “Even more so in a king’s death.”

Melisandre sends Sam and Ser Davos back in time to the death of the last true dragon king.

Chapter Notes

Every time Melisandre intones the words "king's blood", I find myself imagining some variation of this scenario. Let's just pretend that she has not yet been banished from Winterfell and the North.

Just because, I have written two versions, one from Davos' POV and one (slightly different) from Jaime's. Please enjoy!

VERSION 1 – DAVOS

“There is power in the blood of kings,” Melisandre says. “Even more so in a king’s death.”

Davos clears his throat nervously. “That’s all well and good, my lady, but surely you’re not proposing to kill King Jon. Or even to bleed him.”

“No,” she says, fixing him with her red fanatic’s eyes. “The Lord has granted me visions of what was and what will be. I have seen the death of the last true dragon king. It is the power of that death we must harness.”

“The last true dragon king?” Davos asks, bewildered. “But that must be – the Mad King was murdered seventeen years ago. In King’s Landing.”

“All times and all places are one to the Lord of Light,” Melisandre says.

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Davos isn’t quite sure of the exact details, but the long and the short of it is that the Red Woman proposes to send Davos and Samwell Tarly seventeen years into the past to the day of the Mad King’s death, where they will – what? Collect the dead king’s blood?

Standing before the writhing, flame-lit opening in the fabric of reality that Melisandre has opened in Winterfell’s inner courtyard, Davos isn’t very sure of much at all.

Still, he exchanges a glance with young Sam, squares his shoulders and steps through.

**
They emerge into the halls of the Red Keep, the great bells of the Sept of Baelor tolling frantically, the sound of screams and shouting rising up from the city below.

The great doors of the throne room are open, unguarded, a single fall of light illuminating the scene within.

Davos knows the story. The whole of Westeros knows the story. But seeing the truth of it – the white-cloaked knight on the Iron Throne, the king lying dead in a pool of blood – is something else entirely.

“Ser Jaime Lannister,” Sam breathes, awestruck.

The white-cloaked knight looks up from his golden sword and fixes them with distant, haunted eyes.

_He is not truly here_, Davos realises. _He has gone far away inside._

When Sam explains their quest, stammering nervously under that mad gaze and stumbling over his own tongue, Ser Jaime listens with glassy indifference.

“Why not?” he says finally, arising from the throne to shrug out of his cloak and cast it into the pool of the king’s blood. A crimson stain slowly spreads over the pure white wool, the heavy folds crumpling and growing sodden as the blood soaks into the thick weave.

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They take the cloak with them when they return to the future.

### VERSION 2 – JAIME

The king is dead.

Jaime stares down at the ruined wreck of Aerys Targaryen, at the ruins of his own honour, and feels his gorge rise. Stumbling into an antechamber just off the throne room, he falls to his knees and casts up everything he has eaten that day, bile and acid and choking tears burning in his throat.

For a long, craven moment he is tempted to deny his own act. No one had witnessed it. He could just leave, return to find the king dead and pretend that he failed in his duty and let the king die by someone else’s – anyone else’s – hand.

But whatever else he is, Jaime is not a coward.

When he returns to the throne room he sees two strangers staring at him.

“Oh!” one of them says. “Ser Jaime! There you are.” He is fat, moon-faced and nervous, his voice quavering. “We were just – we just…” he trails off, stammering. “I’m afraid it’s a bit difficult to explain.”

The second man – plain-faced, with a grizzled beard and a furrowed brow – stares at Jaime. He doesn’t seem surprised, or even distressed or angry to see Aerys dead and Jaime alone in the throne room, streaked with blood.

It almost seems as though he expected it.
“We – er – we need the king’s blood, you see,” the fat, nervous stranger says. “Oh dear, perhaps we should have brought some cloths. Did you know that a man’s body can hold between 9 and 12 pints of blood?”

They all look down at Aerys’ corpse, lying in a slowly spreading pool of blood. Feeling strangely numb and detached, Jaime asks, “Why do you need it?”

The stranger – *please, call me Sam, and this is Ser Davos* – launches eagerly into a fantastic explanation involving snarks and grumpkins, red priestesses and the end of the world. Jaime doesn’t understand a word of it. Part of him is sure that even if he had run the king through and slit his throat, he shouldn’t allow Aerys’ blood to be collected for use in some unholy ritual. But Sam looks at him so earnestly, and really, what does it matter now? The old man is dead; his death may as well serve some purpose.

“Why not?” he says. “Here.” He shrugs out of his white cloak and drops it into the pool of blood.

“Oh, thank you very much!” Sam says. He bustles about, mopping up the blood and gathering Jaime’s sodden cloak up in his arms, the white wool stained sopping crimson. “We do appreciate this, Ser Jaime!” he says, scurrying out, bowing and smiling.

Ser Davos stares at Jaime one last time, his brow furrowed, and then follows Sam out.

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When Ned Stark arrives in the throne room, he sees only Jaime seated on the Iron Throne. He doesn’t ask why Jaime is missing his cloak, or why there is so little blood pooling beneath the king’s body at the foot of the dais.

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Jaime puts the strange episode out of his mind.

17 years later, when he rides through the gates of Winterfell, he sees Sam and his white cloak once more.
Stray Lion

Chapter Summary

One wild night, a stray lion followed Brienne home. [Modern Westeros flatmates!AU]

Chapter Notes

My take on that old classic, the modern flatmate AU. Something about the combination of Brienne's bemusement at the impractical golden creature that wanders into her life really tickles me. While normally I would include Jaime/Cersei as a canon fact, I'm leaving it out here because I don't want to ruin the sweet fluffiness. Try and assume, if you can, that they are close but not *that* close.

One wild night, a stray lion followed Brienne home. That is to say, Brienne went out clubbing, got very drunk and somehow came home with a beautiful man who decided that he was going to stay.

The next morning – and sometimes Brienne curses herself, for getting so drunk that night that she can never remember the details – she found him cooking breakfast, barefoot and bare-chested.

He’d smiled at her, golden and lazy and utterly confident in his beauty, and said that he would tell his investment firm to pay his share of the rent into her account twice a month.

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He says that she asked him to move in during the course of the night.

She’s not sure if she believes him or not.

Still.

That’s how she and Jaime tumbled into bed and became flatmates.

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Not everyone has a Jaime, Brienne has slowly come to understand.

Others may have eccentric flatmates, or crazy one-night stands and stray hook-ups, but none of them approach the level of reality distortion that is living with Jaime.

Because with Jaime comes Cersei and Tyrion and their father Lord Tywin – the Lord Paramount of the Westerlands, the Lord of Casterly Rock. There are many Lannisters in Westeros, Brienne has learned, but Jaime is a Lannister of the Rock, which means he’s a Lannister with a capital L.

[Jaime had shown Brienne around the Rock, once. The sheer vastness of it, the macabre tales of ancient murder and treachery and betrayal and the air of centuries old wealth went a long way to explaining the way he was.]
And with the Lannister name comes power – which Jaime despises, but Tyrion and Lord Tywin love – and celebrity – which Jaime despises and Tyrion enjoys, but Cersei loves – and the kind of unreality that comes of unimaginable wealth – which all three siblings take utterly for granted, but Lord Tywin nurtures with an iron fist.

Jaime has an investment firm to handle the tangled mess of his shares and investments and his two houses, one in Lannisport and one in King’s Landing. His share of the rent is always paid on time.

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That much, at least, she can’t complain about.

Okay, that and the sex. The sex is phenomenal.

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She never asks how he lost his hand, or what he had done before following her home one wild night. Some sort of military, she thinks, though he has never mentioned it and only makes disparaging remarks about the uselessness of king and country.

He picks up stray temporary jobs here and there with the intellectual interest of a man who has never had to work before; he seems fascinated by the very ordinariness of everyday life.

One day, it comes up in conversation that he went to a super-posh public school in King’s Landing.

“Oh,” she says. “I would have thought you’d have gone to Crakehall.” Crakehall being a super-posh public school in the Westerlands.

“I did,” he replies absently, fiddling with the coffee-maker. It was gun-metal grey and featured countless buttons and dials and settings; he had bought it himself and yet had no idea how to work it. “The king ordered Father to send me to Whitetower when I was fifteen.”

Brienne stares at him. Whitetower was the academy of the Kingsguard. So much more than the royal bodyguards of old, the white-cloaks – as they were still known, even now – were the super-elite special forces of Westeros. There were only ever seven teams of seven, and they took only the best.

“Were you a Kingsguard?” she asked, trying to reconcile his lazy arrogance with the image of him as a white-cloak.

He dragged his attention away from the coffee-maker. “Does that excite you?” he asked, his tone – almost scornful.

She considers this. “Not really,” she says. “I don’t want you to be anything other than – than you.”

After a moment, he smiles. “The Kingsguard serve for life,” he says, turning back to his coffee. “Besides, I wouldn’t have made a very good one. I’m no good at following orders.”

It wasn’t, she realizes, a denial.

**

The assassination of Aerys Targaryen is still unsolved, even so many years later.

Some say that it was a Baratheon or a Lannister loyalist. Some even say that it was a rogue Kingsguard.
The truth is, his death was convenient for all parties and no one was particularly sorry.

**

12 months after their first meeting, Brienne still has a stray lion in her bed. It’s a magnificent sight, and she pities everyone else who doesn’t have a Jaime tangled in their white sheets, lazy and golden and beautiful.

He still scatters his belongings through the flat with the utter disregard of a man who grew up with servants; he still tangles her up in his family dramas, his constantly feuding siblings and his innumerable cousins all competing for his attention. The Lannisters, she has come to learn, claw and scratch mercilessly at each other but turn instantly on outsiders; for some reason, they all love Jaime and have accepted Brienne into their fold.

He still works only two or three shifts a week as a barista or a bartender or a librarian – whatever catches his fleeting fancy – has no interest in money and has yet to tell her one way or the other whether he ever was – or still is – a Kingsguard.

And he is still inexplicably determined that he is going to stay with Brienne for the rest of their lives.

She’s finally stopped worrying about it.
Hedge magic

Chapter Summary

When Robert Baratheon rose up against the last of the dragon kings, he allied himself with Tywin Lannister, the lord of the uttermost West. [Canon JB with a magical / otherworldly twist]

Chapter Notes

This concept sprang from idle musings about Jaime being Brienne's fairy godmother (which is another story for another day). I have made up all the magic bits. Please enjoy!

1. The Riverlands

Heavy iron shackles encircle Jaime Lannister’s wrists, the shining skin of his wrists growing sickly pale beneath; his eyes are fever-bright, the iron-sickness obvious in the light of day.

It makes him all the crueler as he taunts and cajoles and insults her in turn, his glittering green eyes watching her every reaction, just waiting for her to slip.

Brienne feels as though she holds the leash of a coiled, fearsome beast who will devour her the instant she lets go.

“You wear no charms,” he says, “you bear no wards or defences – did no one ever teach you the meanest hedge-magic?”

“There are no other-folk on Tarth,” she replies.

**

When Robert Baratheon rose up against the last of the dragon kings, he allied himself with Tywin Lannister, the lord of the uttermost West.

The other-folk had stayed out of the affairs of Westeros for so long that most people thought them no more than a myth. The magical shields of the Red Keep were long-unused and in disarray; Lord Tywin’s powerful heir, Jaime, had slipped right through them and murdered the Mad King.

In return, when Robert took the throne he married Jaime’s golden twin, Cersei, her skin white and shining like the moon.

When the beautiful Queen and her golden twin came to court, so too did their younger brother. Tyrion was a dwarf, stunted and twisted in body, but for all his misshapen ugliness he was far kinder than the cruel Queen or reckless, capricious Ser Jaime.

Beautiful is as beautiful does, the small folk said.
When the Bloody Mummers cut off his sword hand, she sees real emotion in him for the first time. His shining skin grows wan and dull, his fever-bright eyes dim and flicker, and the force of his presence fades. The coiled, fearsome beast lies dying before her very eyes, and she can’t bear to watch.

“Teach me about magic,” she says, desperate to engage him. “Teach me about charms and wards and defences.”

He stares at her, unblinking. His green eyes are strangely reflective, glowing in the firelight like a cat’s; she can’t look away from him.

“Did your mother never weave straw charms to place above your bed?” he asks. “Do hedge-witches not sell herbs and braided knots in your marketplace, and your crofters nail horseshoes above their doors?”

“But that’s just peasant superstition,” she protests.

“The small folk keep to the old ways,” he says. “Oak and iron, a stone pierced through with a hole; there is power in small things, as well as grand workings.”

Oak and iron guard me well, she thinks.

“Magic is power given intention,” he says. “Form – doesn’t matter. But for every action, there is a price.”

Later, Brienne will meet a red priestess who will tell her that only death can pay for life. It is much the same.

2. Winterfell

Brienne wears a round polished stone, pierced through with a hole, knotted on a thong around her neck. She wears braided leather cords twisted with charm-beads wrapped around her left wrist, and around her right a snug iron cuff.

Jaime had not been able to teach her much. A creature of magic himself, he had difficulty explaining what came so naturally; he’d taught her a little hunting and combat magic, a few easy tricks. But the sum of his advice had been frustratingly vague: form doesn’t matter; it’s intention that counts.

The small folk of the Riverlands and later the Free Folk had taught her more practical skills.

Barefoot, weathered Septon Meribald, half-pagan himself in his own curious interpretation of the faith, had taught her to weave hopes and wishes into knots and braids and to breathe sparks of power into glass beads. Tormund Giantsbane and his men had taken her scouting in the ice and snow and had shown her their protections against the winter; the old Northern grandmothers, with their white hair and ancient eyes, had shown her the older, darker magic of the distaff side.
Hedge magic, she has come to understand, is fuelled by the hopes and loves and hatreds of the small folk, taking power where they can find it in the small things.

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Dragons are creatures of air and fire made flesh. The first time Brienne sees Rhaegal and Drogon, she catches her breath in awe.

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3. The Long Night

The Night King and the army of the dead are magic twisted horribly awry. Jaime calls them abominations and hates and fears them in equal measure; here in the frozen North, far from the centre of his power, his shining skin is faded and he is always chilled through and shivering.

Brienne sleeps pressed next to him now, sharing her warmth and her furs; they wake entwined, Brienne holding him close, feeling the solid weight of him against her and breathing in his sweat-steel-ozone scent.

When his cat-green eyes flick open and meet hers in the shadowed darkness, she lifts his hand to her heart, and presses her own against his heart in turn. They are here. They are alive. She breathes out, slowly, and with it breathes out all her hopes and dreams and loves, wishing him well, wishing him well.

**

Three rewards, golden Jaime Lannister had granted her for saving his life:

Her sword is of no mortal making, the hilt crowned with a golden lion.

Her armour – dulled and battered – has protected her from blows that should have sheared her in two. By the light of the moon, the mark of Jaime’s own hand can be faintly seen – a ward and a well-wishing, stronger than any shield.

For her third reward she could have asked anything: beauty or grace, wealth or power. She had held onto it instead, not sure what she wanted, when she wanted so much -

Now, she knows. "I want us to live," she breathes as she kisses him, staring into his eyes, unblinking. "First we'll survive, and then afterwards - promise me that we'll live."

"Yes," he says, his hand on her heart, wishing her well, wishing her well, wishing her well. "Yes."
“We all like you, Brienne,” Tyrion says. “We want you to stay. Even Father, in his own, unique way.” (A continuation of "Stray Lion").

**Chapter Notes**

So, I couldn't resist writing more bemused!flatmate Brienne, this time becoming entangled with the sprawling Lannister family. In keeping with the self-indulgent fluffiness of this AU, Joffrey will not be appearing in this fic. Please enjoy.

**9am**

“Your 9am interview is here, Brienne,” Pod says. He hands her a coffee and a folder containing a resume. She thanks him absently, flicking through the pages and stopping when she comes to the photograph.

Ah, she thinks. She’d forgotten about –

The door opens to reveal a shaggy golden lion. Tall, brawny, with overgrown hair and a great bushy beard, Daven Lannister looks bluff, straightforward, and honest.

Jaime had recommended him. She’d mentioned in passing that she hated interviewing people, and he’d casually mentioned his cousin, just discharged from the army and looking for some sort of security work.

“Ms Tarth,” Daven rumbles, taking her hand in a firm grip.

“Mr Lannister,” she returns. “Jaime speaks highly of you. He says that you’re steady, reliable and calm under pressure.”

He laughs. “I may not be as brilliant as Jaime,” he says, “but I can still get the job done.”

“So long as you’re more practical than he is,” she replies.

Daven’s eyebrow flicks up, but he says nothing.

“What I need, Mr Lannister,” Brienne says, “is someone patient, practical and grounded in the real world, who can be trusted to turn up on time every day and not lose interest. The work is not always exciting; in fact, most of the time it’s anything but. I need someone dependable.”
Surprisingly, Daven frowns. “You don’t think Jaime’s dependable?” he asks. “He’d tear his heart out for the people he loves.”

“I’ve no doubt of that,” she counters. “But can he be trusted to turn up every day?”

“If it truly matters, he would,” he says.

**

12pm

**

The sleek, anonymous black car pulls up beside her as she’s on her way to her usual lunch spot. The tinted window rolls down, and she sees Lord Tywin Lannister in the back seat, impeccable in his tailored suit and discreet tie.

He levels her with a cold, green-gold stare. “Ms Tarth,” he says. “Get in, please.”

“I’m supposed to be having lunch with Tyrion,” she says.

“He’ll have to excuse you,” he drawls. “Now, do you mean to stand around arguing all day?”

She presses her lips firmly together, but there’s no point in refusing him. Just to make a point, she pulls out her mobile and quickly texts Tyrion – *kidnapped by your father, send help* – and then finally climbs into the car.

Every now and then, Lord Tywin takes Brienne to his exclusive club – all hushed silence, shadowed rooms, leather armchairs and ancient privilege – and checks on her. Cut-glass tumbler of whisky in one hand, he stares at her with those cold, inscrutable eyes.

He asks about her business with a level of insider knowledge that makes her nervous. Sometimes he gives her sound, if cold-blooded advice.

[The first time Brienne had told Jaime about her audiences with Lord Tywin, he’d asked her if she had some sort of magic Lannister-taming power.]

He asks her about Jaime, and then when Brienne recounts his latest venture into employment, dismisses it with a shrug. “Jaime says that he has no interest in the Lannister business,” he says. “So be it. So long as he is…happy in his glorified dabbling,” he says, “I don’t care what he does.”

[“Brienne,” Jaime had said, staring deeply into her eyes, “promise me you’ll only use your power for good.”]

Sometimes, in these discussions, Brienne can work the conversation round to other members of the family. Sometimes she can mention Tyrion, and the stubborn crofter’s daughter he refuses to give up; sometimes she can mention Cersei or some of Jaime’s other cousins and their various issues.

Sometimes Lord Tywin even listens to her suggestions, or offers his own.

After the audience is done, she walks out through the dark-panelled corridors and into the fresh air and the warm sunshine. Tyrion is waiting for her, leaning against his own anonymous black car.

“How bad was it?” he asks, opening the door for her.

She only sighs. “Same as always,” she says, climbing into her second chauffeured car of the day.
“It’s his way of showing that he cares,” Tyrion says, pouring himself a drink. “We all like you, Brienne. We want you to stay. Even Father, in his own, unique way.”

**

2.30pm

**

Her phone buzzes.

She glances down automatically, sees Cersei on the screen and lets it go to voicemail with a silent groan. Moments later, the screen lights up again, insistent, and Brienne sighs and reluctantly answers the call.

“What is it?” she asks. “I’m working.”

“I need you and Jaime to take the children tonight,” Cersei says without preamble.

Since Cersei’s acrimonious split with her husband Robert, Tommen and Myrcella have been spending more time with Jaime and Brienne. Cersei, while a devoted mother, is not always – kind, especially when she starts drinking; sometimes it’s best that Tommen and Myrcella spend some time away from her.

“Fine. Send them over,” Brienne says, pinching her nose. “They can stay as long as you need.”

There’s a momentary pause, and Brienne can picture Cersei, green eyes sharp and sardonic, biting her tongue on a sharp remark. It’s not like her to hold back; Brienne is only grateful for the reprieve.

“Six o’clock,” Cersei confirms.

**

4pm

**

Brienne finishes work early and drops into the sleepy little neighbourhood pub where Jaime is currently dabbling in bartending. It’s a cozy, shabby place, warm and inviting with dark wood paneling and a shelf piled high with worn books.

Jaime is seated at the bar, rather than standing behind it; his cousin Myrielle is in his usual place, peering intently at an online tutorial on mixing drinks. A row of discarded glasses filled with brightly coloured liquids sits before Jaime; obviously her previous, unsuccessful attempts.

Myrielle is 18, maybe 19 years old, studying business at university. She’s in the middle of recounting some convoluted tale about her sister Cerenna, some boy from Kayce and Rosamund, one of the Lannisport Lannisters, but breaks off when Brienne walks in, greeting her with a brilliant smile.

“Does the owner know you’re letting your cousin use his stores for expensive experiments?” Brienne asks, sliding into the seat beside Jaime and brushing a kiss over his cheek.

Myrielle grins. “Jaime’s giving me unpaid work experience,” she says. “I’m learning valuable life skills.”
“Again,” Brienne says dryly, “does the owner know?”

“Oh, this is one of Tyrion’s properties,” Jaime says. “He doesn’t mind.”

Myrielle nods in agreement. “Tyrion always says we need a taste of the real world.”

Brienne doesn’t think Myrielle quite understands what Tyrion had meant by that comment. But she lets it pass.

“And what about the coffee shop where Martyn and Willem are working now? Is that one of Tyrion’s as well?”

“No, I bought that one myself.” Jaime grins proudly. “Tyrion is always telling me I should diversify my holdings.”

Of course he’d bought a coffee shop for his cousins to work in. Lannisters never did go about anything in the usual way. At least it was on the university campus, where desperate caffeine-deprived students were guaranteed to keep it afloat.

“Oh, Brienne, Mother said to thank you when I saw you next for hiring Daven,” Myrielle says. And there goes Brienne’s moral high ground.

She forces herself to smile. “It was nothing,” she replies, and is rewarded by a brilliant, golden Lannister smile.

**

6pm

**

Tyrion arrives with Tommen and Myrcella.

The children are subdued and Tyrion, though he conceals it well, is drunk. Jaime shoots him a worried look over the children’s heads. Tyrion only shrugs, and strolls – listing sideways – into the living room.

By the time Brienne and Jaime get the children settled in, Tyrion is snoring on the couch, dead to the world.

“What’s wrong?” Brienne asks, unfolding a soft woolen throw and draping it over him. “I thought everything was going well with Tysha. Your father seemed – receptive – when I talked to him at lunch.”

Jaime shrugs. “Who knows? He and Father have always clashed. Just dealing with him is enough to drive Tyrion to drink, sometimes.”

She crosses towards him, slides her arms around his waist and hugs him. “At least he knows he can always come here.”

He smiles into her hair.

**

9pm
They’re curled up in bed together, Brienne wearing one of Jaime’s old t-shirts, washed so often it’s soft and super-comfortable, Jaime wearing only cotton boxer shorts. With Tyrion on the couch and Tommen and Myrcella sleeping in the guest room, they’re content just to hold each other and nuzzle; Brienne rubs her cheek against Jaime’s jaw, enjoying the soft rasp of his golden stubble.

“Daven feels like he’ll be a good fit,” she mumbles, drifting and content. “Said he’s not as brilliant as you, though.” It’s not – quite – a question. Jaime is brilliant in many ways. But Daven had been career military –

He makes a low, satisfied humming sound. “No one is,” he agrees, smugly.

She clicks her tongue, would have swatted his chest but it turns into a slow, caressing pat instead. “Are you ever going to tell me, Jaime?” she asks, pulling him close against her.

She can feel him grow tense, just for a moment, before he deliberately relaxes. “One day,” he promises her. “One day I’ll tell you everything.”

In the meantime, she holds him as close as she can.
Imagine This

Chapter Summary

“I’m strong enough,” Jaime had said, once.

He really isn’t. Not without his right hand. But sometimes, in her chambers at Winterfell, with the rest of the world locked away beyond the heavy iron-bound door, Brienne likes to imagine that things are otherwise.

Chapter Notes

Um. *coughs nervously* This little smutlet contains fantasies of a dub-con nature. But if that's not your cup of tea, don't worry - by the end it dissolves into romantic fluff. Please enjoy!

“I’m strong enough,” Jaime had said, once.

He really isn’t. Not without his right hand. But sometimes, Brienne likes to imagine that things are otherwise.

**

When she was very young, her mother had once played pretend with her.

*Imagine this*, her mother had said – and had spun Brienne into wonderful worlds of romance and adventure and fantasy.

Safe within her chambers at Winterfell, wrapped in her furs, with the rest of the world locked away beyond the heavy iron-bound door, Brienne plays a different sort of game.

**

*Imagine this*, she thinks –

She hums, shifting in her blankets, feeling the soft brush of fur against her bare skin, stroking her nipples and her belly.

The fight by the river.

Jaime, whole and perfect and insolent, his movements lithe and swift, his footwork sublime, his taunting remarks as much a weapon as the blade in his hand. Even after months in the dungeon, he’s the most exhilarating, most infuriating, certainly the most distracting opponent she’s ever faced.

They spar, and they match wits, and he tests her harder than any other opponent, always smirking, always so…impossible. Ser Jaime Lannister. The Kingslayer. A knight of the Kingsguard. Always
just out of her reach, laughing at her with his wicked green eyes.

*Let’s pretend – there were no Bloody Mummers.*

She presses him hard at first; he gives ground, because he’s been in the dungeon for long months. But then his strength returns, all the perfect grace and skill of the most dangerous knight in Westeros – he takes the fight to her, and soon it’s all she can do to defend herself. She kicks him in the chest and drives him into the shallow water, and there they wrestle for supremacy until he finally overpowers her and pins her down on the riverbank, his weight heavy on her, his breathing hoarse, his green eyes fierce and triumphant –

A knock comes at the door, shattering her fantasy and recalling her to the present.

“Go away!” she shouts, flushed and irritated, her blood pounding in her veins.

There’s a surprised pause on the other side of the door. “Ser, my lady,” Pod ventures hesitantly, “it’s time for the evening meal.”

**

The second time she plays her fantasy game, she tells Pod beforehand that he is not to interrupt her under any circumstances whatsoever.

Door locked, furs securely wrapped around her, she curls in on herself and slips her fingers over her breasts and belly, parting the curls between her legs and stroking the folds of her cunt.

*Let’s say... the Red Tent outside Riverrun,* she thinks. *I want to cross the siege lines, and so I offer him - what?*

It’s late at night. Brienne stands before golden, beautiful, untrustworthy Jaime Lannister and tries to control her temper. She can’t afford to alienate him; she needs his permission to reach Riverrun.

“What do you want?” she finally demands.

He smiles, steps right into her personal space, close enough that she can feel the warmth of his body. She fights the urge to step back, holds her ground stubbornly and meets his wicked green gaze. Her pulse is beating desperately as he reaches up to stroke a lock of her thin blonde hair, his fingers brushing her throat. Slowly, deliberately, he trails his fingers down to –

(Not armour and furs. Something silk, perhaps?)

- the v of her nightrobe, to the tightly cinched sash, and with one deft tug he pulls it open to reveal her thick woollen nightgown.

(Never mind.)

His expression is rueful and amused. “Of course,” he says. “So practical, Lady Brienne. The nights are so cold, aren’t they?”

“What do you want?” she asks again.

He looks at her, then, meets her eyes – his own are cruel, hot, and intent. “The question is,” he says slowly, “what are you willing to do, to reach the Blackfish?”

She stares at him for a long time, not quite grasping his meaning. “What do you mean?” she asks, disbelieving.
He only laughs, steps even closer to her, and cups his hand deliberately between her thighs. She gasps, tenses, and grasps his wrist in an iron grip; he stares at her, eyes mocking and ironic and cruelly amused.

Shuddering, she releases her grip on his wrist, and he slowly, deliberately rucks up her thick nightgown, his eyes fixed on hers, her breathing hoarse, and slips a rough, calloused finger into – she gasps, her blood pounding, as he strokes her folds, boldly parting her lips and forging inside her – and then another, forcing her to widen her stance.

She is every bit as tall as he is, just as strong, trained in sword and shield and spear, but she stands frozen before him, her blood pounding as he strokes and circles and penetrates her, his thumb pressing against her clit. He is so beautiful, and his eyes are wildfire green and burning.

He pushes her down to the bed –

(Where did the bed come from?)

– nudges her thighs wide apart, and slowly crawls on top of her, his weight heavy on her, eyes watching her all the while.

“How far will you go with this, Lady Brienne?” he asks, his tone curious. Still his fingers work between her legs, sliding easily through slick moisture now, her hips jerking convulsively with every stroke.

She swallows, her heart pounding, her breath rasping, her hand – without her knowledge – gripping his wrist again and holding him between her thighs. She draws in her breath. “As far as I need to,” she says, her voice quavering but determined.

He only laughs, coaxes her into releasing his wrist – she whines, her hips rising, chasing him – and unlaces his breeches, fitting his cock to her entrance, eyes still daring her. She is shaking, her blood pounding, her breath gasping – fear, surely it must be fear – twisting beneath his heavy weight, feeling him warm and solid above her – “Do it,” she grinds out, reaching up to tangle her hand in his hair.

And so he does. Wild green eyes fixed on hers, he draws her thighs up around his waist and slowly, carefully pushes his thick, heavy cock into her, his hand firmly planted by her head, his muscles flexing beneath his golden skin. Even though she is wet and slick, it still feels like – like sudden fullness, when she had never known she was empty, like she aches for something she has never before known – she whines, grasping desperately for breath, eyes screwed tightly shut –

The horn sounds: once, twice, thrice. The rush and clamour of armed men racing past her door drags her up out of her hot-blooded reverie and sends her heart pounding for a different reason. She leaps out of bed, rushes into her clothes and her armour and hastens to the walls to join the fight.

**

Twice now she’s started something and been interrupted. She’s snappish and irritable and glowering, and when she finally gets a third chance she’s determined to see it through. She has no patience for elaborate fantasies, but simply thinks –

*Jaime finally comes to Winterfell with the Lannister armies more loyal to him than the Queen. He’s finally broken with Cersei, and he looks at Brienne with fierce, hungry eyes.*

(Skip over all the rest.)
They’re alone in a chamber – somewhere, it doesn’t matter where, or how – and they’re both naked on the bed, and Jaime has just entered her for the first time –

“Open your eyes, Brienne,” he says.

His eyes are fierce wildfire green, fixed on hers. His hips shift, he moves back a little, and then he drives into her again, forcing another gasp from her.

She doesn’t know what to do, but she catches the rhythm easily enough, and when he leans down to kiss her and his fingers go back between her legs to pinch and press against her clit she feels her body clench around him. He grunts, and so she does it again, and again; his body is hot and sweating, his eyes are dark and strained, and her own body is twisting and writhing in counterpoint, striving to reach something that lies just beyond her reach, if he would only fill her more deeply.

She gasps and whines and strains, scratching and clawing at him, grinding against him, desperate for release – “Jaime,” she gasps, “Jaime please –”

He groans, pulls her impossibly closer and drives into some part of her that sends sparks lighting up her spine, and she arches, throwing her head back – and the deep coiling anticipation snaps, and she cries out as she finally reaches her peak.

She’s dimly aware that he collapses on top of her, shaking, but she is still lost in a pleasure she has never before known, feeling like she has shed the bounds of her own too-big body and is no more than a creature of quivering pleasure.

**

“Open your eyes, Brienne,” he says.

She gasps, her eyes flying wide open. “Jaime!” she says, scrambling up, clutching her furs around her. “What are you – how did you –” She stops, and slowly reaches out to touch him.

He’s wearing black leather and mail, cold to the touch. He’s – he’s actually here. Not an idle daydream, not a midnight fantasy, but in the flesh.

He’s not golden and beautiful and wicked, and his eyes aren’t fierce wildfire green. He’s missing his right hand, and he’s grown a beard, complete with streaks of silver amongst the gold, and he looks – exhausted. Worn.

But he’s sitting on her bed and eyeing her with a ghost of that wry, insolent smirk she remembers so well.

“I’m sorry to drag you from your dream, Lady Brienne,” he drawls. “But as you were calling my name –”

“I dreamed of you,” she says simply. “And here you are.”

Slowly, her gaze fixed intently on his, she lets the furs fall, leans forward and kisses him. His mouth opens eagerly under hers, his beard scratching – she hums, pleased; she hadn’t anticipated that – and he laughs into the kiss.

When she pushes him back down to the bed, he yields; when she pins him down, her weight heavy on him, he looks up at her and smiles.
Rise

Chapter Summary

His cousin Daven greets him just inside the bailey, Addam Marbrand by his side. “Cousin,” Daven says, his face grave. “We received your raven. And then – another. From the Queen.”

“Yes,” Jaime says, staring around at the bustle and activity of an army preparing for war. “I’m aware of what my sister must have said. The question is, cuz, which of us do you believe?”

Chapter Notes

This has been my head-canon for Jaime going north since I watched episode 7.07. And now I’ve finally been able to put it into words, just in time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He’s dressed in grey and brown and black, stripped of Lannister colours and identifying marks. Save for a brief, unpleasant period after his imprisonment he’d prefer to forget, he’s worn either crimson and gold or Kingsguard white his entire life; anonymity in these dark days is – not freeing, but sobering.

All his life, men have seen him, known him on sight, reacted to him. Now he’s just another stranger on the road, and their eyes slide away.

The scouts and outriders at Riverrun take a few moments to recognize him. But recognition finally dawns.

“My lord,” they say, their voices relieved but their eyes troubled. “We have been expecting you.”

As he rides towards the castle, he feels the weight of their troubled uncertainty: once he was the Lion of Lannister, the Lord of Casterly Rock, the Commander of the Queen’s armies.

But no more.

His cousin Daven greets him just inside the bailey, Addam Marbrand by his side. “Cousin,” Daven says, his face grave. “We received your raven. And then – another. From the Queen.”

“Yes,” Jaime says, staring around at the bustle and activity of an army preparing for war. “I’m aware of what my sister must have said. The question is, cuz, which of us do you believe?”

“Jaime,” Addam says, lowering his voice and putting his hand on Jaime’s arm. “Cersei writes that you’ve gone mad. That you mean to go into the North – in winter, mind you – to fight grumpkins and snarks and old wives’ tales. She says that anyone who follows you is guilty of treason.”

“You didn’t see what I saw,” Jaime says. He looks up, his gaze encompassing the watching
sentries, the officers crowded behind Daven and Addam, the soldiers, servants and grooms and camp followers crowded into the bailey, all gazing at him in worry and fear and expectation.

Some of them still bear wounds and burns from the Field of Fire. Others were with him at Highgarden and the siege of Riverrun. Others, still, he remembers from those glorious days before the Whispering Wood, so many years ago.

He raises his voice. “The Queen would have you believe that I have gone mad,” he says, addressing the entire army. “But I have finally come to my senses. For years we have fought and killed for the Iron Throne— but now there is an even greater war to come. You’ve all heard the stories. You heard what hides in the frozen North.”

He can see the expressions of fear and disbelief on his audience’s faces. The rumours of the undead horror at the Dragonpit had raced far and wide; as the days grow shorter and wintry darkness falls over Westeros, men begin to speak of old, old fears in the dark, waiting beyond the edge of the firelight.

“I’m here to tell you that I believe those stories,” Jaime continues. “I’ve seen a dead man walk. I believe there’s an army of undead horrors marching on the Seven Kingdoms, and no matter what the Queen says I intend to go north and stop it.”

Now he can see a slow dawn of hope, cautious, hard-earned trust and loyalty—he sees men who want to believe him, who stood with him even in the face of dragonfire because he asked them to.

Because in a world gone mad, they had no one else to look to but him.

“Don’t fight for gold,” he says, “or for power and glory and Casterly Rock. Fight for your families. Fight for the man standing next to you. Fight, because if we don’t fight, the darkness will roll over us and destroy us all, Stark and Lannister and Targaryen alike, until every last man, woman and child is dead and the world is nothing but desolation.”

There is a long pause, like an indrawn breath.

“Will you come with me?” he asks simply.

The answer is a resounding YES!

****

When he arrives at Winterfell, it is with the Lannister armies loyal to him at his back.

Chapter End Notes

I was half-tempted to borrow from Aragorn's speech at the Black Gate and finish with "I bid you stand, Men of the West!" But I managed to control myself.
Bannerman

Chapter Summary

When Jaime Lannister was still a squire of no more than four and ten years old, he met a Northman at Crakehall. They played dice, and Jaime won a fishing village off him.

And that’s how Jaime – technically – became a bannerman to House Stark.

(During Sansa and Jon's travels across the North to drum up support for their cause, they come across a small keep flying the lion banner.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Davos Seaworth reined in his horse on the rise overlooking Shorewatch, a tiny fishing village on the Stony Shore. There was a small keep overlooking the deep harbour, squat and unprepossessing; from the battlements an old, faded crimson banner flew limply, before a stray gust unfurled it to reveal a dull golden lion pawing at the grey sky and the grey-green sea.

“I thought this was a Tallhart holding,” Davos said. “The reply to your message bore the Tallhart seal. How is it that a lion banner flies here?”

“It may as well be a Tallhart holding,” Lady Sansa replied. “Ty Tallhart is the castellan. His lady mother was sister to the lord of Torrhen’s Square. Her husband took her name when they were married.”

“And his father?” Jon Snow asked.

“A lesser Lannister, they say.” Lady Sansa’s face was unreadable. “When the Kingslayer won this fishing village at dice, he installed one of his father’s many cousins to hold it.”

**

When Jaime Lannister was still a squire of no more than four and ten years old, he met a Northman at Crakehall.

They played dice, and Jaime won a fishing village off him.

A small village on the Stony Shore, the man said, a few houses and dozen fishing families with tiny boats. No more than a tiny dot on the map.

Still, Jaime sent one of his more adventurous cousins north to hold it for him, and then he promptly forgot its existence.

When he knelt before King Aerys and swore to hold no lands, take no wife and father no children, he gave up all rights to Casterly Rock, but ownership of the tiny fishing village was never formally relinquished.

And that’s how Jaime – technically – became a bannerman to House Stark.
Ty Tallhart was no more than a boy, twelve or perhaps thirteen; his hair was Lannister gold, his eyes the familiar green, but he spoke with a Northern accent and gazed at Lady Sansa and Jon Snow with wide-eyed loyalty.

“My brother Loreon died fighting for the King in the North,” he said fervently. “I will do whatever I can to aid you, my lady, Lord Snow.”

“And what of your liege lord?” Lady Sansa asked.

The boy looked surprised. “Ser Jaime?” he said, frowning. “What does he have to do with it?”

When young Lord Jaime sent his cousin away into the North, he gave him a scroll authorizing the bearer to act in Jaime’s own name, to draw upon Lannister monies and resources as if he were Jaime himself.

It was in the young lord’s own scrawled handwriting, the ink faded but still perfectly legible, sealed with the rampant lion of Casterly Rock.

*Jaime Lannister,* it was signed, 280 AC.

Young Ty Tallhart presented this written authorization to Davos and Lady Sansa and Jon Snow with a shy, mischievous smile.

“My father never used it much, but he told Loreon and I that this piece of parchment was worth more than all the gold and silver we could ever imagine. When the Ironborn came, he died because he ran back into the keep to retrieve it.”

His face fell, and he stroked gently at a discoloured brown patch on the edge of the scroll. *His father’s blood,* Davos realized.

“Most of our fighting men fought and died with the Young Wolf, Lady Sansa, and the rest when the Ironborn came,” the boy said with simple dignity. “But I will bring you my sword – and my father’s authorization.”

Chapter End Notes

This is another flyaway crack!bunny briefly pinned down for my own amusement. The wider implications - is it no more than a sad fishing village, or did Jaime's adventurous cousin turn it into a prosperous holding which trades with Lannisport? Did he buy more and more land from the dice-addicted Tallhart and make Jaime one of the great lords of the North? What do the small folk think of their liege lord? Did Lord Tywin know about all this? - I have deliberately left unexplored.
Bannerman 2

Chapter Summary

[Sequel to "Bannerman". Not crack.]

A fix-it fic for episode 8.05. Brienne hears that the keep at Shorewatch still flies the golden lion. For the first time in long months, she dares to hope.

Chapter Notes

In which I set out to write a cracky little fix-it for 8x05 based on the premise of "Bannerman", but somehow feelings crept up on me. I don't know that I agree with show!Jaime's desire for a grand tragic death in Cersei's arms, but it's there so I tried to work with it.

It was a grim place, Brienne thought; a squat stone keep built on a weathered granite cliff, overlooking a deep harbour and a straggling village. The icy water was grey-green and restless, the wind from the sea relentless. Out in the distance, she could see the distant silhouettes of four or five fishing boats.

The banner flying from the battlements on the keep was faded and tattered, the crimson now a dull red ochre and the golden lion no more than an outline. Still, it was a Lannister banner, and the lion still clawed defiantly.

Can it truly be him? she wondered, her heart beating strangely within her breast.

When they finally excavated the fallen tunnels deep below the Keep, they had found Queen Cersei's body – but never Jaime’s.

Where he might have gone, no one knew. Not to Casterly Rock or Lannisport or anywhere in the Westerlands. Not to Essos or Dorne. Not even to Tarth.

But who would think to look for a Lannister in the frozen North?

**

A few hardy sheep and goats grazed on the thin, rocky soil. An old, toothless shepherd huddled in ragged furs watched her with rheumy eyes as she rode up towards the keep.

She nodded cordially at him. “Good day to you,” she said.

He only gaped at her.

She rode in, unchallenged, through the gates. Inside, the keep was in better repair than the outside might suggest. Though the gates were open, the hinges were newly oiled and the heavy iron showed no signs of rust. The walls may be weathered, but they were in good repair.
If there were few signs of prosperity, there was no evidence of neglect, either.

_Lannister gold_, she thought. _Put to good use, for once._

When she ventured into the hall – hung with dusty, faded banners, crimson and gold – a greying, red-faced woman swathed in thick shawls whom she took to be the housekeeper bustled out to meet her. “Ser,” she said, and then, “my lady?” She hastily wiped her floury hands on her apron and curtsied. “Welcome! We’ve been expecting you. Ever since the new lord came back to us.”

“How you?” Brienne stripped off her gauntlets and walked over to the vast fireplace. There was a fire burning, even in the relative warmth of the day; a comfortable chair was drawn up before its warmth. Beside the chair was a small table, upon which lay a pot of the salve Jaime used on the scarred and aching stump of his right arm.

She dabbed a finger in the salve and brought it to her nose, the familiar scent of it flooding her with memories of those long-lost weeks at Winterfell.

_Damn him._

“We don’t get many guests here anymore,” the housekeeper said sadly. “Not like the old days, when Lord Jasper was the castellan here and good King Robert sat the Iron Throne. Why, I can remember trading ships coming all the way up from Lannisport, bringing silks and spices and blood-oranges from Dorne. Sometimes Lord Jasper’s golden cousins would come, all hot-blooded and wild for adventure in the north.” She sighed. “All gone now.”

“Young Lord Ty fought bravely during the Long Night,” Brienne said. “He died defending Winterfell from the Night King.”

“Aye, and nearly one in three of the village men with him.” The old woman shook her head. “It’s been a long, hard winter, my lady. We had stores laid by, of course, and the sea can always be relied on, but even so.” She huddled into her shawls and sniffed.

“It’s hard everywhere,” was all Brienne could say.

Hard in the North, ravaged by the Boltons and then by the Night King; hard in the South, ravaged by long years of war and strife.

The housekeeper only sighed again. “No doubt, no doubt,” she said. And then, her dark eyes fixed shrewdly on Brienne, she said, “You’ll want to see the new lord, then?”

**

The new lord, as the old housekeeper had called him, was down at the harbour, going over some business with his steward. It had to do with counting barrels, or something at least that required him to shelter from the icy wind in the little village tavern, a tankard of ale to hand.

The tavern was ill-lit and sparsely populated. He did not see her, at first, his back to the door; it was the steward, an old, grey man – as all the men here seemed to be old and grey – who first noticed her. When his expression changed, Jaime stiffened, and slowly turned around –

He was older, Brienne thought, older than he had even been at Winterfell. His face was gaunt and haggard, his eyes dark – with grief, perhaps, or pain. He was moving more slowly and carefully than usual – had he been wounded? Could that be why he had not come back?

He looked on her as though she was a ghost. As though he were afraid of her.
“Ser Brienne,” he said.

The steward looked between her and Jaime, made a discreet bow and slipped away.

“Ser Jaime,” she replied.

He winced.

In the dim light of the tavern, there was only the tavern-keeper and two or three other customers present to witness their meeting, and they all appeared to be engrossed in their cups, intent on their own business.

“When I heard that Queen Cersei was dead, and that there was no sign of you beside her, I waited for you to come back,” she finally began.

He looked up at her, his mouth twisted wryly. He said nothing.

“When I heard that the Seven Kingdoms were finally at peace and your brother had been declared Lord of Casterly Rock, I waited for you to come back,” she continued.

His eyes flicked down and away. Still he said nothing.

“When months passed with no news, when I heard that there had been no sightings of you anywhere, I thought –” she swallowed, “I thought that surely you must be dead. And then I heard that the keep at Shorewatch on the far edge of the world still flew the golden lion.”

He refused to meet her eyes.

“Jaime,” she said, speaking his name into the silence. “Jaime, please. Cersei is dead. The world has changed and moved on. The man you once were is dead, but here you are, still alive. Come back with me and live.”

She reached out her hand to his. He gripped her fingers, tangled them together, painfully strong. When he looked up, his eyes were sheened with tears and he looked as though he were in torment.

“I loved her,” he whispered, his voice almost too low for her to hear. “I went back to die with her.”

Her heart twisted within her. “I know,” she said.

“I almost did die with her. If Euron’s blade had driven any deeper, if the stones from the roof had fallen in a different way – but when our world came to an end, still there I was – alive. Cersei and the babe were dead, and I was alive.”

He wept, now, slow, grim tears. “I was – I didn’t care who or what I was, after that, or where I went. I had nowhere else to go but here. I didn’t think I deserved – I didn’t think you would –” he trailed off.

Take him back, she thought. Forgive him.

Brienne had always known his weakness as well as his strength. She’d known that there was more than forty years of history between the twins, that Cersei was so much a part of him that there could be no untangling them.

She’d thought, perhaps, that he might come to choose her, though. Just once.

But Cersei was dead, and here Jaime was – lesser and diminished, but alive.
“Come back with me, Jaime,” she said again. “Come back into the world, and live.”
The Arrangement

Chapter Summary

“How much?” Brienne asks.

The beautiful golden stranger blinks, slowly – even his eyelashes are gold-tipped – and stares at her with incredible cat-green eyes. He looks affronted, half-vexed and half-amused, ready to fall either way –

“How much do you charge?” she asks again.

Chapter Notes

Just a little of bit of cracky, fluffy fun.

**

1.

**

“How much?” Brienne asks.

The beautiful golden stranger blinks, slowly – even his eyelashes are gold-tipped – and stares at her with incredible cat-green eyes. He looks affronted, half-vexed and half-amused, ready to fall either way –

“How much do you charge?” she asks again.

After a beat, he smiles at her, sharp-edged and mocking. “Why not,” he says. And then – “Five hundred gold dragons.”

She almost chokes on her drink. “What?!?”

“I don’t come cheap, you know,” he says.

She’s on holiday in Dorne, by the sea. The night is warm and sultry, the stars brilliant in the black sky. Wild, hot-blooded music skirls in the background, and a glorious golden gigolo is flirting with her, with definite – if expensive – intent.


**

He takes her to bed.

She strips his shirt off, exposing his long, lean torso covered with warm golden skin, and a tattoo
of some sort – she can’t really see it in the dim light. He pins her against the door of the hotel room, devouring her mouth even as his hand – one hand, she thinks, why does he only have one hand? – rucks up her short skirt. She fists her hands in his long golden hair and tugs, moaning low in her throat as his calloused fingers plunge into her –

“Oh,” she breathes, and then, “Oh –!” as he goes down to his knees and puts his mouth on her.

She loses track of time, after that.

**

She sneaks away in the early hours of the morning, leaving the money on the bedside table.

**

She sees him again the next day, during her last walk on the beach before she has to make her way to the airport. He’s unshaven and still wearing last night’s clothes, gloriously disheveled, and something deep and dark coils and twists, deep within her belly.

“Do you have anywhere to stay?” she asks.

He looks at her through his lashes again, calculating and aloof and amused, like a great golden cat.

“Why don’t you come with me?” she offers, her heart in her throat.

She doesn’t know what she’ll do if he laughs and ridicules her.

But –

“Why not?” he says, as he had said last night.

**

She takes Jaime – his name is Jaime Hill, he says – back with her, to her home in King’s Landing.

**

2.

**

“Brienne,” Margaery and Sansa say, half-despairing, “You can’t just go round picking up stray golden drifters, no matter how good they are in bed. You don’t know anything about him!”

“He has a Kingsguard tattoo,” Brienne counters weakly.

“Anyone can get a Kingsguard tattoo!” Margaery throws up her hands. “I bet even Sansa could get one if she wanted!”

Sansa nods in grave agreement.

But Brienne digs in her heels. There’s something about the way Jaime moves, balanced and powerful, his confidence, his pride and self-assurance. She doesn’t know why a man like him would agree to their arrangement, but she’s not going to argue with her good luck.
Brienne lives in a nice little flat in the more fashionable end of Flea Bottom. Jaime makes himself at home with ease, charming the neighbours and soon the entire local community.

He makes no secret that he lives with Brienne and is currently between jobs.

If he were a younger man, she might feel old and predatory, but Jaime is older than Brienne, and he has teeth; whatever he’s hiding he’s not helpless.

He has armour of his own: his golden beauty, an instinct for finding weak spots, a sardonic eye and a vicious tongue that would flay her alive if he ever turns it on her.

It’s been a very long and tiring day. As she fumbles with her key in the lock, cold and tired and irritable, Jaime greets her at the door, shirtless, dark golden hair trailing down his abs to disappear beneath his low-riding jeans.

His feet are bare. Her mouth goes dry.

She feels, more than sees, his lazy grin. “Aren’t you going to come in?” he asks, stretching, all that smooth golden skin on display.

She nods dumbly and follows him in.

The sex is mind-blowing, as usual. They lie curled together afterwards, Jaime tracing patterns between her freckles and humming approval, Brienne basking in the warmth and comfort of it, trying not to remember that his affection is bought and paid for.

Somewhere, his phone buzzes. He yawns and stretches, arching like a cat – she can’t help but put her hands on him, which he accepts as no more than his due – and pulls on his jeans before he pads into the kitchen, barefoot and shirtless, his golden hair tousled.

She gets up to follow him, absently switching on the kettle for a cup of tea. Some part of her notices that his phone is a very new model, sleek and black and super-expensive. The other part of her is half-listening to his low voice.

“What is it, Tyrion?” Jaime asks.

And then, “No, tell Father I’m not – no, I don’t care what Cersei or Aunt Genna says, I’m not flying out to the Rock on two hours notice –”

Brienne can’t hear the other end of the conversation, but suddenly her mind snaps back into focus and for the first time in weeks she starts thinking furiously.

Golden hair and green eyes.


The Rock.
When he slams the end call button and tosses the phone down on the kitchen bench, Brienne straightens to her full height. “You’re a Lannister,” she says accusingly.

He hums absently, his attention caught by her robe falling half-open. Slowly, lazily, he leans forward to nuzzle at her breasts.

She threads her hand through his hair and tugs, dragging his attention back to the conversation. “You don’t need my money,” she says.

He blinks at her, that same half-vexed, half-amused stare he’d given her the first night they’d met. “I don’t need anyone’s money,” he replies. “I’ve got enough of my own.”

So many things become clear.

“Then why did you –” she waves her hand vaguely, trying to encompass the whole situation, their – arrangement.

“I was trying to pick you up that night,” he says, frowning at her as if everything is her fault. “You assumed I was a paid professional and wouldn’t believe anything I said.”

She stares at him.

He shrugs. “I thought if I waited long enough, I would find some way to convince you I was genuinely interested.”
**Strike first. Strike hard. No mercy.**

**Chapter Summary**

Jaime and Sandor Clegane open a dojo to teach real-world karate. Brienne is their first student. (Inspired by Cobra Kai.)

**Chapter Notes**

1. Due to the age-difference and the teacher-student relationship, this story is necessarily Jaime & Brienne rather than Jaime/Brienne. But please feel free to imagine them years in the future.

2. I have no excuse. I watched season 1 of Cobra Kai and the crack!bunny bit.

3. I know nothing about karate.

**

1.

**

In his dream, he has two hands. He’s 16 years old again, at the Westerosi under-18 karate championships, and his coach, Aerys Targaryen, says: *Sweep the leg.*

Jaime’s opponent is Aerys’ own son, Rhaegar. Rhaegar’s coach is Arthur Dayne, one of Jaime’s childhood heroes.

*Sensei?* Jaime asks, not quite believing.

*No mercy,* Aerys says. *Do you understand?* He puts his hand on Jaime’s shoulder, his fingernails digging painfully into the skin. *Sweep. The. Leg.*

Jaime’s fear of Aerys Targaryen is all-consuming. Stronger than honour, or hero-worship, or even the thought of his reputation.

He sweeps Rhaegar’s leg.

The crowd boos and hisses.

He follows up mercilessly on his advantage, striking hard and fast, and Rhaegar curls in on himself, his face twisted in pain and shock.

On the last point, when Rhaegar would have used a last, desperate kick, Jaime grabs his foot and sends him crashing to the ground, finishes him off with ruthless ease.
The last thing Jaime sees before the dream ends is the disapproving look on Arthur Dayne’s face.

**

He wakes to cold reality: a shit-hole apartment in Flea Bottom, a pounding hangover, and the knowledge that his glory days are forever behind him. He’s 34 years old, a one-handed cripple with no job and no future; his life in the army had been ended by an Essosi machete and his life on civilian street is – well, it’s less than ideal.

To make matters worse, everywhere he looks he sees Rhaegar Targaryen’s face. On billboards. In the papers. On the television. He’s running for office, with a great story for the masses: a two-time Olympic karate champion, overcoming disappointment and defeat to cast off his father’s shadow and make his own path. *Never mind that he took my spot in the Olympics. Never mind that I lost that spot when I killed his father with my bare hands and did him the greatest favour of his life.*

Rhaegar had gone to Vaes Dothrak and had won gold at the Olympics.

Jaime had been sent to a juvenile detention centre. Only his age and his father’s expensive lawyers had saved him from a prison sentence and a permanent criminal record.

Still.

He doesn’t regret it.

He’d done exactly what Aerys had taught him: he’d struck first, he’d struck hard, and he’d showed absolutely no mercy.

**

2.

**

The first time he sees Brienne Tarth she’s curled in on herself, shoulders hunched, head bowed. But something about her catches his attention: even as she maintains a miserable silence, her hands are clenched into fists at her sides. Even as the circling bullies taunt her, he can see the anger building, building in her.

She only needs to learn how to express it.

**

3.

**

He shouldn’t be proud of himself for beating up a bunch of dickless teenage boys. But when he calls Tyrion from the police station afterwards, he’s filled with a sense of reckless possibility.

“You want to what?” Tyrion asks.

“I want to open a dojo,” Jaime says, for the second time. “Come and bail me out, and we’ll talk.”

**

Tyrion is skeptical at first.
“Do you know the first thing about setting up your own business, brother?” he asks. “The paperwork, the certification, the thousand and one details –”

“Never mind all that,” Jaime says with a lordly wave of his hand. “That’s what Lannister money and Lannister lawyers are for.”

“Lannister money comes with Lannister oversight,” Tyrion warns. “What do you think Father will say when he hears of this?”

“Just tell him that I’ve finally found a business venture worthy of my trust fund, and that you’re supervising me every step of the way. In fact, it might be best if that’s actually true –”

“Jaime,” Tyrion says with slow patience, “I am the Chief Financial Officer of Lanniscorp. I don’t have time to run a karate dojo as well.”


Tyrion glares at him half-heartedly, but finally sighs and gives in.

Jaime grins delightedly. “It’s going to be great, Tyrion,” he says. “You’ll see.”

**

(“There’s just one thing, Jaime,” Tyrion says a few days later. “Because of your colourful juvenile past, you need an assistant instructor qualified to teach children under 18. I know a guy who works with juvenile offenders who can help. His name is Sandor Clegane.”)

**

4.

**

With Tyrion handling the inconvenient details, Jaime – and Clegane – are free to concentrate on their lone student.

“Stand up straight,” Jaime says, in their very first lesson. “Look me in the eye like a man, Tarth. Show me you’ve got some balls.”

Clegane snorts.

Tarth stares at him, wide-eyed. “You do know I’m a girl, sensei,” she ventures.

“Quiet!” he snaps. “I don’t give a shit what you are. You’re a student of Cobra Kai. And students of Cobra Kai have balls, whether they’re girls or boys or aliens from outer space. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sensei!” she says, standing straight.

“Good. Now. What is the first principle of Cobra Kai?”

“Strike first,” she says, her eyes straying to the logo on the wall.

“Yes.” He nods. “Strike first. Not just in a fight, but in life as well. If you see a really hot girl at a party, you don’t wait for some other guy to talk to her first, do you?”
She blushes an ugly, splotchy red. “I’m not actually interested in girls, sensei –”

“No point, Tarth!” he says. “What I’m saying is, you’ve gotta have confidence. You’ve gotta reach out and take what you want. Nobody’s gonna give it to you. That girl – or guy, whatever – isn’t gonna suddenly fall in love with you out of the blue. You have to make it happen. Understand?”

“Yes, sensei!” she says.

**(Brienne will never, ever tell Lannister-sensei this, but after her first lesson, she gathers up the courage to finally talk to Renly Baratheon and ask him to the Stranger’s Day dance. He has the grace to let her down gently and explain that he is going with Loras Tyrell.)

**

Brienne Tarth is a natural.

Once he and Clegane get her to stand up straight and teach her to see her 6-foot plus height as an advantage, once they teach her to use her strength and her weight, she catches on with gratifying ease.

Her fists are man-sized and she punches like a freight train.

Her legs are strong and muscular and she kicks like a sledgehammer.

She’s relentless in attack and immovable in defence.

She’s almost a joy to teach, to watch as she absorbs the fundamentals and moves on to the more aggressive techniques.

“The second principle of Cobra Kai,” he says, when he thinks she’s ready, “is strike hard. There’s no point in fighting if you don’t put your enemies down fast and hard. Make sure you don’t let them get back up.”

Jaime and Clegane teach her all the quickest, dirtiest and most ruthless moves they know between them. Jaime had spent more than 10 years in the elite special forces; Clegane had spent his life on the streets, fighting for hire and in jail.

“Listen, girl,” Clegane rasps, “when you’re fighting for your life, there’s no right or wrong. Kill your enemies before they kill you. And if you can’t kill them, make the bastards hurt.”

It’s not until Tyrion asks Jaime, elaborately casual, whether the rules of karate allow eye-gouging and head-butting that he realizes he has to backtrack a little.

“Listen, Tarth,” he says, drawing her aside and lowering his voice, “if you’re going to use these in a competition environment, make sure that no one sees you.”

“Yes, sensei,” she says, wide-eyed and sincere.

**(5)
Slowly, the dojo gains more students.

Like Tarth before she started to gain a little confidence, they’re all social outcasts, shy and hunched in on themselves, lacking in physical confidence.

“Seven hells,” Clegane mutters dourly, “what the fuck are we supposed to do with this lot?”

Samwell Tarly is moon-faced and fat and terrified of his own shadow. Jaime glowers down at him and tells him to put his weight to good use.

Podrick Payne is bumbling and incompetent, but he means well.

Hot Pie is fat and obsessed with food and Lommy is small and weedy. Jaime and Clegane do what they can with them.

And then one day Tarth brings in a slender, beautiful red-head with pale skin and haunted eyes. She looks like a maiden out of song, like a damsel waiting to be rescued by a knight –

“Her boyfriend was a sadistic monster,” Tarth tells Jaime and Clegane before the lesson. “She wants to learn how to become stronger.”

Clegane looks even more murderous than usual. Jaime can understand the impulse, and so he lets Clegane take the lead on the lesson.

“Right,” Clegane announces. “The third principle of Cobra Kai is no mercy.” He looks around the rows of terrified young faces. “Life’s not fucking fair,” he continues. “If you don’t know this already, you’ll learn it soon enough.”

“Your father is a ruthless tyrant,” he says, and Tarly looks like he might cry.

“The cool kids bully you at school.” Payne, Hot Pie and Lommy shuffle their feet.

“You’re ugly as fuck and the hot boy you’ve got a crush on turns out to be gay.” Tarth flushes beet-red.

“Your sick cunt of a boyfriend is a monster.” Sansa Stark looks stricken and sways slightly on her feet.

“Your hand might even get chopped off with a machete.” He looks straight at Jaime as he says it.

“And now you think your life is over. Well boo-fucking-hoo. Life’s not like the stories. Good people aren’t rewarded and bad people rise to the top. You’ve gotta fight. If life knocks you down, you get the fuck back up, do you understand?”

“Yes, sensei!” the students shout.

**

Jaime has never been prouder.
The Golden Consort

Chapter Summary

“Do you know,” he says, “they tell tales in Essos of the Evenstar, the great Warrior Queen of Tarth, and her beautiful golden consort.”

“Oh?” she asks. “And who is this beautiful golden consort? Do I know him?”

Chapter Notes

In which there is post-canon fluff and roleplay. Just because.

She comes back to her chambers after a long, tiring day.

Jaime has scattered candles on various surfaces, the flickering lights creating a warm, hazy golden atmosphere. She can also see a large copper tub filled with steaming water, sweet-scented oils swirling on the black surface.

There’s a plate of food and a goblet of red wine set out for her.

Best of all, Jaime is lounging on the bed, shirtless, dressed only in his trousers.

“Do you know,” he says, “they tell tales in Essos of the Evenstar, the great Warrior Queen of Tarth, and her beautiful golden consort.”

“Oh?” she asks, unbuckling her sword-belt and placing Oathkeeper carefully on its stand. “And who is this beautiful golden consort? Do I know him?”

“They say that he is the most handsome man in Westeros. They say his father was a dread warlord, and his sister a cruel seductress. They say the Warrior Queen stole him away and kept him for her own.”

“I don’t blame her,” Brienne says, kneeling on the bed beside Jaime, leaning down and taking his mouth with her own. “If I’d ever seen such a golden paragon, I would have been tempted myself.”

He nips gently at her, sits up and frowns at her in mock reproof. “They say,” he continues, “that the Warrior Queen keeps him captive in her chambers, clad in the finest silks and adorned with gold and jewels –”

Brienne can’t help it. She breaks into a fit of undignified giggles, very unfit for a great Warrior Queen.

“Are you laughing at your golden consort?” Jaime demands, indignant.

Still laughing, she threads her hand through his hair – still golden, though streaked with grey now – and cups his face with her palm. Now that the days have finally become warmer, he’s clean-shaven
again; he looks younger and more carefree, but some part of her still misses the beard.

“Never,” she says solemnly. “If I were a Warrior Queen, I would keep you in all the silks and jewels you desired. Alas, I’m only a knight, and you’re only a –”

He pounces on her. She shrieks with laughter as they wrestle over the bed, Jaime mock-growling, each trying to gain the upper hand; eventually she pins him down beneath her, his lean golden body at her mercy.

“Now,” she says, leaning down to kiss him and feeling the coiled strength of him stir beneath her, “lie back and let me take you for my own.”
The Lioness of Lannister

Chapter Summary

She rode a milk-white destrier in triumphant procession to the gates of Casterly Rock, wearing scarred, battered golden armour and a smoke-blackened crimson cloak. Lion banners snapped in the wind, and the smallfolk cheered and called her name – Brienne the Brave! they cried. The Golden Lioness of Lannister.

The news of her betrothal came swift on the heels of Lord Jon Arryn’s death.

(\textit{She would always remember that, afterwards; the odd coincidence of the timing.})

Her father broke the news to her as gently as he could. She was to be married to Ser Jaime Lannister, newly released from the Kingsguard, within a month.

“Father, I can’t,” she said. “I won’t.”

“Brienne,” he replied, taking her hand. “You can. You must.”

Her father never told her what Lord Tywin had promised – or threatened – in order to secure the match. All she knew was that Lord Tywin gained a daughter-in-law and a secure harbour in the Narrow Sea, and her father gained a husband for his ugly, mannish daughter.

**

They were married at Storm’s End.

Trussed up miserably in an ill-fitting dress, Brienne stood beside the golden, beautiful Kingslayer, conscious that she was one or two inches taller. The septon droned on and on and Brienne fidgeted uncomfortably, her eyes darting this way and that, until her maiden cloak was removed and she felt her new husband drape his gold-embroidered crimson cloak around her shoulders.

The feast was interminable. King Robert – fat and red-faced – drank and roared his way through all seven courses; the Queen sat beside him, pale with icy rage. Brienne and her new husband – Brienne the Beauty and the golden Kingslayer – were seated in pride of place, in full view of the court and able to hear every scornful whisper and slur.

She picked miserably at her food. Ser Jaime drank, his smiles growing sharper and sharper with every malicious comment.

The bedding ceremony was every bit as awful as she’d feared.

The act itself was – intrusive. Invasive. Uncomfortable.

In the dim light of the marriage chamber she lay on her back on the great bed, her shift hiked up around her waist, staring into the distance as her husband fitted himself to her and pushed in, uncomfortable and stretching. She held herself awkwardly still as he moved within her, his breathing harsh and his skin sweat-slick until he groaned and she felt a rush of sticky warmth, and
then it was all done.

They lay beside each other afterwards, not touching, not looking at each other: two strangers with nothing in common save their vows.

**

“Wine?” he asked, later. His tone was – light. Ironic. False.

“Yes,” she said, sitting up and pulling her shift back down. “Please.”

Her new husband smiled crookedly at her careful manners. Hitching his breeches back up, he strolled over to a side-table and poured two goblets of Arbor red.

His linen shirt hung loose about him, and she could see shadowed glimpses of his bare skin in the firelight. She’d put her hands on his waist, when he’d been – inside her. His muscles had bunched and gathered. His skin had been – warm.

She gulped eagerly at the wine, feeling her cheeks flush blotchy red.

“This is not – what I would have chosen,” he said, almost to himself.

She stared at him, this golden, beautiful stranger whose life had been joined to hers. She wondered what he saw when he looked at her.

“It’s what we’ve been given,” she said, more harshly than she meant to.

**

The next day Ser Jaime rode north with the King and his great procession, and Brienne left the Stormlands with Lord Tywin Lannister for Casterly Rock.

She would not see him again for another year, until he returned to the Rock after attacking Ned Stark in the streets.

**

Before he went off to play at war in the Riverlands, he lay with her again.

It was at Lord Tywin’s insistence, she knew; her good-father had made it clear that he expected her to produce an heir in a timely fashion, never mind that she had not seen Ser Jaime since their wedding night.

The second time she lay beneath him, she at least knew what to expect. It was still too-close, too-intimate; she could smell the wine on his breath and almost taste the salt-slick sweat on his skin.

Afterwards, as on their first night, he poured two glasses of wine. They drank in strained, uncomfortable silence.

**

When Lord Tywin went off to war, Brienne stayed behind at the Rock.

She was not beautiful or graceful or accomplished in the womanly arts, but she knew how to run a noble household. She knew how to command.
She held Casterly Rock even after Ser Jaime was captured in the Whispering Wood, even after Ned Stark’s death, even as the Young Wolf began to win victory after victory and pushed beyond the Golden Tooth into the Westerlands.

And then – and then Stannis’ vile whispers of treason and incest reached her ears, and deep in her heart she knew them to be true. She’d seen the way the Queen looked at her, the poisonous hate and jealousy that could not rationally be explained.

She’d seen the way Ser Jaime looked at his beautiful golden sister.

*This is not what I would have chosen,* he’d said on their wedding night.

**

When Renly Baratheon called his banners and declared himself king, Brienne suffered a crisis of conscience.

She had no loyalties to the Westerlands. She hated and feared Lord Tywin and she resented ser Jaime. Lord Renly had been kind to her, and had smiled and laughed and danced with her. Her father was a sworn bannerman to Storm’s End.

And yet – and yet –

And yet she stayed. Because it was her duty.

Because she was no longer Brienne of Tarth; she was the Lady of Casterly Rock, and the smallfolk and the lesser lords looked to her for direction.

**

When the Young Wolf escaped death at his uncle’s wedding and came for Casterly Rock, Brienne called her banners and rallied the Westerlands. Marbrand and Brax, Crakehall and Plumm, Lefford and Lannister, they answered her call and stood with her against the combined forces of the North and Riverlands.

Trumpets called. Banners snapped and rippled in the wind. Swords and spears clashed. Men and horses screamed as they died. It was nothing at all like she had imagined, but she was not overwhelmed; she stood firm against the men who would invade her lands and kill her people, and she threw them back.

She won the first victory, and then a second and a third. The people of the Westerlands flocked to her, great lords and knights and smallfolk alike; with their help she took back the castles and strongholds the Northerners had seized, and finally, as long months and battles passed, she forced the Young Wolf out of the Westerlands and beyond her borders.

**

The next time she saw Ser Jaime, she was no longer a shy, awkward bride.

She rode a milk-white destrier in triumphant procession to the gates of Casterly Rock, wearing scarred, battered golden armour and a smoke-blackened crimson cloak. Lion banners snapped in the wind, and the smallfolk cheered and called her name –

Chapter Summary

“So many vows,” he says. “They make you swear and swear and swear. I wonder – do drunken vows made at spear-point count?”

“No matter,” he continues, before she can think of a reply. “Just as I rid myself of an unwanted king, I’m sure I can rid myself of an unwanted wife.”

Chapter Notes

A secret marriage! AU. Inspired by the fabulous "no war is enough (to keep me from you)" by robotsdance. The author very kindly let me adopt a plot-bunny inspired by the line: “Apparently we were married by Lady Catelyn herself, the night she sent us south.”

I may have steered it into forced!marriage territory as well as secret!marriage.

Many thanks to robotsdance.

They drag him into the marriage chamber, strip him down to his smallclothes and chain him to the bed.

“A wedding night right out of song!” one of the Northern soldiers jests as they depart, and “The bear and the maiden fair!” says another. “Only which is which?” They laugh uproariously.

The Kingslayer is vilely drunk, pale and wasted after long months of imprisonment. And yet his eyes, glazed over as they are, gleam with sardonic malice when he sees her –

“Ah, my blushing bride,” he says. “Eager to consummate our marriage, no doubt. Well, come here, sweetling – I’m afraid you’ll have to do all of the work yourself. I’m a little tied up.”

Outside the chamber, the soldiers shout and laugh and offer crude suggestions.

Brienne looks at the man who had been held at spear-point and forced to marry her, who was even now chained down to the marriage bed. Suddenly, she feels sick to her stomach.

“I am not a raper, ser,” she says.

“No?” he considers this. “I’m glad to hear that. But the soldiers outside will be terribly disappointed.”

“I will deal with them, if it comes to that.” She grips the hilt of her sword, holds tightly, as if for comfort.

“Do you know,” he says, musingly, “I believe you could. When you square your shoulders like
that, you look like the Warrior himself.” He pauses. “If the Warrior were dog-ugly, with no teats to speak of.”

She rounds on him, blushing furiously. “Shut up!” she hisses. “Just – be silent.”

He falls silent. The fire hisses and pops, the warm play of light and shadow playing over the large velvet-canopied bed, over his body, splayed out on the thick furs.

He has been released from the Kingsguard, Lady Catelyn had said. They plan to proxy-marry him to Margaery Tyrell. We cannot allow that to happen.

On Lady Catelyn’s orders, they’d held him down and poured wine down him first, then dragged him from the dungeons and forcibly washed him. He was clean, at least, and dressed in new clothes when he stood beside her at the altar; he’d smelled of wine and harsh lye soap when he’d draped a borrowed crimson cloak over her shoulders, prompted by a spear pressed to his back.

She can still feel the warmth and strength of his arm as the septon bound their wrists with soft cloth.

His eyes are half-closed, his breathing slow. But she knows that he’s still awake and aware.

When the raucous shouting has finally died down outside their chamber he stirs.

“What do you mean to release me from these chains, wife?” he asks, after a while. “If you don’t intend to have your way with me –”

“I don’t trust you,” she says flatly. “You are an oathbreaker. You have no honour.”

“I don’t deny it,” he replies lightly. “But if you don’t trust in my honour, surely you trust in your own strength. I’ve been in the dungeons for months. I’m weaker than a kitten.”

Despite these light words, his muscles bunch and coil as he tries his strength against the chains.

“You will stay in your chains, Kingslayer,” she says stubbornly. “Unless you mean to renounce your allegiance to the false king Joffrey and swear fealty to the King in the North.”

He sighs wearily. “So many vows,” he says. “They make you swear and swear and swear. I wonder – do drunken vows made at spear-point count?”

“No matter,” he continues, before she can think of a reply. “Just as I rid myself of an unwanted king, I’m sure I can rid myself of an unwanted wife.”

They spend the rest of their wedding night in uncomfortable silence.

**

“If they wish a wedding, I will give them one,” Lord Tywin says, when Lady Catelyn sends word to him that his golden son had been wed by force to the Maid of Tarth.

“I will give the North a wedding they will never forget.”

**

Even now, long years later, Brienne still dreams of the Red Wedding.

She dreams of the feast, the loud music and raucous merriment, the drunken toasts and the dancers
stomping and whirling. She dreams of King Robb, smiling gravely, of Lord Edmure and his hapless bride, of Lady Catelyn, worry and fear slowly giving way to wary enjoyment.

She dreams of the Kingslayer – of Jaime – holding himself with haughty pride even in chains, his smile sharp and ironic.

She dreams of the way his face had changed, the terrible realization that had come over him as the minstrels had begun to play The Rains of Castamere.

He’d looked towards her, she remembered, as the crossbows appeared on the upper galleries and the Freys and the Bolton soldiers drew their knives. His eyes had been –

Resigned. Unsurprised.

She’d fought her way through the ambush, had almost managed to reach Lady Catelyn, before someone knocked her down and she hit her head. The last thing she remembered was King Robb, falling to his knees, Lady Catelyn crying out in her grief, and Jaime holding her down, telling her to stay still, to play dead, to trust him to get them out of this –

In her dreams, though, it’s not Roose Bolton killing King Robb but Jaime plunging the knife into Brienne, all the while whispering: The Lannisters send their regards.

**

There are few left, now, who remember the brief, forced marriage of the Kingslayer and the Maid of Tarth. Most had died at the Red Wedding, or if they survived the massacre at the Twins had turned to banditry and died squalid, nameless deaths. The Freys are all dead. The Bolton men who had gone north with their lord had mostly perished when Jon Snow took Winterfell back for the Starks.

Rumours persist, though: lurid tales of wild goings-on in the dungeons of Riverrun; bawdy songs of a brute warrior-maid overpowering a golden knight and forcing him to pleasure her. Kingslayer’s Whore, they call her in the Riverlands.

Lord Tywin, it seems, had kept the news of his son’s marriage to himself, and it had died with him.

Of those who remember that long-ago drunken ceremony in Riverrun’s glass-windowed sept, only Brienne and Ser Jaime remain.

And so when Brienne rises to her feet to defend Ser Jaime to the fierce, terrible Dragon Queen, she does not say: This man is my husband. He saved my life at the Red Wedding, when he could easily have been rid of me.

She says only: “Ser Jaime is an honourable man. I will vouch for him.”

**

He’d taken her back to King’s Landing with him, after the Red Wedding. She’d been grieving and heartbroken, raging at the gods and the Lannisters and the world entire. Left with nothing and no one else, she’d had no choice but to trust him.

Live, he’d said. Live, and take your revenge.

Under Lord Tywin’s calculating gaze and Queen Cersei’s jealous one, they’d played a very delicate game of pretend – until he finally sent her away.
Their paths have intersected many times over since their parting. Each time they meet and part again, the knowledge of their marriage lies between them, unspoken, unacknowledged.

**

When he comes to her chamber after the long, terrible night, she lets him in.

Long years after the drunken vows made at spear-point, long after Lady Catelyn and Lord Tywin are dead and gone, there’s no need to hide it any longer – their first kiss is filled with the weight of their shared history, and when they stumble to the bed and she lands on top of him, he laughs and makes some jest about having her way with him.

Afterwards, they hold each other close, and in the silence of their marriage bed he turns towards her, his green eyes clear and unshadowed.

*I am hers,* he says, in his right mind and of his own free will, *and she is mine.*

*Yes,* she says. *Yes.* And vows the same in turn.
Chapter Summary

Two descriptive mini-AUs.

**

1. Captive

**

Deep in the furthest backwoods of the Riverlands there stood an old, long-forgotten keep, crumbling with time and neglect, with a slate roof and mullioned glass windows, the walls overgrown with ivy. The grounds were filled with pungent herb gardens, overgrown rose gardens, and a wild tangle of apple trees, white flowers drifting from their boughs.

At the very top of the keep there was a spacious, airy chamber flooded with golden autumn light, with a cracked stained-glass window that cast jewelled shadows across the dusty stone floor. The chamber contained a great four-poster bed draped with tattered silk curtains. Two comfortable armchairs were situated before the fireplace. An old copper-framed mirror hung on the wall, next to bookshelves stacked haphazardly with scrolls and manuscripts and a battered desk holding a pile of parchment, ink, charcoal and paint.

Sprawled half-naked in the great four-poster bed, the afternoon light trailing lovingly over his muscular torso and shoulders and his long golden hair, was Ser Jaime Lannister.

He stretched deliberately, arching his golden body, and watched her with cruel, taunting green eyes.

“Come, Lady Brienne,” he drawled. “I am at your mercy. No man would blame you for taking advantage.” He smiled, his teeth sharp and white. “I can feel your eyes on me. Watching. Wanting.”

“Take him away from Riverrun,” Lady Catelyn had said. “Take him to a place his family will never think to search for him, and keep him safe and hidden until I call for you.”

And so Brienne had stolen the Kingslayer away from the dungeons, had bundled him onto a horse and ridden far and fast, stumbling across the old, forgotten ways, the tangle of hidden paths that none but the furtive smallfolk knew, until she found this long-forgotten place.

Here she kept him close and secret, her fierce, dangerous captive who watched her and taunted her, waiting for the slightest mistake. For long, long days she kept him, as weeks turned into months, and she waited, faithfully, for word from Lady Catelyn that never came.

**

2. Enemy Agents

**
They fuck, sometimes.

It’s dangerous, she knows, but she can’t help it. He’s so beautiful she can’t keep away, and he looks at her with such hunger in his green eyes; beneath his gaze she forgets that she is a graceless, lumbering beast of a woman.

She holds onto him with all her strength when he puts his mouth between her legs, her hands clenching in his golden hair, her legs wrapping convulsively around his waist as he drives into her over and over again, his mouth on hers and his thumb on her clit and the warmth and weight of him pressing down on her.

She holds onto him with all her strength when she flips him over and pins him down on the bed, all that golden beauty beneath her as she rides him fiercely, driving them on and on until she shatters, crying out her pleasure to the world.

Afterwards they lie entwined with each other, arms and legs tangled together, two human creatures starved of touch and intimacy.

Their lives are filled with shadows and secrets and lies. Trust is sacred.

She leaves him in the morning, still sleeping, sprawled in a patch of sunlight with a smile on his lips. Her body will ache for days afterwards, a small, secret ache that she holds jealously close, the memories enough to tide her over – until the next time.
Woodstock, 1969

Chapter Summary

Woodstock, 1969

Chapter Notes

Please forgive this incomplete glimpse of an AU. It wouldn't leave me alone until I scribbled it down.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Prologue

Woodstock, 1969

The crowd was – mindblowing. Spread out as far as she could see, young men and women from all over America, united by a shared belief in peace and love and an enduring hope for the future.

She looked at Jaime. His long, shaggy golden hair was held back by a red headband, and he was nodding slowly as he played a few experimental riffs on his guitar, his scarred right hand flexing; under the weight of her gaze his eyes slowly lifted to hers.

“Look, Jaime,” she said, indicating the vast, murmuring audience. “It’s what we’ve always wanted.”

“Is it?” he asked with a lazy smile. His bright green eyes were blurred; sweet, pungent smoke clung to his fringed buckskin jacket.

She only sighed. Marijuana blunted Jaime’s sharp edges and made him easier to deal with. It dulled the pain in his hand, especially after crazy fingertip work on the guitar. But she still preferred him as he truly was, even with all his jagged edges and unexpected triggers – the cruel, wounded young man she’d first known, four long years ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the announcer intoned, please welcome – Oathbound!

The crowd roared as they stepped into the spotlight.

**

Berkeley, 1965

The first time Brienne met Jaime she was 18 years old, fleeing the hardscrabble poverty of life on a small farm.

Jaime was 26, a world and a war older, fleeing the gilded prison of wealth and privilege he’d come back to after two and a half back-to-back tours in Vietnam.
She had struck up a curious friendship with Tyrion, who worked at the student radio station; it was there, in the studio, that she first saw Jaime.

He was wearing old, worn jeans and a dirty khaki jacket, and was sprawled on the ancient corduroy couch, listening to Jimi Hendrix. His long hair and beard were shaggy and golden, his green eyes hazy, pupils enormous – one whiff was enough to tell her why – and he was slowly, lazily nodding his head to the music.

He was the most glorious golden creature she’d ever seen.

“Ah, I see you’ve stumbled across my brother, Jaime,” Tyrion said from behind her. “He’s staying with me for a while, until he finds his feet.”

“I thought your family lived in Massachusetts,” Brienne said.

Tyrion looked at her, his mouth wry.

“Right,” she said. “Of course.”

As the song ended, Jaime looked up and saw her, and a slow, lazy smile tugged at his lips.

“Hello, Blue,” he said.

**

Later that night, they fucked on that old, dusty couch, holding each other close, gasping into each other’s mouths, the sound of driving guitar heavy in the background.

**

He moved in with her the next day.

**

Jaime played the guitar.

His finger work was slightly shaky, thanks to the burns on his right hand.

(What happened to your hand? she asked once.

There was a fire, he said. Or, rather – there wasn’t a fire.

It’s all he ever said on the subject.)

“You should sing,” Tyrion said to Brienne, one lazy afternoon. “I bet you’ve got a lovely voice.”

“What about?” she asked. She was pressed against Jaime, leaning on his shoulder; she could feel his silent amusement at his brother’s lordly dictum.

“All the best songs are about love,” Tyrion said. “Love and sorrow and hope and despair.”

And so Jaime strummed a few chords on the guitar, and Brienne sang. Her voice was low, rich and smooth. She sang of grief and sorrow, of hardship and hope, of love and war and loss.

Together they made music, and Tyrion recorded them in his studio. It was raw, and powerful, and their first album succeeded beyond anyone’s wildest dreams.
And...let's leave it there, on a happy note.
A Lion's Ransom 2.0 (the Jaime on Tarth remix)

Chapter Summary

In which Lord Tywin, determined to thwart Jaime's plans to join the Kingsguard, arranges a proxy marriage between his son and the first unmarried noble daughter he can find. It still doesn't prevent Aerys from giving him a white cloak.

After the Kingslaying, Jaime is sent to Tarth.

Chapter Notes

1. This is a remix of "A Lion's Ransom", which can be found at Chapter One of Stray Sparks.

2. I don't think there will be any more to this. My focus shifted and I found myself cannibalising this story to write "Step Outside & See (Another World)".

3. It seems I forgot about Selwyn's wife and two younger daughters who would have died around this time. Mea culpa.

CHAPTER ONE – HOW JAIME CAME TO TARTH

1.

It had been a long, damnably tiring day. Robert’s head ached, and he wanted nothing more than to be done with this dark and stuffy room and the tedious business of ruling.

Things were much easier when he was still fighting a rebellion.

“There is one last thing, your Grace,” his new Hand, Lord Jon Arryn said. “A matter of some – delicacy.”

Robert sighed and poured himself another goblet of wine. “Well, out with it then.”

“Ser Jaime Lannister.”

Robert cursed under his breath. “Gods. What a bloody mess.” He took a long drink, fortified himself. “So. What do I do with the Kingslayer? If it was up to me alone I’d congratulate him.”

“Robert,” Jon chided. “You cannot be seen to publicly condone such a betrayal. No matter how much you personally benefited from it. There must be consequences to such an act.”

“There’ll be consequences no matter what I do. If I execute him, Lord Tywin will rise against me. If I send him to the Wall, Lord Tywin will still be wroth.”

“And if you do nothing and allow him to remain in your Kingsguard, it will be seen as tacit
approval of his actions.”

“Seven bloody hells!” Robert swore. “He’s no more than a boy. Aerys appointed him for spite and paid the price for it. What do you expect me to do? His father helped put me on the throne. His sister will be my Queen.”

He got up and paced to the window, stared restlessly out at the world outside. Gods, he wanted to be out there in the sunlight and the fresh air.

“There might be a way,” Jon said, after a thoughtful pause. “A way to both appease Lord Tywin and punish Ser Jaime.”

“Well, go on, what is it?” Robert growled.

The old man’s seamed and leathery face broke into a miserly smile, and he chuckled to himself. “Two years ago,” he began, “just before Ser Jaime was raised to the Kingsguard, Lord Tywin got wind of his plans and tried to arrange a proxy-marriage before Aerys could clasp a white cloak around the boy’s shoulders. They say Lord Tywin paid ten thousand dragons to the first lord he could find with a marriageable daughter, though the maid herself was but a babe in arms.”

Robert laughed uproariously. “By all the gods!” he marveled. “And all in vain!”

“They say the marriage took place in the exact hour that ser Jaime swore his vows to the king. It was all hushed up, of course, but Lord Varys’ little birds have their uses.”

Robert was still chuckling to himself at the thought of Lord Tywin’s displeasure.

“Aerys claimed that the white cloak came before the marriage. But who is to say that Aerys did not just say that to tweak Lord Tywin’s nose? I’m sure some evidence can be found to prove that it was the marriage, rather than the white cloak, which occurred first. And then all we need to do is hold Ser Jaime to his bride.”

“Instead of sending the boy back to the Rock, we’ll pack him off to his wife,” Robert said, hugely pleased. “Ser Jaime keeps his head, the old lion keeps his heir, and I don’t have to wonder if a man who’s killed one king is like to try again. Who is the lucky maid?”

“The daughter of the Evenstar, lord Selwyn of Tarth,” Jon said. “No more than two years old.”

**

2.

They bought Jaime into the throne room.

There, in the very spot where Lord Rickard Stark had been roasted in his armour and Brandon Stark had died trying to save him, he stood before the entire court, under the stern gazes of Robert Baratheon and old Jon Arryn and long-faced, self-righteous Ned Stark.

They spoke about the long history of the Kingsguard. They spoke about oaths and loyalty and dishonour.

They asked him why he had done what he had done. Why he had killed the king. Why he had left Elia and the children to die.

He simply stared at them, exhausted and uncomprehending. What did it matter? If they were going
to do something to him, let them do it.

Let it be over with, so that he could finally sleep.

They mouthed stern words of admonishment and pronounced some punishment that couldn’t have been too harsh, because otherwise his father would not have looked so self-satisfied.

And then –

And then they stripped him of his white cloak. In the middle of the throne room, in full view of the court, Ser Barristan Selmy physically stripped the cloak from his shoulders and threw it to the floor.

He did not weep. Not there, for all to see. Not even afterwards, in the privacy of his chamber.

**

Sometime in the night, a thin black kitten slipped into his chamber, mewling in hunger and distress. There was blood on its claws and whiskers, and the black and red silk ribbon around its neck was torn.

Princess Rhaenys had always laughed to see Balerion the Dread twining about Jaime’s legs and purring shamelessly.

**

3.

Lord Selwyn of Tarth held the rolled up curl of parchment to the candle flame, watching as the words *marriage to your daughter* and *trust you will ensure he is treated with all respect* shriveled up into ash. The wax seal – that of Tywin Lannister, the Lord of Casterly Rock – was clear and unmistakable until it, too, melted and ran.

“So that’s where you got the money to rebuild the docks,” Ser Goodwin said, thoughtfully. “How much did he give you?”

Selwyn had not wanted the match. Tarth was a quiet place, far removed from the great houses and their violent ambitions. But Tywin Lannister had all but coerced him into it, promising him ten thousand dragons and an annulment.

“More than enough,” Selwyn said heavily.

Ten thousand dragons he had received. But the annulment had never come.

Now, two years later, Lord Tywin’s golden son had been stripped of his white cloak for oathbreaking and regicide and was to be sent to Tarth.

“What in Seven Hells am I supposed to do with the boy?” he asked.

The old master at arms scratched his chin. “They say he earned his spurs on the battlefield, not lolling about court,” he replied. “Before he put on the white cloak, he earned himself quite a reputation. Arthur Dayne was not a man to be easily impressed.”

“So?”

“I think we should put him to good use,” Ser Goodwin said.
It felt good to be out of King’s Landing.

The air was fresh and tasted of salt and the sea; old, familiar companions of Jaime’s youth. He’d spent so much of his childhood on the water: swimming, sailing, fishing, running wild on the stony beaches and the streets of Lannisport alike.

For the last two years he’d been trapped in the Red Keep.

But now here he was, on a crimson-sailed Lannister ship sailing out of Storm’s End. His old sea legs had come back to him; he had spent most of the voyage so far in the prow, the wind ruffling his golden curls, the sun warming him after what felt like years in the shadows.

He was wearing crimson and gold again, after two years of wearing nothing but white. It felt garish. Ostentatious. But he supposed he would have to get used to it once more.

“There, my lord,” the captain of the ship said, pointing out a hazy land mass on the horizon. “The Sapphire Isle.”

Jaime stared at the island that was to be his new home, and felt – nothing.

Slowly, they drew closer and Jaime could begin to make out more details.

The waters were blue and tranquil, rather than the restless green of the Sunset Sea; the shores were of soft white sand rather than black stones. Rather than the great harbour and bustling wealth of Lannisport, there was a smaller harbour and a small town, over which Evenfall Hall rose – a less imposing, gentler guardian than the vastness of Casterly Rock.

Still. The docks had been recently refurbished and expanded, and what defences he could see were modern and well-maintained.

My dowry, he thought, with a flicker of amusement. Put to good use, at least.

Lord Selwyn met him as he disembarked.

“Ser Jaime,” he said, “welcome to Tarth.”

Jaime smiled automatically and mouthed the expected courtesies.

His good-father was a big, straw-haired man, at least a head taller than Jaime, bluff and straightforward but with shrewd blue eyes. His hand, when he extended it to Jaime in greeting, was rough and calloused with weapons practice, his grip strong and sure.

There was a young fair-haired boy by his side, perhaps seven or eight years old – a little younger than Tyrion, but taller than Tyrion would ever be.

“My son, Galladon,” Lord Selwyn said. “He wanted to see you for yourself.”

The boy looked up at him with wide, excited eyes.
Jaime smiled down at him, a warmer smile than the one he had given Lord Selwyn.

“And my daughter, Brienne.” Lord Selwyn gestured to a sour-looking septa, who curtsied before
drawing closer to present Jaime with a toddling girl of perhaps two years, clutching her septa’s
hand nervously and watching him with solemn, curious blue eyes.

Jaime wondered what he should say to his young bride. He settled for bowing politely, and offering
her the black kitten – Balerion the Dread, sleek and shining once more, a crimson and gold ribbon
around its neck.

She took the kitten with wide eyes and thanked him in a small, lisping voice.

All around them, a little crowd of smallfolk had gathered, come to see the new arrival – the word
must have spread like wildfire, he supposed. The Kingslayer, arrived on Tarth in exile.

“Come,” Lord Selwyn said, “let’s go up to the hall.”

***

CHAPTER 2 - TWO YEARS LATER

***

1.

The raven brought the news of their triumph the day before the ship returned to harbour.

“What is it, Father?” Galladon asked excitedly. “Is it from Ser Jaime?”

Brienne, now four years old, looked up as she heard the name of her betrothed. Both children
adored the young Lannister boy.

“Ser Goodwin writes that they have defeated the pirates,” Selwyn told them. “They will be
returning to harbour tomorrow.”

Galladon cheered. Brienne smiled widely, her blue eyes shining.

The next day they ventured down to the quay to meet the incoming ship.

Ser Jaime was easy enough to pick out. Sun-browned and unshaven, his golden hair shining bright
in the sun, he made his way down the gang-plank, clapping one man on the shoulder, greeting
another by name and laughing with another. The sailors and the knights and men at arms deferred
to him and called him the young lord, as if he was one of their own.

He was nineteen years old, Lord Selwyn thought. Still half a boy.

Underneath that golden beauty – those curls! – was a hot-blooded young lordling, laughing and
adventurous, who had once been the darling of his family, of Casterly Rock and Lannisport and
most of the Westerlands. Selwyn had heard the Westerlander traders and craftsmen speaking
admiringly of their Young Lion – as if his exile on Tarth was no more than a geographical
inconvenience.

Everybody loved him. He swam like a fish and climbed fearlessly, claiming – with a cocky smile –
that the cliffs of Tarth were nothing to those overlooking the Sunset Sea. He was tall and golden
and charismatic, and Selwyn could see why Tywin was so wroth when Aerys raised him to the
Kingsguard.
“The boy fights like a demon,” Ser Goodwin had said, once, “and he can inspire men to follow him into hell.”

And yet he had broken his sacred oath and killed Aerys Targaryen.

There was some unspoken story there.

**

Back at Evenfall hall they held a great feast for the returning heroes. Mead and wine and ale flowed freely, and the knights and men at arms cheered as they recounted the grand deeds of the fighting.

Ser Jaime, it seemed, had leapt through the window of one pirate ship with ten men behind him, fought his way up to the deck to take her, and then thrown himself from the deck of the first pirate ship onto a second.**

“Is that true?” Selwyn murmured to Ser Goodwin.

“Every word,” the old knight said. “Laughing all the while.”

**

2.

Jaime had grown to like his new life on Tarth.

At first he’d thought it no more than a rural backwater. Tarth was a slow, peaceful island with no large cities, only fields and forest and the sea. The main income came from the marble mines and from the trading ships that called at the main port every season.

But every now and then, Essosi pirates raided the eastern shores and Lord Selwyn sent ships out to fight them.

There was nothing Jaime liked more than fighting. Well, fucking came a close second, but Cersei was far away in King’s Landing, and Jaime had no interest in anyone else. His bride was a toddling girl of four, and there would be no marriage for at least another ten years – if anything, she reminded him of Tyrion, escaping from her septa to follow at his heels like a puppy. She watched him in the practice yard with worshipful, wondering eyes.

One day, he put a tiny wooden sword in her chubby hands and walked her slowly through a basic form. She looked up at him as though he were Prince Aemon the Dragonknight, her eyes shining like stars.

Jaime spent most of his time in the practice yard, or riding out over the island with Lord Selwyn and Galladon. The smallfolk bowed and called them young master Galladon and young Lord Jaime, and he had not heard the nickname Kingslayer in months. Not from the people of Tarth.

Every day he swam in the sea, the sun warm on his back, and when he slept it was without nightmares.

*****

**According to Patrick O’Brian’s “Master and Commander”, Lord Nelson actually did this:
“…so very often the improbably reality outruns fiction. Even an uncommonly warm and industrious imagination could scarcely produce the frail shape of Commodore Nelson leaping from his battered seventy-four-gun Captain through the quarter-gallery window of the eighty-gun San Nicolas, taking her, and hurrying on across her deck to board the towering San Josef of a hundred and twelve guns, so that ‘on the deck of a Spanish first-rate, extravagant as the story may seem, did I receive the swords of the vanquished Spaniards; which, as I received, I gave to William Fearney, one of my bargemen, who put them, with the greatest sang-froid, under his arm’.”
Protector

Chapter Summary

"He's not a tame lion, you know."

Rhaenys and her protector.

Chapter Notes

Tomorrow will be the 1-year anniversary of my first GOT/ASOIAF fic. For the last year I’ve been tossing up ideas for a crack fic based on the CS Lewis quote "He's not a tame lion, you know." And so here it is. (Only not crack. Sorry.)

When Rhaenys was a little girl, her mother told her not to make Ser Jaime play with her so often.

“He’s not a tame lion, you know,” Mama said. “He’s a knight of the Kingsguard. He’s supposed to be our fierce guardian.”

Ser Jaime pretended to look grave and solemn while Mama had said this, but he shot Rhaenys a wicked, laughing look behind Mama’s back.

Rhaenys was unable to hold back her giggles, and Mama threw up her hands and sighed in exasperation. “Children, both of you,” she said. “And you, Ser Jaime – you’re just as bad as she is.”

Ser Jaime was young and golden and handsome, and his smile as warm and kind as summer.

But when the bad men came, he fought fiercely to protect Mama and Rhaenys and little Aegon. “Take them and run,” he said to Mama, “and don’t let them look. I’ll hold them off.” And he drew his sword and barred the way, and Mama held Aegon tightly against her and gripped Rhaenys’ hand, and they ran.

“What about Ser Jaime?” Rhaenys tried to ask, but Mama shushed her. Rhaenys tried to twist around so that she could see what was happening, but Mama dragged her along so quickly that Ser Jaime was soon out of sight.

But Rhaenys heard the shouting and the cries and the clash of steel far after she lost sight of Ser Jaime, and she wept and cried and fought to go back – but Mama did not stop, not for Ser Jaime, not for anything.

**

Every night after that, for long weeks afterwards, Rhaenys woke screaming from terrible dreams. She wept, inconsolable, as they fled south towards Dorne, towards Mama’s family where they would be safe.

When her Mama finally brought Rhaenys and Aegon to the Water Gardens, her uncle Prince
Oberyn gave her a gift.

“Your mother says you lost your favourite protector,” uncle Oberyn said, kneeling down beside her where she was curled up, crying softly. All around her the other children played and laughed, but Rhaenys could not bring herself to join them.

“Perhaps this little fellow will help,” her uncle said, depositing a soft, golden-furred creature in her lap. “I brought him back for you from Essos,” he explained. “You must be very careful with him, princess. He may look gentle now but he has real claws, and real teeth. When he is grown, he will be a fearsome protector.”

Rhaenys called the lion cub Ser Jaime.
It was Friday night, and Brienne was lost in the blur of bright lights and too-loud music. She had no time for dancing or flirting; she had an assignment and two exams due in the next week and a practical test to prepare for –

“Hello, Blue,” Jaime Lannister said.

She blinked at him.

“Jaime,” she said faintly. “What are you doing here?”

He only smiled, a crooked, gently reproving smile. “I was looking for you,” he said, as if it was the simplest and most obvious thing in the world.

“Are you looking for another,” she paused, searching for an appropriate way to phrase it, “a repeat?”

Two weeks ago they had met in this bar, had talked and laughed and gotten drunk and then fallen into bed. But she’d had a nightmare assignment due that following Monday, and she’d planned to work on it for the entire weekend; she’d had to usher him out early on Saturday morning.

And then last Friday they had met once more, and he had asked if she would like to take him to bed again, and after a moment she had said yes, yes please, that would be – lovely.

She’d had to study on Saturday and go to Tarth on Sunday afternoon. She’d spent Saturday morning distracted by Jaime’s talented tongue, but she’d finally pushed him out the door at lunchtime so that she could get at least some studying done.

And now here he was again.

“Yes,” he said, his eyes dancing with laughter. “I would like a ‘repeat’. If you don’t mind.”

She considered him. “Okay,” she said. “Let’s go.”

**
On Saturday morning, Jaime lay asleep in her bed, his perfect body a sprawling golden temptation.

But Brienne was curled up on the couch, sticky-noted books and articles highlighted in several colours spread all around her, two cups of half-empty tea forgotten on the coffee table as she worked on her laptop. She had her headphones on, half-listening to music as she mumbled under her breath, flipping through the books and articles, scrabbling for her pens and scribbling down notes.

She was aware, dimly, that another cup of tea magically appeared at her elbow, along with a plate of toast and marmalade. She hummed her absent thanks.

Some time later, a sandwich appeared. She devoured it voraciously, and drank the accompanying orange juice without pausing to wonder where it had come from. She hadn’t bought groceries in two weeks.

The next thing she knew it was dark and her stomach was rumbling at the delicious smells wafting through the flat. She looked up from her books, her eyes blinking and unfocused, to find the kitchen lights on and the dining table set.

“There you are,” Jaime said, wiping his hands on a tea towel. “It’s not much, I’m afraid. But even I can manage a stir-fry.”

“Oh, thank the gods,” she said, with real gratitude.

**

The next few days were a blur.

Brienne spent Saturday and Sunday studying late into the night, falling asleep over her books only to wake in her bed, Jaime curled around her. She had two exams on Monday and Tuesday and her assignment was due on Wednesday, and the difficult practical exam was on Thursday, and she was never sure, afterwards, what she would have done without Jaime to feed her and provide her with endless cups of tea, to make sure she slept and woke up on time, and even to drive her to and from the campus.

**

By the time Friday rolled around again, her assignment was done and her exams were finished and she was drooping with exhaustion. But she was back at the bar, lost in the blur of bright lights and too-loud music, and Jaime was smiling at her, his eyes laughing and warm.

“Let’s go home, Blue,” he said.

**

They went home.

Jaime stayed, and never left.
Chapter Summary

Lord Tywin takes the throne, and everyone is happier for it. (Except perhaps the Targaryens, and anyone who gets in his way.)

Chapter Notes

IDEK. Honest. I had a Word document dating back to 2018 titled "King!Tywin AU". I opened it up today, looked at the few cryptic sentences I wrote almost a year ago, and this poured out. It's super-cracky, un-edited, and completely off the cuff.

Aerys is dead.

Numb, Jaime sits on the Iron Throne, his sword still dripping blood and his white cloak soiled, and waits for whoever will find him first.

In the end it’s not Ned Stark – it’s his father.

**

As ever, Tywin Lannister wastes no time.

Orders fly thick and fast: soon the fires are out in the city, Lannister troops are installed in the Keep, the remaining loyalists are rooted out and crushed, and the former Hand has established a stranglehold, effectively cutting Robert Baratheon and his allies out.

Robert may have won all the battles, he may have won all the glory, but he loses out on the main prize.

(Perhaps he is even happier for it, in the end.)

Princess Elia and her children are slain by mad dogs during the chaos of the sack. An unfortunate incident, which King Tywin deeply regrets – he gifts Prince Doran with the heads of Gregor Clegane and Amory Lorch.

Queen Rhaella dies in childbirth, and the young prince and the newborn princess are spirited away to Essos during a great storm – but King Tywin’s assassins are effective, and soon enough news comes that the last of the Targaryens are dead.

Cersei is still married off to Robert Baratheon. Some things don’t change.

Jaime is released from the Kingsguard and promptly married off as well – if Lysa Tully is no longer available, well, there are other marriableable daughters. Within the year, Jaime’s wife gives him an heir and promptly expires.
Prince Jaime spends his life travelling as far as possible from the Red Keep, putting out fires and attending tourneys, with many stops to visit his sister at Storm’s End, and is much happier for it. If he’s an unsatisfactory heir, at least he’s produced a grandson for Tywin to shape.

Tywin appoints his brother Kevan to be his Hand.

Tygett proves an able deputy at the Rock. Tyrion grows up mainly under his, Gerion’s and Genna’s benign influence, and when he’s old enough to come to court he takes to it like a duck to water.

**

When Brienne is 16 years old, the lord of Storm’s End and his lady come to Tarth. Lord Selwyn holds a great feast in their honour, and Brienne meets Lady Cersei Baratheon’s golden brother, Prince Jaime.

He dances with her at the feast, smiles and says she has beautiful eyes, if nothing else.

Early next morning, bleary and hungover and smelling of perfume, he wanders into the practice yard.

“Good gods,” he says lazily. “No wonder you’re such a strapping wench.”

She challenges him to a mock duel. He disarms her easily enough, then eyes her curiously and says –

“Again.”

**

When Brienne is 17 years old, she wins a great tourney at King’s Landing and crowns Prince Jaime her Queen of Love and Beauty.

The next day she runs off with him.

No one goes to war for them. King Tywin holds the kingdoms together with an iron fist, and everyone lives happily ever after.

Except those who stand in Tywin’s way.
Cut scene - Prince!Jaime and Kingsguard!Brienne

Chapter Summary

Prince!Jaime makes his move.

Chapter Notes

This scene was cut from "Princely Virtues", but because I'm quite fond of it I thought I'd include it in my Stray Sparks. Please enjoy!

A discreet voice calls from just outside his chamber door.

“My prince,” Ser Brienne calls, “you summoned me?”

Tyrion’s current inamorata, Shae, winks cheekily at him. Good luck, she mouths, before slipping out through the back door and away.

Jaime hastily strips off his tunic and musses his hair. He strides to the heavy wooden door and throws it open.

Ser Brienne of Tarth clears her throat, her blue eyes wide as they take in his bare chest, the trail of hair leading down to his breeches, tantalisingly unlaced. At least he hopes so. Shae had said that no woman – white-cloaked and armour-clad or not – could fail to appreciate the sight.

“Come in,” Jaime says, with his most charming grin.

She eyes him distrustfully. But he is the Crown Prince, and she is a member of the Kingsguard, and so she obeys him, dutiful and obedient as ever.

She stands in the middle of his chamber, her hand gripping her sword-hilt, looking tall and imposing and impossibly heroic in her white cloak and armour.

Jaime has been trying to get her to notice him for years. Ever since she’d first fought back to back with him at the Trident; ever since he’d convinced his father, newly crowned, to raise her to the Kingsguard. He hadn’t thought, then, that the white cloak would forever be a barrier between them.

“What is it, your grace?” Brienne asks.

“Just this,” he says, stepping closer, ever closer, until he’s standing right before her, looking up into her wide, wary eyes. “Brienne,” he says, smiling lopsidedly. He puts a hand on her mail-clad arm, feeling the strength and solid worth of her. “Please don’t hit me.”

“You’re the Crown Prince,” she says, bewildered. “I would never –”

He leans up and kisses that too-wide mouth. She draws in her breath, grips his shoulder and pushes
him away –

“If this is a jest, Jaime,” she says, “I swear I will kill you.”

“Brienne,” he says, half-laughing, half-despairing. “I’ve never been more serious in my life. Now will you please just kiss me?”

She tangles her hand in his hair and crushes her mouth to his, clumsy and gloriously eager, and her other arm slides around his waist, pulling him tightly against her armoured chest – just like a maiden in a song.
She slanted him a low, sultry look, out of the corner of those green cat’s eyes. “Mr Tarth,” she said, “shall we speak in your office?”

Galladon was big and blunt and homely. Most people thought him slow and dull-witted, and his slow, drawling Tarthian accent only reinforced their first impressions. He was solid, and steady, and practical –

But he also knew better than to refuse such an invitation.

Even over the sounds of the construction site, Galladon heard her coming.

The low growling purr of her sleek black car as it pulled up to the curb. The lone whistle and the murmured comments from his workers. The imperious sounds of her heels crunching on gravel, tock-tock-tocking on concrete.

The hair on the back of his neck rose. Beneath it all, he half-imagined he could hear the shushing of her silk stockings against the lining of her dress.

He straightened to his full six and a half feet, drew in a deep breath, and turned to meet her.

“Ms Lannister,” he said – and then stopped.

She was wearing a hard hat.

Deep green sheath dress and glossy black heels, her eyes outlined in smoky eye-shadow and her lips red as sin, her golden hair coiled up in a neat twist – and a hard hat.

“Mr Tarth,” she greeted him.

Her perfume was rich and heady, wreathing his senses.

In her towering heels, she was at just the right height.

“Oh?” she said, jolting him out of his reverie. “Do you have something to show me?”
Cersei Lannister was fiercely ambitious, driven, and brilliant. An internationally renowned interior designer, her work was featured in glossy, colour-saturated spreads in *Architectural Digest* and all the most stylish magazines. By all accounts she was a notorious workaholic, demanding perfection from herself and anyone who worked for and with her.

Her own brothers had tried to discourage Galladon from becoming her construction manager.

“Don’t do it,” Tyrion had said lazily. “She’ll eat you alive.”

Galladon’s good-brother Jaime – Cersei’s golden twin – had considered Galladon thoughtfully. “Nothing is ever easy with Cersei,” he’d said. “She pushes everything and everyone to breaking point, just because she can.”

The other construction managers who had worked with her previously had been brutally frank in their assessments. *Ball-busting bitch*, one had called her. *Fucking nightmare* said another.

But his eyes had strayed to the glossy pictures of her work, of the colour and brilliance with which she could transform even the blandest rooms, and he’d been intrigued.

**

He walked her through the rooms under construction. She asked shrewd questions, her eyes narrowed as she examined his work. Galladon found himself holding his breath, waiting for her verdict –

She nodded curtly. “Good.”

In the five months he’d been working with her, it was the most effusiveness she’d ever shown. He let out a long, slow breath of relief.

She slanted him a low, sultry look, out of the corner of those green cat’s eyes. “Mr Tarth,” she said, “shall we speak in your office?”

Galladon was big and blunt and homely. Most people thought him slow and dull-witted, and his slow, drawling Tarthian accent only reinforced their first impressions. He was solid, and steady, and practical –

But he also knew better than to refuse such an invitation.

**

She was warm skin and silken hair and wreathing perfume, her red lips warm beneath his and her breath sweet. He unzipped her sheath dress, trailing kisses down the elegant line of her back; when she stepped out of its green folds she was clad only in smoky silk stockings and tiny wisps of lingerie, and those towering heels.

“Gods above,” he swore reverently.

She only laughed, stepped into him and slowly began to unzip him. “Did you wear this tool-belt just for me?” she breathed into his ear.

He nodded. She made a low, hungry sound and bit his ear – gently, at first. “Impressive,” she murmured.

She was proud and fierce and capricious, and he could not possess her, only wait for her to come to
him when and where she pleased – still, there were some things he knew that could entice her.

He stripped off his shirt, unable to resist flexing his muscles, just a little. Determined to impress, he picked her up as if she weighed no more than a feather and carried her over to his desk. She laughed, wrapped her long, stocking-clad legs around his waist and held on.

**

Afterwards, when she was zipped back up, her hair once more perfectly coiled, and was reapplying her lipstick with the aid of a tiny gold compact, she spoke.

“The whistler,” she said. “Get rid of him.”

She looked up from her mirror. Meeting her fierce green stare, he nodded.

**

And then she was gone.
“Jaime, sweetling,” Aunt Genna said, “why don’t you go and put on a shirt. And put the kettle on, too, while you’re about it. I want to talk to Brienne.”

He woke in the morning light, warm and comfortable and content. There was a pounding on the door, and he felt a flicker of alarm before he realized that he was safe, now; the Mad King was dead, and men could no longer be dragged from their homes and taken to the Red Keep, never to be seen again.

Slowly, reluctantly, he untangled himself from Brienne and pulled on a pair of jeans, cursing under his breath as he stumbled to the door.

His aunt Genna waited outside, dressed in a twin-suit and pearls, her hair and make-up perfect even before eight o’clock on a Saturday morning.

Grinning hugely, he pulled open the door to welcome her. “Aunt,” he said. “I thought you were in Lannisport.”

“No doubt,” she said dryly, surveying him critically. Barefoot, bare-chested, unshaven and with his hair no doubt wildly mussed, he must have presented one hell of a picture.

He grinned boyishly at her, entirely aware of his own golden charm. She glared sternly for a moment, before her eyes softened and she smiled.

“You always were a wretched boy,” she said fondly, reaching up to pinch his cheek. “Now let me in, will you?”

He stepped aside to let her enter.

“Well,” she said, when he closed the door behind her. “So this is where you’ve been hiding.” She looked around at the cozy, cluttered living room, at the huge television and the long, comfortable sofa scattered with cushions, the piles of books – Brienne’s – and dvds – Jaime’s – and the mixture of belongings and interests that spoke of two lives, intertwined. Across the back of the sofa lay the hideous crocheted blanket Aunt Genna had made for him when he’d been sent off to Whitetower as a boy of 15.

“A lovely little nest you’ve made here,” she said, sniffing. “Very domestic. I wonder you haven’t thought to bring Ms Tarth to visit me.”

“Father had Brienne investigated very thoroughly,” Jaime said defensively.

“Yes, I know, I’ve read the report.” She nodded, finally deigning to sit down on the sofa. “She sounds like a very strong, very sensible woman. Gods only know what she sees in you, nephew.”

“My good looks and charm,” he said, “and there’s one particular thing I can do with my –”

“Jaime?” Brienne’s voice came from inside the bedroom, and she stumbled out, just as he had, hair
flying everywhere, dressed in running shorts and one of his old t-shirts. “Is that Tyrion again? I swear, everywhere I turn these days I’m surrounded by Lannisters –”

She stopped at the sight of Aunt Genna, regal and collected and staring at her with unabashed interest. Square and stout as Aunt Genna was, she was still, undeniably, a Lannister.

Brienne shot Jaime a look.

“You must be Brienne,” Aunt Genna said, rising like a galleon under full sail and heartily shaking Brienne’s hand. “My nephew Tyrion has told me so much about you. Jaime, on the other hand, has told me absolutely nothing.”

“Aunt –” Jaime began.

“Jaime, sweetling,” she said, “why don’t you go and put on a shirt. And put the kettle on, too, while you’re about it. I want to talk to Brienne.”

**

Jaime put the kettle on. He went into the bedroom and pulled on the first clean shirt he could find. It was too broad across the shoulders; probably Brienne’s, then.

Once he was fully clothed, he pulled out his mobile and called Tyrion, hissing furiously as soon as his brother answered –

“Did you know she was coming?”

“Jaime?” Tyrion sounded still half-asleep, and Jaime could half-hear a low feminine voice, and then another, giggling. “What on earth –”

“Aunt Genna is here!” Jaime hissed, sotto voce. “She’s here. Talking to Brienne. She sent me off to make tea.”

“You know she had to turn up sometime,” Tyrion said, unsympathetic. “Everyone else has met Brienne.”

“Yes, but not at first thing on Saturday morning! I wasn’t dressed! Brienne wasn’t dressed!”

“Jaime,” Tyrion sighed. “I really don’t want to know.”

(There was a muffled feminine comment on the other side of the line. It sounded like – although Jaime wasn’t quite sure – “I’d like to know”.)

“Look,” Tyrion said. “Just go out there, make tea, and make small talk for half an hour, and then she’ll go away and you can go back to bed. Surely even you remember that much of your manners.”

Jaime made a face at his phone. “If you’re going to start talking like Father, Tyrion –”

“Man up and go away, Jaime. I have better things to do than deal with your manufactured drama.”

“Manufactured!” Jaime hissed – but Tyrion was gone.

**

Manufactured – yes, perhaps it was. Just a little.
Brienne liked it when he was just a little melodramatic. It made her feel steadier, as if she had something to offer with her calm practicality.

Jaime liked having her calm practicality to lean on. It made him feel less alone, as if there were someone he could turn to if the world fell apart again, as it had done when the king went mad and there was no one to stop him – no one but Jaime, 17 years old and afraid.

He took a long, quiet look at himself in the mirror – his mouth grim, his eyes shadowed – and pinned on his best boyish, charming smile.

And then he went out to make tea and small talk. Half an hour, and he would be alone again with Brienne.
**Prison AU**

Chapter Summary

DI Brienne Tarth and DS Podrick Payne investigate the disappearance of over 1000 jars of wildfire from the Alchemist's Guild.

They need to interview the last of King Aerys' bodyguards. There's only one problem: Jaime Lannister is in prison.

Chapter Notes

This inspiration for this little ficlet comes from two sources: A, the chapter in A Clash of Kings where Tyrion goes to the Alchemist's Guild; and B, "Disengagement", by turtle_paced (here on AO3), which has the most wonderful subplot of Ser Davos investigating caches of wildfire found hidden under the city. Also I wanted to do a prison!AU.

“Guv,” DC Podrick Payne knocked on the door to Brienne’s office. “There’s been a break-in at the Alchemist’s Guild.”

Brienne looked up from the file she was studying. “Why is that a matter for CID? Call in the locals and get them to file an insurance report.”

“That’s just it,” Pod said. “They did an audit of their wildfire stocks. There’s nearly a thousand jars missing.”

**

Wisdom Hallyne met them at the Guildhall. With much obsequious smiling and bobbing, he led them underground to where the wildfire was kept.

“At our last insurance audit, DI Tarth, we had seven thousand, eight hundred and forty jars of the substance,” Hallyne said. “But that was in King Aerys’ day. So many of our records were lost during the coup…” he trailed off.

“How many are there now?” Pod asked.

“There are at least a thousand jars missing,” Hallyne said simply. “We found two hundred of them just last year, in a storeroom beneath the Great Sept of Baelor.”

Pod drew in his breath.

“So you knew about the missing jars before the break-in?” Brienne demanded.

Hallyne coughed. “There were – rumours,” he said. “Whispers. But our records were lost, and so many of our masters were murdered when the Red Keep fell –”
“Wisdom Hallyne,” Brienne said, “I think you’d better start talking.”

**

It sounded fantastical. King Aerys had a liking for wildfire and burning his enemies alive, everyone knew that, but to think that he had booby-trapped the city? What had he been thinking?

“What do you think, Pod?” she asked, as they headed back to headquarters.

“If they found 200 barrels beneath the Sept of Baelor,” Pod said, “where are the other 800?”

“Seven hells,” Brienne swore. “We need to get people on that straight away.”

“And how was the wildfire transported?” Pod continued. “The Wisdom said Aerys was obsessed. Do you think he oversaw its placement himself? Secret trips into the city under cover of night?”

“Yes,” Brienne said. “With only the Kingsguard to witness.”

“Oh,” Podrick said. “Oh, no, guv, you don’t think –”

“I think we need to interview the only one of Aerys’ bodyguard who was in the city during the last days of his reign,” Brienne said. “Set it up, will you Pod?”

**

Jaime Lannister had broken his oaths and murdered a king and been pardoned for it. He’d cut down Ned Stark’s captain of the guard in a wild street brawl and gotten away with it. He’d led a rampaging army through half the Riverlands, until he’d finally met the Young Wolf in the Whispering Wood –

There had been a trial. Lannister had been found guilty of murder and war crimes, and had been imprisoned ever since in a maximum-security prison near Riverrun.

“We had to put him in solitary confinement,” the warden said, as he escorted Brienne to the visiting area. “He was causing too much trouble amongst the general population.”

“They tried to kill him?” Brienne asked.

“They tried,” the warden said. “But he was a much better killer.”

And there he was: the Kingslayer. The last of King Aerys’ seven. The man who had broken his sacred oath and murdered the last Targaryen king.

He was unshaven and shaggy-haired, dressed in prison greys, seated with his feet chained to the floor and his hands chained to the top of the steel table. But for all the drab clothes and the heavy chains, there was a barely leashed magnificence to him: a larger than life presence that filled the room.

“Detective Inspector Brienne Tarth,” he repeated after she’d introduced herself. He squinted at her. “Funny. I wouldn’t have picked you as a woman.”

She ignored him. “I want to talk about Aerys Targaryen and wildfire,” she said bluntly.

“Are you another journalist writing a book about the Mad King?” he asked. “The facts are all on public record.”
“There are a thousand jars of wildfire missing from the alchemist’s guild,” she countered. “Two hundred of them were found last year, under the Sept of Baelor.”

“Well, well,” he drawled, leaning back in his chair. “I can just imagine the High Septon’s face.”

“Where are the other 800?”

“The alchemists keep records, don’t they? That cunt Rossart certainly kept detailed records of his burnings.”

“Rossart,” she said. “The old head of the guild. He was murdered during the sack, along with most of the master pyromancers.”

“Good riddance,” Lannister said, spitting on the floor. There was a gleam of cruel satisfaction in his wicked green eyes.

“Did you kill them?” Brienne asked, though she was certain she already knew.

He only laughed.

“Where are the other 800 jars?” she asked again.

“If I knew,” he said, “why should I tell you?”

“Why did you kill the Mad King?” she said suddenly. “Did you know what he meant to do with the wildfire?”

He went silent.

“That’s it, isn’t it?” she asked, marveling at the way the facts reshaped themselves. “Not because of your father. He meant to see the entire city burn, and you stopped him.”

There was no reply. He merely watched her, sullen and resentful.

“Tell me where the other jars are, Jaime,” she said, coaxing him. “The Mad King is dead; you don’t have to keep his secrets any longer. You saved King’s Landing once before. Now save it again.”

There was a long moment of silence. He leaned in.

“What’s in it for me, DI Tarth?” he asked.

“Well, what do you want?” she demanded.

He only smiled.
Chapter Summary

In which Brienne is down to her last ten dragons. She answers a help wanted sign.

Chapter Notes

My first attempt at both a bakery and a coffee-shop AU.

(I should mention that I have never worked in either a bakery or a coffee-shop. Please excuse any glaring inaccuracies.)

It was the sign that caught her eye. Neatly positioned in the window of a combined bakery and coffee shop, the words “Help Wanted. No Experience Needed. Enquire Within.” were printed in beautiful, feminine calligraphy on a creamy sheet of expensive paper, surrounded by delicate flowering vines and curlicues coloured in rose and azure and gold.

Tarth colours.

It was the first positive omen she’d seen in a long, long time.

Brienne knew that even under normal circumstances, there would be few people willing to employ a six-foot-plus woman with her unfortunate looks. But add a criminal record, and her prospects for employment melted away like snow in the summer sun.

She was down to her last ten dragons. What did she have to lose?

She pushed open the old wooden door and went in.

**

Her first impression was one of old-fashioned comfort and warmth. The walls were painted warm golden brown and dark blue and dark red, the lighting was soothing, and the furniture was comfortable and inviting. The air smelled of roasting coffee, fresh bread and sweet pastries. She wanted nothing more than to sink down into one of the comfortable chairs and forget her troubles, at least for a little while.

The tables were almost empty. It was mid-afternoon, between the lunch crowd and evening rush hour, and time seemed to stretch slowly, thick and golden in the afternoon light.

“What do you want?” a man growled at her from the bakery counter.

She started. Half of his face was horribly burned, and the other half was twisted in a fearsome scowl – but his eyes were sad, she thought. Sad, and angry at the world.

He was wearing a flour-dusted apron tied around his waist.
“I saw the sign,” Brienne said. “Are you still looking for help?”

He looked her up and down. “Some sort of military, were you?” he guessed. “Do you know anything about baking or making coffee?”

“No,” she admitted, her voice low and tight, her shoulders tensing miserably. “I went straight into the Academy after school.”

He grunted. “Another bloody career officer. I suppose your head’s filled with honour and duty and no common sense. Can you at least wash dishes and use a mop?”

She hesitated. “I have to tell you, though, that I was – dishonourably discharged.” She looked away. “I spent two years in Harrenhal prison.”

The burned man snorted. “Do I look like I give a fuck about your sob story? Now – can you wash dishes and clean up or not.”

“I – yes,” she stammered. “Yes, I can do that. And anything else,” she squared her shoulders, “I can learn.”

“Right. You’re hired. Now get in the back, there’s a bloody great pile of dishes waiting for you.”

**

The coffee shop and the bakery, Brienne came to learn, were two symbiotic businesses sharing one space.

The bakery was owned by Sansa, a formally trained pastry chef with red hair, big blue eyes and a smudge of flour on her cheek that made her look absurdly young.

She greeted Brienne with a warm smile and gave her a sample of her latest batch of lemon cakes.

“I’m so pleased you’ve come,” she said. “I knew that the sign would attract someone special.”

Sansa’s simple warmth and kindness and the sweet taste of the lemon cake almost reduced Brienne to tears.

The burned man, Sandor, baked all the bread – kneading is good for the soul, Tarth, does wonders for aggression – and hovered over Sansa like an over-protective hound.

The coffee shop was owned by Jaime, absurdly handsome and utterly impractical, with foul-mouthed Bronn as his barista. They sold Sansa’s pastries and Sandor’s bread, just as Sansa and Sandor sold Jaime’s coffee.

They had a delivery boy in common, young Podrick, and now a mutual dishwasher in Brienne.

**

Soon enough she graduated from washing dishes and cleaning to learning to bake bread and make pastries. Sandor was right; kneading was wonderfully therapeutic. And there was something magical about pulling a tray out of the oven and seeing something she had made with her own hands.

Pod took her along on deliveries and Bronn taught her to make coffee. In my day, he grumbled, we drank instant coffee black and liked it, but though he sneered at overly complicated, sugary sweet concoctions, he taught Brienne to appreciate the subtleties of what he called real coffee.
Jaime put her on the counter and tried to teach her to smile and flirt with customers and draw them in with golden charm. When that failed, he taught her how to be polite but firm, and soon he began to send all the difficult customers her way, to be treated to her own special brand of customer service.

“You can be our complaints manager,” he said admiringly, after she had reduced an irate and offensive would-be complainant to stammering apologies, merely by looming over him and treating him with menacing courtesy. “If you can manage all of them like that, we might even be sued far less often.”

“Do you often get sued?” she asked, bemused.

“We used to,” he said cheerfully, “before we learned to banish Sandor to the kitchen. But in the early days it was all hands on deck.”

He patted her arm. “But now that you’re here, I feel like we’re finally complete.”

When he smiled warmly at her, his bright green eyes utterly sincere, something deep within her that had been frozen since Renly’s death slowly began to unfurl.

Oh, she thought, with a sense of wonder.

Oh.
Heroes and Villains

Chapter Summary

Five variations on a superhero theme.

Featuring: Batman!AU, mild-mannered alter-egos, super villains, undercover agents and the mafia.

1. Nolan!Verse Batman!AU

If the city’s newest Assistant District Attorney, Brienne Tarth, had known what would follow when she punched out a hostile witness in court, she might have reconsidered her impulsive action. How was she to know it would go viral? That it would catch the attention of the most self-absorbed, extravagant cloud dweller of King’s Landing’s vacuous elite?

“Oh, boo-hoo,” their paralegal, Ygritte said. “You have to dress up and go to a swanky fundraiser, where a handsome billionaire will probably ask you to dance. How terrible.”

“That’s what comes of heroism, Tarth.” Her boss, District Attorney Tyrion Lannister, strolled out dressed in a tailored black suit with the ends of his bow tie dangling loose. “You end up drawing attention to yourself.”

Brienne made a face. “If only it hadn’t drawn your brother’s attention.”

“Jaime’s harmless,” Tyrion said with a grin. “Trust me. I’m a Lannister.”

Jaime Lannister was the darling of King’s Landing.

The whole city knew the story: the poor little rich boy, terrified and alone in an alley, his parents gunned down before his eyes. Brienne didn’t think it absolved him of responsibility for his life and his company; there was so much he could do to help the city.

But even with the immense wealth and resources of Lannister Industries at his disposal, all he did was date supermodels and throw glitzy fundraisers.

She went to the fundraiser. She danced with Jaime Lannister, and as they circled slowly on the dance floor they argued about politics and philanthropy and everything in between. His lazy grin was so infuriating – and the slight hint of his cologne was so tantalising – that they didn’t realise he’d steered her into a side room so they could continue uninterrupted.

“Take the Dark Knight,” Brienne said. “He may be the type of hero King’s Landing needs right now.”
“He killed Aerys Targaryen, the last district attorney,” Lannister said. “I wouldn’t call him a hero.”

“After your brother took over, he began to uncover all sorts of malpractice and corruption,” Brienne said seriously. “His actions had been hushed up for years. He had so much blackmail material that he would never have been removed from office, if the Dark Knight hadn’t killed him.”

“You sound like you admire him.” There was a curiously wry twist to Lannister’s mouth.

“I think I do,” Brienne said. “Perhaps he’ll inspire others to step up and help save the city.”

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Later, when she finally met the Dark Knight in person, she found his mouth and jawline strangely familiar.

**

2. Heroes & Villains

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She’d been captured by idiots.

She was almost ashamed of herself, listening to them panic now that they’d actually caught one of the city’s great heroines in their amateur trap. It had been two days now, and they were still arguing over whether to kill her, ransom her back, or just let her go and hope she had mercy on them.

Suddenly a number of gunshots rang out. She heard her erstwhile captors scream and beg for mercy, pounding on the securely locked iron door to her cell.

Within moments there was eerie silence, and the sound of echoing footsteps, and then the scraping turn of a key in the lock.

“Well, well,” a smooth, drawling voice said, “I must say, I’m disappointed in the upcoming criminals of today. No imagination.”

Her eyes flew open, startled; she turned in her chains to see –him. The Kingslayer. The man who had killed the previous kingpin, Aerys Targaryen. The ice-cold enforcer of the Lannister crime family.

His sharp green eyes skimmed over her close-fitting tactical suit, her muscular shoulders, her flat chest and her powerful thighs.

“Well if I had captured you, Beauty –” she cringed at the name the media had given her – “I’d have known exactly what to do.”

“Oh, piss off,” she retorted.

He only unlocked her chains and hauled her to her feet, grunting a little with effort and bracing himself as she leaned her full weight against him. Unable to resist, she put her head on his shoulder, breathing in the smell of him: musk and male sweat and solid warmth.

“Come on then, Brienne,” he said, “let’s get you home.”
She woke the next morning in her own bed, alone, after the deepest and most comforting sleep she’d had in a long time.

A woman’s voice called out: “Brienne! Brienne, are you here?” The door to her bedroom was flung open and Sansa Stark walked in, strong and fierce and proud, a true superheroine.

“I was so worried,” Sansa said. “We couldn’t find you for two days; we were afraid that you’d been captured.”

“I was,” Brienne replied. “They were a bunch of amateurs.” She slipped out of bed and stretched, wincing at her collection of aches and pulled muscles, and headed blindly towards the kitchen and the automatic coffee maker. It took her half a cup before her mind finally cleared enough to see Sansa looking at her suspiciously.

“The police found that bunch of amateurs murdered this morning. They were beginning to infringe on Lannister territory.”

“Yes, I know,” Brienne said. “I was there.”

“So it was him. The Kingslayer.”

Brienne sighed. “Don’t say it.”

“Don’t trust him, Brienne,” Sansa said gently. “Can you really be sure that he’s not using you? I don’t care how much you say he’s changed, he’s never going to walk away from his family.”

“Perhaps,” Brienne said. “But I believe that he’s willing to try.”

**

3. Undercover

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The sound of a fork tapping against a crystal glass brought the gathering to order.

“Shall we get on with it?” said Catelyn Stark, the matriarch of the Stark crime family. “We’ve got a lot of business to get through today.”

“By all means,” Balon Greyjoy said.

“I call this meeting of the five families to order,” Catelyn Stark intoned, slipping on her glasses and reading off a printed agenda. “Let us start by acknowledging our newest member, Daenerys Targaryen, who has replaced her brother Viserys as head of her family.”

A white-haired woman with cruel violet eyes bowed. There was a polite murmur of welcome.

“And of course, Renly Baratheon, representing his elder brother Stannis, who is unfortunately indisposed.”

Renly bowed with a flourish and a twinkle in his eye. Behind him, an absolute beast of a woman loomed imposingly over his shoulder, her face grim and humourless.

[“Who on earth is that?” Jaime leaned over to whisper to Tyrion. “She looks like she could bench...
press me without breaking a sweat.”

“That’s his new bodyguard,” Tyrion whispered back. “She’s the reason Stannis is indisposed.”

“Do you know how much he’s paying her?” Jaime hissed. “Whatever it is, I’ll double it. I’ll triple it if I have to.”

“He doesn’t pay her anything, now shut up before Father hears us.” Tyrion faced forward, his face polite and attentive, his hands folded neatly on the table.

“What do you mean, he doesn’t pay her anything? Everyone has their price.”

“I’ll explain later – just don’t approach her without me.”

Their father cleared his throat pointedly. Jaime sat up straight and assumed an expression of angelic innocence.

Reckless as ever, after the meeting Jaime disregarded his brother’s warning and went in search of Renly Baratheon’s Amazonian bodyguard. He found her in an isolated corridor, talking softly into her phone, though she concluded the conversation as soon as she saw him approaching. “What would it take,” he asked with his most charming smile, “for you to go out on a date with me?”

She eyed him up and down and pulled out a badge and ID. “Come down to the station with me, Mr Lannister, and we’ll find out.”

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4. **Supervillain (from a certain point of view)**

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“She has taken my son,” Tywin Lannister said, his back to the rest of the room, looking out over the King’s Landing skyline. “I want her found.”

Commissioner Tarth squared his shoulders and shifted uneasily. “We’ve no proof that the Beauty even exists,” he replied.

“She has taken my son!” Tywin snarled, slamming his fist against the glass window. “What further proof do you need?” He turned and fixed the Commissioner with a fierce hooded glare. “This – I can only call her a supervillain – has been a thorn in the side of Lannister Industries for years, and King’s Landing’s finest have done nothing –”

Mayor Mace Tyrell coughed. “Really, Tywin, I don’t think –” but he wilted under the force of Tywin’s blazing wrath.

“Find this Beauty, Commissioner,” he ground out, “and bring her to justice.”

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5. **Mild-mannered alter-egos**

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Clark Kent had a lot to answer for, Jaime thought. Did he know how difficult it was for Jaime to look meek and mild-mannered? It took more than just a pair of black-rimmed glasses and a slouchy green cardigan. It took serious acting skills.
But he’d finally gotten a date with Brienne Tarth, a shy, taciturn lawyer at Stark Industries, and he didn’t want to scare her off.

“Look at you, brother,” Tyrion said, enjoying himself hugely. “You look like a cowardly lion.”

“Do you really think so?” Jaime preened in front of the mirror, adjusting the carefully brushed sweep of his hair. He really did look like suburban dad material.

“Don’t you think you’re going a little too far? What are you going to do when you have to admit that you’re a Lannister? Never mind the whole superhero thing.”

Jaime sighed. His shoulders slumped. “I’ll worry about it then,” he said. “But first I have to get through the first date.”

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“Brienne,” Sansa said, biting her lip, “I think it might be a bit much.”

“Do you think so?” Brienne looked herself in the mirror. Long dark skirt and prim white blouse, buttoned up to the neck: Check. Hair scraped back in a bun: check. Dark-rimmed glasses: Check.

“You look like a Victorian school-marm. Or else some perverse fantasy of a dominatrix governess.”

Brienne sighed, and sat down heavily on the end of her bed. “I don’t want to scare Jaime off,” she said. “He’s just so – kind and gentle and, well, nice.”

“Brienne,” Sansa said, “listen to me. You dress up in leather at night and roam the streets, beating up criminals. I don’t think you’re going to be satisfied with kind and gentle and nice.”

**

Their first date was disastrous.

But when they met again as their real selves two weeks later, both hot on the trail of the same gang of criminals, the chemistry between them was explosive. Literally.

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